

Dickinson College
New Orleans Service Trip
March 2012



Team Journal

During Spring Break 2012 a group of 26 students and 4 administrators traveled over 3,000 miles to serve with Epworth Ministries as homes were rebuilt in the greater New Orleans area. This year marked the 10th Dickinson group that has helped rebuild since Hurricane Katrina hit in August 2006 and thousands of homes were destroyed and people displaced. As the team continued their work this week, it has been remarkable to see what has remained the same since Dickinson started their work in Mississippi during spring break of 2007. Homeowners and neighbors remain to be the highlight of the trip, telling their stories of struggle and hope. The organizations we have worked with continue to have at their mission the people that are touched in the worst way; the least, the last, and the lonely. They are often elderly, disabled, single parents, and those who are unable to rebuild without help. The Dickinson students, staff, and the college community has raised thousands of dollars to support our work and teams. While students make a difference through cleaning out, dry walling, painting, and trimming during this opportunity for service, their lives were transformed. Lives have been dedicated to service and vocations discerned by one week of service in New Orleans. Eyes have been opened to community needs. Friendships have been formed across campus with other students and administrators in remarkable ways.

This year three crews worked on houses in Slidell and East New Orleans. In Slidell, Ms. Sharon's house was in the final stages of trimming and painting closets, tasks which are small but which take great patience, before she was able to move back in. Her home at 399 Markham Drive will not be the same because of the blessing written by a crew taking it one step closer to completion. Nearby at 2751 Washington Street, Mr. Terry and his uncles welcomed a crew that mudded and sanded his huge house. Each day they were covered in dust, helping to prepare it to be painted. After six years, Mr. Terry is finally able to live in a house that is no longer a construction zone. Over in New Orleans East our crew worked in an area where only 10% of the people have returned since Katrina. This was evident by the houses still boarded up and evidence of homes awaiting work. The crew at Mr. Larry's house hung drywall on ceilings all over the house. Others started the process of mudding a huge cathedral ceiling. Living in Houston, Mr. Larry came to help for two days and shared his appreciation for the crew and all those that continue to remember the needs of families in this region.

But the story of the rebuilding with the United Methodist Committee on Relief and Epworth is larger than just these three homes. Dickinson has been a part of the rebuilding of 21,354 homes. Volunteers have spent over 3.5 million hours working to bring people home—to bring the life of the city back and share hope that these people are not forgotten.

Thank you for sharing a week of your spring break to become part of the community of over 250 Dickinsonians that has made a difference in the New Orleans area. Thank you for giving yourself the opportunity to hear stories, meet new friends, and learn about the complexities of rebuilding. Thank you for your patience and passion to step up and help others that would be waiting without your commitment. Read on to learn how one week changed perspectives, opened eyes, and brought hope to those in need.

Saturday March 10, 2012 Cassidy

After a long night of driving and very little sleep we loaded up the vans and left Virginia at 6:30 a.m. We were on the road until 6:00 p.m. and crossed into a new time zone, so it was a 12 ½ hour car ride. That 12 ½ hours felt like much, much less. We passed the time singing (over the walkie-talkies, to country songs we didn't know the words to, and to songs on whatever radio station we happened to find), playing games (the green, glass door, alphabetical games with movie titles and actors, and scrabble), having excellent conversations, and getting to know great, new people. We saw the world around us get greener as we traveled south and spring started to appear. Along much of the highway, beautiful, purple-budded trees dotted all of the greenery. There were a million places to buy fireworks in Tennessee.

During reflection it became clear that more than just the scenery was changing. Some people talked about the nice conversations they had with complete strangers about ice for their water bottles and someone asking "Hi, how are you?" We had wonderful conversations with each other as well, both in the vans and at dinner, talking about things ranging from education to being green to bugs to eyebrows.

Today, we bonded as a group through these conversations, games in the vans, doing yoga in the parking lot, playing ninja (also in the parking lot), and laughing with one another. There is a real, wonderful community forming.

Saturday March 10, 2012 Carrie

Despite having a long drive the night before and having an early start in the morning, I was surprised how quickly the drive passed and how much I enjoyed it. After sleeping during the first shift, I felt more rested and ready for the rest of the drive. The second shift was a great time of having deep conversations with the other people in my large van and I felt like I was able to connect with them all in new ways. This day was also the first time I got to really talk to a number of the people on the team, and I enjoyed switching vehicles throughout the day and having both light and fun, as well as deeper, conversations. It was also great to see the weather change and spring start as we drove further south. I also enjoyed meeting and just having little interactions with the people in the rest areas when we stopped. At one stop in particular Laura and I interacted with a woman working in a fast food restaurant. She was so friendly and gave us water and ice to fill up our water bottles. I also enjoyed arriving, relaxing over dinner and unwinding from the drive down. The reflection time was great to hear how positive the experience has been for everyone so far and it makes me excited for the group dynamics throughout the week and just seeing how this week is going to impact each of us.

Saturday March 10, 2012 Madison

So...we spent a lot of time in the car. And yet collectively we decided the time FLEW by! We sang, we played games, we fully utilized the walkie-talkies...But really I think I sang for eight hours straight. P.S. I'm sorry for making everyone experience that. Also, I think we all know the words to all of Kelly Clarkson's new songs. Everyone was determined to get to know everyone. There were no walls: there was no "them" and "us."

Also, as we travelled south, it was strange how things evolved. I don't travel south much so I don't often experience the cultural change myself. As we went down, the interactions between us and the employees at the rest stations changed from a feeling that we were inconveniencing them and our presence was stressful and not wanted to a feeling that our needs were important and kindness to one another was given a priority. For example, at one of the rest stations I had just woken up from a nap and was all fuzzy and groggy and reallllllly thirsty. I brought my water bottle in hoping I would find a water selection on the soda fountain. But there wasn't one and I spent a solid five minutes exploring all the nooks and crannies of the machine hoping to God there was one there somewhere. Finally, Richie asked the woman at Subway if she would fill up our bottles. She exclaimed very enthusiastically about how she would love to do that for us. She insisted that we fill our bottles with ice to cool the water. Before we left she ensured we were satisfied with the temperature of our water. She gave our needs priority and care even though we were inconveniencing her. I grew up on the northern east coast. If you slow up the progress of someone's day by making "your problems" "their problems" there is immediate disdain for your presence and the interaction you had with this person. What an awful feeling! The first and only time you meet someone and they only ever felt inconvenienced by you! The change was beautiful. There is a stereotype about the south pertaining to ignorance and laziness. But I am beginning to think that the people who stereotype like this are the ignorant ones because what I see is people who have slowed down their lives to revel in the beauty of it. Each connection is an exchange from the heart and kindness is given. These concepts seem simple but they are often forgotten in today's society where efficiency and money rule. I'll summarize this very lengthy explanation by saying I have never been called honey so many times.

Another thing that blows my mind is the facilities and resources that are available to us at this church. The bathrooms are beautiful and each girl gets her own bunk. The kitchen is fully equipped and there are newspaper clippings praising the work of volunteers all over the walls. This made me feel two ways. The first feeling was positive: that they valued our well-being so much even though we are there to help them. Second was slightly more morbid because these facilities were not slapped together like they were expecting to never use them again after a couple months. They are very much permanent additions to the church which makes it obvious that Katrina isn't over and there will be more that needs to be done for years to come. The government has made it obvious that it will have to be an independent movement of the people to change minds here. People who live in excess must give to those who

suffer in hopes that if the positions are reversed, the same exchange would occur. This is very much a movement of human kindness. It has no complications of bureaucracy and laws, it is just people wanting to know one another and have a mutual exchange of the things they have to share. I am excited to learn!

Saturday March 10, 2012 Evan

We find ourselves in Slidell, Louisiana; we are the tenth group of students from Dickinson College to make the beautiful trek down south to participate in a week of wonders. While the trip has only just begun, the group has already been growing for quite some time. Beginning with our Sunday meetings in Althouse, we started to learn each other's names, about the city of New Orleans, and how each of us, as individuals, can create positive change. From those meetings, bonds blossomed as each of our crews enjoyed dinner dates and learned more about each other on deeper levels. And then, before we knew it, the day came. We assembled—all thirty of us, in the ATS parking lot and we set off for New Orleans. The first evening of travel took us to Virginia, but not without a couple of detours first. We all got our first taste of our spring break—we were all so happy to be off campus and free from stressors and incredibly excited for the week to come. By the end of the evening, we made it to Abingdon, VA. We set up camp for the night in the church and collapsed in exhaustion.

Before we knew it, we were back in the vans and rearin' to go. While it might have been early, the tunes were blaring, conversations were getting started, and deep inside, we all knew we would be in New Orleans by nightfall. The ride felt shorter than ever. We belted the lyrics to just about every song we heard, played endless amounts of games both within the vans and via the walkie-talkies. But one conversation truly reminded me of why I am so utterly obsessed with these opportunities: I was in the back row of the van surrounded by beautiful people, some more familiar than others. Before I know it, our whole van is engaged in a deep conversation. We cross topics that some friends won't ever discuss: love, commitment, religion, education, and equality. I couldn't help but be enthralled by how open, honest, and confident we felt around each other.

Before we knew it, we arrived at Epworth Ministries, our home for the week. Having spent time in the church's facilities before, it brought back so many incredible memories, but I am trying to leave those aside as I couldn't be more excited to form new memories with the 29 incredible individuals that I have the privilege of being here with this week.

Dinner was hilarious. Half exhausted and half excited, we all settled into one restaurant for dinner and simply enjoyed each other's company, traded embarrassing stories, and got to know each other more. (While our tables were lively and fun, we couldn't help but watch the Admin dinner date occurring behind us).

After dinner, we returned to the church for reflection time, one of my favorite aspects of the trip. All around the circle, former strangers were laughing and smiling as we shared stories about our own previous travel experiences. And while it's only been a day and a half, I could not be happier than I am right now, here in New Orleans, about to begin a new journey of learning from the city, from each other, and about ourselves.

Saturday March 10, 2012 Nikki

I remember us packing our things into the vans on that Friday afternoon, overwhelmed with excitement and luggage...I wonder which was worse. Haha. I remember us awkwardly standing around, looking up at one another with hopeful smiles. After a night of loud snoring and embracing the cool morning air, the second half of our long journey began. I had never traveled in a car for that long before, so I was expecting it to be tiresome and honestly, a pain in the butt. I was quickly proven wrong. From playing the green glass door, sharing morbid "would-you-rathers" and having intellectual discussions, our 17 hour car ride felt no more than five hours. Our car ride alone, especially our discussions in them, opened my eyes just a little to the complexities of the Katrina disaster. I witnessed just how much love and good humor there is in our group from "sing-alongs" in the car ride and awesome co-piloting skills. I've always thought

that it took months and even years to form amazing bonds with people. With the experiences that we all shared in our car ride, I think it's safe to say that amazing bonds have already been formed and I'm excited to see where they go within this next week.

Saturday March 10, 2012 Tabea

Pennsylvania-Virginia-Tennessee-Georgia-Alabama-Mississippi-Louisiana *696 miles

Well my day started pretty early, with a 6:30am to 9am driving shift with my awesome co-pilot, Brandon. He's really happy right now, just so everyone knows. We got to drive through the rolling mountains of Virginia and see the sunrise which was cool. My morning was filled with such uplifting conversation in Big Van #1. We discussed everything from how people think, public education, and the Internet, to the existence of love and how it is a concept that may or may not be definable (still to be determined!). It was just really nice to be able to have these conversations with people I had met less than 24 hours ago and learn about so many new perspectives. I greatly enjoyed the camaraderie that was formed. My whole day was basically just full of those warm, fuzzy feelings you get when you make connections and know that people are good. I got these in the bountiful sing-alongs, walkie-talkie conversations, my dinner table conversation, playing Ninja, and in the laughter on our way back from the restaurant this evening. I'm so grateful for this day to be able to get to know people better and get prepared to experience this next week together.

Saturday March 10, 2012 Pat

The time flew driving down. I looked at this aspect of the trip with the most dread having made a number of long distance trips, but it was nothing like I thought it would be. What made the trip fly by were the conversations, games and singing: all signs that this is a group that is bonding well at the beginning of a process that will in all likelihood bring some challenges as the group forms. Two things really struck me as we drove today, one was the joy I felt driving into spring. To go from winter to seeing pear, cherry and red bud trees blossom to azaleas and forsyths when we reached New Orleans was wonderful. The other was listening to the conversations among the passengers on Van 1. At work I have intellectual conversations everyday about the work we do to help students develop and grow, but it has been a long time since I have heard people speak with excitement and passion about topics such as love. These types of conversations are rare once one gets older, but are extremely important and brought me back to my undergrad and grad school days when we would sit around and spend hours talking about things many would say really did not matter, but in the sort, really do. I am looking forward to hearing more as our group dives through its spring into its summer as it grows and develops.

Saturday March 10, 2012 Sara

13 hours. In a van. With people I barely knew. Yet somehow, the time flew by. Normally car rides feel like a punishment. They're not something I look forward to. However, yesterday went by so quickly. From doing yoga in the Dunkin Donuts parking lot, to spending my driving shift with Laura and getting to know her better, to playing car games and singing into our walkie-talkies. The whole day made me really hopeful and excited for the entire week. Everyone seems to get along really well. I can't wait to see how the group grows over the next few days.

Sunday March 11, 2012 Emily

There was definitely so much to digest today that I can't really decide what to write about. The most shocking thing to me was the blighted houses. We saw one house in the lower 9th ward that was completely repaired next to one that had not been touched at all. John, the Dickinson Alum from Rebuilding New Orleans said that there were 40,000 blighted or vacant damaged homes now, and there were 20,000 before Katrina! SO many before! Also, these homes were right next to the homes that people live in. Maybe two feet from a repaired window is a damaged one.

Furthermore, the X on the houses designating the date checked, number of people rescued, number of bodies found, was heartbreaking. It seemed inhumane and cold to mark somebody's home and their whole life like that

without really caring. That mark then stays on these homes until they are repaired. It is a constant reminder of the trauma.

I also found the great difference between areas to be upsetting. Garden Street was beautiful with greenery and HUGE houses and Mardi Gras beads in the trees which was upper class and obviously viewed as a great part of the city with no visible flood damage. Then there was the lower ninth ward with smaller houses and bad streets (pavement) and blighted houses everywhere. It was also shocking to see all of the tourism in both areas. Tourists flock to the “beautiful” areas and don’t pay any mind to others but instead drink and party and have a good time. Then, others tour the “disaster” areas, gawking and taking pictures of people’s homes as if they were objects and not lives; as if they were in a museum and it was their function to be on display. I understand people should see the devastation, so they can see they need to help, but I doubt most people on those tours then do help!

Lastly, I just want to say how cyclical all of these problems are. I can hardly understand them because they are so complex and interwoven. The public school system was bad before Katrina as was the issue with blighted houses, and now it is worse after this disaster. Houses were already separated by class and now more so with government aid. I honestly feel helpless with how I can help when I see so many problems.

Sunday March 11, 2012 Brandon

Good day. All around good day. Church was amazing. We saw a great service and lovely kids, but I’m pissed. After church, we drove around New Orleans and the Lower 9th Ward and we got to see a lot of the damage that was created six years ago. I appreciate the opportunity we had to go see the different houses and the construction that was being done but I hated feeling like a tourist. I hated being in the comfort of the van and not being outside doing something. Then it got worse. We went to the French Market and saw all the tourists. I couldn’t help but wish that all the people would drop their stuff and go into the real part of New Orleans and do something. It sucked knowing that everyone was living happily in the Quarter and having fun while more work needed to be done in the city. One thing I know I will always carry with me is that anger that more needed to be done and not enough people were doing it.

Sunday March 11, 2012 Christina/X

I was very anxious going into the day today. In the past, I have seen so little change between the first two years, participating in the 9th Ward. Today surprised me though—it was the first time that I saw the spirit of New Orleans throughout the city. The lower ninth was no longer a ghost town, as it has been for the past two years. It was so exciting to see people actually LIVE in areas like Holy Cross. It was nice to see that it finally wasn’t a construction zone. I was happy to see the progress at the school. Though they had not yet broken ground to build a new school, I was so encouraged to see that at least the old school had been taken down. The church was an amazing experience and came to me at a perfect time when I was questioning my faith/faith in general. I just know that one day, when they ask for new members, I will be walking up to the front. I think the day finished perfectly, eating in the French Market, listening to live music with some absolutely incredible people. Our waiter brought us extra alligator for us to try—just another added element of Southern hospitality that we experienced all day. The food was amazing, as usual, but I really enjoyed being in a great place with incredible people that I truly care about. Another tear jerker moment came when Madison said that I was passing down my love to a new generation at Dickinson. That was probably the most amazing compliment I, or any leader could receive. On a completely selfish level, today was a little tough for me emotionally because it really hit home that this was not only the last time I’d be in New Orleans for a while, but also the last time I’d be down with Dickinson. This trip has meant so much to me and my Dickinson experience and my life, while it is great, natural, and necessary to move on, it is also a little sad and I didn’t realize how soon that was until today.

Last thing—it was really cool to hear the woman from the Louisiana Bucket Brigade talk not only about her work and some of the environmental justice issues I had studied, but also to hear how she started in the Peace Corps. As sad as I am to leave Dickinson and Serve the World, it made me realize that most of my story is yet to be written.

Sunday March 11, 2012 Alex

As soon as the van pulled up near the church, the great day had begun. Being greeted by one of the ushers with a, "Good morning baby, how're you?" There couldn't have been a more welcoming and warm greeting and beginning to my day. Throughout the entire church service, there was so much energy and sense of spirit and unity in the room that I've never felt or seen at any other church service I've been to. It was more than easy for me to get up and shake random people's hands, and then hug people I had only known for about a day or so. It being so easy to do all these little things was beautiful and heart-warming. After leaving the great service, going on the flood tour was a little rough because of the appearance of the environment, but at the same time it didn't hit me that hard because I unfortunately couldn't picture myself in those circumstances so I didn't feel the impact. When we reached the school, learning all the information about the "temporary" trailers was very hard to take in because when I think of school, I think of community and unity, but how can one have that when right off the bat there are separate trailers for students to learn in? After the school, we explored the French Quarter and that was a very fun and crowded experience. Being in the French Quarter truly opened my eyes to true genuine kindness that was vibrating off of the people of New Orleans, despite the disasters they're going through. Reflection was very detailed and thought provoking. At the end of the day, I was exhausted but glad to see what I had seen and very excited for tomorrow.

Sunday March 11, 2012 Chelsey

Itinerary:

- Attend church service at First Grace United Methodist
- Meet Alum John to see the 9th ward, levy system, 'Make-it-right' homes
- Explore the French Quarter

Everyone filed into the vans dressed in an array of floral sundresses and collared shirts. Our expectations set high for all that awaited us, yet I know looking back now there was no way I was prepared for all that would pass by my eyes.

Stepping on the church steps for a group portrait is where it all began. I was astonished by the enthusiasm and joy expressed by the woman who immediately greeted and recognized the Dickinson group. I was most blown away by the spirit that filled all of those in the congregation. The innocent children's smiles and excitement to share their good mornings, the moments of peaceful embrace, voices of song, and engaging pastoral sermon. I was amazed to speak with and find an actual Dickinson alum as a member of this very congregation. For all of the members of NOLA, no matter their religious affiliation or spiritual beliefs... everyone felt inspired. I walked away reminded that this is how worship should be—a place of support, happiness, hope and welcome.

From the church, we ventured to the lower 9th ward. Here alum, John, educated us all on his connection with New Orleans. Not only was what he shared educational, but it was also inspiring. It was fascinating to see first-hand how touched and captivated John is by the city of New Orleans. A few points that stand out in my mind are the disparities between two neighboring homes. While John's Rebuilding Together home stood as a sparkle amongst the dark sky, I was shocked to find that just next door stood a home branded with an X that has gone untouched for 6 years. Someone's home, someone's life and memories all still lie there untouched.

The Make-It-Right homes were a colorful spectacle to look upon and contemplate while the levy stood as a symbol of new strength and support.

As I gazed upon a vast empty green field, it was hard to imagine that this land once held the community for many and most children in this section of New Orleans. It is almost impossible for an 'outsider' to comprehend how for 2 years these children went without the school. Not to mention many of these very children no longer found their home here.

The French Quarter stands at a polar opposite to the experiences of the first half of our day. Instead the streets are buzzing with people and displayed with vibrant colors. Remnants of the proud Mardi Gras Celebration can be found hanging from the trees.

My highlight of my time as a true tourist was dinner. My small group perfected the strategy of SIT and DITCH! We found ourselves then enjoying the true Louisiana Jambalaya and Alligator tail from a balcony looking over the city street. Our laughs were never-ending and conversations memorable: a dining experience of the utmost perfection.

The evening came to a close as all 30 (almost) members sat on the steps gazing upon the church/castle in the center of the city. High on food and happiness, many of us sipped on the famous Café du Monde beignets and coffees. We sang to music together, played games and listened to one another's stories (Gaberella finally shared the eye brow tale). It was a moment where for the first time the whole group was truly engaged together.

The night finally came to a close with reflection... an emotional and inspiring discussion.

Sunday March 11, 2012 Richie

I woke up around 7:15 and went for a jog with Brandon, Tabea, and Heather. Needless to say I was exhausted. After barely getting breakfast (I was kind of late) we rode into New Orleans over a ten mile bridge. Vast amounts of water expanded far beyond what the eye could see. With a little bit of Jazz music to set the mood, we entered the city. We gazed at trees full of Mardi Gras beads and were awed by the huge, old fashioned houses that lined St. Charles. After our quick tour we went to a church named First Grace. They were so welcoming of us. This church was a community and a family. One could tell that they were accepting of anyone regardless of religious affiliation. A guest pastor called us a blessing. He said we had our freedom and we chose to spend it with them. I could tell that it really meant something to him. We then headed to the Ninth ward and saw the effects of the flood and the attempts to rebuild homes. I couldn't help but wonder how the community would see us. I didn't want them to think we were just tourists or that we had pity on them. John had been working down in New Orleans for about five years. I had so much respect for him. To give up going to grad school meant he really had something to believe in. John was a Dickinson alum and I think seeing all of us volunteers re-sparked his drive. Afterward we toured the French District and checked out the French market. I couldn't believe that just hours ago we were staying at an open field where a high school once stood and now we were surveying jewelry and beads. Just like any place there is a tourist attraction and then there are the lower, poverty stricken areas that normally go unknown. I find it interesting that the poorest areas are on the lowest ground, available to flood if the situation arose. The obvious correlation between wealthy land and overall damage to houses is sick. Christina told me that some people who live in areas like the lower ninth ward believe that there was a conspiracy going on involving the flood and the levees breaking. I would tell them that it was pretty simple. Just follow the money. Brandon felt pretty guilty buying anything in the French district and I saw that in his face while we were there.

Sunday March 11, 2012 Paige

Today was our first full day in Louisiana. Even though I have been here before, I still find myself surprised at every sight I see. Last summer I was not able to go to the Church service, this year I was almost brought to tears by the hope, faith, and joy of the community.

After the church service we went on a flood tour. Even though I have seen the damage and heard the stories, the tour still choked me up. The main aspect of the tour that really blew my mind was hearing John talk to us. He is a Dickinson alum—a basketball player and history major. Yet he found his passion elsewhere and even though he has had struggles, he absolutely loves his job.

As graduation approaches in about two months I often find myself thinking about the next step in my journey. I have two passions in my life and those are marine biology and service. I know that I want to be involved in both somehow and I am hoping that I will find my place. I truly hope that through the rest of this week I can help Larry, our homeowner, and truly bring something he is passionate about (NOLA and his house) back to him with the help of my peers and other volunteers.

Sunday March 11, 2012 Enzo

First day in New Orleans and out of the room. We woke up around 7:00 a.m. after a good night of sleep and a real bed (what a difference compared to how last night was!). Richie, Martin, and a few other brave souls went out for a run. I stayed at the campus and enjoyed the nice morning in New Orleans. After a good breakfast we piled into the vans and drove into the city. As usual, morale was very high and we all enjoyed the guided tour of the city Chuck gave us: the bridges, the Super Dome... After a short ride and a few laughs we went to the church at 11:30 a.m. It was a little awkward for me because I am not used to this kind of ceremony but the people in the church greeted us with a very (very) large smile. Everybody was dressed up—we listened to the songs, the sermon, and the prayers. Some members of our group even took part in the communion. After the mass we filed into the vans again, swallowed a quick lunch and drove toward different parts of the city which had been flooded by Katrina. Here we met John, a former Dickinson student who is currently working in New Orleans building houses. His speech was really interesting and he explained to us what had happened during the hurricane. This helped me a lot to grasp the complexity of the situation. He also gave us a tour of one of the houses that had been rebuilt: a shotgun house (the name comes from the fact that it is theoretically possible to shoot from the front door and hit the back door.....). He then took us to the Service (very impressive, Richie found a way to sit above us...) and to a school which had been destroyed (the students were currently having class in trailers). On our way to those different sites we saw some very interesting aspects of this New Orleans that is being rebuilt: the misc.-income houses, the “do it right” houses..... After this tour we left John and went to the French Quarter. We actually took the trolley which was kind of fun. While we were waiting for the trolley Brandon and Ethan grabbed some of the necklaces hanging in the trees and offered them to Christine (she actually blushed). We also assisted in an inconclusive magic trick, courtesy of Brandon: it was easy to see that the morale of the group was skyrocketing quickly. Once we eventually reached the French Quarter we split up into different groups and slowly walked toward the “French” market. It is difficult to sum up all of the things I saw during this visit but I distinctly remember the musicians in the street, the painters and the overall joyful atmosphere. I stayed with a small group and we decided to go directly to the French Market. One hour and 2000 crazy pictures after we left the vans we actually reached the infamous “French Quarter”; which was not French at all. It was still pretty nice and we did a little bit of shopping (I bought a t-shirt). At around 6 o’clock we decided it was time to eat and we found a decent place nearby where we shared our meals: I had a fight with Kim over a plate of crawfish. Although the food was very good I was a bit disappointed because I could not try alligator meat. After our meal we joined the others at the rendezvous point far from the vans. The place had several steps and was facing a huge park: the view was amazing. Here we ate some beignets (1/3 beignet, 2/3 pure sugar) and piled some home. Since the vans were still not coming we scattered around for a bit (Heather was in desperate need of some “fudge” aka “chocolate” or “heaven”). We did not find the mythical candies so we bought some peanut butter biscuits instead. When we came back to the rendezvous point the whole group started to sing, dance, play the “whoa” game (I almost made it to the final) and tell stories (courtesy of Gaberella). I am pretty sure all the people who were around and staring at us were convinced we were completely crazy. Honestly I do not blame them; I don’t think I disagree with them either. But it is not like we cared about what other people thought anyway: none of us was wearing Dickinson clothes. When the vans eventually arrived we rushed, pushed and piled into it as if our lives depended on it (considering what Christine told us about possible stragglers this was probably the case). The drive home was fairly quick and after a “reflection meeting” we went to sleep in another room where we had to sleep on cots instead of real beds (mine actually collapsed during the night ☺).

Sunday March 11, 2012 Erica

Church was amazing! There was so much genuine hope, energy, and faith. The pastor thanked us for being there and we haven’t even done anything yet.

After church we met with John who used to go to Dickinson and went on a service trip to New Orleans when he was a student. His service trip experience led him to a job helping New Orleans rebuild for the past 5 (or 6) years. Not only did he show us one of the houses they were working on, he described his experience and how he hoped to one day

have a family here. He sees the potential in rebuilding this destroyed city. We are here to keep that hope and all the hope/dreams of the New Orleans community.

John described to us what the symbol "X" meant on each house. By that point we had already seen several of these symbols but never knew what it meant. The "X" with numbers in each section showed which government stopped by the house, how many survivors they found, and how many bodies they had found. It was disturbing to think how massive this disaster was that the government only provided a spray painted number on the houses instead of a more personal approach. Then family had to come back to the destruction and a harsh symbol in remembrance of the ones they lost.

We stopped by the school and I think it was a great place to gain perspective and really connect to the children of New Orleans. Relating to how many kids had to miss school, fall behind, or get shipped away from their families hit a chord with many including myself. We highly value education and the emotional and physical stress would have made it practically impossible for students to succeed. Some schools haven't even recovered and many probably can't without much more support.

Once we saw the areas that were destroyed and still needing a lot of work to recover, we went to a whole different side of town. The French Market was full of life, shops, and great food. Everyone split up and looked around this area for a few hours. In and out of the French Quarter we took the trolley and that was a fun adventure and we got to see a lot of the wealthier neighborhoods that looked pristine. We ended the tour with 26 students rushing the vans and successfully getting inside of them in 32 seconds. Awesome job!

Monday March 12, 2012 Maria

So I am writing a day late because people were catching up with their journaling. Anyway, I began the day at 6:40AM after only getting about 5 hours of sleep. Our team, Carrie's, was setting up for breakfast because we were in charge of making dinner that night. We had orientation where we were told why the work we would be doing this week was important. We then waited for our housing assignments.

As we drove to our destination, Paige and I were trying to get pumped up. As we drove into the neighborhood our house was in, I noticed a lot of houses were boarded up, even though they looked decent from the outside. I wondered why this neighborhood looked more like a construction site and not a community.

We arrived at a house that did not have any electricity which meant that there wasn't any light inside the house. There was so much to do we did not know where to get started. Paige gave us an overview of things that we could do: dry wall, sand, or mud. Dry wall seemed too intimidating so I began with sanding and mudding.

A man named Larry came in, who I thought was the contractor helping us, and it turns out he was the home owner. We listened to his story and laughed about his father's interactions.

Towards mid-day another crew was needed to do dry wall. Carrie, Enzo and I stepped up. I felt that this was a huge risk I was taking. I watched intently and tried to soak in as much as I could. It took us a really long time to put and sheet up and I was frustrated and disappointed.

We left the work site early because we needed to shower before dinner. We were making chicken tacos with refried beans, lettuce, tomato, sour cream and more. We all worked great and even though I didn't feel like I helped much I did a good job delegating. Dinner was amazing! Our team got sooo much compliments. We also had Spanish music playing and many people were dancing. This made me so happy because it reminded me of home.

Reflection went well and then a bunch of us stayed up and played card games It was an awesome experience. I look forward to the rest of the week.

P.S. I am in love with New Orleans

Monday March 12, 2012 Kim

“I find home in the people around me”

Talking with Heather tonight this came up and it is something that resonated so deeply within me. Something that I can feel so strongly on this trip is this sense of home and already after the second day the sense of serenity, strong foundation, desire/yearn to help those in need and our ability to feel for one another is seeping through our pores and it is so uplifting and rejuvenating to see this energy being shared between all of our souls forever.

Today, it was a really special day. It involved going to our worksite in Slidell- meeting the home-owners and his two uncles. They were all extremely willing and happy to talk with us which was ALL I WANTED to do, since I stepped foot in the door of the home. We started with sanding the already slightly spaced walls and then continuing on to MUDDING! Probably has a little bit too much fun with the mud, considering we covered Kallie’s shirt with our hands dipped in mud. As the day progressed, our group came together more and more.

Alex and I shared a single kitchen table chair to mud an entire top of a wall. It was both bonding experience and something that extended/continued mine and Alex’s relationship- which was beautiful. Building the bonds of friendship is so amazing because these friendships are making a difference in the peoples’ lives within NOLA.

Funny experiences which happened today! Terry-homeowner- such a pip, wanted to talk and really seized the day. Lived by Carpe Diem, and it showed through his actions. His uncle was even funnier talking to us about all of the wild animals that they eat and sell down here such as raccoon, rabbit, and possums. “I saw a raccoon out there, wanted to bop him over the head and cook em” quote by Terry’s uncle.

Monday March 12, 2012 Martin

My first time leading a group on a service trip made me jitter and shock when we finally arrived at the front door of our worksite. Our folder with instructions did not have keys to open the door meaning that the homeowner will be home. Opening the door we were welcomed by this petite man with a heart-warming smirk. He didn’t say much, just directing us inside. We were the second group to work inside the home and all the drywall has been installed... little did we know that the last group to work on the house dated as far back as Christmas. It is now march and his furniture and supplies are centered in the middle of each room. He loved in his room avoiding reality when stepping out of his door. His story is nothing short of amazing. He lived in the house for 59 years and survived the flood from Katrina. He said to me and Chelsey that he saw water rising from the floor board when his uncle ran back to get the boat they owned. Before he knew it when they returned with the boat, in a matter of 30 seconds, more than six feet of water had risen into the house. Devastated and shocked, he put his niece and nephews into the boat and quickly hopped on, leaving everything behind. “We got on, I am still living haha, but it’s shocking. I still cry sometimes.” (Terry). It surprises me how much courage and personality has grown from this devastation. He can easily tell his story but keep his genuine, soft laugh and witty comments. I think my team got a lot from hearing his story and how thankful he is for volunteering. He also had his uncles and friends come over just to hangover and all of us sort of just participated. Observed, while this may sound creepy, I think we all took away the unity in the community with just welcoming these five individuals. I took in a lot of today’s reflecting on what his house is and symbolizes. It symbolizes his courage, his effort to start over.

Monday March 12, 2012 Laura

First day of work and it felt good to get going on things. I could feel out team getting even closer, getting even more excited to make a difference. It’s funny actually to think we all woke up really early and couldn’t wait to do labor? Kind of makes you think, why can’t my everyday life be waking up and wanting to make someone’s life better? Why do I have to do only things to help me exceed. But it’s different here, we are a team and quickly becoming a family. With the inspiration of Christina and others who have done this before. So dedicated but also the inspiration of those who have never painted before but never give up. I know what our homeowner was not here the first day but hearing the stories from the volunteer coordinator made me realize the importance of service. If there were no volunteers at this site...then would she still have hope, what would happen? I want more than anything to meet her, tell her that we want to be here,

we want to hear what she's been through and we care. I want her to see the blessing notes behind the wall and know that she is not alone, she is not forgotten, and that there is hope. Honestly after getting to know all of our team members well, I am proud to have this homeowner meet them. And yet there is so much more for us to understand and apply ourselves with. One thing I do know for sure is that we will not stop and we will not give small efforts. Besides my first day on the site, I have also been noticing great things through times outside and through others. During our reflections I have been gaining experiences from others and it has been truly enhancing my experience here. I also love the amount of diversity in our group, and I don't just mean the color of your skin or where you are from, I mean one person loves to salsa, one that is quiet, one that cares about equality, one about the ocean, one that's the goofball, one that is more serious, but I have to say that this would never be as wonderful if I could not learn from everyone's passion and knowledge. Anyways, this entry in no ways great, and I often ramble on but I know that as each day goes by our experience and our hearts will become closely tied to New Orleans.

Monday March 12, 2012 Chuck

Monday is sometimes a difficult day. The team energy is always high but there are often things that get in the way of accomplishing work. This year we were lucky and our team was able to get to work quickly. Paige and I had both done dry walling before so we started doing that along with Gabriela and Richie. It took me a while to remember all of the minor details that go into a proper sheet rocking job but we had a lot of help from our home owner Larry. After lunch, I started to train a new crew on dry wall installation. Carrie, Marie and Enzo picked it up quickly, especially with the assistance of Larry's dad (whom I never was able to know his name). The world progressed slowly but it was a great learning experience which will lead to an excellent day two.

Monday March 12, 2012 Sophie

Our first day of work, I was so excited to get our house assignment and get started working. The group overall seemed really anxious to start work last night in reflection and that overall made me even more excited to get started. Our house is pink and in East New Orleans. On our way, we drove in on this incredibly bumpy road with a lot of destroyed concrete on one side – Chuck said he thinks it might be an entry to the Six Flags since destroyed to discourage people from exploring the park.

The neighborhood itself is extremely quiet – and more houses boarded up than not. I thought I have been used to seeing boarded up homes, but seeing them even a year later is still like a punch to the gut.

We are working on dry walling and mudding. Most of us started mudding, but eventually we formed three teams: two dry walling groups, and Maddy; Cassidy and I stuck with mudding. Mudding is tedious and slightly overwhelming because the house is so large.

The best part of today was meeting Larry, our homeowner, and his father. The two of them together acted like best friends instead of father and son. They stayed with us the whole day helping us - his dad showed me a better way to mud seams.

At lunch, we asked him a little about his experience with the hurricane. He said he and his family evacuated, ending up in Houston (which he hates). It speaks volumes to me that he's still trying to come back after seven years of that. He makes the trip from Texas to here to check on progress.

He also told us he used to have a boat, which he left in his driveway, but his neighbors, who were trapped, had to use it to get out and the boat eventually crashed into an apartment building, but as he said, "I can't blame anyone for needing to survive." I'm so grateful we got to meet him it made all of us more determined to make the house perfect.

Tuesday March 13, 2012 Ethan

Today started out away, I feel very lucky and fortunate to be here, so if I did not look forward to working today, I would just be wasting everybody's time. Getting back to my day however, we did not have the correct nail gun so Pat and I had to return to home base to pick up the right one. This gave me the opportunity to get to know someone who

I've grown to admire. He gave me advice about how I should choose my major and helped me realize I've been going about it all wrong. He also talked in depth about these cool marine hovercrafts that he worked on while serving active duty with the marines. I thought that the work he did on these hovercrafts was fascinating. This is proof that you learn something new every day. When we returned to our worksite, I started working on cutting trim. I started to get frustrated that it wasn't fitting correctly so Christina suggested that I go for a walk. She's such a good group leader. I'm only writing this because I know she is typing this later. Anyhoo, on this walk I notice a few things. We saw a church and a middle/elementary school adjacent to it. We saw children switching in between classes; however these classrooms switching in between classes, however these classrooms were the same type of temporary/trailer style class rooms that we saw in the city. I did not like the fact that, after seven years, these classrooms were still in use but I did like the fact that you could see construction on the original school. I liked seeing this because it showed that people are not giving up hope and still making an effort to rebuild the community. Another thing that I saw were many nice, rebuilt houses and a few community members out and about. I thought to myself that if these people's lives have returned to a level of relative normalcy, then why aren't they rallying around their community members who are still in need? I brought this up in reflection and received a response that made sense. Someone answered my question by saying that these community members have all gone the same level of destruction that they have basically become numb to it all. The worst part of suffering through Katrina, to me, would be this loss of a sense of community that myself, and the other groups have also witnessed. While at lunch, Laura and Christina came up with the idea to leave a note in a crack that had dry wall going over it. Although I was not as much a part of the creation of the note I would have liked. I was still able to write a part of it and sign it. It really symbolized our team unity and our commitment to make this house a home. On a different note, I am really looking forward to hopefully meeting our homeowner. This will help me put a face to the house and give myself and our team the extra motivation to do everything perfectly. My last and final wish is for the impression we make this week to not end when we leave on Friday, but rather extend way into the future.

Tuesday March 13, 2012 Heather

Today was our second day on the job and our third day altogether (apart from driving). The energy in the house was high as we stepped through the doors and the sun's bright rays lit up the rooms. The speckles of dust were scattered and falling like snowflakes to the ground. To me, this was a sign of progress because the dust that fell was not because the house was vacant and untouched, but rather, it was dust from the wood pieces that were chopped for new trim and boarders and the paint chips surrendering to new coats. This dust gathered like little gems in the light and pushed me into the work mode I needed so early in the morning.

Our team was establishing themselves into specific jobs and the day seemed to fly by thanks to our productiveness. Sabiha and I were excited that the paint job that we were not – how should I say – experts at, soon became like second nature and the flick of our wrists had turned into perfect muscle memory. During a break while we waited for some paint to dry my partner in crime and I decided to take a walk around the neighborhood. As Sabiha and I passed each house we tried to casually evaluate the situation of each house and imagine the stories of the families living in them. The houses on the outside appeared well-kept and untouched by any sort of disaster. There is no way this neighborhood could still be suffering from Katrina and the after effects, I wanted to tell myself. I wanted things to be okay. However, the deeper I looked and the farther I peered the more hurt I saw. One house was being worked on by one man and I wondered how long it had been since he began the progress on his house.

Then I saw an empty lot that could have been just an empty lot, but it also could have been where a house once stood – where a family once lived. I took a second glance at all the houses and wondered if they all looked as put together on the inside as they appeared to be on the outside. This reminded me of people I have met not only here but elsewhere in my life. So many people have the ability to come off as perfectly fine, happy, secure, and strong when in reality they are struggling with something that no one else can see. Initially the home we began to work on surprised me because it looked somewhat normal. I then reminded myself that it has been almost seven years since the disaster and all the people living here deserve more than a semi-finished, still-broken home. I also reminded myself that although

the house may be close to finished the story behind the home will never be erased and for the home owner the feeling that are attached to that may never be repaired.

Almost as an answer to all my thoughts about the house my awesome team (Team "That's what she said") decided to write a blessing to the house and board it up like a message in a bottle for future generations to find. The line that sunk in for me was "May this house be a home." This is what we are here for this week. We are bringing the homeowner one step closer to a house but furthermore with the hope of blessing them with a place of security, normality and familiarity – a home. So just as we walked in the home this morning with hope amidst the glistening sun, we left in the same mood. The azaleas and the lilac blooming and filling the air with a sweet summer scent, the neighbors walking outside to get the mail, the last coat of paint on the laundry room walls; our house was definitely turning back into a home.

Tuesday March 13, 2012, Gaberella

Right now it is 12:08AM on Wednesday March 14th, 2012. I just finished playing an intense basketball game with Brandon, Alex, Richie, and Christina. However, this journal entry is a reflection from Monday—our 1st day at the worksite. This time our group was in charge of organizing breakfast/lunch materials and cooking dinner. This meant we had to wake-up early.

After eating breakfast we had an orientation from a man representing the Epothworth Project. He shared his personal experience with the flood. He was fortunate enough to have insurance, unlike many in New Orleans, but he still faced many hardships. I think he really hit home when he was speaking about clearing his house and items with much value, such as his daughter's prom dresses. He also spoke about how this organization of volunteers is one of the largest. Right now there aren't many organizations, and Epothworth needs to make decisions about which to prioritize. This made me wonder how they decide which house to select. So many people have been impacted. At this point I was very curious to see my work site. When the orientation was finished I was left in shock. I truly thought he was going to teach us how to do some of the construction work.

My father works in construction, however, I have no experience. I guess in some ways you can't be prepared—you can only help however you can.

Even though I was a little nervous, I was also very pumped and excited. John from yesterday inspired me and I wanted to act. So many of my peers spoke about how they were impacted by going into the lower ninth ward and wanted to be a part of the rebuilding. Our reflection was amazing and I wanted to keep it in mind thorough out the day.

When we drove to the work site, we passed a big plot of land with metal and scraps. Chuck said he believed it was the entrance to Six Flags. It is unbelievable to see how much rubble has not been dealt with since the disaster.

Our house was a cute pink house owned by a man named Larry. Our team's tasks included mudding and dry walling the ceilings. I chose to dry wall the ceilings with Chuck, Paige, and Richie. I decided to do this because I wanted to challenge myself.

Well let's just say I chose the most perfect task if I was looking for a challenge. We weren't able to put up much dry wall by the end and our owner asked us to take a piece down because he wasn't satisfied.

This part was my low because that distinct part of dry wall took a very long time and was complicated to place because the dimensions were warped.

Having the homeowner there made our experience very engaging. He was very knowledgeable about construction. He said he also rebuilt houses in New Orleans when he was young during Hurricane Betsy. He said people did die during that flood, but it was nowhere as destructive as Katrina.

Throughout the day we tried to talk to our homeowner, especially during lunch. During this time he shared that he was living in Houston. He said he wasn't pleased with the food. Before, he and his wife would go out to eat seafood all the time. Now in Houston his wife cooks because the food isn't good. He spoke with pride when referring to New Orleans food. He even spoke about his personal fishing experiences to catch dinner. Sadly during the flood his boat was used for a family's survival and when he found it, it was crashed in an upper level apartment.

Mr. Larry's father also came. This was funny because their relationship included some friendly arguing. His father was in good shape to help with dry walling.

Later on Mr. Larry told us he wasn't going to be in NOLA for the rest of our stay due to a doctor's appointment in Houston. I still can't imagine the amount of faith Mr. Larry has in us to open his house to strangers. This makes me feel like I need to do a good job.

It was such a blessing meeting 2 generations of that family. After a hard day's work I spoke to my own family and realized that my own father specialized in dry wall at the beginning of his construction experience. This gave me a connection. I now know for a fact it's not easy and I think it's cool that we can talk about it.

This brings me to dinner time. I must say preparing dinner was such a unique bonding experience. We all contributed in the kitchen. My team made tacos and brownies with ice cream. In the kitchen, I randomly began singing Mama Mia and then the entire kitchen broke out into a musical. The next thing I know, Richie grabs his speaker and we are all jamming, dancing, singing, and cooking.

Everyone seemed pleased with dinner and the dance session we had afterwards. We were having so much fun that another person from another volunteering group joined us! Salsa music was playing!

Oh Maria gave classes and Richie and I danced a duet. I have to give him props he did great and at the end he dipped me!

After dinner, Paige and Enzo took out the trash! Hilarious because the trash was placed on top of the bin inside of inside through the side door.

After reflections people played card games and Mafia.

This day was AMAZING. I feel like there is such a strong sense of community and I feel blessed to be here. I couldn't ask for more on Spring Break and I look forward to reading these journal entries and reading everyone's perspective. After a journal entry I usually end with a prayer. Here is this entry's prayer:

Dear God,

Thank you for another day of life. Please guide the volunteers working in areas of disaster. Be with the homeowners and families, and provide hope to this beautiful community. I ask that we all grow through this process and spread our experience. Amen.

P.S. I might want to live in the South! People are so friendly here. I would just need to make sure I have an infinite supply of bug spray.

Tuesday March 13, 2012 Carrie

Today was our second day at the worksite. It was great to see that everyone got off to a quick start on the projects. We continued to have two dry walling teams: me, Enzo, Chuck, and Maria and Paige, Gaberella, and Richie. The others: Cassidy, Sophie, and Madison continued mudding, taping and sanding. After a hardworking, humid, and mosquito-filled morning my group was able to complete around a quarter of the garage roof. The highlight of the day for me was the homeowner's son dropping by to talk to us and see our progress. It was amazing to be able to meet all three generations of the family and their joy and friendliness. Lunch provided a needed break and chance to continue to bond with the team. By the afternoon it got quite hot, but we were able to be productive and finish half of the ceiling despite a piece that provided more trouble for us. On the drive out of the neighborhood, I saw two kids walking home from school and it struck me harder just how hard it has been and will be for this neighborhood to get back on its feet. The one child was probably too young to remember Katrina so he must have grown up away from home only to move into a neighborhood with still 60% or so of the houses boarded up. Once back at the church, I enjoyed a little run with Gaberella and Madison. It felt like summer with kids playing baseball in the park. Dinner was delicious and I felt like reflection provided everyone with a chance to bring up some of the real difficulties and complexities of the situation here in New Orleans. After chatting and giving backrubs, I headed to bed early so I would not be so tired the next day. So far, each day really has shown me new things and it feels great to be productive on our project in this house knowing the people who lived here and knowing their concern for the rebuilding process.

Tuesday March 13, 2012 Cassidy

Breakfast at 7:00, a quick gathering of tools and at the van by eight. The big highlight of the day for our team was the completion of dry wall hanging on the ceiling in the front room. In addition to that we got half of the drywall hung on the ceiling in the garage, and mudded a vaulted living room ceiling and most of the bedroom.

The highlight of the day (for me at least) was meeting the homeowner's son. I spent a lot of yesterday thinking about what I perceived as disengagement between the homeowner and his son. I compared that to the great relationship I saw between the homeowner, Larry, and his father. I was so happy I was wrong yesterday. He came to see what we were doing and take pictures for his dad. It was really special.

After getting a lot done, we came back to the church, relaxed, and had a great burger-bar dinner with crepes for dessert followed by reflection. Overall, a great day.

Tuesday March 13, 2012 Alex

Today was an interesting day. At our homeowner's, we did more mudding, sanding, and reinforced the parts of the house that needed the most work. The work was getting a bit repetitive and unfortunately we had to end early at the home. Fortunately, Mira found another project for us. We went to a Community Christian Center. This was the more interesting part of the work day. I don't recall what the others in the group were assigned, but Jamie, Kallie, and I were assigned to rearrange items in a truck. We were told to place clothing and bedding items outside of the truck to add to their thrift store, and then move everything else to the back of the truck to ease the unloading. This was interesting because of the wide variety of things we found. We found around 15 garbage bags and 10 large bins full of clothing and shoes. The other stuff we found included old records, books, picture frames, wind generators, a bureau set, toys, and many other random donated items. This was a nice change because it involved lifting a lot of boxes which I normally enjoy. It was incredible to see all the objects people chose to get rid of, some of which were old and used but others that were brand new. After about an hour and a half we finished up with the truck and then moved on to raking. This upset me a little bit because we were raking the entry front of a community center. I felt that I wasn't contributing to a person in need by raking the front of this building. This was a minor low of my day. My greater low I actually forgot to mention. It happened while we were at the homeowner's house. A big male with really dark shades, long hair, and an untrimmed beard came to the house to deliver flooring and other material. There were 2,100 lbs. worth of flooring and we didn't know how to go about moving it into the house so when we asked him for help he said, he wasn't allowed to touch the

material. When we figured out what to do with the flooring, we were all commenting on the heavy weight of the stuff when the male deliverer says, “70 + year old people lift these every day.” Then he starts bringing some lighter material and says, “I am already doing enough to help y’all by bringing this stuff in.” To add on, he picks up a box of tiles by the strings that kept it together, and being the big guy that he was, he probably thought he could carry the box of tiles without supporting it with a hand underneath...but no! The box of tiles falls and the tiles break, so he picks them up and puts them in his truck. Not to mention that he did all of this with a bitter face and overall bad attitude in my opinion. This infuriated me because it showed that there are people out there with this same kind of attitude, and to make matters worse this guy actually worked to “help” the underprivileged. Luckily, our team cooked dinner tonight, and everyone enjoyed it, so that cheered me up. It was definitely a rollercoaster day, but overall a good experience.

Tuesday March 12, 2012 Jamie

First Day! I was so excited this morning to get our assignment. I thought it was interesting we were assigned to Slidell, which has a 90% recovery rate compared to the dilapidation we saw in New Orleans. One thing that shocked me the day before was the functioning neighborhood and a random house that was lost in the shuffle of recovery. Despite my initial confusion, I knew this work was needed wherever we were.

I wasn’t sure what to expect when we pulled into the driveway of the house on Washington Street. Compared to some of the houses I saw in the city with crumbling roofs or just one face complete, I was impressed how together the exterior of the home was. However, when we crossed into the hearth, my first impression was “Oh.” All of the furniture and most things that normally define the atmosphere of a house were stacked under black tarps. The object I first saw that added a homey touch was a Mardi Gras joker head above the kitchen archway; the shy homeowner had a home with secret swag.

When we first met Terry, he was reserved. With all of his southern politeness he shuffled in, greeted us, and headed out the back door to sit on his porch. Cool.

Looking back at the house, it looked miserable. The walls were slate grey with white patches. With the yellow-orange color the kitchen, the house looked sick.

It felt good getting to work. Martin took command like a natural and Evan was right behind him. With these two awesome guys as our head leaders or guides, as they prefer- I knew this was going to be an interesting week. We got to work right away sanding and mudding. Mudding is one of the most horrible tasks; it goes everywhere and anywhere and sticks to the dust from sanding. Even so, our laughter rang throughout the house. My high was hearing everyone laugh and myself laughing to the point of tears this first day. It has been so long since I’ve laughed this hard. Everyone has such a good sense of humor. I’m incredibly excited to get to know everyone and to see how our team dynamic will develop as we work and talk to each other. I’m also excited to see how far Terry will open up to us. When we first pulled in, Terry’s house was just a building; now it’s beginning to be a home, a center, and the beginning of something special.

Tuesday March 13, 2012 Kallie

Kefi: Greek word meaning spirit of joy; passion

One of my good friends—now Dickinson alum—taught me this word when she tried to explain what happiness meant to her. Kefi is a Greek word, often used to describe transcendent moments in which worries dissolve, and you are enveloped in joy because everything is as it should be. A Kefi moment is one of untainted happiness, enriched by the people around you.

Today has been a mix of Kefi moments and not-so-Kefi moments. Of people who seem overwhelmingly (perhaps even cloyingly) selfless, and others who are impossibly selfish. More so the former than the latter, thank God. Some outstanding examples of not-so-Kefi experiences that either intensified my worries or induced frustration:

- When the delivery guy dropped our homeowner’s new ceramic tile and responded indifferently by grunting about how he should not be responsible for replacing it or cleaning it up. His hostility angered me. But then I felt the need to kill him with kindness. He obviously needs more warmth in his life.

- When Nikki told us about her paperwork experience at the Christian Concern Community Center during reflection. One of the application questions was, “Explain why you need food and/or other provisions from us.” The answer: “Because we’re hungry!!” Both heartbreaking and all too real.

Now for some moments that made my worries disappear!

- Meeting Dave and Debbie from the Christian Community Center. Both of them are so, so, so thankful for volunteers like us, and their willingness to overtly express their gratitude was more than heartwarming. I was only cleaning out trailers and raking leaves, but they made me feel like I was saving the world.
- Making dinner with my team, Da Mudd Brothas. We went a little haywire while we were washing the dishes afterwards (throwing silverware at each other, dancing like maniacs, laughing like fools, etc.) It was refreshing and glorious...not to mention, the burger bar and crepes we made were equally wonderful. Note to self: Nutella and bananas are one of the best flavor combinations ever.

Tuesday March 13, 2012 Sabiha

Today was an amazingly productive, yet surprisingly exhausting day. Heather and I took over the task of fixing the laundry room in the house we are working on. This included painting the walls three coats of bone white (which we finished today), painting the ceiling and door, and tiling the floor. I really hope we can finish it by the end of the week. I was really happy when the walls were finished, though. It’s so rewarding when a big job gets finished—now I’m excited to finish the laundry room! But besides that, today was a great day; from starting off with a dance party to “Call Me Maybe” to having an ice fight at the end of the day and finishing a lot of jobs in between. Many of the doors have been painted, and a lot of the trimming has been cut. I think we’re making a lot of progress, but it would be really nice if we could meet Sharon, our homeowner, and have her help us to make her house perfect in her eyes.

I also feel as though today was a very sentimental day. Our team wanted to make more of a secretive and personal mark on what we were doing. Heather and I wrote our names on the wall and painted over it to symbolize that we are always going to be in that house and room. Laura and Christina wrote on the drywall they put on. There was also a hole in the wall that we realized we could fit something in. We found a piece of wood and wrote a note/blessing on it:

May this house be blessed by love, strength, hope, happiness, and wisdom!
Let its strong foundation be the strength that guides and protects many generations.
May these walls be witnesses to both tears and laughter.
May this roof provide shelter and a safe harbor for all—through good times and bad.
May this house provide a sense of community found throughout this city.
What these bricks have withstood will never be forgotten.
May all who live here live long in love.

This was placed in the wall and covered with drywall. It will probably never be found, but it was nice to know that our words and hope will always be within the house.

After our day, we went back and had lounging time before dinner. I sat in the bedroom with Paige, Maria, Laura and Sophie. We all realized that we know nothing about what we all do at Dickinson. All of the girls are older than me, and they really told me to take advantage of all the opportunities Dickinson has to offer. I love the amazing group of completely different people on this trip. I feel like I’m learning so much about different viewpoints/ideas/thoughts, interests, and opportunities to take hold of at life. It’s so amazing!

Dinner tonight was also very good. Martin’s team made hamburgers and crepes—everything was delicious!

So far, this trip has been a wonderful experience. Not only am I able to help someone who has really suffered, I am also learning things that I have never learned before—ranging from how to paint properly to heartbreaking (and heartwarming!) details about New Orleans after Katrina. I have met a wonderful array of people that, whether they realized it or not, are teaching me how to live life to the fullest. I have seen hope reflected in the faces of the people

who hold New Orleans near and dear to their hearts, and I love it. We're all doing a great job. I wish we could stay longer!

Wednesday March 14, 2012 Richie

Third day of work!! I was so proud of what we did today. Paige, Carrie and I finished half of the bathroom in our house. This was actually pretty difficult considering the awkward edges and shapes we had to cut out. We were also in an extremely small area so that made it difficult to maneuver around. Not only did we work hard but we also got a lot of laughs in during the day. At first we were extremely exhausted. I've been taking naps during my lunch break everyday so far. I also sleep in the van on the way to east New Orleans and back from it. With the help of some lovely jazz music played on Cassidy's phone, we worked hard. After returning from our site we were visited by a fiery spirit. She was a Dickinson alumni and professor. Professor Yoachin. She has successfully combined all of her passions and focused them toward her goals. She provided us with a different viewpoint on New Orleans and the effects of Katrina on hospitals, health, and community. I topped the night off with a game of basketball with about 7 other members of our NOLA group. Chelsea was considered MVP.

Wednesday, March 14, 2012 Jamie

Up and our early today...a little rough start to the day, but the expectation to paint was exciting. We finally got to hear some of DJ Chicken's program at "Straight up" 7:30. He had people compete to see who could "wah" the longest. Some kid "wah'd" for good 20 or so seconds- it never ended. The next person was .5 seconds off. Since the person lost, DJ Chicken serenaded them with an a cappella "You Suck." It was nice to hear straight up laughter from our crew so early. I wish we had more of a drive so we could listen to more of his program.

As we pulled into Terry's neighborhood, guess who was out roaming? Our good buddy Henry! This guy is like Where's Waldo= you never know where he will pop up. He most so fast! We all said, "Hey!" and as he turned the corner, we turned the other way...oops!

After turning around, we entered the house pumped to paint. This was going to be a nice change of pace after the intense sanding and mudding of the past few days. However, when our site manager guy came over to see how we were doing, he said we were doing a great job mudding. BUT (there is always a big one, isn't there?) there was still more to mud. Apparently mudding can take up to five coats.

This was exasperating to hear. Even if it was from our friend with the LSU hat (who really isn't a fan of LSU, but needed a hat), who Alex, Kallie and I met at the Christian center the day before. I think what got us through yet another day of sanding and mudding was Terry. As Kim said, "When I get frustrated and feel like I'm suffering doing the same thing over and over, I think of Terry and everyone else who lost their homes and have been waiting seven years. We can't even be suffering one tenth of what these people have suffered." Knowing Terry made what menial tasks we were doing worth it. For him, perfection wasn't just worth it—it was something Terry deserved.

By the time we were cleaning it definitely felt like time to go. As we swept the home, we found another corner that needed to be mudded. When I told Martin to check it out, the look on his face was priceless. Soon after as Chelsey was washing off our tools, we noticed a wet spot on the floor that kept getting longer. We looked at each other, then at the sink. Not another problem!

Thank goodness we had one of the site managers there, because I don't think any of us had a lot of plumbing experience. We had to send people to Lowes to get supplies so we could fix Terry's sink.

We ended up leaving at 4:50. There was no time to breathe between our adventure and the professor who came to talk to us. She was fascinating and dynamic, but focusing was a challenge. Our team handled our crisis really well—you know you have a great team and great friends when you can assess a crisis and keep the atmosphere just as light hearted as the rest of the work has been.

Wednesday, March 14, 2012 (Pi Day) Emily

Today was our third day on the worksite! Very Exciting! I can't believe three days of working are already gone! Our team is mostly doing finishing touches like caulking the trim and painting. It is frustrating at times because it is all codependent on each other so we can't caulk and paint unless the trim is cut, and that is a long process because it is so precise and wrong a lot of times. The most exciting part of today was meeting one of Sharon's (our homeowner's) neighbors. We have not met our homeowner yet but we were able to meet one of her neighbors today on a walk. It was very coincidental (fate if you will) because the neighbor walked out while the five of us were on a walk staring at the mocking bird. This particular neighbor has known Sharon for a while. They both grew up in New Orleans East just down the block from each other and both coincidentally moved to this neighborhood in Slidell. He talked about his experience after the flood. His house took 52 inches of water and he did not move back in until December 2007 (2 years later). He was living in a trailer during some of that time on his lawn. Before that, right after the storm, he was commuting from Baton Rouge (12 hours away). He talked about how after the storm he saw the Milky Way for the first time because all electricity in the area was out. He has the switch to a national bank so he could actually have funds if it ever happened again. He said driving down the block was like driving through a canyon of trash that went higher than the houses because of all the stuff that was ruined during the storm. He said that it renewed his faith in people with all the people who came to help after the devastation. Then he said that he would do it all again to be able to live here. This is his home.

It was so great to be able to meet this man because we have not been able to meet our homeowner, and this man was able to make this experience more personal. This house was a home and it has been a construction site for six years. The storm destroyed so many homes.

After we got back to from the worksite, Ann, a Dickinson graduate spoke to us about New Orleans and answered our questions. Ann is a professor at Tulane and was very knowledgeable about the city. However, she was very conscious about not throwing her perspective and opinion on us and acknowledging that everyone has a different perspective. She was also very passionate about the city and how this is her home and will always be no matter where she travels.

Overall, it was a great day and I can't believe the week is almost over and we leave so soon! I don't want to go! I want to do so much more but we just don't have the time and supplies in many cases. I am so glad I was able to come on this trip! It has given me so much awareness and hope and perspective!

Wednesday, March 14, 2012 Enzo

After Monday and Tuesday, today was another great day of work. As usual we woke up early and left around 8:00 am. I worked at the site with Chuck, Naria, and Carrie. Together we almost finished renewing the Sheetrock in the garage ceiling. The team spirit was amazing: jokes, music, laughs and a lot of dust are probably the best words to describe it. The team also picked up a funny, weird habit: every time one of us does something wrong we yell his name and laugh...At lunch we stopped our work as usual and gathered in the garage to eat our sandwiches. This is a great way to rest and laugh together: this time we had a very deep conversation about what animal we would like to be (Chuck's answers kind of surprised us: he wants to be a homo sapien or a parrot). By the end of the day our ceiling in the garage was almost done. With Chuck we decided to place the last piece in the ceiling before we leave: it was a very complicated piece because of the garage door and wood logs that were in the way. We measure the distances very carefully, we place our lines and a new sheetrock with the utmost care, and we cut the piece very slowly as to make sure we followed the lines. Only to find out that the piece didn't fit at all and we had to throw it away and start over tomorrow. That hit our moral a bit but fortunately the drive back to Slidell cheered us up again. Back in Slidell we had a bit of a special program because of Anne, a former Dickinson student who now lives in New Orleans in general. This was very interesting and we listened to her while we ate our dinner cooked by the admins: pizza!! After that we had a quick reflection session. (Tomorrow's session is supposed to be longer). Then we went our separate ways for the rest of the evening. I hanged around in the kitchen room for a while with Ethan, Christina, Heather, Cassidy, Gaberella, and Evan. We had a very deep conversation which was absolutely not appropriate for this time of the day... I want to bed around

eleven, hoping, along with all the guys in the room, that Ethan does not snore as loudly as last night (I had my shoe ready by the bed just in case...).

Wednesday, March 14, 2012 Sara Hatch

I'm a very big believer in the idea that everything happens for a reason. Since getting here, I've been struggling with what I feel is a disconnect between what I'm doing here and why I'm doing it. Our crew still hasn't met the homeowner, so I tend to forget the purpose of the work we've been doing.

Luckily, that changed today. A few of us took a break to explore the neighborhood during our walk. We all stopped to admire a mockingbird in a nearby tree. While we were watching the bird, a man from the neighborhood came over to talk to us. It turned out he grew up in the same neighborhood as our homeowner and now lives down the street from here. He told us about his experience with Katrina and how it affected his life. I think meeting him was exactly what I needed to make the connection between the house we were working on and the story behind it.

Later in the day, our crew made shirts with our team name and handprints on it. It is amazing how in a span of four days, ten people can become as close as we have. The only downside to this experience is only having two more months to get to really know them. Such is life I suppose.

Everyday here is better than the last. I can't wait to see all the projects we were able to finish before we leave. Hopefully we'll meet the homeowner, however, if we don't, this week has been an amazing and enlightening week that I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

Thursday, March 15, 2012 Nikki

Today was filled with a mix of emotions. We began the day re-mudding the final spots on the walls and sanding. After climbing to the top of the fridge for at least the fourth time, I have to admit I was slightly over the mudding and sanding process. After three days of hard work and perseverance, we finally got the chance to apply texture to the walls. For the first time, Terry's home seemed to have a sense of stability. The patches of dark mud were finally covered with a unique texture. It signaled, for me, a sign of progress, hope, and future stability. I was relieved to see Terry finally sit out on the front porch instead of the back porch of his house. We got him to take a photo right on the outside of the "Rainbow Inn", his old business that fell asunder after the storm. Seeing how comfortable he was moving outside of his comfort zone and visiting his past made me so proud. Terry's smile gave our constant mudding over the past three days a sense of purpose. Playing Kung Fu with the rest of our team reminded me of how appreciative I am of the team I've worked with over the course of this week. I honestly cannot remember the last time I was able to laugh endlessly and to truly be myself. I felt not only appreciated, but loved as well and I can't express how much that means to me. I found myself tearing up today during reflections out of pride and admiration for our homeowners' joyous spirits and our own passion and dedication to service. I was reminded of how much I have to be thankful for in my own life, and how blessed I am to have met such amazing groups of individuals. I finally feel like I have a solid group of people I can turn to on campus for just about anything. Not many people have an opportunity like this in their lifetimes, so the fact that I have has made me extremely grateful. I will be forever thankful for this opportunity.

Thursday, March 15, 2012 Chelsey

After another substantial breakfast, the groups were off! I joined Christina's team to pick up metal corner pieces for a project at Terry's home. I was so glad to have seen their house for the week. It was so beautiful and very far along.

From almost the moment I entered the house with Team Christina music was playing—I was introduced to the morning dance party while "Call Me Baby" played! It was an energetic start to the day. Upon arriving back at our (Team Martins) site everyone was busy placing finishing touches in the living room, kitchen and dining room. It was amazing to see the smiles and laughs still shining after four days of mudding and sanding. We had done it! Finally almost all of the mudding and sanding was complete – texturing could begin. I was fortunate to have worked and listened to Glenn and was able to lead in the texturing process. And so the anxiously anticipated work began.

It has been a challenge to clean thoroughly at the end of every work day because we must make it very clean since Terry is living here. Yet every minute has been well worth it. Our group is incredibly fortunate to have interacted with Terry and his two uncles on a daily basis. This kindred spirit and laughter has continuously encouraged us all this week. I hope our stories back to the whole Dickinson crew has been enjoyable and allowed them to capture a glimpse of who Terry is.

In addition to our phenomenal work day—our group dynamic and moments together were truly sensational. Like everyone discussed during reflection it is the people and their character that make this a trip true blessing and simply no words can explain the true happiness, bond, and love I have for everyone in Team Mud Brothers and on the whole trip!

Ninja battles, forehead cookie contests, our venture to the famous sushi shop and team basketball game made for a day of perfection. The array of colors on each of our tongues after leaving the sushi store captured the sweetness.

The evening came to a close with a delicious meal of beans, rice and grilled vegetable skewers. Our final night of reflection demonstrated why each and every one of us is here. While it is those moments that cannot be precisely re-told, it is those feelings and emotions I hope no one forgets. The faces of everyone on this trip I will always remember. Our service, this city of New Orleans and Dickinson brought our group together. I could not be more fortunate to have worked day in and out with Martin, Evan, Erica, Kim, Jamie, Kallie, Alex and Nikki. Each one of them carried a constant smile and all together created so much laughter. Thank you team and group leaders for everything. I admire everyone on this trip.

I think Paige captured it best, no words will ever be able to describe or understand the connection we all created yet we will all always remember it. Lastly the crackle brownies ended the night. And I'm sure many of us fell asleep with the song "Angels on the moon" playing in the back of our head. An irreplaceable day.

Thursday March 15, 2012 Tabea

Today was a long day that flew by very quickly. Team "That's what she said" began our day with our usual pump-up dance party in the living room of our house. I spent the morning scraping paint off the eaves and fascia around the outside of the house with Sabiha and Laura and Emily. We had a great time singing along to Taylor Swift, getting tan calves, and painting particles in our hair and eyes. Then we sanded everything we have scraped and soon enough, it was lunch time. A midday highlight was that Laura and X has dispersed Ethan's lunch throughout the rest of the team's lunch bags as a little prank. Ethan wanted to set out his pizza to heat it up and he just got so frustrated when he couldn't find it and we all got a laugh out of the whole situation. After lunch, Pat picked us up in the van and took us to Frutti Fresh, an awesome "frozen yogurt lounge." I tried basically all of the flavors and finally settled on cookies and cream and dark chocolate raspberry with almonds and strawberries on top. So delicious! It was so nice of Pat to treat the team after a full week of hard work, even though in many ways I felt like I should have been the one thanking him for his much appreciated and needed presence on our team and on the worksite. We then returned to work and began painting the fascia and eaves outside. It was nice to have a consistent project for the whole day that we could take through all of the steps and claim it our own. The clean white paint looking out at the world created such a sense of accomplishment knowing that much scrapping and sanding had been done in preparation for it.

In the middle of the afternoon, a neighbor was walking down the sidewalk and asked me what we were all doing. A bunch of the team ended up talking to him and hearing his story. His house down the street was already well under way in being repaired from the flood, but he has had much difficulty with contractors working in his house who didn't finish projects correctly and often violated building codes. He has taken many of these contractors to court and he thanks us for taking time to repair our house correctly and with care because it's much easier to do things right the first time around. He also admired that we were down in New Orleans and thanks us for being role models to our peers and community. This personal interaction was so meaningful to me and I latched on to everything he had to say to us, especially since we haven't met our home owner. It amazed me how open this man was to initiating such deep,

transparent conversation with complete strangers. I'm sure his story is very similar to Sheri's (our home owner), and meeting Dave really made me feel like my work all week was truly meaningful.

Once again, my team struggled to pack up our site but we were all very excited to cook dinner. After showers, some of us cut up veggies and grilled chicken. Sabina, Heather, and I had a little difficulty cooking nice for our gallo pinto dish, but finally produced some rice that looked edible (thanks to great tips from Sabiha's mom ☺). Everyone greatly enjoyed the beans and rice and shishkabobs.

Reflection time this evening was very meaningful to me. As everyone explained their postcards representing their NOLA trip, I wished that I could have a real copy of all of them. Everyone had such a different and good symbol that highlighted this experience for them—both sad and hopeful—and a collage of all these pictures would be such a good representation of the state of New Orleans and its people seven years after Katrina. It was also really important for me to discuss how I and this group will continue the bonds we've formed and share the knowledge and experiences we've gained this week. I think it's extremely important for me to continue forming these relationships and together, find ways to express and share this week with the rest of our Dickinson community when we return. The people I have come to know this week truly feel like a family to me and I know all of you will support me and each other, something that is so comforting to me, especially as I find my way in my first year at Dickinson. I want to thank each of you for making me feel so comfortable, happy, and completely free. I can't remember the last time I laughed so hard and long in a single week. ☺

Thursday March 15, 2012 Kallie

Two things happened for the Mudd Brothas today:

1. Breakthroughs
2. Bonding

One of our major breakthroughs today: WE FINISHED MUDDING AND BEGAN TEXTURING!!!! Definitely one of the most exciting moments of my day, especially because we've been working towards it for the past three. Terry's patched walls are finally starting to look legitimate—like the walls of an unblemished HOME. In many ways I feel like both my and my team's solidarity level are developing with the walls. Like Terry's home is slowly becoming livable, we are becoming a team unit.

Our team unity was particularly exemplified by the team chant, stomp routine, and handshake we created today. We performed these things for our homeowner, Terry, as he looked on from his front porch. Watching him watching us was one of the most surreal moments of my life. Here we were, nine crazy college kids stomping on dirt and reciting silly chants. And there he was, a seasoned, vivacious Katrina victim reveling in our absurdity. I never thought my weirdness could bring such joy to someone...but now I know better.

If anything, this trip (thus far) has taught me that the smallest things can—and often do—mean the most. Cheers!

Thursday March 15, 2012 Maddie

So today was the usual...up sometime around seven, half-still asleep pouring coffee that Mira made into the mug I had lost for the first half of the trip. It's funny because I'm pretty sure the majority of people on our trip wouldn't classify themselves as morning people but you would never guess that. Everybody was up chitchatting and spreading friendly "good mornings."

This morning was bittersweet. It would be our last full workday. Our last fully day at Epworth. Our last full day in New Orleans. New Orleans had been the common thread for all of us on this trip. Despite all our differences and paths we were always able to relate to one another based on our commitments to and compassion for New Orleans. This was our last day with this vital part of our family.

Because our house is the only house not five minutes down the road, rather a half an hour drive into East New Orleans, we decided to leave earlier than usual. It was a gorgeous morning! This isn't normal, usually it was so foggy

that while crossing the twin bridges you couldn't even see the remnants of the old bridge that were right next to the new. Also, Richie and Gaberella stayed awake longer than usual. Typically, five minutes into the drive we lose one or the other but today we spent the drive jamming out to DJ chicken.

We got to our house and tried to start working as soon as possible. The time we lose to the drive is frustrating so we try to make up for it. I like that we are in New Orleans though. I especially love the ten minute drive over Lake Ponchartrain on the twin bridges. It's gorgeous and brings to mind a couple of thoughts. The first originates from the couple sets of unused bridges you can see across the lake. The set closest to the bridge we are on is what is left of the bridge that stood through Katrina. There are random chunks left. I keep thinking back to what Ann said about the storm surge once Katrina hit the Mississippi. I couldn't imagine 26-foot waves disrupting this calm surface, so strong they could rip apart concrete. And yet here stood the proof, like a scar. The second set of bridges was the temporary bridges that people used for years while they waited for the new ones to be completed. Six years ago Katrina hit and last year the new twin bridges were completed. The second thought I had was about our homeowner Larry. On Monday I had asked him about Lake Ponchartrain and he said he used to fish on the lake. His gaze was distant like he was recalling a different life. This brought home the realization that after six years his life was still not back to normal. He was still displaced in Houston, removed from his city, his culture, his favorite foods and his fishing. At this moment, I thought of my Grandfather. When he had lived in NOLA, he had raved over the fishing and told stories of his adventures, much like Larry was doing with us now. I envisioned my Grandfather's reaction if he had lost his boat and access to his favorite spot and it helped me understand how he was feeling. His boat had been taken by his neighbors who tried to wait out the storm. When their home began to flood they desperately took Larry's boat. He didn't blame them but the look on his face made me want to buy him a new one. I could see Larry in his little boat out on the lake fishing away as we crossed it this morning.

Sophie and I commenced sanding and mudding Larry's living room and hallway. We wear goggles and face masks to protect from the dust. However, that didn't offer much protection for the rest of us which was soon coated in white powder. I was hoping to get tanner this week; I didn't expect to get paler.

The work day was very productive. While Sophie and I did work on the hall, Richie, Paige and Gaberella finished the drywall ceiling in their rooms and Chuck, Maria, Enzo and Carrie finished the ceiling in the garage.

Thursday, March 15, 2012 Sophie

This week has flown by. I feel like we just got here and now it's already time to leave. I really don't want this experience to end. This group is a force to be reckoned with: so many passionate people who want to make a change. I've had some amazing conversations this week and met so many fascinating people.

Today was mudding, sanding and more mudding. Cassidy, Maddie and I leave caked in dust and covered in dried mud and just looking all-around disgusting but we are making great progress. Maddie and I are working hard on the vaulted ceiling in the living room and we were talking today about how we wish we could finish and paint it but we're out of time. The dry walling teams have been amazing. They finished all the ceilings today and have moved on to work on some walls. The home is really coming together.

We're all really bonding too. At lunch conversations are always very fun and interesting, as well as all of our love for classic 80's rock, which leads to all of us singing along to the songs. Also our jokes about yelling "ENZO!", the doodie calls port-a-potty and Gabby and Richie's always falling asleep.

Around three, Carrie, Paige, Enzo, Maria, Maddie and Cassidy and I took a quick walk around the neighborhood. We found this house – completely destroyed, never been returned to, never been gutted. We were all silent as we looked inside. I remember seeing houses like this last year and it hit me just as hard today as it did then; Maria and I kept saying, "Seven years, it has been seven years." The worst part was that there was a flyer stating it was a health code violation, so the homeowners were being fined. It's unbelievable that after all they have been through, and most likely were unable to come back and gut this beautiful, bright colored home, that the city tacked a fine on as well. I really don't want to leave tomorrow. (Team Titanium!)

Thursday, March 15, 2012 Maria

Today our team left around 7:30 am to get to our work site at 8:00 am. We wanted to get there early because we know tomorrow would be our last workday. We got to work as soon as we got there. Carrie and I worked on the final two pieces that needed to be cut for the garage ceiling. The first piece went in rather quickly but the second piece was a bit more difficult. We moved to the bathroom after finishing the garage. We needed to use a lamp because there wasn't any natural light. The room was also much smaller and we have to be more creative with the use of the lift. We finished the bathroom and we moved to the walls in the hallway. We finished and side but will continue tomorrow. We got back and had a fabulous dinner. Then we had an emotional reflection where everyone shared their postcard moment for the week. It was also inspiring to listen to people speak about their perceptions of their experience.

We then got to meet with our group. We signed the frame that held our picture for the homeowner. We talked about our experience this week and I encouraged people to take this energy back to campus. We ended with a pivo game. Yay group bonding!

Friday, March 16, 2012 Kim

Last day at Terry's house. What a slow moving morning – all wanting to delay it as much as possible so we didn't have to leave just yet. As I looked around this morning Evan was texturing with Chels and teaching the rest of us as we pleased. Erica, Jaime, Alex, Nicki, Martin, Kallie and I were in and out of the kitchen sharing our last few moments in Terry's house, sanding so the next group who comes can texture his family room. These moments, I looked around and just saw thinking faces, stretching smiles, and the thoughts which you could see on our faces, that we were sad to leave this beautiful magical place, a diamond in the rough.

The day is not even half way through and my heart is already filled with so much emotion from everything. From meeting John earlier in the week – to seeing the 9th ward, and seeing Christina's house yesterday and watching them wrap up an almost finished house (inspiring), to waving/interacting with people in Terry's neighborhood while on our walks, to talking to Terry/ watching him become more comfortable within his own home. One thing that really showed me this was yesterday when I saw him walk over to the Rainbow Inn (small community gathering venue/bar which he owns next door). His eyes lit up and you could see him actively thinking about the future/reminiscing about the past. Either way, I feel honored to be a part of this inspiring moment.

Before we left today, we gave Terry a few things for his garden because he spends a lot of time outside: a flower and a clock which he can put in his newly painted rooms. Last but not least we gave him a picture to remember us which we took yesterday with him in front of the Rainbow Inn.

Yesterday I was having a conversation with him in which he said, "I want those pictures – I will give you my telephone/address so you can send them to me." I responded, "For sure, we are definitely going to send you this and you we don't want to leave." He said, " I don't want you guys to leave either, why can't you all just stay? One more week?" I assured him there was another group coming next week because it was what we were told. This was so incredibly meaningful hearing this because it was the first time I heard him get sentimental and actually feel any connection to us. It was something else. His willingness to accept our love I think is what got to me. Kim

Friday, March 16th, 2012 Sabiha

Wow. Today was such an amazing and fulfilling day. We all woke up really early because we were leaving by 1:30 to begin our long journey home. My team, team "That's What She Said" passes a little donut shop every morning called Not Just Donuts, and we've always wanted to go there; so we took advantage of the morning and went. They were definitely Not Just Donuts. They were amazingly delicious— a wonderful start to our last day in New Orleans. We got to Sharon's house, ate our donuts, and participated in our daily dance party to "Call Me Maybe" (Ethan's still the only one who knows all the words...). Then we started on what I thought to be an extremely productive 6 hours. I went outside with Laura and Tabea to finish painting the outside. It wasn't until we finished, however, that we realize we had used the

wrong paint. Definitely a minor setback, but we fixed it. Admittedly, we wanted to do more painting, but it all worked out. While we painted, Heather, Brandon, and Sara were planting the flowers we bought for Sharon. We never met her, so we couldn't get her anything extremely personal, but we thought flowers would brighten up her house—make it more of a home. Emily was painting and caulking the trim that X, Pat, and Ethan were putting up. And before we knew it, it was time to clean up. We were all scrubbing the floors and sweeping—trying to make it the most beautiful space ever. But, we didn't know when Sharon would be back and we wanted to send her a message and make sure someone checked on her flowers every once in a while. So Heather, Laura, Tabea, Brandon and I walked to one of Sharon's neighbor's house (one of the neighbors that some of the other team members met the other day) to talk to him. But instead, we met his wife Lynn who told us a little about Sharon. She had a child who died in a car accident a while ago, so she is basically all alone right now. Lynn then told us about her life. She loved that we were from Pennsylvania because she was from Pittsburg. She told us about how her children live in the same town—even more of an example of when Anne explained how a lot of neighborhoods were full of family members. One thing that really touched me was how often Lynn said thank you. I knew that we were helping Sharon restart her life, but not having her there to say anything directly to us was a little difficult, so when Lynn kept saying thank you, it reassured me that what we were doing really helped. And, I finally got to meet a neighbor and make that community connection!

After talking to Lynn, we all left to rush back to Epworth and clean up in order to leave. Once that was done, our long journey back to Carlisle, PA began. We ate dinner at an interesting Chinese Buffet, really fulfilling food. Then we did paper plate awards in the parking lot, really symbolizing the end of this trip.

What an amazing trip it was. I loved how we were all able to make an impact and help get New Orleans back on their feet. I loved the amazing variety of people I met, and I love how much I learned from all of them. I love how motivated everyone was to work. We all got up early to do manual labor. And we were excited about it! Knowing that there are people who are as excited and passionate to help others, like all you wonderful people is inspiring.

For my first service trip experience at Dickinson, I would say it was an extreme success. I love the people involved, the connections we made, the impact we had on the community, and the pride I felt when we were approached by people asking why we were working instead of partying during Spring Break and we replied that we wanted to. Like Pat said, "You never forget your first time.☺" Good job NOLA 2012! I love you all.

Friday March 16, 2012 Paige

It is strange to think that this is the last reflection that I will ever write. I just want to thank all of you for being such amazing people. You truly made this trip unforgettable. I feel so blessed to have such amazing people in my life.

This week has been a whirlwind of emotions and excitement. I have been able to learn more about myself and everyone around me. This has been a truly inspiring experience. Today was our last day at our worksite, and I have to admit that it was bittersweet. I have such an amazing group (Titanium: Doodie Calls)! And we have been working so hard on our house for Larry. The most important concept that we were trying to remember was to make the house a home for Larry and his family. Today was also the day that we start our travels back home.

The 22 hour drive seems so much fun when you are with a group like ours! It really hit me after dinner how close we all are when presenting paper plate awards and just being so proud of the growth that I saw in everyone!

This has been one of the most amazing experiences for me and I am glad and blessed to have spent it with you all!

NOLA LOVE 2012!!