

## YOUTH OUTREACH

## Mission Trip to Aid Katrina Victims Changes Lives



*Christie Dover, 18, was one of the students from St. Paul-Boca Raton, FL, who participated in a summer mission trip to*

*Gulf Port, MS. Here is her report on that trip.*

Our St. Paul youth group, which is led by youth director Mike Hardies, had planned to go out of the country for our mission trip this summer, but with last year's devastating hurricane season, particularly Hurricane Katrina, we felt it was better to help out here in our own country. Our new destination was Gulf Port, MS.

This trip was organized through a group called Team Effort where youth groups from across the country can get together in different locations to do mission work. They also hold worship services that help you

become closer in your relationship with God.

For the past year we had many fundraisers — such as

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car washes, dress down days at St. Paul School, our annual road rally and our stock sale, a program where our church congregation invests in our youth ministry — to raise money for this mission trip.

Our group of 28 high school students and five chaperones began our journey on Saturday, June 17, as we drove from Boca Raton and arrived in Gulf Port on Sunday.

The first thing we did that afternoon was drive along the

coast to look at the devastation from Hurricane Katrina. It was shocking. Lots where buildings once stood were empty, or were

enormous piles of rubble. Messages were spray painted on the sides of homes saying "Mom, I'm safe." This was all very surreal; it made me realize how truly blessed I am.

Our camp site was located at St. Paul Methodist Church-Ocean Springs. All 300 people at camp lived in M.A.S.H. style housing with old box cars turned into showers for a week.

Monday morning we arrived at our worksite. Our team joined another group to clean up, reconstruct and re-roof a local church's day care center that had been damaged by Katrina. This was a huge task considering that most of us had never been on a roof before, but we were up for the challenge. Despite our lack of knowledge we learned quickly and within three days we had the entire roof completed.

Everyone worked extremely hard, whether it was nailing shingles down or making sure everyone had water to drink. The job was done successfully because we all worked as a



team. The outside and inside of the daycare was scrubbed down and other parts of the church got painted. It was extremely rewarding to see the results of our labor.

Just next door to the church lived a lady named Gladys whose house we were also working on. Her roof needed to be fixed up because it was damaged by the storm. We were able to fix most of these problems and re-shingle and tar paper a large portion of her roof. There were many other tasks that we did such as cleaning out her garage and fixing her garage door to open automatically. We also spruced up her garden and added lattice to the base of her house.

I have learned many new things and have grown in my relationship with Christ through

this experience. This trip has opened my eyes to many things and given me a new perspective on life. It taught me that it doesn't matter how much work you get done or how good it is, but about the hearts that you touch in the process.

It's very easy to spread God's Word by your actions. People from the neighborhood would stop by the work site and ask what we were doing. The guys from our group saw some kids from the neighborhood and offered to play basketball with them. There was a family from the church that we worked on that cooked us lunch one day as a thank you.

Gladys and all the people in the community needed to see that people do care, are willing to help them and that God loves them. □



See more mission trip photos at [LutheranLifeOnline.com](http://LutheranLifeOnline.com)

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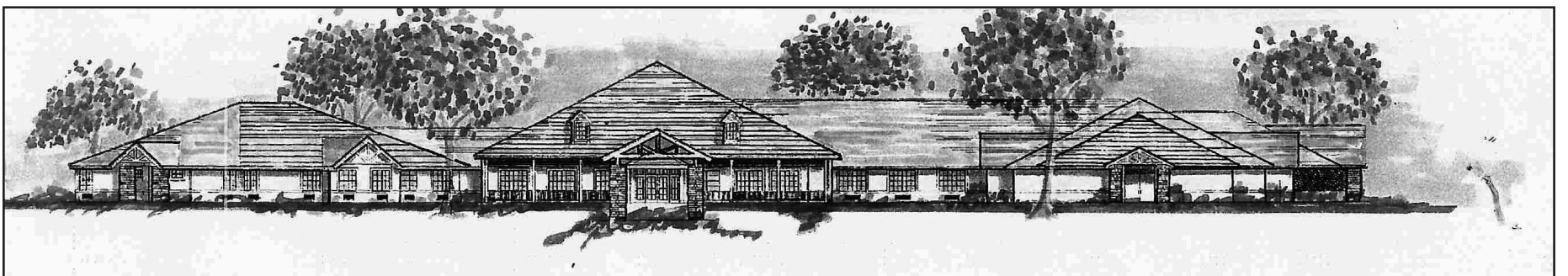
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