



# Dickinson College

## Habitat for Humanity

### March 12-20, 2011

What about service inspired this group to go without warm showers, loved ones, and a “fun” spring break to endure 22 hour car ride to work for your week of spring break?

It is about service, but it’s more about just getting a good feeling. Throughout the week the answers varied. This hands on experience provided opportunities to learn about ourselves and learn about others; to be confronted with our values, and challenged by our previous beliefs. Service is about coming together as a team to help others, without regard to if we will “feel good,” be thanked, meet the recipients, or know the task required. It was evident throughout the trip that service was about journeying together to explore a new culture, providing hope to those we met, and relating to our peers (whom we may not have met before on campus), but who share a passion for service. Additionally, it is about understanding Habitat, and how they help and how they give a hand up to families in need.

We have returned home, but the memories, pictures, and reflections will continue to remind us of this time in Miami. Twelve students and two administrators traveled to Miami FL for a week of spring break that reached out to support families who were waiting for Habitat homes. Thank you for going and serving.

Thank you for caring for those you did not know, but coming to serve willingly. My greatest plea is “Don’t Stop Now”! Miami, here in Carlisle, and your home communities are in need of people who are willing to serve. Every area needs people who are willing to speak out about injustice, fight against inequality, and work beside people who (if only for a little while) you can call a neighbor. What are you passionate about? Do it! Reach beyond your comfort zone. Listen to a neighbor. Share your stories. Engage the community and world through service...you will be changed. Read on, and find out how...

### **Saturday March 12, 2011**

This morning we all scrambled to get ready in time to meet at the Kauffman lot at 7:30, pack up the vans, and head to Miami. The morning started off slow, with lots of resting in the car. As we headed down south, the temperature picked up with every stop, and the entire group was starting to get excited about the fact that our trip was finally on its way. We stopped for the night pretty early—it was still light out when we reached South Carolina. We took some time to hang out at the school where we were staying (thanks to a great alum!), and all of us played Catchphrase outside in the courtyard. We went for a late-ish dinner at a restaurant called Fatz (where we all enjoyed the complimentary bread that tasted like donuts) and when we came back to the school, everyone was already exhausted. We took around 30 minutes to get ready for sleep, and then laid around in our sleeping bags on the classroom floor, discussing our ups and downs of the day as well as our interests and backgrounds in service. We’re all so excited to get back on the road early tomorrow so that we can arrive in Miami and get settled before starting the build.

Siobhan O’Grady

### **Saturday March 12, 2011**

Today was a day of driving! Luckily, the time went by really fast. It was really fun because everyone talked and we got to know each other a lot better. We played the celebrity name game and catch phrase and ate dinner at a place called Fatz. The food and the company were both wonderful! I'm really excited for the rest of the trip and getting to know and work with everyone on the trip. I think this is going to be a really good week.

Morgan Cheatham

### **Saturday March 12, 2011**

We spent most of today driving, but it was a lot of fun. I am getting to know some really cool people who I hadn't met before the trip. They all seem really interesting, so I look forward to getting to know everyone better. Dinner at Fatz was fantastic, especially the fried rolls. We also played catch phrase, which was a lot of fun and showed how funny and creative everyone is.

Chris Mills

### **Sunday March 13, 2011**

We stopped at an education center last night. I immediately noticed the area in which we were staying. Darlington was a poor and dominantly black neighborhood. From what I gathered from pictures and various reading materials, I assume that most students who go there were going to get their G.E.D.s. The nature of the signs that were on the walls were highly parent-like. The way they were phrased, the overall message, and the way they were conveyed seemed as if they were designed for children. Due to lack of knowledge, I am not entirely sure what I feel about this occurrence. But I definitely noticed it.

Cassie Boquiren-Garcia

### **Monday March 14, 2011**

Today, after getting settled into the beautiful Motel Blu, we had a nice day of relaxation. The day started with an orientation by Habitat for Humanity. The orientation went over Habitat's mission, history, and safety tips. From the orientation we traveled to the Everglades. There we saw many different birds (which Phoebe enjoyed) and many alligators. After lunch we met up with a recent graduate of Dickinson for a nice outing/tour of Miami. After walking around for a while, we packed up the vans and headed to dinner at Maureen's house. Maureen was another Dickinson graduate and also worked closely with Habitat for Humanity of Greater Miami. This was the first time many of us have had the pleasure of meeting Maureen. She prepared a great dinner for everyone and shared her experiences with habitat and Dickinson college students over the years. During our visit with Maureen we went to the beach that was walking distance. Here we took amazing pictures and found some pretty neat things. This is also where our family portrait was taken.

Robert Spriggs

**Tuesday March 15, 2011**

Mood: Satisfied

Song playing: Some country song Big Sister Cate has me listening to. (Not conducive to my writing mood, but we will see what happens)

Ok so first day in Miami. Hands down amazing and boy I sure didn't pack right. Too many jeans, so glad I got to go shopping bought me some tank tops and jeans shorts that make my legs look real nice. But anyways, that's beside the point. What I want to say is how much closer I have become with everyone on this trip. I never really knew these people, and if I did it was out of general respect that I would say hi. For example I always called Robert trouble because of the trouble he caused during orientation. However that title has been diminished and his new name is DIVA aka the little brother I never wanted. He is a great guy and always kept me laughing. Phoebe, I have never ever seen her on campus a day in my life. However when getting to talk to Phoebe she is a fountain of random knowledge. She knew a lot about the random animals that we saw at the gator park. It was pretty hilarious to find out she knows such random things. All in all I can say that I have had a bonding experience with 13 people and I wouldn't trade those individual experiences for the world. I am so glad to have met such awesome people, and now I have more peoples name to yell across campus when I see them. (Yes I am that embarrassing).

P.S- Guess country music isn't that bad after all.... No wait, it just got worse with this green tractor song.

With love,  
Stevie Sims

**Tuesday March 15, 2011**

Today was the first day at the worksite. I was beyond excited and I think everyone was too. The first task of the day consisted of base boarding around the whole house. Each caulk, base, and nail had to be put on with precision and care. The day finished with painting, it was great seeing how everything was coming together. After the worksite we visited a completed Habitat community, Jordan Commons. The community was absolutely beautiful and heartwarming. Even though I didn't directly help build in Jordan Commons I still felt accomplished and happy.

P.S. I love the group and our amazing family photo. :)

Antonia Johnson

**Tuesday March 15, 2011**

We had a bright and early start and woke up at 6:45am. We arrived at a gathering of other students that had come to help out. It was amazing to see lots of other people from all over come out to Florida and help build homes during their spring break. There were about 250 volunteers. At the worksite, our team shirts had the slogan "It's hammer time!" and it had the right idea because there was a lot of hammering all through out the house. We were installing base boards and sounds of people hard at work were reverberating off the walls. I know I might have added an "Ow" once or twice because I hit my thumb with the hammer. Whatever we worked on, we added more life into the house as it began to form into something more. The guy we worked with, Rick, was very helpful and knowledgeable. Without him, I don't think we could have accomplished so much. The house that we worked on was a blue-green color and I wondered if the color matched the homeowner's personality. I guess we'll see... Overall, I've become grateful for the friends that I've met on this

trip and look forward to learning more about everyone, meeting the homeowner, and to see the changes with not only the house but ourselves – our way of thinking and our different experiences.

Grace Flores

### **Wednesday March 16, 2011**

After our first day on the worksite I was pleasantly surprised at how much work we completed. Rick's presence at Latisha's house kept the team moving, motivated and inspired. As compared to other trips I have been on, I found that the amount of work completed in a single day may have eclipsed an entire week of work on other trips. Everyone on the team tried to learn a skill and master it, which really helps to work towards an end product. Morgan picked up the art of caulking, along with Cassie and Antonia. Rob and Siobhan learned to install baseboards, and the rest of the team worked to make each element of the process move more smoothly. I found each little project moved the house towards being a Latisha's home. As the baseboards were installed I could see the evolution of the house into a place where Latisha could have her family and friends gather. After the sod and trees were planted I could see her kids out poking around in the trees like my siblings and I had done when we were younger. Because I had never known a homeowner so intimately, it made the work we accomplished much more personal and heartfelt. I think that Latisha's struggles in life, yet extreme positivity and enthusiasm touched our team. My favorite thing Latisha told us was "I never meet strangers," and this may seem odd or maybe not very safe, but I really like that. I wish I could live by those words and be so embracing.

Cate David

### **Wednesday March 16, 2011**

Today when we went to the worksite we got a cool surprise. Latisha Lewis, the homeowner came to the house to meet all of us and to thank us for helping her build it. She was so excited to see the progress of her house and to talk to us. She gave us a tour and told us which rooms were for whom. We also started talking about what colors she should paint the walls and how to decorate. She wanted to stay longer but had to go to work, so she decided to come hang out with us later at Motel Blu. I don't think it is very common to get to meet the homeowner, much less hang out with her but it was such a great experience.

What I loved so much about her was how she didn't hold back anything. She told us her whole story about how she was a domestic abuse victim but how she has turned her life around and is now working on getting her degree. It was refreshing to hear her story because it wasn't the standard that I'm used to hearing as a 4-year college student at a liberal arts institution. I feel like my whole life I've had a plan for how to succeed either made by myself or by others who've expected me to follow a particular path. As a senior I feel like I'm at a point where I really have no idea where I want to go. I could take the path that gets me the most money or I could take a path that gives me the most enjoyment/ is the most rewarding. I feel like this middle-class society that I live in looks at those different paths as "right" and "wrong" and "better" or "worse" but I don't like to use such labels. I prefer to think of my choices as "actions" and "consequences" but not all consequences have to be bad. Anyway, I digress; I think what was so great about spending the evening with Latisha was hearing that it is possible to turn your life around.

I think the thing that stuck with me most was that she said "she had to love herself before she could love others" and I completely agree with her. Last year after returning from Spain I was diagnosed with PTSD and spent the better part of the following year going to therapy and trying to recover. Part of my treatment was eliminating the unnecessary stresses in my life, which included various activities, obligations, and even relationships I had with certain people. While I feel bad that this anxiety disorder ruined some previous friendships I'm now beginning to see that this had opened up many other doors for me, much like it has for

Latisha. While it was hard for me to let go of those relationships, I know I'm in a much better place than I was a year ago and I know that by getting out into the world and seeing how other people like Latisha are doing similar things (getting out of bad relationships, etc.) it only further reinforces the decisions I've made.

I'm so glad that Latisha came and spent time with us because it really gave me a face to the reason why I came down to Miami. And I am confident that Latisha will continue to help her community. Since her house is mostly finished she will likely have to work on other people's houses. Hopefully, the other homeowners she works with will get to opportunity to get to know her like we did because she was truly inspirational.

Taylor Putnam

### **Thursday March 17, 2011**

I would have to say that my favorite day while on this service trip was the day that I got to meet Latisha. I am happy to have seen the face of the person who was getting the house. I read her bio on the door, but there were many ideas of how her personality could have been going through my head. She's an outgoing woman full of energy who showed her excitement for us being there helping her build her home. I was glad that we got to give her our opinions on the wall coloring for her house. I felt as if I knew her for a long time. I hope that we, as a group can keep in contact with her. I am glad to have been a part in impacting someone's life.

Another day that I enjoyed on the trip was going to south beach. It being my first time being in Miami, I was satisfied with going to the beach and seeing clear water for the first time. I had a great time. I thank Grace and Morgan for allowing us go visit the beach. Although I know that it wasn't a vacation, having that time to see the attraction of Miami was great.

Victor Holguin

### **Thursday March 17, 2011**

Thursday was an eventful day at the worksite and a very productive day for us as we got to see our house come together. The day was spent landscaping--some of our most difficult work yet was sodding the entire yard. Our work had high payoff, however, since after we left on Thursday the house looked very close to move-in ready! Thursday was also a great day because our homeowner, Tisha, worked with us throughout the entire day.

Thursday also included a Thank You event put on by Habitat where we got to connect with Maureen again and the entire Habitat staff. The day ended with a much-anticipated trip to South Beach to see how the "other" side of Miami operates. It was quite a divergence from Liberty City and for some a very harsh adjustment back to commercialized high-end reality. The day ended with a very meaningful and in-depth conversation on the beach.

Peter Paquette

### **Friday March 18, 2011**

The trip taught me to recognize that need comes in forms different from the stereotypical starving orphaned baby.

When we first met Leticia the homeowner, she was well dressed and energetic. She had a nice car and was going to school and talked about how she was the president of the business club. I was really shocked because in my mind she appeared not wealthy but definitely well off. Upon talking to her more, though, we learned about her experiences with domestic abuse and the desire for a home, and it helped to elucidate the fact that it is possible and even important to even serve people who seem ok, who aren't visibly the definition of extreme need, because by serving Leticia and allowing for her to have a beautiful and safe home, we are also serving her children, and her community, so the labor that we put in for one individual will spread to benefit more lives. Conversely, the insight and stories that Leticia shared with us will help us to grow as well.

Phoebe Oldach

### **Sunday March 20, 2011**

Spending my spring break in Miami, doing something a little different than most of my college-aged peers who also spent their breaks in tropical locations, brought me back to Dickinson with a better understanding of the importance of service, and the economic and social differences that exist within my own community. Four of the five days we spent in Florida were dedicated to service work with Habitat for Humanity, mainly landscaping property for a new homeowner in the Liberty City neighborhood of Miami. The group of students was diverse and the service work was incredibly rewarding—we even got to work alongside our homeowner during our final day at the worksite. Because I did not bring my laptop along for the trip, and because I do not have a smart phone, I happily disconnected myself for the week, and I enjoyed the inner sense of freedom that came along with my lack of access to technology. The group did a lot of reflection discussion on the importance of our work, and it seemed unanimous that we got just as much out of the service as did our homeowner. While she received the physical benefit of the progress on the building of her home, we received the benefits of working in a team, learning about a community different from our own, and forging connections with an organization as fantastic as Habitat for Humanity. This service trip, my first physical build, made me even more interested in continuing my connection with service, and expanding my time spent on service to include a variation of different kinds work.

Siobhan O'Grady

### **Sunday March 20, 2011**

Looking back on spring break, it almost seems unreal. I think back on certain moments and think “did that really happen” or “I can't believe we did that!” It is so strange to go from living in such close community with 13 other people, and spending most of my time doing service work in construction to now being back to my everyday life here at Dickinson. I had such an amazing experience, and I somehow feel that I will never be the same, but at the same time nothing has changed.

We started our week off with the long drive there. The driving, as normal, went pretty well. The excitement of the trip and the desire to get to know everyone kept spirits high on what could have been a very long and very boring trip. My favorite moment from the drive down was when we had stopped for the night. We had some free time before dinner, and I had gone outside because it was so beautiful out and was listening to music. Shortly thereafter I was ambushed by the whole group and we played catchphrase, which was a lot of fun and totally unexpected. It was a great way to start off the trip.

Then there was Monday, our free day. It started off badly because Grace and I had gone to get groceries for lunch before orientation, and were a little late getting back to Motel Blu. We tried our best to follow the large van to the orientation spot, but inevitably got lost. It was a stressful few minutes trying to navigate a mini-van in Miami with just the two of us. Thankfully we found it, and didn't end up being too late. Then we took the

airboat tour, which was great. There were so many animals out, including some baby gators that were adorable. After the gator park we were going to go on a tour of Miami with Ashley Foreman, but she got lost trying to meet us, and we ended up wasting a lot of time. On one hand, it was sad to waste so much time just sitting around at the gator park, but on the other hand it was good to have more time to talk and get to know each other better. Then Ashley took us to her local mall. It was neat to feel like an insider and do something not touristy and it was also good to get to talk to people on a more individual level. I also went to Urban Outfitters for the very first time and bought the most awesome book about the Peanuts. I also had mango gelato for the first time in a really long time, which reminded me of my time in Germany. It was a wonderful day.

The rest of the week we worked! Our house was pretty close to being finished; we put in the baseboards and painted them as well as doing the landscaping. I was lucky enough to work inside the house all week, so I was protected from the sun, but some of the others weren't so lucky. We had a lot of both joking around and getting some work done. Our site leader Rick was pretty funny, and the AmeriCorps worker, Heiress, was really cool. I really enjoyed getting to know both of them, and it was sad to have to leave at the end of the week. The biggest surprise, and probably the best thing about the week, was getting to meet our homeowner, Latisha. She was great! She surprised us all on the site, with hugs for everyone. She came and reflected with us, and we even worked with her on the house one day. I've never been able to interact so much with any homeowner, much less the homeowner of the house I was working on, it was something totally new and unexpected. Latisha was so warm and inviting and bubbly and outgoing. She even asked us about advice on how to decorate and what to buy her children. She was so open and honest in telling us her story and I was so happy that I had chosen to come and was able to help her finally have a home that she could claim as completely her own. Getting to meet and work with her was something special, and it helped me connect the physical work we were doing with a face. It wasn't that we were building a house or helping a stranger, we were helping Latisha, this wonderful person who was in a really bad situation and is working so hard to turn her life around.

Then was the long drive home, which was a great experience that we had to reflect with each other on various things. I got into a wonderful conversation in the large van that started on how posse is viewed on campus and then moved on to how minorities fit into the picture at Dickinson. This topic, especially the latter, is something that I think about a lot, being a minority on campus, but is something that I've never talked about with anyone before. That is huge, stuff that I've been unwilling to share with my friends and even my family I felt comfortable sharing with this group of people that I had barely known only a week earlier. There was such diversity in the group, but we were able to overcome that to form something really awesome. It wasn't perfect, and we sometimes annoyed each other, but we got through it and we had a wonderful time and we bonded and I can't imagine that the trip could have gone any better. I'm so glad I, and everyone on the trip was able to come. Each person, Antonia, Cassie, Cate, Chris, Erica, Grace, Peter, Phoebe, Robert, Siobhan, Stevie, Taylor, and Victor, all added something special and I am so glad I got the chance to spend time and get to know each one of you.

Morgan Cheatham

## **Sunday March 20, 2011**

When I told my friends that I was going to be spending my spring break in Miami, everyone told me that I was going to have a lot of fun. But then I explained that I was going to Miami as part of a service trip, and would spend the time building houses, not going to the beach. All my friends changed their minds and told me I would be miserable. They said I would be missing out on everything spring break was about, and I should spend it sleeping, hanging out with friends, eating junk food, and just generally having a good time.

But I got all that done before we even arrived at Miami. During the drive down, I slept when I wasn't driving, ate a lot of fast food, and when I wasn't doing that, I talked to people that I had never met before. And I kept having a good time the entire trip. Siobhan, Robert, Stevie, and Cassie were always really funny, and

Antonia really cracked me up when she decided to call herself “John.” Peter and Victor made great roommates. Grace was a great copilot I’m glad we got to celebrate her birthday and make a lot of noise. And I had some great conversations in the car with Taylor, Erica, Phoebe, Morgan, and Cate, about everything from community service to study abroad.

But it wasn’t just the students on the trip that made it worthwhile. Rick the worksite supervisor was really passionate about his job, Latisha was really friendly, and the people who work at Habitat Miami were really warm and welcoming. I couldn’t have asked for a better spring break.

Chris Mills

### **Sunday March 20, 2011**

Prior to the trip, the idea of being exposed to the ‘real’ Miami was prevalent in our meetings. But after a few days of driving around Miami, I came to realize that the phenomenon witnessed in Miami was not unique to the city. Disproportion in wealth exists not only in other cities, but all across the United States. I came from a place that can be compared to Liberty City. I admit, my hometown is not as poor but living in LA – the “real” LA – neighborhoods like Liberty City are both common and numerous.

While there may have been complaints about the group dynamic, what truly matters is the meaning that each individual took from the trip. Ever since coming to this school, I find the opportunity to analyze and derive meaning in every moment. If I had not been given a scholarship, I doubt I would have left my hometown. I would have never learned the things I know now. Going back to a city like my own allowed me to realize what happens to most people who do not get an opportunity. I can name several people who stayed back home and are working or are stuck in community colleges for years just trying to get an associate’s degree. People who are just as qualified as others at this school – some even more. So much potential not put to use mainly because of socio-economic factors. But no one will ever know that. It’s not fair. The saying, “the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer” is true and the gap is getting bigger. People who go on these service trips have the opportunity to not only realize this but do something about it. Going on this trip pushed me to declare my major – American Studies – and affirm my understanding of what it means to be passionate about something.

With that being said, I will sum up my thoughts with the conclusion: I thought the trip was amazing.

Cassie Boquiren-Garcia

### **Sunday March 20, 2011**

The entire trip, for me, was an experience of a lifetime. The trip gave me the opportunity to interact and become close to many people that I simply walked by on campus. Through this interaction we discussed over and over social injustices in our community and world. These discussions also led comments during reflections which we had every night. The service that we did also had a lasting effect on the group and myself. Working side by side with the homeowner made the service we were doing even more meaningful. The joy of knowing our help building a home also helped build a new life for an extremely appreciative homeowner was very satisfying. All in all, I am extremely grateful I had the chance to meet life long friends, change lives, and engage the world with Dickinson College’s Habitat for Humanity.

Robert Spriggs

**Sunday March 20, 2011**

Mood: Tired

Song playing: How to Save a Life - The Fray (I always listen to music when I write)

So we got to meet our homeowner today, which was probably the best experience in my life. She is such a sweet, warming person. You know people (including myself) have this preconceived notion of what people receiving a Habitat Home looks like. I know I thought this person was going to be non-educated, non-working, and can do everything to fix these problems. Ignorant for me to think so, Latisha broke all the stereotypes I had in my head. Latisha is smart and going back to school, has drive for herself and her kids, also she has a lot going for herself she just needed the extra push. I can honestly say that I am glad to be apart of that extra push Latisha needed. She deserves every good thing that comes her way. She spreads a lot her knowledge, wisdom, and personality. I am glad not only that I was able to pour back into her life that the other 13 people were able to as well.

With love,  
Stevie Sims

**Sunday March 20, 2011**

At the start of this trip I was skeptic about how the rest of the week was going to go. I was happy to do community service and meet new people, but I still had concerns about how the trip was to go. However, as the days carried on and the more we worked on the house as a team, what seemed like community service turned into service with 13 amazing new people I can call my friends. From my trip with Habitat for Humanities I learned what service is. Service is a deed that is done with nothing expected in return, it is not done to fulfill a requirement or to make one feel better about themselves, but done to selflessly help your fellow man. At the end of each work day, seeing the house progress and progress, the more anxious I got to have Latisha (the homeowner) to move in. Overall, I am very grateful for being selected to take part in such a great trip and plan to continue my service through other trips and in the Carlisle Community.

Antonia Johnson

**Sunday March 20, 2011**

Working with Habitat for Humanity is a wonderful opportunity at school, but taking part in a service trip takes you on a whole other level. A group of twelve students and two administrators embarked on an adventure that opened us to new perspectives and the chance to help out a community. Our team was crazy... crazy awesome. Morgan and I selected people on the basis of what we thought were good traits that certain individuals would bring. Our group had a lot of life, experience, knowledge of issues, personality, the willingness to learn, the ability to be open up to something they might have not done before, the determination to help others, and so much more. We branched out of our comfort zone by getting involved, sharing our ideas/thoughts, and exploring new possibilities.

Having everyone working as a team promoted a better approach to the tasks at hand and a better understanding of what we were accomplishing, especially through reflections. We were becoming aware of the disparities within the Miami area. We realize that it's not just the touristy attractions and glamorous depictions of beaches and posh houses. It showed us that poverty and differing socioeconomic classes are prevalent and that there is a large need for these Habitat homes.

The homeowner, Latisha, is an amazing woman. In one of my earlier reflections, I wondered if the house color matched her personality and it did. She's bright, bubbly, and unique. She's definitely down to earth and not afraid to be herself and that's one of the things I loved about her. She had told me how she had overcome domestic abuse and long hours of work and education (630am-10pm) to rebuild a new life for her and her kids. It helps me realize not to take things for granted and to appreciate what has been provided for me in terms of education and what I choose to do in my free time. It was surprising to have someone that I've known for only a short period of time become someone that I can openly talk to about sensitive topics. I was really taken aback by some of the things I was sharing because the things we talked about weren't easy. We exchanged stories, learned from each other, and took comfort in each others words of support. Despite all of her challenges, she comes right back up, swinging at any obstacles she faces. She's definitely someone I look up to for inspiration.

Overall, we had a good and productive work week. I learned how to landscape and install base boards. On top of that, we were able to go participate in fun activities such as the Gator Park, the beaches, catchphrase, and dinner with Maureen. Maureen is also a wonderful individual. She opened her home to us in hopes that she could share with us her knowledge about the Habitat program in Miami and to hear our stories of why we've come down to Florida to help those in need. In retrospect, we took back a lot of fond memories of an amazing homeowner, Motel de Blu, John, "our family", reflections by the pool, Rojr, digging up hidden treasure (?), a fun birthday celebration, long car ride conversations, and so many other things. Das it!

I've learned about a lot of social issues in regards to differing socioeconomic classes/poverty and I hope to help others become more aware of them as well. This trip was a great learning experience, I believe it's important to understand Habitat's mission, who we're helping, and why we are engaging in the activities that we participate in. This trip has enabled us to work with different types of people, taught us how to deal with varying challenges, and to learn about ourselves and how we can apply ourselves the best we can. I hope to encourage other people to take advantage of these service trip opportunities in the future.

So what did I do for my Spring Break? I went on a Habitat service trip. Did you build houses? Yeah but it's more than that, we helped build a place where an inspirational woman and mother of three can call home.

Grace Flores

## **Sunday March 20, 2011**

After going to Miami with Habitat for Humanity this Spring Break, one of my personal beliefs about American capitalism was reaffirmed. As we entered the city, most of our minds pictured the palm tree-lined boulevards of Miami we had all seen in postcards, television shows and vacation destination commercials, and for the most part our preconceived notions weren't far from the truth. We didn't see poverty or homelessness; these types of societal problems are always hidden from sight. As a capitalist country we value images of wealth and prosperity, therefore we push from public view unpleasant reminders of where the US is failing.

Despite our work in the so-called "troubled community" of Liberty City, Miami, we literally saw no signs of homelessness, extreme poverty or dilapidated homes. The fact that one of the "worst" neighborhoods in Miami was composed of individual pastel homes with relatively large backyards was surprising to me. Was this really the worst of Miami? Or were we, as stereotypically Spring Break-seeking college student volunteers shielded from the actual problems that plague nearly all major cities? I think we were. I understand that Habitat for Humanity does not necessarily work with the homeless or those in extreme poverty, but I think they gave us and the other volunteers the nice side of homelessness and poverty. They made it seem like 'well, this is as bad as it gets, kids!' And everyone goes home feeling good about his or her work, but remains blissfully unaware of the enormity of these problems.

I think this example proves perfectly how despite the fact that we were on a volunteer trip, we *still* didn't really see the real Miami because it's unpleasant, and I think that if Habitat did in fact work in desolate, dangerous, poor areas, volunteers wouldn't come back. As Americans, in general, we are shielded from the unpleasantness of reality for many people and families, even in our volunteer activities because our capitalist tendencies make it uncomfortable for us to see people in a much lesser position than ourselves.

Cate David

### **Sunday March 20, 2011**

I've been having some difficulties this year coming to terms with the fact that I'm graduating this year so I've been trying to make this year count and take advantage of the various opportunities available to me. Going on a service trip was definitely one of those and I'm so glad I got to go. There are a lot of things that I've learned from this trip. My awareness of poverty/need is much more real than it used to be as well as the distinction between helping and serving. I've also learned a lot about team work and group interactions. Figuring out people's strengths and weaknesses has been a very valuable and rewarding experience, especially when we can use that to come together as a group. I've also had a number of personal accomplishments on this trip:

1. becoming more confident in my driving skills
2. feeling more comfortable in new/unfamiliar situations
  - traveling
  - being with new people
  - doing jobs I've never done before
3. doing good for the world

I think the best part of this trip was that it really helped in my recovery from PTSD but I had a really good time doing it. I've pushed myself a lot this week but I realized that all these things were things I could do.

Taylor Putnam

### **Sunday March 20, 2011**

I cannot say that I did not enjoy my spring break this year. It feels great to know that I have contributed in helping someone's life. When I applied for this trip I knew the initial goal of the trip, because I am a person that loves to get involved in the community. This was my first service trip here at Dickinson, so I was excited. I never visited the city of Miami, so my initial vision of what I knew about it was that it was a destination for college students, full of fun and beaches. This was also an exciting anticipation to go on the trip.

I thought that this trip would consist of us Dickinson students going within a community that has a high poverty level, which we help, give homes to homeless people. Not knowing much of habitat for humanity this is what I believed I was participating in doing. But now that I have arrived back at Dickinson, I have learned that this service that many college students are involved in is one that is greatly appreciated. Not only by the organization itself, but by the families that are being given a home. I know that the families are not what I had initially thought; they are regular working people with great hearts that have struggled in their lives.

Meeting the homeowner of the house that I was helping build made me feel much more connected and proud of the service that I was doing. I started to realize that people were actually going to be living in the space that I was helping to build. Just thinking about all the memories that this family was going to have in the future

was fulfilling to me. Seeing Latisha's face light up for the minimalist things while constantly saying thank you shows that she deserves the home.

Another highlight of this trip was the people that I got to experience this with. I thank each and every person in this trip for being themselves and making me love my spring break that maybe others might not have done. I never thought on this trip that I wish to be somewhere else, with all the laughter's and moments with this group that will never forgotten. I will highly recommend everyone to at least do one service trip while at Dickinson. Not only are you helping others, but you get to meet new people that you never usually talk to everyday. This experience will always be with me to share with others. I might even do another one.

Victor Holguin

### **Sunday March 20, 2011**

There are a number of highlights from the trip and many that have real life application. The humor we shared and willingness to be vulnerable that helped us build community together, the set-backs and wrong-turns we made that delayed our trip but helped us value arriving at our destination even more—I could go on. However the most influential aspect of the trip for me was that this trip involved direct service in a form that I had not experienced in the 5+ years that I have been actively involved in service work. Specifically, having the chance to work with our homeowner, LaTisha Lewis, made a profound impact on the group, on me, and lent new meaning to the term service.

I believe what made working closely with Tisha so meaningful was that it embodied the concept of what serving is, as compared to simply helping or fixing. Rachel Naomi Remen, in her article (a favorite of mine) "In Service of Life" (<http://www.infj.com/ServingVsHelping.htm>) explores the difference between serving and helping/fixing. She discusses how helping or fixing require us to see the "receiver" as broken or incomplete and that we are there to fill that void. Remen suggests that instead we must see each person as full and that we are connected to each if we truly want to serve. Serving is an exchange—each party involved benefits from seeing the other as whole. Tisha truly embodied that concept and made it concrete. She had an extremely warm persona and always said she "never meets strangers." She accepted people fully as they were—and served as their biggest cheerleader to overcome obstacles and achieve more. I not only assisted Tisha to have baseboards in her bedrooms and a lawn for her kids to play on, but we served each other. She gave others permission to be their genuine selves around her—a lesson I needed at this point in my life.

In addition to the ways I was impacted by serving alongside Tisha, I believe the group was impacted by her great resiliency. Her story of being a victim of domestic violence made our struggles seem lighter. Her ability to lose 70 pounds gave us motivation to tackle our own challenges. Not only was she enjoyable to be around, but she served each one of us by allowing us into her life and her new home.

This summer when I'm at a barbeque with family over the Independence Holiday I will be thinking about Tisha having her first barbeque at her new house. In December, while opening gifts at my parents' home, I will be imaging Tisha celebrating her first holiday season with her family in a place she owns. Service is not about doing something for someone—it's about opening yourself up to truly serve, allowing yourself to be transformed in the process. I had and saw that experience among our group.

Peter Paquette

**Sunday March 20, 2011**

I have been struggling with feelings of guilt for all of the incredible amounts of power and privilege that I have access to (especially in my race and socioeconomic class). I think this guilt has been a driving force for doing service (subconsciously, though, I hadn't pinpointed it as one of the reasons for my desire to help others until recently), because I had felt that it was important to use my privilege and power to help others who didn't have access to the same benefits of race and class.

While it was probably good that I was doing service, working under guilt alone made the service less rewarding for both me and the person we help. I have felt like those people who I'm serving have so much more strength and wisdom since they have struggled with real-life challenges. Whereas my life has been relatively easy and care free. Because of this, I have never been able to connect to or find common ground with those who I have served, and have tended to lean more towards manual service like Habitat where there is a little less interaction with the people we help instead of doing something involving working closely with people, like teaching. I definitely was more comfortable serving from a distance.

Meeting Leticia though helped me to realize that she is a human just like I am, and is open to talk and doesn't judge me for being "too privileged" and we can find common ground and shared experiences. I still feel overwhelmingly guilty going to someplace like Liberty City after attending private high school and college, since there is no reason why I deserved all of that over the people there, but connecting with homeowners and community members and also talking to Peter in the van is helping me to realize that the guilt is unproductively negative.

By overcoming the guilt, I can be more comfortable with Liberty City community members, or others who I "serve". Instead of serving just to alleviate feelings of guilt, I could serve just for the rewarding feelings from finding commonalities to the people with different experiences, learning from them, and building relationships. Ideally, those who I serve could become in my mind individuals who I am eager to serve because I care about them on a personal level. Instead of being part of the large faceless mass of "needy" people who I serve out of a sense of moral obligation. I hope I can keep working on my transition from "moral obligation service" to "personal service" on future service trips and on Dickinson campus.

Phoebe Oldach