Relief Work Over Break

While many anxious students are driving home for break or counting down the seconds to the New Year, there will be a group of students from Northern Michigan University in Biloxi, Mississippi, trying to do what they can to get families into homes for Christmas and the New Year. Not many students say all they want for Christmas is their own bed to sleep in or to wake up to a backyard without debris in it, but the people in Mississippi are putting that on their holiday wish list this year.

Chi Alpha is promoting a unique volunteer opportunity open to students, community members, or anyone that has an interest in helping out the Hurricane Katrina victims. There will be two trips to Biloxi, Mississippi, to do relief work. Biloxi is about 90 miles east of New Orleans, on the coast. The trips will be from December 16 - 23 and December 26 - January 6. There are approximately 15 people going on each trip.

This will be the third and fourth trip to Biloxi that Chi Alpha has put together. The first two trips were during last year’s spring break and at the beginning of May. This is how Dale Throenle, a volunteer who was involved in both of the previous trips, described Biloxi, "It looked like a bomb had hit. It looked like they’d gone through a war." He also went on to say that he was a bit discouraged when he went back in May because there was barely any progress on the construction since they left after spring break of the previous year. Prior to the hurricane, approximately 600 families lived on the east side of Biloxi, where the relief work is being done. Currently, approximately 82 families are living in the area.

Dale met an ex-Marine of the Biloxi community, Anthony, on his first trip. He said that Anthony had never seen devastation in any of the previous six hurricanes he survived or in Vietnam as bad as what he had seen in Biloxi from Hurricane Katrina.

Though the volunteers going to Biloxi cannot bring back the 200 people’s lives that were lost in the disaster, they can help surviving families rebuild their lives and the homes they lost almost a year ago.

The volunteers going to Biloxi will be paying their own way, approximately $250 per person, for the transportation to get to and from Mississippi. If you are interested in helping out with this relief project, please contact Dale Throenle, Fuchsia Block, at dthroenle@nmu.edu. If you still want to help out but can’t make the trip, any donation would be greatly appreciated. Some people are not able to go on the trip because of financial reasons. If enough money is raised to lower the total price of the trip, more people will be able to go. The more people involved, means more hands to help, which in turn means more progress can be made to get families back in their homes. Any and all donations will be put to great use and are greatly appreciated!

~Julie Rueden
Mint Block

Dale Throenle (far right) and team members with Biloxi residents in May 2006.
The Philosophy of "Big Jon"

There is a word that represents something we all recognize as important. In fact, many of us use this word on a daily basis. Philosophers often speak of it, but scientists tend to write it off as too subjective, indefinable, and multifaceted. It is clearly something we cannot live without, something that costs nothing, and something that when given to others, makes both the giver and the receiver stronger and more powerful. You have probably guessed by now that I am writing about love. Love is the foundation of all relationships and to my belief, has been best defined as an effort toward understanding, accepting, and appreciating the true self of an individual (for more, see Erich Fromm's book The Art of Loving).

Relationships are a huge part of leadership! Often these relationships are vertical, wherein the leader holds a position of influence over other group members. The power of love is relevant here as well; the more the leader loves the group members, the more influence she will have over them. What I have observed in the domain of student-teacher relationships, is that the more a student feels loved by a teacher, the more likely the student is to believe that the teacher has the student's best interest in mind. The more the student believes this, the more he/she will internalize the knowledge, values, and suggested behaviors offered by the teacher. As a result, the students will hold as their own, the knowledge, values, and behaviors originally suggested by the teacher.

This is not a new idea. In fact, my favorite historical example of this notion was provided by Lao Tsu, around 2600 years ago and goes something like this: "To lead people, walk beside them... As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence. The next best, the people honor and praise; the next, the people fear; and the next, the people hate... When the best leader's work is done, the people say, 'We did it ourselves!'

During the holidays it is customary to say, "tis the season for giving;" so remember, the easiest and arguably most important thing to give, is the gift of love.

Jon's Jokes:
Two atoms bump into each other. One says, "I think I lost an electron!" The other asks, "Are you sure?" To which the first replies, "I'm positive."

Jon's Cookbook:
1 ham, (about 1/2 pound per person is a good rule)
1 cup of brown sugar for each 3 pounds of ham
1/4 cup of honey for each 3 pounds of ham
1 can of mandarin oranges (save the juice)
1 container of whole cloves
A handful of toothpicks
A few pinches of ground cinnamon, allspice, and nutmeg as desired

Mix together brown sugar, honey, and ground spices. Add a splash of the juice and a few mandarin orange slices. Mix well to a sticky (but paste-able) consistency. Slice the ham 3/4 of the way through, keeping slices as thick as you want them to be when served eventually. Next, paste a thin coat of the sauce between each of the slices. Place the ham in a casserole dish with the slices stacked horizontally. Paint a coat of the sauce all over the outside of the ham. Press whole cloves into the ham 1-3 inches apart. Spike mandarin orange slices onto the ham using the toothpicks. Cover the dish with tinfoil and bake for approximately 2-3 hours at 325 degrees. Cooking time will vary depending on the size of the ham. Most hams come with estimated cooking times on their label.

Block Talk

What do you want for Christmas?

"I want a vacuum. I kid you not. I want a vacuum for Christmas so I can vacuum my dorm room without having to use the dorm ones. I do not like the dorm ones because they are ghetto looking, smell, and don't work."
--Angela Neumann
Mint Block

"I want to go home! That's all I want for Christmas!"
--Amanda Kaminski
Mint Block

"I would like snowshoes!"
--Krista Leidl
Mint Block

"I would like a trip to Ireland over spring break to visit my best friend, Alyssa, while she is studying abroad!"
--Zana Setunskey
Mint Block
Brooke’s Blurb

CSI Highlight

This month we are featuring two of our Fuchsia Blocks, Claire Knoche and Ashley Bartkowiak, and their Community Service Internship at Marquette Senior High School. I asked Claire and Ashley a little bit about what their CSI is all about.

Brooke: What do you do at Marquette Senior High School (MSHS)?

Ashley: “Twice a week Claire and I go to MSHS to help in the Functional Skills Classroom. The Functional Skills Classroom is one in which many of the students are cognitively or physically impaired. In the classroom, we usually work on specific tasks that the students are trying to get better at, which varies from playing with blocks, to matching, to putting together puzzles, or reading books. Also, Claire and I usually spend a half an hour of our time taking the students for a walk around the building, so they can get out of the classroom and get some exercise. For some students, this is their favorite time of the day and when they are most cooperative.”

Brooke: Do you have any specific goals for the project?

Claire: “A goal for me is to make sure that I am helping them with whatever they (the teacher and the students) need me to do and to make sure that I am more help than a hindrance.”

Ashley: “My primary goal was to become comfortable around students with disabilities. I think that I have been successful in reaching this goal and sometimes I forget that the students I am working with even have a disability. You become so comfortable with the atmosphere and see each student as an individual that you completely forget why these students cannot be placed in a ‘normal’ classroom setting.”

Brooke: How did you become involved with it?

Claire: “Ashley and I talked with the two girls who had helped in this classroom for their CSI last year.”

Ashley: “[They] talked to Claire and I about their experience working in the Functional Skills Classroom at MSHS for their CSI. It was something that sounded beneficial and rewarding, so Claire and I decided to take over their CSI this year.”

Brooke: Are there future CSI opportunities in the Functional Skills Classroom for other SLFPers?

Ashley: “Yes, definitely! It seems that on most days the classroom is understaffed, and they don’t have enough adults to work with the students. The teacher is always very grateful to have us there to help and looks forward to our next visit. Although it does test your patience some days, it is definitely a rewarding experience.”

Brooke: Do you want to share anything else about your experiences at MSHS?

Claire: “I am so glad I did this for my CSI. It was definitely something outside of my comfort zone but now I am so comfortable going into the classroom. I have learned a lot. I have learned so much from working with the students but also learned about myself. I am a Secondary Education major, and I know I will be taking what I have learned from this experience and applying it to my classroom. I feel really lucky to have been able to do this.”

Ashley and Claire are making a big difference in the Marquette community with their internship. Look forward to future CSI Highlights for the Fuchsia Blocks!

~Compiled by Brooke Gregersen

Claire Knoche and Ashley Bartkowiak at their Community Service Internship at Marquette Senior High School.
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10   Amanda Moraska
11   Katie Paulin
13   Kara Granroth
24   Yolanda Hazen
24   David Hedberg
27   Liz Becker
28   Stacy Bushie
31   Rachael Kramer

February
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2    Andy Wapneski
10   Ashley Bollwahn
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15   Melissa Natter
20   Shay Moore
26   JJ Jannette

Student Leader Fellowship Program
Center for Student Enrichment
1401 Presque Isle Avenue
Marquette, Michigan 49855
(906) 227-1771