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A Silver Lining for UM Student ...



COE, Students

A Silver Lining for UM Students Who Weathered Irma

When international student Qianyun Ding, a first year graduate student, came from Jiangsu – a coastal Chinese province north of Shanghai, China – to study at the College of Engineering, she may not have expected to see quite so much of Miami as she did. With Hurricane Irma on a path to make a direct hit on South Florida, Qianyun was one of approximately 150 students who spent the hurricane at Southwest Miami Senior High School, which served as a special shelter for University of Miami students. What could have amounted to a dark and harrowing few days was tempered by the comfort and safety provided courtesy of the University.

Satisfying more than just the physical needs of the students with safety and meals – students ate in the high school’s cafeteria and slept on the second and third floors – the University also provided mental health specialists for them. “UM went above and above to make us feel safe and cared for so far from home and under such difficult circumstances,” Ding says.

All the students’ time in the shelter was downtime – they played board games, watched movies and used the shelter cafeteria for painting. “Every day, a priest hosted mass for us,” Ding adds. Once the hurricane passed, campus remained closed and the students were treated to several days at a local hotel. Even after the students were able to resume normal life back on campus, the University treated them to a night on the town with a visit to the Pérez Art Museum Miami and a movie at Sunset Palace

“I am beyond grateful for the help we received over the course of the storm and beyond,” Ding says. She expressed her gratitude by volunteering, days later, to help with post-hurricane recovery in the Florida Keys. “It’s my great honor to have a chance to help as a volunteer,” she added.

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