

Coastal Marine Resource Agents Receive National Recognition

From left: Logan Respress, Texas Sea Grant Extension (TXSGE) Leader; Terrie Looney, Texas Sea Grant Extension's Marine Agent for Jefferson and Chambers counties; and Dr. Peter Rowe, New Jersey Sea Grant Consortium's Research and Extension Director and chair of the Sea Grant Extension Program Leader's Awards Selection Committee.



NEW ORLEANS — They were hurricane victims themselves, had no formally defined role in the post-storm response and lacked the financial resources, manpower and authority that governmental agencies had to implement large-scale relief efforts, but a team of Texas Sea Grant Extension (TXSGE) staff knew they had to do something to help their neighbors recover from Hurricane Ike. For their work, county Coastal Marine Resource Agents (CMA) Terrie Looney, Rhonda Cummins and Julie Massey and Seafood Marketing Specialist Mike Haby received national recognition from their peers. The four have been named winners of the prestigious Assembly of Sea Grant Extension Program Leaders' Superior Outreach Award. Looney accepted the award on Tuesday night during a banquet at the bi-annual Sea Grant Week meetings here. The quartet had the clarity of vision and purpose to see through the post-storm chaos and their own Ike-induced hardships to identify four critical needs that were not being addressed by other responders and fill these gaps. The four critical needs they identified were: reuniting boats found scattered inland with their owners; conducting an economic and environmental impact survey of the oyster and charter boat industries; ensuring the largely Vietnamese-American crab fishing community of Oak Island received much needed government assistance; and restoring the facilities and habitat of Galveston Island State Park. "I was, and still am, amazed at the amount of work these four people did in a short amount of time following the storm," said Logan Respress, Texas Sea Grant's Associate Director and head of TXSGE. "The number of lives they touched and the impacts they made are truly stunning, especially considering that there is no field manual for what they did. They relied on their creativity, perseverance and resourcefulness to successfully do jobs that others either could not or would not tackle. Because of their work, Texas Sea Grant is

now seen as an integral player in the state's hurricane recovery efforts." "There is a story about a boy walking along a beach, picking up starfish stranded by the tide and tossing them back into the surf," said Looney. "A man watching the boy takes him to task for the futility of his efforts, saying, 'Why are you wasting your time? There are millions of starfish and you can't possibly make a difference.' As the boy picks up another starfish and flings it into the surf he replies, 'It makes a difference to this one.' Well, we don't have money to spread around, and we can't do much for a whole lot of people at once, but maybe we can help this one."



TXSGE agent Terrie Looney (third from left) stands with (from left) her husband, Larry Looney, daughter Victoria, Texas Sea Grant Director Dr. Robert Stickney, and TXSGE Leader Logan Respress