

# PSH students travel to Mississippi to aid in Katrina relief

By **KELSIE WHITE**  
LAYOUT EDITOR  
KNW5041@PSU.EDU

Over Spring Break 11 Penn State Harrisburg students traveled to Gulfport, Mississippi where they spent five days helping those that were affected by Hurricane Katrina. The students were chosen through an application process last semester on a space available basis, and most didn't know each other before the trip. By the end of the trip the students were inseparable and referred to each other as family.

porches from scratch; laying down laminate wood flooring; and painting the interiors of houses.

The trip was sponsored by Penn State University. The University paid all expenses except the 100-dollar fee students had to provide for staying at the camp in Gulfport. The camp that the students resided at for the five day duration of the trip was run by the Presbytery of Mississippi, which has camps throughout the United States that aid victims of natural disasters. PSU also sent students from the Penn State Erie, Leigh-High Valley, and Dubois campuses. In

all, there were about 60 Penn State students present at the camp.

At the camp students resided in "PODS", which most students described as "plastic cardboard shacks". They slept on cots and used outdoor bathrooms and showers, and even cooked each other breakfast and

dinner almost everyday. Different campuses alternated what days they needed to cook each meal, and even which campus had cleaning duties each day. Even though the camp life seemed rough to many students at first, in

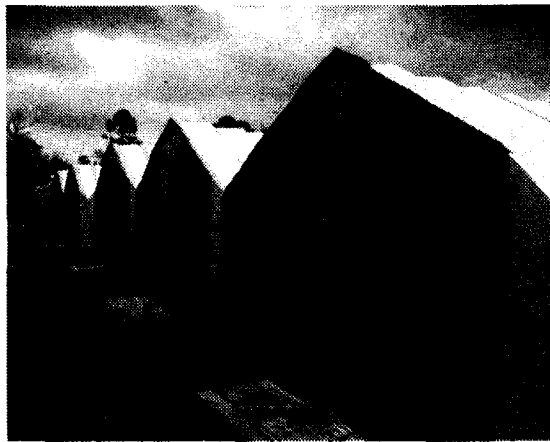


Photo by **ALLYSON KILHEFFER**

Part of the "POD" village that the students resided in during the trip.

the end they learned to enjoy it.

The camp wasn't bad until the trailer restrooms broke down and I had to swallow my pride and use a "john". "I would like to think of it as a part of the experience. How often do you get to eat your dinner in a tent mess hall or make s'mores around the camp fire?"

Student's also had the opportunity to interact with the some of the residents of Gulfport who experienced the devastation of Katrina. Many felt that this was one of the most important experiences on the trip because they got first hand accounts of what actually happened and how people had handled what happened.

"The interactions with the homeowners were great. They were so grateful for us being there and they were open to tell their story, which made the work worthwhile," said Freeman.

When asked what the most shocking thing about the trip

was sophomore Allyson Kilheffer said, "I thought the most shocking this was the lack of help from the neighbors. There were a couple of times that neighbors would watch but never came over to help."

When asked what his favorite part of the experience

was Vaughn Corleone said, "My favorite part on the trip was actually when we going through

the metal detectors at the airport. One of the guards had asked me what we were in Gulfport for. I told him that we were there on disaster relief for our spring break with a program through our school. He responded by thanking me and he told me that he probably still wouldn't have his house back if it wasn't for students like us coming down to help. That made me realize that we were only a small part of a much bigger puzzle."

Throughout the week students traveled along the Gulfport coast as well as to the nearby city of Biloxi. Students expressed signs of disgust and shock at the sites of large casino resorts

alongside empty lots where people used to live. Freeman said that it upset her to see tourist attractions along the coast when there were neighborhoods waiting to be built and families still waiting to go back home because companies and private owners could have put their money together and helped the residents of Mississippi first and then catered to their tourists.

Every student that went on the trip said they would recommend the trip to anyone because it gave them a greater appreciation for all the things they had.

"I walked away from this experience loving life, appreciating everything that I have and forgetting about the things I don't have," said Freeman.



Photo by **KELSIE WHITE**/ The Capital Times

Students work together to finish the exterior details of a resident's house.

Throughout the week students completed tasks such as: scraping off exterior paint and then repainting surfaces such as porches and even entire houses; caulking spaces on the exteriors of houses; rebuilding front

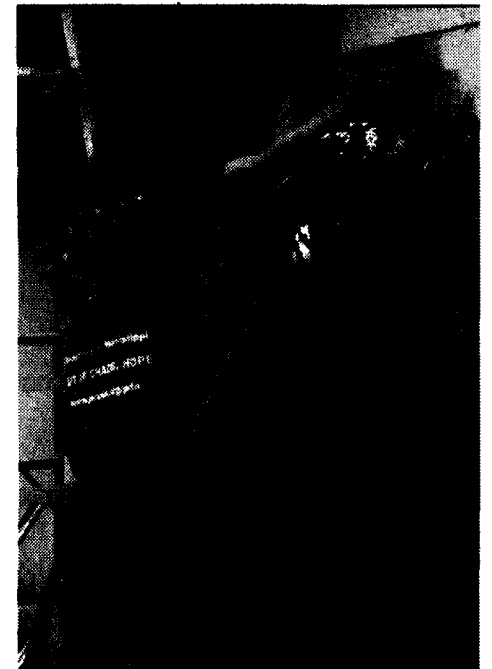


Photo by **ALLYSON KILHEFFER**

Lindsay Shook, Stephanie White, and Vaughn Corleone repaint the exterior of a resident's house.

## KAREITHI: Professor honored for being a remarkable teacher

Continued from page 11

advanced critical thinking and a desire to understand and analyze perspectives outside the Western perspectives familiar to most of our graduate students. Dr. Kareithi's impact on our students is electrifying," a colleague says.

Also the winner of the 2009 Penn State Harrisburg Award for Excellence in Teaching, Kareithi is not a stranger to national and even international accolades. A native of Kenya, he was named that nation's journalist of the year in 1980, best investigative reporter

in 1981, and best reporter in 1983. He also won the 1990 international Lillian Hellman-Dashiell Hammett Award presented by the Fund for Free Expression, which honors writers worldwide for their courage in defense of free expression. Past winners have included poet and former Czech president Vaclav Havel.

The Hellman-Hammett honor came as a result of his efforts as editor and publisher of the controversial Kenyan investigative weekly newsmagazine, *Financial Review*, in the late 1980s. He was arrested and detained by the government

on numerous occasions before the magazine was eventually banned for exposing corruption and the abuse of power. He then went on to serve six years as an editor with *The Republican* in Springfield, Mass., and earned his Ph.D. at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Prior to coming to Penn State Harrisburg, Kareithi had taught at American University, the University of New Hampshire, and Ithaca College.

Story and Photo courtesy of Penn State Live ([www.live.psu.edu](http://www.live.psu.edu))

