

Hurricane rains are so unpredictable. Sumiko Hamilton-Hervey, owner and director of Smartie Pants Academy Center in Katy, never thought that the reservoir would need to be released in order to prevent greater damage to the city of Houston. “I didn’t know what to think when that happened,” she said. “But I knew my center would be impacted because of its location.”

Since 2011, the center has cared for children with special needs and their siblings from all over the Houston area. The goal and mission of the center is to provide a safe learning environment and space where these children can grow and learn life skills in order to be functional citizens in our community.

Before the rains came, Sumiko and her staff did their best to prepare by moving tables, toys and valuables to safe areas. But because of the heavy rains leading to the Addicks Reservoir release, the center took in seven feet of water damaging everything. Sumiko wasn’t able to access her center to assess the damage for two weeks. Once she was able to see the center, it was evident that the children wouldn’t be able to return to the original center location.

Fortunately, one of her board members was able to connect her to a pastor who offered his church that could temporarily take in the center’s four classrooms. In September 2017, Smartie Pants relocated its operations there until a new space could be created.

“This couldn’t have happened at a more opportune time,” said Sumiko. She had been thinking of expanding but didn’t know how or when that could take place. Over the past few summers, she has had a waiting list of children wanting to be part of the Smartie Pants summer program. After settling in their temporary space, she began looking for a new permanent location for her center that could accommodate more children. Luckily, a space was available near their previous location, and she was able to purchase it and quickly began the process of renovating.

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Coming Back Stronger after Harvey

Sumiko Hamilton-Hervey, owner and director of Smartie Pants Academy Center, looks forward to her new space being complete in order to serve more special needs children in the Greater Houston community.



“It’s exciting to see this new space come together for my kids,” she said. “I can’t wait to have our grand opening for my families and the community.” The center will have a kitchen for them to be able to prepare meals to have family-style lunch together.

Because of the support from Collaborative for Children through its Hurricane Harvey recovery program, Smartie Pants is able to come back stronger to serve the Greater Houston community. “I’m looking forward to share this new center with my current children as well as being able to see more children come through my doors,” Sumiko said. “I love being able to teach parents how to care better for their children and serve and care for my community.”