

Assistance for Hurricane Victims

A recent Eisenhower Fellow to New Zealand who is a passionate about corporate responsibility and philanthropy is behind a significant drive to assist the victims of America's Gulf Coast Hurricane Katrina.

Kathy Higgins is Vice President of Community Relations for health care company Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC) and leads the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation. Kathy led the creation of the BCBSNC Foundation to promote the health and well-being of North Carolinians. Since 2000 it has awarded US\$16million in grants.

Her team is behind the co-ordination of several initiatives through the American Red Cross to assist evacuees in North Carolina.

"We're stepping up to assist the victims of Hurricane Katrina, and we're doing it for the long haul" said Kathy.

"Both individually and collectively as a company, we have a unique opportunity, and a desire, to put our resources and people to work to help some of the many thousands of people who desperately need it.

"BCBSNC has identified at least 3,000 members who reside in the disaster areas. Our team is working to make sure our members get access to the health care they need as quickly and easily as possible. We are also providing assistance to any employees whose immediate family is affected.

"We are aware of a few employees with immediate family members who were evacuated and are now residing with them in the area" said Kathy.

"We are supporting them financially by providing cash gifts and collecting cash donations and gift cards from our employees. We're also offering them services from our human resources department such as resume writing and job searching.

"Many evacuees arrived with nothing except the clothes they were wearing and urgently need the most basic of necessities. We've been able to provide each person with clothing and shoes and are looking at other ways we can help.

"We understand that there is not a short-term fix. Rebuilding homes and lives is going to be a long-term process. Both as employees and as a company we have a desire to put our resources to work to help some of the many thousands of people who desperately need it."

In addition to assisting BCBSNC members, the organisation has contributed US\$100,000 to the



Hurricane Katrina arriving in Alabama

American Red Cross for disaster relief, has implemented a regular blood drive, and is encouraging and supporting their employee volunteers.

"With so many medical professionals on the staff here, we've been able to offer many types of medical assistance.

"Our employees have raised more than US\$630,000 which will support the many local agencies whose resources may have been depleted during recent relief efforts. This is especially helpful right now, since flooding and destruction make it very difficult - and in some cases even impossible - to deliver mass supplies or volunteers on site.

"We will continue to develop and implement plans well into 2006 and maybe beyond."

BCBSNC delivers health care products, services and information to more than 3.2 million members. For 72 years, the company has served its customers by offering health insurance and has served the people of North Carolina through support of community organisations, programmes and events that promote good health.

The Foundation's primary focus areas include access to health care for the uninsured and underinsured, eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities, physical activity, and screenings and education, all with a focus on preventative care.

Kathy has worked at BCBSNC since 1987 in a variety of leadership roles related to corporate philanthropy, employee volunteerism and other community involvement.

continued on page 3

INSIDE

p3...Outreach Seminars

p5...Maths-in-Industry

p6...California Dreaming

p7...Fulbright Lecture 2005

Study in the US Outreach Seminars

With an increase in funding which has enabled us to both increase the value and the number of our graduate awards, the recruitment and promotion of our awards this year has been intensive.

The NZ\$2.7million over four years from the New Zealand Government through the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology (MoRST) is for the creation of up to 12 new graduate awards in areas targeted to support growth and innovation in New Zealand. Broadly, this includes biotechnology, information communication technology (ICT), emerging areas of science such as nanotechnology and supporting areas of study relevant to New Zealand's sustainable economic development and future economic growth. These awards are in addition to our usual graduate awards and the Fulbright-EQC Award in Natural Disaster Research sponsored by the Earthquake Commission.

We have also been seeking applications for our most lucrative award, the Fulbright-Platinum Triangle Scholarship in Entrepreneurship, valued at over US\$100,000. This award is the initiative of former US Ambassador to New Zealand Charles Swindells and is funded through the New Zealand Government and private donors, including the Swindells Foundation.

We specifically targeted the business community to promote the Platinum Triangle award and the science community to promote the EQC and MoRST awards.

During August, our Graduate Programme Manager Martin Farmer and Executive Director Mele Wendt visited universities throughout the country to give seminars to students and faculty about the full range of Fulbright awards. Staff and students from polytechnics, colleges of education and wananga were also invited to attend. Fulbright alumni in each university were invited to speak about their experience in the US and also to assist us with promoting the seminars among students and colleagues.

The personal perspectives of our alumni were very well received by the seminar participants.

We have received good publicity for our departing and arriving students this year. This publicity provides an excellent vehicle to encourage others to apply. Our students appeared in metropolitan newspapers, weekend magazines and were interviewed on the national radio.

With over 20 awards on offer this year, more than we have ever had, we are keen to tell as many people as possible about Fulbright and the wonderful opportunities it offers. ■



Students from Victoria University hear alumna Jo Mossop speak about her Fulbright experience in the US.

continued from page 1 - Assistance for Hurricane Victims

She was behind the development of a five-year partnership between the BSBSNC Foundation and the New Carolina Association of Free Clinics to provide statewide access to free clinics and double their capacity to serve uninsured residents of the state. She has developed a number of award-winning programmes including *Be Active Kids*, which teaches preschool children about nutrition and physical activity; the *Breast Health Project* which educated the public about breast cancer and the importance of early detection of the disease.

As an Eisenhower Fellow to New Zealand earlier this year, Kathy met with health care and opinion leaders in areas of government, hospital administration, private sector health companies, business leaders, non-profit and local agency leaders, medical school and academic leaders.

Her aim was to gain an understanding of how innovation and creativity is being implemented in the delivery of health care through programmes, initiatives, projects, activities, partnerships and collaborations and to understand the impact of physical activity, diet and smoking on the citizenship.

"In New Zealand the government has historically shouldered most responsibility for providing services to the community. Corporate philanthropy is minimal

because there is little demand for it.

"I looked closely at government funded tribal-based health care clinics. The government has demonstrated sensitivity to tribal traditions by learning much about how Maori approach the care and well-being of their people.

Kathy also spent some time in Australia as part of her Eisenhower Fellowship where she met with corporate leaders in Sydney about the value of corporate-community relations.

As a result of her Eisenhower Fellowship experience, Kathy pledged to look for meaningful and measurable ways to bring about change through health and social outcomes in the US. She has already identified ten tangible best practices from her fellowship that she aims to implement in her work and in her community. ■

PROFILE



Kathy Higgins