

# The Stoutonia



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## Not your average spring break

*By Tabitha Martin  
The Stoutonia*

Imagine a spring break where you will be in a warm, sunny place surrounded by other students from all over the country cleaning, working and building all day.

This may not be the ideal for many of the Univeristy of Wisconsin-Stout's spring breakers, but this spring break is ideal for the 90 students who are passing up trips to Cancun and the Bahamas for the greater good.

These 90 students will travel 22 hours in a bus to Hancock and Harrison Counties in Mississippi to spend a week working hard to improve the lives of those hardest hit in that state by Hurricane Katrina. They will help to clean and rebuild what was lost in the wake of the hurricane. They will also spend their time working with the children affected by the disaster as well.

This alternative trip was coordinated by Sandi Meinsen, the Student Services coordinator at UW-Stout. Each student has paid \$150 to participate in these efforts. This coordinated effort was made with the cooperation of the Involvement and Leadership Center located in the MSC, Housing and Residence Life and University Centers.

The activities that the students will be participating in— which includes cleaning, construction and working with the children— have been coordinated with the Boys and Girls Club as well as Community Collaborations International.

According to Meinsen, organizers have sought out sponsorship from a number of student organizations such as the Stout Student Association and the Inter Residence Hall Association.

Within the first two days of the announcement of this program, there were 90 applicants ready to go and there are still another 60 on waiting lists.



Source: www.ritaimages.com

During spring break, 90 University of Wisconsin-Stout students will go to Hancock County, Mississippi, to help clean up the most severe hurricane damage in the state. The cost per student is \$150.

This is a sign that students at UW-Stout really do have a desire to help and participate in bettering their community while gaining an education.

The students will be staying at the Icare Volunteer Village in tents. They are prepared to "get dirty, sweaty and maybe even smelly" to help a great cause.

"After the hurricane hit, we wanted to help as much as possible and this was just one of many ideas that we had," said Meinsen. "We hope that this trip will send a message that serving the community is important, that opportunities are available to do so and that more can be done."

There is more that students who are not able to go on the trip can do to help with the relief efforts. The participants and those helping to coordinate this trip will be seeking out donations necessary to make their time spent in Mississippi more effective. They will be raising money to buy Home Depot gift cards and construction materials that will be beneficial to the relief effort. To help them accomplish this goal, be on the lookout for their tables in the MSC, or stop by the SOC desk to find out how else you can help.

The students who are participating are committing a lot to this project and they seem excited about the experience. They will be trained in first aid and will receive disaster training to prepare them for their experiences in Mississippi.

Karen Metzner, a student in the graphic design program, will be attending.

"It is important to give back to the community," said Metzner. "I think that I will walk away from this experience with a different perspective. I will get to meet new people and learn new things."

At the orientation meeting Monday night, Feb. 13, the students seemed ready to have fun and to contribute all things possible on their spring break adventure.

"This is a worthwhile cause because we will actually make a measurable difference while we are there," said Brandon Jutz, a senior in marketing and business education.

"My goal is to learn more about myself and to meet a great group of people all while helping my fellow Americans," said Jutz.

Coordinators of the spring break experience were overwhelmed by the number of students who applied. Unfortunately, they can only take so many, but look forward to the possibility of future excursions where UW-Stout students can show their pride by participating in events that will benefit not only themselves but contribute to the community as well.

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