

## **Houston, We Have a Problem**

*Employees help feed, encourage Hurricane Ike victims*  
by Valliere Jones, contributing writer

After Hurricane Ike devastated parts of Houston, Texas, last September, employees at Avnet's Houston branch naturally wanted to help fellow citizens in need. They looked online for sites requesting volunteers and found the San Leon Maranatha Baptist Church.

"The Gulf Coast storm surge caused by Hurricane Ike literally swept the church off its foundation and sat it to rest 50 feet behind its original location," says Arlene Harper-Veith, sales and marketing representative. "We offered our services in whatever manner they needed, and their greatest need was help distributing food from the Houston Food Bank to church members and neighbors."

In addition to passing out food for a day, eight employees helped cheer up hurricane victims. "As we handed out food, we discovered telling people to enjoy the food and to invite a neighbor in need seemed to lift their spirits and find a sense of good fortune even in the worst of circumstances," Arlene says. "Offering friendly, supportive smiles and words of encouragement was very rewarding."

Having worked together at the office helped the Avnet team better assist the church. "Our teamwork helped things go much smoother for the church, which was quickly running out of resources, energy and time to keep up with the immense need for help," says Arlene. "Their sincere appreciation for our stepping up to help gave us an immeasurable feeling of pride in doing the right thing."

Volunteering together also strengthened unity amongst the Avnet volunteers. "The sense of having done a good and unselfish deed brought the branch team closer and more supportive of one another in general," says Arlene.

Moreover, the project inspired employees to continue supporting hurricane relief efforts. Some returned to the church the following weekend, while others volunteered at other locations. Additionally, the branch put the church in touch with a customer who makes sound systems to help replace the one the church lost in the hurricane.

As proud as they were to help fellow Houstonians, the branch won't wait for another disaster to strike before volunteering together again. "We'll choose a project to which the team can and will commit, and use skills learned working together as a team to help another great cause," Arlene says.