

QUICK LINKS:

- Home -



- @St. Norbert December
- Math Conference
- Motivational Speaker
- Alumni Service Trip
- Main Hall Statue
- Christmas Events
- Hockey Games
- Issue Archive
- Television Show
- Ask the Abbot
- How to Subscribe



What can you do?

Consider a short-term personal volunteer commitment. Deanna Misko, at (228) 860-2105 or deannam@southernccj.org, is coordinating volunteers. Free accommodations are available at the Dedeaux Retreat Center in Pass Christian, Miss.

Contact Mary Ellen Enzweiler of Catholic Charities USA, at (800) 919-9338, to discuss a financial donation to hurricane relief efforts.

Find out more about the [alumni service trip to Mississippi next June](#).

December 2006

SHARE

FACEBOOK

TWEET THIS

PRINT

Alumni service trip to the gulf coast **Kim (Lopas) Sullivan '95** was one of the alumni participants in last year's service trip to the Gulf Coast. Her experience was life-changing, as she recounts below.

The St. Norbert groups that helped with clean-up in the wake of Hurricane Katrina were so affected by the scope of the devastation that they immediately started planning a return trip for next year. The third annual service trip heads to Mississippi June 16-24, 2007.

Hurricane Katrina—These Things Take Time

I don't have anything particular against snails; I just didn't want one in our fish tank. Nor did I want the dog in the swimming pool. But when I went away for a week and daddy took over ... things happened. The amazing part is, I didn't really care.

Now, in a typical week's time, the unsanctioned occurrence of these events would have at least caused minor irritation, if not full-out agitation. This was not, however, a typical week. I was not at home caring for our 3½-year-old son and 14-month-old daughter. Instead, I was at the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, helping in the recovery effort of Hurricane Katrina.

For nine days, nine of us left our regular routines as educators, nurses, mental health providers, social concerns consultants and mothers to draw on our hidden talents in insulating, sheet-rocking and mudding. We came together, bonded by our common goal to serve others, as part of the June 2006 St. Norbert College Parent/Alumni Service Trip.

When our group caravanned along the coast near Biloxi, Miss., we were shocked at the level of continued disrepair.

We saw piles of debris towering over the boardwalk on the beaches. We saw entire blocks devoid of houses—only a foundation indicating their previous existence. We saw half-collapsed buildings, a church with its roof caved in and the sides blown out, gravestones lying face down in the rubble.

We saw a bridge collapsed, pieces of white-lined road sticking up from the water. This was the condition of the Biloxi area 10 months after Hurricane Katrina.

The occasional flag, thrust into the ground, reminded us that we were in

America. We realized later, after looking at photos taken just after the hurricane hit, that what we'd seen wasn't so bad. We hadn't seen garbage strewn everywhere or people milling about aimlessly. We hadn't seen furniture on beaches or cars under water. Progress has been made, but much is left to be done.

There are still thousands of people who cannot live in their homes. Many rebuilding projects have been started, but there are many that need to be finished and even more that haven't begun.

The Catholic Charities Long-Term Disaster Relief Office in Gulfport, Miss., where I worked for two days, has 2,500 cases open with only 14 case managers. Returning calls from March, I talked with a man and his family who were still in need of food and water. One mother needed more materials and help with labor before she and her five kids could move back into their house.

Needing to hear their voices, I called my family from a parking lot on a borrowed cell phone. My son shouts, "Mommy! I miss you!" I try hard to conceal the fact that I am crying. He sounds so young.

My husband is trying to tell me something. I close my eyes and see the FEMA trailers, the falling-down buildings. I hear people asking for food, materials and something about a ... snail? "You got a snail? Oh, I couldn't care less about the snail ... Let the dog swim in the pool all she wants. I love you. I'll be home soon."

After our return, I received a letter from the owner of the house we worked on. She thanked us for our hard work. "Nothing's been done since you left," she wrote, "but I know these things take time." I turned the letter over in my hands several times, inspecting it, hoping for more—wishing for a different truth.

Office of Communications

Phone: (920) 403-3557

Fax: (920) 403-4010

E-mail:

communications@snc.edu

St. Norbert College • 100 Grant Street • De Pere, WI 54115-2099 • 920-337-3181

© 1996-2019 • All rights reserved worldwide.



24.208.59.11