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Freshman Student Reflects on Surviving Hurricane Katrina

Winthrop University

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Freshman Student Reflects on Surviving Hurricane Katrina

Quick Facts

- Mykesha Wolfe currently lives in Beaufort, South Carolina.
- She is a freshman computer information systems major at Winthrop.



ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA -- Whenever it thunders or lightning shoots across the sky, Winthrop University freshman **Mykesha Wolfe** makes the sign of the cross, prays and turns her music up loud.

Surviving **Hurricane Katrina** will do that to a person.

Wolfe, a computer information systems major whose family relocated to —and still lives in—Beaufort, South Carolina, was only 8 years old when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, Louisiana, killing more than 1,800 people and causing more than \$100 billion in estimated damages.

She and her family—her father, mother and brother—lived in Algiers, Louisiana, roughly five miles from the Mississippi River and the heart of New Orleans. The Wolfes didn't evacuate as the category three hurricane approached and made landfall.

“We thought it would be just another storm that passed by,” she

said, reminiscing while taking a break in between classes on Aug. 31 in the DiGiorgio Campus Center. The 10-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina's landfall was Aug. 29.

But when her father came and took her and her cousins out of school and told them they couldn't go back, she knew something bad was coming. They went to the townhome Wolfe's family lived in and prepared for the worst.

The storm began, and the house was shaking so much that Wolfe couldn't comprehend what was going on. Her family took refuge in an upstairs hallway. Her father, who had suffered a heart attack the year before, removed the home's doors off their hinges and put them against the windows to prevent the glass from shattering into the home. As water flooded the home, he placed towels on the

ground to try and soak up the deluge.

“It was scary, being so young and not knowing what was going on,” Wolfe said. She was comforted only by her family and the toys she had brought upstairs with her.

The family stayed in the home for two days with no power as the temperature inside rose higher and higher. Eventually, Wolfe’s mother decided the family would take shelter at Southern University. There, Wolfe remembers eating packaged food or whatever was available, sleeping on hard mats, playing games, sharing bathrooms with other people and constantly asking her mother when they could go home. The answer was never.

“Home is crucial to an 8 year old,” she said. “Being in the shelter...was just awkward. I didn’t know what was going on....**How can a storm so powerful destroy the one place you knew to call home?**”

Eventually, the Wolfes moved to Beaufort to stay temporarily with family. They lived in several different places, including a furnished apartment provided to them by a church, before moving into a home newly built for them as Katrina survivors.

Wolfe visited New Orleans two years after the tragedy, but said she just doesn’t want to go back. She considers Beaufort her home now. She calls on her faith to keep her and her family strong and believes God helped her get through the hurricane. She feels she has received so much, and wants to give back in her future career and during her time at Winthrop.

“You would never think it would happen to you, living in America,” she said. “You see other places get destroyed, but you just don’t think about it happening to you. Sometimes I cry when I think about it, but I’m happy to be where I am today. **They say if you go through a storm you receive a blessing at the end, so it’s kind of been a blessing to be here.**”

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