

Students spend break rebuilding Gulf Coast

Nearly 700 students working with former senator this week

By STACEY PLAISANCE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW ORLEANS

Some of the college students flocking to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast for spring break are not coming for the beaches, the booze or the all-night debauchery. But they are getting hot and sweaty nonetheless.

Instead of stripping down to bathing suits and sunglasses, thousands of young people from across the country are putting on coveralls and goggles and gutting hurricane-blighted houses, repairing roofs and hauling away storm debris.

"I figured this is one of the rare times I'll get to do something like this, to really help somebody," said Danielle VanEaton, a freshman at the University of Iowa

who spent the first day of her first college spring break gutting a flooded home in New Orleans' hard-hit Ninth Ward.

Flushed and sweaty after ripping out the house's moldy carpet, paneling, plaster and insulation, VanEaton unzipped the top portion of her protective suit and waved the plastic fabric back and forth to let in some air.

"These things are hot," she said, her dust mask pushed up to her forehead.

Behind her, a dozen or so students hauled flooring and insulation to the curb with large shovels and wheelbarrows, tossing it onto a large pile of ruined furniture, clothing and other debris.

"A lot of my friends were going to Florida and South Padre, Mexico," she said. "But I knew it was bad here and that people

needed help. I'm really happy I came."

Alvin Spears, a widower whose home was flooded, was grateful for the help.

"If it wasn't for God and the hearts of these young people, nothing would get done," he said as he watched the students haul to the curb moldy books and appliances. "I know it's not easy work. It's dirty, and I'm amazed. They're smiling, like they're glad to do it."

It is unclear how many students are spending spring break helping with the recovery effort. But nearly 700 students from 85 schools in 27 states will be on the Gulf Coast with former Sen. John Edwards, D-N.C., this week alone.

Thousands of others have been here in recent weeks, and more are expected between now and the Easter holiday.

Many of the trips have been organized by colleges, some of which are offering students credits for their labor. Others have been arranged by volunteers, churches and other charitable organizations, such as Habitat for Humanity.

Some of the spring breakers are sleeping in tents, using portable bathrooms and makeshift showers. Gettysburg College students from Pennsylvania, for example, are staying in a gutted church in Violet, La., and are using a generator to heat water and hanging tarps to make shower stalls.

"At night, we reflect on what we've been through, what we've seen," said Kristen Rimany, an organizer of the Gettysburg group. "I've been impressed with the students. They're handling it very well."



Students from the Baptist Student Union at Georgia State University help clean out a home in New Orleans on Tuesday.

Irish leader meets with president

By DEB RIECHMANN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern gave President Bush a bowl of shamrocks on Friday and then asked the president for more transparency about CIA flights over Europe.

After his St. Patrick's Day meeting with Bush, which lasted for more than two hours, Ahern renewed his commitment to seeing the implementation of Northern Ireland's 1998 peace accord and its central goal: power-sharing between the province's British Protestant majority and Irish Catholic minority.

The consensus among Irish Americans and political leaders is that "we just have to move on," Ahern said after meeting with Bush, who also visited with relatives killed in murders linked to the Irish Republican Army.

"We've seen the end of the IRA campaign," Ahern said. "We've seen the end of the arms issue. We're dealing with the criminality issue. We saw the big raids on the border last week. The politicians have to get back to the work that they were elected to, and we have to do that this year."

Ahern said he asked Bush if there was a way to bring more transparency to the issue of rendition. The European Union is investigating allegations that CIA agents interrogated al-Qaida suspects at secret prisons in eastern Europe and transported some on



Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern, right, presents President Bush with a bowl of shamrocks at the White House on Friday.

secret flights that passed through Europe.

Ahern said that while Ireland facilitates U.S. troop movements, and is happy to do it, there is public concern over the CIA flights.

"We've asked for the president's understanding and cooperation," Ahern said.

"If you met this staff, you'd understand why I chose JMH."

JONI KENDALL, *Avon*

The decision to have bariatric surgery wasn't a simple one for Joni. "I wanted to make sure I was doing the right thing. So I talked to people I knew had the surgery. And I met with doctors at a couple of different hospitals." When her deteriorating health became too frightening to deny, deciding where to have the procedure was a lot easier. Joni says her experience at Johnson Memorial made up her mind "in the first ten minutes. The doctors, the nurses, everyone made me feel really cared for."

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Abortion ban leads to boycott threat

By CHET BROKAW
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PIERRE, S.D.

The superintendent of Mount Rushmore, Gerard Baker, was surprised at first when people from all over the country started calling up to express their opinion about South Dakota's ban on nearly all abortions.

Some callers said they were so upset that they would never visit Mount Rushmore, South Dakota's No. 1 tourist attraction. Others said they were so thrilled that they would make a point of coming to see the chiseled faces of four U.S. presidents in the Black Hills.

On further reflection, Baker decided the messages from far and wide make sense, because Mount Rushmore is a symbol of freedom.

"That's what we're all about here," he said. "That's what America is all about, people expressing their freedom and people expressing their choices and so forth."

In an uproar that has taken many South Dakotans by surprise, politicians and state agencies have been bombarded in the past few weeks with thousands upon thousands of calls, letters and e-mails, pro and con, from across the country and around the world.

And a few small groups have called for a tourism boycott of South Dakota, urging people to avoid such attractions as Mount Rushmore, the Badlands, the annual motorcycle rally in Sturgis, and the Corn Palace, an arena in Mitchell whose walls are covered with colorful ears of corn.

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My name is Pat Foster. I have called Country Charm Independent & Assisted Living community my home for more than two years. I say it's my home because the staff and fellow residents are like my family. There is always so much to do at country Charm. Between activities (bingo, dominoes), bus trips to shopping, the movies, lunch outings, etc., I barely have time to sit still. The tree daily meals are very good, however, my favorite is breakfast. Every morning I feel like I am being treated as a queen. Eggs (cooked to order) and bacon, pancakes, yogurt, danishes, etc. The staff at Country Charm caters to your every need. In fact, the staff

is what makes Country Charm so unique. Most of the staff has worked at Country Charm for years and years. It is so reassuring seeing the same team members each and every day. Lately there have been many new exciting

...it is comforting to know that if I need care, Country Charm has all of the amenities and services to meet my needs...

additions at Country Charm Independent & Assisted Living Community. For example, the community has implemented a computer lab (and classes), started on-site banking services, paved the

walking path around the beautiful lake, added automated doors and ramps to make it more accessible for everyone, just to name a few. Regarding the care (and cost) at Country Charm: there is no comparison. The property has added a full time nurse, implemented on-campus home care services, and certified each and every apartment for assisted living. Although I feel healthier than ever, it is comforting to know that if I need care, Country Charm has all of the amenities and services to meet my needs. Whether you are from the city or down on the farm join me and make your home Country Charm. I just love it.

Pat Foster, resident of Country Charm Independent & Assisted Living Community.

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