

News Release

MARCH 2007, NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA—Tools, magic markers, and a season of prayer brought hope and blessings to four families when Rogue Valley Adventist School (Medford, OR) students chose missions over vacation.

A year and a half after Katrina ravaged New Orleans, residents continue to feel its wrath and live in a limbo of bureaucracy, financial logistics, and the unpredictability of life: Everyone, including city engineers and insurance agencies, believed that certain areas of New Orleans were safe from flooding; as a result, thousands of families were without flood insurance when Katrina rampaged through New Orleans without discrimination.

Rogue Valley Adventist School students chose to spend their spring vacation in one such neighborhood. Through a partnership with the North American Division Adventist Community Services and South Central Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the school gave \$10,000 worth of supplies towards renovations and personally prepared the damaged homes for professional volunteer contractors: With sledgehammers and crowbars, they gutted and cleaned the inside of homes. With rakes and mowers they beautified neighborhoods. And finally, with youthful zeal, they went the extra Christian mile with a unique testimony of hope: Girded with the truth, the students used magic markers to permanently write promises of hope and encouragement on 2 x 4 lengths of timber that will be used as rafters in the roofs. As a result, truth will reverberate every time someone walks up into the attic and sees the handiwork of these students.

Seeing the devastation first-hand, cleaning up destroyed personal belongings of strangers, witnessing the slow pace of recovery, the students gained an appreciation for the everyday blessings of life and were moved to give as much time as possible to the project. One homeowner who, like thousands, is currently taking refuge with family out of state until a job can bring her back to New Orleans, was overwhelmed with the volunteer work of Rogue Valley Adventist School and sent word for them to bless her home and family with prayers.

The students responded with a solemn dedication of her house and the three other homes they were involved in rehabilitating. Standing in a circle in the empty, gutted homes that await the return of families, the students shared aloud adjectives that described the blessedness of their home and family: laughter, support, love, loyalty, spirituality, and memories. Then they blessed the home and families with all these attributes. A moving, tearful season of prayer brought the mission project to an end while reaffirming the choice of mission over vacation; and in their choice Rogue Valley Adventist School affirmed their faith-based tradition of service in education.