



For Immediate Release
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Rebuilding and Recovering after Harvey and Irma, Jose and Maria: Occupational Therapists Can Help

Experts predict it will take months and years for victims of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, Jose and Maria to recover and rebuild their homes and businesses – and their lives.

“Occupational therapists [OTs] can provide assistance to persons who sheltered in place in communities affected directly by hurricanes, but also in communities where those who left their homes are trying to resettle in unfamiliar environments, even if only temporarily,” said Dr. Marjorie Scaffa. She recently spoke to students in the inaugural Post-Professional Doctor of Occupational Therapy program at Salus University as a visiting faculty member.

Her talk proved particularly timely for the students who are enrolled in the Health and Wellness specialty track in the wake of the recent devastation from multiple consecutive hurricanes.

OTs are trained to address the physical, psychological, environmental and occupational consequences of disasters for individuals, families, and communities. In addition to the abrupt changes in habits and routines, families may also experience psychological trauma due to the many losses in their lives caused by the hurricanes. Dr. Scaffa reminded students that “often, the mental health effects of a disaster last much longer than the physical manifestations”.

Dr. Scaffa is a leader in a community-based OT practice and is known for her contributions directed at enhancing the role of OTs in health promotion and prevention. She is an author of *Occupational Therapy in the Promotion of Health and Wellness*, a widely used textbook, and *Occupational Therapy in Community-Based Practice Settings*. She has also conducted research on the effects of hurricanes and other disasters, particularly the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

About Salus University

Salus University, founded as the Pennsylvania College of Optometry in 1919, today is a diversified, globally recognized professional academic center of learning that offers a wide range of degree programs in the professions of Optometry, Audiology, Physician Assistant, Public Health, Blindness and Low Vision Studies, Biomedicine, Occupational Therapy and Speech-Language Pathology. Salus operates four clinical facilities in the Philadelphia area that provide highly specialized vision, hearing and balance, and speech-language pathology services. The University has more than 1,200 students, including PhD candidates, and more than 11,300 alumni worldwide. For more information, please visit www.salus.edu.