

A Sobering Spring Break



Among those who gutted homes were, back row from left: Chelsey Gosse, April Burko, Kaitlin Taber-Miller, Steve Karpinski, Ashley Maresca, Theresa Brewer, Steve Felter, Lisa Mulvey, Jim Bochicchio, Patrina Jordan, Andrea Smallacombe; and front row from left, Ann Loyek, Greta Kleckner, Valerie Martinez, Jessica Krupski, Allyson Bazarsky. PHOTO COURTESY OF MEGAN BOONE

STUDENTS AID NEW ORLEANS RELIEF EFFORTS

Twenty-nine Wilkes students and five chaperones spent a week in New Orleans on an alternative spring break. Responding to the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, the students worked with the National Relief Network to clear debris from yards, demolish dilapidated structures and gut homes. The students kept daily journals excerpted here and documented work in photos.

2:30 p.m. Monday, March 5

By Zach Bremmer

Yesterday we went to a Baptist church only a few miles from our campsite, and the people we met greeted us so warmly.

We then went on a tour of the business district and the French Quarter. It is truly a sobering experience driving through this place. It was like a ghost town.

We moved into the area hit hardest by the flood. Seeing the X's marked on the doors of all the houses and buildings is just so unreal. These marks were used by rescue workers to indicate that the houses had been inspected, how many bodies were found, how many hazards there were and date of the inspection. Rescue teams also initialed the doors.

Right now we are doing yard work, cleaning up things that haven't been touched in 1.5 years. We see movies and books and other items just left here. Families just had to leave everything. I can't imagine not having a home.

3:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 7

By Amanda Kunkel

In the backyard of the house I am working on, I found Bibles and love letters scattered around. I didn't read any of these letters because they are private and I respect that.

I did read a card that was found opened. It read: "Time endures and cannot fade the memories." I can't believe this card survived.

3 p.m. Friday, March 9

By Valerie Martinez

An amazing story of courage that I will never ever forget is what a firefighter told me. His name was Ribo and he was a part of the first rescue team to help in the recovery efforts during and after the flood. He told us that when he was at a rescue shelter, he looked across the way and spotted a young man rowing in a small boat. Firefighter Ribo asked the young man who else was left in the boat and the man replied that it was his mother, but on the way to the shelter, she had died. The firefighter asked the young man if he was OK, if he needed anything. His reply was, "Yes, I'm OK. I just want to go help others stay alive."



Jim Bochicchio removes debris from a roof.
PHOTO BY LISA MULVEY

3 p.m. Friday, March 9

By Andrea Smallacombe

Last night the whole group sat around a campfire and began to reflect on all of our fears. Someone wrote that she/he was afraid that coming down here wasn't going to make a difference. We came to realize that we are helping, helping in a huge way. Through our efforts, we have been able to help 10 families get closer to coming home. And then after those 10 families come home, they can begin to help others, like we did. We all realized our efforts will cause a ripple effect.