

SSND BUILD 2009

Service Trip to New Orleans

On Sunday, July 12, 2009, 23 women gathered in New Orleans for a week of service to help rebuild homes devastated by the flooding in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The group included Sisters Mary Fitzgerald, Maria Iannuccillo, and Jane Moran with staff, students and graduates from the College of Notre Dame, Baltimore, MD, and staff and students from the Academy of the Holy Angels, Demarest, NJ. This group, known as SSND Build, worked with St. Bernard Project to help rebuild homes in the still-devastated St. Bernard Parish.



Students from the Academy of Holy Angels and the College of Notre Dame with Sr. Mary Fitzgerald, SSND



Kate Chambers (Academy of the Holy Angels) & Sr. Maria Iannuccillo, SSND working on siding.



Sr. Maria & Jennifer Hale (College of Notre Dame alumna) at the Depot House volunteer residence.

Although most houses and structures could not withstand the levee flooding after the hurricanes of 2005, the faith of the New Orleanians was not washed away with the debris. During my week-long trip helping rebuild houses in the St. Bernard Parish, I experienced firsthand their loyalty to their people and city, which I hope to emulate one day. - Jennifer Hale, College of Notre Dame of Maryland Alumna (2008)

"The time spent in New Orleans was a substantial point in my life and the life of a family I had never known previously to the trip. I feel that as I did my service, I found a new love for my surroundings, a respect for the people of our country, and gratitude for all those hard workers who day after day helped restore a life and a home that the citizens of New Orleans should rightfully have. It was an honor and pleasure to be a part of the St. Bernard Project." - Gianna Puzzo



Antoinella Peterkin and Sr. Jane Moran, SSND

"I was most struck by the local couple, John and Celie, who came to talk to us while we were on our lunch break one day. Both their families had been in St. Bernard Parish for generations and had weathered a number of storms. Both were well on in years and had lost everything from the aftermath of Katrina. Both had stories of waiting days for rescue and months for help. When asked if they felt abandoned by their country, their response was immediate: "If the government did abandon us, the American people never did." They continue to be overwhelmed by the numbers of people and organizations that continue to be with them and assist in ways that really do make a difference. What a wonderful lesson in solidarity!" - Carol Fay (Academy of the Holy Angels)

"This service trip to New Orleans opened my eyes to my own capabilities and the significant impact that a small group of enthusiastic caring individuals, no matter how devastating the situation may be. Learning to install laminate flooring and operate a power saw were extremely empowering experiences, but far less inspiring than the positive, upbeat attitudes and warm appreciation we received from the citizens of New Orleans. Their resilience, found in everyone from our city tour guide to the local fisherman we stopped to talk to, is something I will carry with me for my entire life. If I had the opportunity, I would go back without hesitation. There is still so much to be done." - Nicole Onderdonk (Academy of the Holy Angels)



Students from the Academy of the Holy Angels installing new flooring.



Students from the Academy of the Holy Angels and the College of Notre Dame with Ms. Carol Fay (Academy of the Holy Angels)

At our evening prayer on the last night of our week together we reflected on the question: "How have you experienced God dwelling in this city during this week?" In the quiet I began to see a slide show in my mind and heart of the faces of people we had met. I saw the local men and women who were still trying to rebuild from the devastation of the flooding from Katrina. I saw faces of volunteers who have given days, weeks, months and years to rebuild New Orleans. I saw our team, SSND Build, students and staff who worked together to help rebuild a few homes. I saw God in each of these faces. - Maria Iannuccillo, SSND, Vocation Director

SSND BUILD 2009 Helping to Rebuild New Orleans



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