

Helping the Less Fortunate

Will R.

Grade 8

Stanton Middle School

Not more than a year ago, I along with my dad, step mom, and stepbrother traveled with Kent State University to Biloxi, Mississippi over spring break. We went there to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina. When my dad told me what we were doing for Spring Break, I doubted that I would have any fun at all. I would rather go to school than to spend hours every day working in the hot sun with a bunch of college students who obviously didn't have any friends. If they were normal, they would probably be going to Florida with their friends. My views on the trip changed a few hours after we got there I learned an important law of life in Biloxi and while at first I didn't want to go, When I got there I didn't want to leave.

The busses we rode arrived in a small town in the suburbs of Biloxi at five o'clock AM and I had barely gotten any sleep since the same time one day ago when we left. I slept a few hours in my cabin but my dad woke me up to tell me we had to clean up a park off the coast of the Gulf. There were hundreds of us working there but it still took us a while to clean. I spent hours picking up small pieces of debris from nearby ruins that were once buildings. After we were done cleaning the park, I stepped onto the beach and took a look at what we had done. Suddenly, I thought for a second that this trip may not be a complete disaster.

Over the next few days, I worked on adding showers and sinks to a newly built laundry house for victims of the hurricane and volunteers. I worked for hours on installing sinks and gutters. The work, however, was nothing like I expected. I spent most of the time nailing wooden supports for sinks. I barely spent any time outside in the hot sun and somehow, the work was actually somewhat fun. I would have never guessed that the trip would have been anything like it was.

As I worked in the laundry house, I began to notice things about the people I was working for and with. I had always thought of natural disaster victims as people who were too lazy to do anything to repair their homes. I thought that they just waited for volunteers to come and do their own work for them. As I walked around the coast in the evenings, I saw more and more people doing their best to repair their houses. I realized some difference in the other volunteers than what I expected too. They didn't seem like the type of people who came to Biloxi because they didn't have and friends to do something fun with. I realized that they liked doing this, and I realized that I did to.

From my experience in Biloxi, I learned a valuable law of life. I learned the value of helping others and that working can actually be fun if you know that you are making a difference. As I looked out of my window on the bus ride home from Biloxi, I began to think. I thought about how people could now take a walk in a beautiful beachside park. I thought of how victims of Hurricane Katrina whose bathrooms were damaged could take showers again. Most importantly, I thought of how I had helped in improving the lives of the citizens of Biloxi, Mississippi. Though my deeds were only minor compared to those of volunteers who had been there for

months, I was satisfied with the fact that I had made a difference. I will never forget my experience in Biloxi and the lessons that I learned there.