



Alternative Spring Break In Southwest Louisiana

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Reported by Evan Johnson

As you look around town you still see blue roofs on houses which is a sign hurricane recovery efforts are still needed. Hundreds of students from across the country decided to lend a helping hand to the area.

Spring Break is a time of the year all college students look forward to, and while many are spending their time on sandy beaches getting tan, some decided to work up a sweat in Southwest Louisiana's hot sun.

But instead many young people from all across the country are in Southwest Louisiana working to help residents recover from Hurricane Rita.

Gina Zamit from Montville, New Jersey says, "As a New Yorker, after 911 I know a lot of the country initiative...raised money and helped us out so I really feel like it's my job to do the same thing for others."

This year on Spring Break she helped repair the ceiling of local homeowner Mary Thomas' home.

Mary Thomas: "They're on spring break and they could be somewhere partying and having a good time. Instead they're volunteering their time to help people like me that need assistance and I think it's wonderful."

The group not only helped repair homes, but they also did smaller jobs like constructing benches and performing some landscaping at Lake Villa apartments.

Jessa Wodke, from Cincinnati, Ohio says, "You see New Orleans getting all of this help and you don't really hear about Lake Charles and it's still so important to the people down here. Everybody's still recovering so even a bench is going to help somebody else know that even people from way up North is still caring."

The landscaping didn't stop there. More college students were at Friend Ships Unlimited cultivating the land so the organization can grow crops to help other people.

Stuart Roberts from Long Island, New York: "Individually I'm not really doing much, but everybody put together I think does a big part."

Veridiana Montas from Manhattan, New York: "It's kind of a chain reaction...they help others and now we're helping them. Through that we kind of are helping others at the same time.

Mopping and wiping down cabinets isn't the way most college students picture their Spring Break, but for this group it's well worth the sacrifice.

Montas: "Rather than spend a whole week doing something that probably is not going to accomplish anything at the end of the week, I'd rather do something that is going to make a difference."

Roberts: "This is more rewarding. I'd forget that cruise in a couple of years, but this I feel like I'll take with me for the rest of my life."

While Southwest Louisiana benefits, Alternative Spring Break also serves as an inspiration for young people to help change their own communities through service.

That's why there were also encores this spring in Biloxi, Mississippi and Detroit, Michigan