

Students Provide Disaster Relief in Kentucky

When people are hurting, God calls us to be His hands and feet in showing others His love and care in tangible ways," said Laura Racovita, dean of Southern Adventist University's School of Social Work, who coordinates disaster relief efforts for the University.

When she learned about the needs of a mobile home community in Prestonsburg, Ky., affected by disastrous flooding last February, she gathered a team to answer the call. "When the opportunity came, we simply responded and left the rest to the Lord's care to provide for students and sponsors."

Two groups of Southern Adventist University students and sponsors volunteered to help, joining two organizations on the ground: Light in the Storm Disaster Relief Ministries and 2Serve. In Kentucky, the groups collected and disposed of debris around the mobile homes; removed damaged belongings from inside the homes; and tore out walls, insulation, and floors so the framework could dry out. The Prestonsburg Church graciously opened its doors and housed the group for the duration of the trip.



When they were finished, the homes had been gutted and were ready for the next phase of the process to begin.

"I like to think that the benefits are always worth more than the costs," said Dannika Faith Olea, sophomore nursing major. "I missed almost a week of school but would do it all again in a heartbeat. God always seems to bless me and others in ways that we couldn't have imagined."

Sponsor Andrew Richards, Ph.D., professor in the School of Nursing, noted that an important aspect of the trip was its effect on the students. "I saw the ministry value of it, but I also saw how the students were able to grow," said Richards. "This was an investment in each of these students. As they finish

their time in college and start their careers, hopefully the lessons they've learned during the experience of service will stay with them the rest of their lives. This one trip might multiply into many more trips and acts of service for them."

"I received far more benefits from going, compared to the \$20 I gave to support the trip," said Madeleine Miyashiro, junior English major. "I wanted to reconnect with God by serving in a community, and I made new friends, bonded with other people who were working on the site, and received spiritual blessings. The trip definitely impacted my view on serving. Anyone can serve, even someone like me who isn't very strong!"

Cheryl Craven, director of Southern's Christian Service program, expanded on the reason Southern sends students on trips like this one, "These trips are a meaningful way for students to live out Southern's mission of pursuing Spirit-filled lives of service. Each deployment gives students a chance to put their faith into action by showing compassion and support when people need it most." ■



Volunteers arrived to help clean out flooded homes filled with muddy, water-logged possessions.

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