

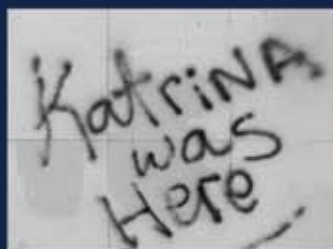
DBU REPORT

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SPRING BREAK IN KATRINA'S WAKE

DBU Students Lend a Hand in New Orleans Recovery





New Orleans Spring Break 2006

DBU Students Offer Hope and a Helping Hand



Thirty-nine Dallas Baptist University students spent their 2006 Spring Break tearing down debris from Hurricane Katrina and helping New Orleans residents mend their lives.

"It was like a ghost town," said Angela Sacco, DBU director of student life and a New Orleans native, as vans filled with students and supplies rolled into town.

Yuta Motegi, a business major from Japan, brought a unique perspective to the team. "It was similar to the earthquakes in Japan, but worse," Motegi said. "Some earthquakes shake the land and cause other problems like fire, but I've never seen such a mess like in New Orleans."

Students found the terrain challenging. "It was frustrating getting around because everything was in shambles," said Jason Hatch, director of the DBU Baptist Student Ministry, "You're looking for a street sign and it's down."

DBU students worked in New Orleans' Ninth Ward, one of the sections hardest hit last August and home to DBU student volunteer Chip Luter. His father, Fred Luter, is pastor at New Orleans' Franklin Avenue Baptist Church.

Floods severely damaged the church's sanctuary and many of the church members' homes. Many of these individuals remain scattered throughout Texas and Louisiana.

Before they can return home, houses have to be cleared of dangerous debris and readied for repair.

Wearing white hazardous-material suits, DBU student volunteers began the grueling task of gutting homes.

"It's hot in those suits," Hatch commented. Damaged home appliances had leaked hazardous chemicals during the flood, and water damage had molded much of the wood and drywall. Breathing through ventilation masks only added to the painstaking task of ripping up floors, tearing down walls, and clearing out wreckage. But DBU students persevered, salvaging 14 homes in five days.

Getting down to the foundation helped the team find hope. In one house, Hatch's team was busy piling old furniture and mildewed carpet on the curb. But in the last room, one piece of paper on the floor would not come off. Looking closer, Hatch realized it was a page from the New Testament book of Galatians. Chemicals in the water and the forces of nature had melted it to the hardwood floor.

Exhaustion was the team's greatest obstacle. But the lasting result of their labor was worth it. Soon, a family will return to their house in New Orleans' Ninth Ward, find a floor ready to build on and see the foundational message of Galatians 5:1 to "Stand firm."

A Musical Message to Katrina Survivors

Tearing down homes was only half of the students' mission in New Orleans. Before the relief trip, DBU President Gary Cook commissioned the university's student worship ministry, Glowing Heart, under the leadership of director Henry Loftin, to record a special CD of hope to distribute to hurricane survivors, along with a package of inspirational literature. Inside the CD case, New Orleans residents found a special letter written by Dr. Cook on behalf of DBU, explaining why they received this special gift of music and also describing how in the midst of any crisis, God is always greater than the storm.



Dear New Orleans Residents:

When we saw from our televisions in Dallas the devastation that Hurricane Katrina brought to the people of Louisiana and Mississippi, our hearts went out to you. Immediately we began trying to figure out what we could do to help bring normalcy back to your lives in the midst of such destruction, shock, and despair. We have asked ourselves, "What can a university in Texas do from so far away that will make a true impact on the lives of our neighbors in Louisiana and Mississippi?"

Yes, we are sending our students, faculty, and staff your way on mission trips to serve your communities and minister to your needs as best we can. But, I must tell you that we could never do enough ourselves. In fact, what you really need can only be given to you by the One who knows you better than anyone else, who knows what you lost from Katrina, and who knows what your greatest need is today and tomorrow... Jesus Christ.

You see on that fateful day when Katrina hit, God was still God and He was in control. And though we do not always understand His ways, we believe that He is the only hope for each of us in the midst of life's storms. Your life's storm was really big...but God is bigger. Your need is, no doubt, tremendous in scope...but God's love can fill your every need. He has truly been a refuge for us in times of trouble, and we pray that you can experience this same peace and joy in Jesus.

Would you accept this CD as a gift from us at Dallas Baptist University? We can offer you nothing better than to direct your eyes and heart to our wonderful, loving God. We hope that this gift would give you a chance to pause and be still and see the goodness of God, even in the midst of so much hurt and loss in your life. We are praying for you.

Sincerely,
Gary Cook
President, Dallas Baptist University