

Report on Livingston CARES March 2006 work-Trip to Gulfport

Prepared by Charlie Elliot-Bearce, Student Trip Leader

Beginning in February 2006, eight students and three staff began planning a trip to Mississippi to aid in the disaster recovery of Harrison County, partnered with Livingston County Cares and Hope Unites. By early March, all arrangements had been made and thanks to Dr. Dahl and Vice President Bonfiglio (and other various contributors), the trip coordinators had raised enough money to accommodate 55 participants for the alternate spring break trip.

On March 10th following an enthusiastic farewell send off by President Dahl, 55 (51 students, and 4 faculty/staff) people left from Geneseo enroute to Gulfport, Mississippi. After a 24-hour bus ride, we finally arrived in Gulfport, Mississippi and met our host recovery center, the North Carolina Baptist Men's Christian Association.

Upon arrival we were very glad to disembark our bus for dinner and much needed stretching. However, after some minor confusion about our lodging accommodations, we reloaded the bus and headed to the Gulfport High School gym; which would be our lodging for the next week.

Sunday, following breakfast at the recovery center and the opportunity to attend church services, we traveled around and viewed the destruction in Harrison County to see firsthand what the people of Gulfport and Harrison County had experienced during Hurricane Katrina. After the tour of the area and confronting the reality of the destruction, the group took a much-needed break and picnicked at the Gulf Islands National Park – which had just reopened for visitors. Following this we returned to the gym to meet in our five individual work teams and began strategizing our construction plans for the week.

On Monday the 13th the real work began and we were ready to start assisting with the reconstruction on our first five homes. Each work team had a different home to work on led by team leaders. Team one was led by Charlie Elliott, team two Jason Boring, team three Rich Pulvino and Fiorella Ugucconi, team four Prasantii Roy, and team five by Chris Basso. Although we did not have all the needed tools or supplies all the teams showed extreme ingenuity and heart by finding work to do with the tools they had at hand and by keeping an upbeat attitude. Our motto to be flexible became an integral part of our days. This time also afforded us time to connect with the homeowners and their families.

Our Alternative Spring Break teams expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to partnership with the Navy Seabees (Steve Byers, Jason Huskey, Tom Hurlburt, Matt Poe, and Beldan Peoples). The expertise they brought to the homes helped each group to hone some carpenter skills and accomplish more than could possibly have been done on our own.

By the time we reloaded the bus on Friday, March 17th to return to Geneseo, each team had accomplished much more than had been expected and repeatedly asked for more assignments because they had accomplished more than what was expected to be completed in one week of work by our host agency.

Some of the accomplishments included:

- removed moldy drywall and damaged insulation;
- completed sheet rocking one house and the beginning stages of another;
- rewired the electrical boxes in a whole house;

- redid a bathroom (including hooking up the shower and installing a new toilet)
- restoring a kitchen (including hooking up the icemaker and moving cabinets);
- rebracing, retrimming and baffling a roof;
- extensive clean-up in and around the homes and their yards, and in their neighborhoods;
- painting interiors and exteriors of three houses, etc.

We worked on seven homes and hopefully changed seven families lives. This really became clear to the group when on Friday, March 17th we opened the homes for a mini “open house” so that all our teams could view the accomplishments in each home and the families whose home’s we had worked on got to see the work we had accomplished and the emotions were high. As we left the neighborhood for our last ride out on our bus, one handicapped homeowner asked us to drive by with the bus so she could wave goodbye to the whole group.

On the return trip to Geneseo, many of the students expressed feelings of gratitude to the people for organizing the trip and awe of the experience they garnered from this trip. One student remarked that they could never go on just a regular spring break after this experience.

The Alternative Spring Break group sincerely hopes that these trips can continue for as many years as there remains the need.

Prepared by Charlie Elliot-Bearce

Participants:

Hadier Aziz	** Connie Hurlburt	Julia Perriello
Joshua Baker	** Tamara Hurlburt	* Prasantii Philips Roy
Emily Barnhart	Emily Hurley	Michelle Plyem
* Christopher Basso	Hanju (Andrew) Jung	Jacquelyn Powers
Lindsay Bernstein	Amy Kaslowsky	* Richard Pulvino
* Jason Boring	Jacob Kriss	Anne Regan
Richard Chen	Shuya Kyu	Kaitlin Sicke
Rachel Coleman	Amy Lau	Jenna Swanson
Jennifer Daggett	Dana LePage	Anne Toomajian
Jennifer Delcourt	Laura Lonski	Jennifer Tyrpak
Nickolas Devin	Mary Beth Mahaney	* Fiorella Uguccione
Mary Donovan	Daniel McConvey	Ziliang (Bruce) Wei
Carol Drake	*** Mark Mitschow	Richard Weiss
* Charlie Elliot-Bearce	Kathryn Murphy	Juliana White
Amanda Flannery	Rebecca Nelson	Emily Zoller
** Jennifer Forbes	Kayla Nimmo	
Maureen Gillard	Marie Ostrander	* Team Leaders
Breanna Hilko	Aimee Paquette	** Staff
David Hoekstra	Sarah Paquette	*** Faculty
Jessica Holbrook	Matthew Pascucci	