

student hurricane network:



law students working for justice in the gulf coast



The Student Hurricane Network (SHN) is a national network of law students dedicated to advancing the cause of social justice in communities affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita by coordinating volunteer efforts, aiding public interest organizations, and educating members of the legal community about legal crises in the region.

I. ONGOING PROJECTS

Student Placements

Student trips continue to be a cornerstone of SHN's work. Over Winter Break 2006-2007 and Spring Break of 2007, approximately 1500 students traveled to the gulf coast through SHN. In the winter of 2006, SHN began expanding the direct placement model to include SHN-administered projects based on the needs on the ground, as expressed to us by our community partners. Over the Spring Break period, over 1000 students were in the region with 500 placed through SHN in a single week. Students continued to travel to the region over the following months, with a few hundred in New Orleans in the weeks before schools started back up again in the fall. After another successful winter trips season this past December and January, SHN brought over 550 students to the region. Over the 5-week period of Spring Break 2008, approximately 800-900 law students participated in SHN student trips. Since our inception almost two and one half years ago, in total over 4500 law students have worked through SHN in the gulf. Through this consistent stream of volunteers, we have been able to maintain and continue to build relationships with nearly every social justice and legal service entity in New Orleans and coastal Mississippi.

Orientations

“I am saying as you must say, too, that in order to see where we are going, we not only must remember where we’ve been, but we must understand where we have been. This calls for a great deal of analytical thinking and evaluation of methods that have been used. We have to begin to think in terms of where do we really want to go and how can we get there.”

~Ella Baker

Over the course of the nearly three years since the landfall of Hurricane Katrina over 4,500 law students have descended, through SHN, to the Gulf Coast region with the unconquerable spirit to serve. As the students, residents, and legal service providers combat ineffective bureaucracies, fraudulent private contractors, and rampant discriminatory policies, too often our own perceptions of the people residing in the region serve as obstacles to truly improving the lives and institutions of those we come to serve. Just as importantly, there is a need for heightened awareness of how we are perceived by the people on the ground. Increasingly, our legal services partners have communicated that the biases and lack of awareness of our students is at times impeding the effectiveness of the fabulous movement we are contributing to. The most obvious culprits are strangely familiar isms: racism, classism, and even sexism.

Periodically the attention of the National Advisory Board has returned to a simple concept. These volunteer relief trips are an opportunity not only to service the people of the Gulf Coast, but to also provide law students with the tools and skills to enable them to become better advocates and ultimately better people. Too often our affiliation with prestigious institutions, or simply operating within our own privilege, are detrimental inhibitors to this very demanding work. In the end we cannot afford to be afraid of, or detached from, the communities we have come to serve.

The legacies of racism and poverty are not uniquely characteristic to the South; they are in fact American problems that comprise a large portion of a shared inheritance. Unfortunately the typical law school approach to education does not adequately address our common deficiencies within these areas. That said, SHN is presently exploring ways to address these biases among students using thoughtfully constructed orientations and trainings. Under our current week long trips model there is little time available at the end of a long work day for intensive anti-racist dialogue and training. Ideally, such trainings should occur prior to arriving on the Gulf Coast, preparing the students mentally and emotionally and providing them with substantive information about the communities they are to enter.

Presently, SHN is exploring partnerships with a variety of experienced organizations, including the Peoples' Institute for Survival and Beyond out of New Orleans, to construct effective orientation models that can be implemented at universities prior to the students' departures for Mississippi and Louisiana. We are also contemplating ways to more thoroughly integrate community leaders and partners into the orientation process that occurs on the ground. As SHN continues its steady transformation into a social justice organization, it is essential that this work not only uplifts and empowers the historically oppressed and disadvantaged, but must also elevate and free the helper. Truly the Aboriginal activists of Queensland stated it best: "If you have come to help me you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

Anyone with an interest in helping SHN fulfill its mission of raising awareness and instituting anti-racist trainings in his or her local regions should contact SHNdiversity@gmail.com.

Project Triage, Fall 2006

In Fall 2006, New York City-based SHN students participated in a remote data project with the Tulane Law Clinic to inventory and track pre-trial inmates held in Orleans Parish Prison. More than forty students gave up three weekends and countless weeknight hours to evaluate Orleans Parish Criminal District Court docket information. The goal of the analysis was to determine the current status of the defendant's case. Students flagged critical cases for Tulane Law Clinic for follow up as well as created a database of pre-trial inmate defendant information for the Clinic and the public defender office. This project laid the groundwork for the Winter 2006-07 Katrina-Gideon Interview Project.

Katrina-Gideon Interview Project, Dec. 2006 – Jan. 2007

In December 2006-January 2007, over 150 students and faculty from across the country traveled to Louisiana to participate in the Katrina-Gideon Interview Project. Led by Tulane Law Professor Pamela Metzger and co-coordinated by SHN students, the project sent teams of students and faculty into Orleans Parish Prison and other correctional facilities across the state holding pre-trial clients of the Orleans Public Defender's office. The teams interviewed clients and created files for OPD. These teams performed the necessary legwork for public defenders that otherwise could not have been accomplished, resulting in a handful of inmates being immediately released and building stronger cases for hundreds more. Schools included Brooklyn Law School, Fordham Law School, St. John's, Widener, University of Baltimore, University of Nebraska, and University of North Carolina. The project received national attention and was

featured in the Times-Picayune (Laura Maggi, "Group tries to loosen legal logjam" The Times-Picayune, Dec. 16, 2006, <http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/neworleans/index.ssf?/base/news-6/116625328310140.xml&coll=1> (last accessed Feb. 3, 2008)).

Road Home

As the Road Home program began to further complicate the recovery process for residents of New Orleans and the surrounding areas, SHN was one of many organizations to formulate a response. SHN, in partnership with law students from Tulane Law School, designed and executed a multi-tiered plan in which law students aided applicants to the Road Home program. Applicants received assistance with their applications, tracking their submitted applications, and handling appeals. Clients whose needs could not be addressed by this program were referred to appropriate legal service providers.

Matchmakers for Justice and Future Remote Legal Service Projects

Last year, Matchmakers for Justice (M4J) brought 75 law students to New Orleans to participate in a day-long training session featuring workshops led by law professors, local attorneys, licensed social workers, community relief organizations and local residents. After training, students were paired up with displaced residents in need of assistance. Students helped the residents navigate legal problems by connecting them with the applicable legal resources.

The pilot program was a success that benefited everyone involved. The sustainability of the program, however, was dependent on a substantial amount of supervision and coordination. As such, SHN sought to restructure M4J into a more manageable program that still connected students and Gulf Coast residents in a meaningful manner. SHN is currently in the process of establishing a database of students who would like to take on remote legal service projects. It is our experience that the legal aid organizations would prefer to send out projects to students who have a faculty member or local attorney serving as a supervisor that can answer questions and help guide the student's legal work. These student-faculty teams provide the most efficient assistance to our partner organizations. SHN is partnering with the Society of American Law Teachers (SALT) to help encourage more faculty members to get involved and assist their students in performing important remote legal service work. Once SHN has an understanding of what resources are available at each school (how many students are available; what is their area of interest; how much time do they have to invest; what supervision, if any, do they have, etc.), we work with legal aid organizations to package projects for students to handle remotely. In the past, students have handled remote legal service projects covering administrative law (i.e. FEMA appeals), successions, bankruptcy and family law (i.e. uncontested divorces).

Jena Six Research Projects, Fall 2007

In the summer of 2006, SHN became involved in rallying law student support of the defense teams of the Jena Six. No projects were actually completed over the summer, but into Fall 2007, a large project cataloging all the articles that appeared in the local papers about the Jena Six. SHN students reviewed the Alexandria Town Talk and Jena Times for articles about the Jena

Six, cataloging them on an Excel sheet and downloading them into a searchable database. This project is ongoing.

SHN Newsletters, Year-round

Since summer 2006, SHN has been publishing email newsletters on a monthly basis, informing our community about relevant local news stories, SHN organization news and events. The newsletters are a crucial piece of our continuing outreach to community organizations, legal services groups, law school administrators and law students. Past newsletters can be found on our website, where you can also sign up to receive future issues.

Placements with the Office of the Governor of Louisiana

Student Hurricane Network made great strides in the summer of 2007 by placing fifteen (15) law students with various offices under the Governor of Louisiana. This opportunity was communicated to SHN by Governor Blanco. The National Advisory Board publicly advertised this opportunity and then selected students. SHN worked with students to find scheduling and placement options that were amenable to both the unpaid student interns and the various Departments within Louisiana State Government. Students worked on environmental policy, economic concerns, homeland security, disaster preparedness, and many other areas of interest. While this program was not a cornerstone of SHN's operations, it represents recognition at the state level for which SHN remains grateful and ever willing to serve.

SHN Alumni Network

In the winter of 2006-2007, third year law students who had been active with SHN expressed a desire to remain active and engaged with our work, even after they were no longer students. Some of these students and a National Advisory Board member worked together to create the Student Hurricane Network--Alumni Network. The Alumni Network was built up by reaching out to past trip participants and leaders and the Network hopes to be a resource of attorneys and expertise to support SHN's work and trips.

Future Projects

As it is SHN's vision that all work be done with sensitivity to the needs of the Gulf Coast, SHN continues to search for other projects arranged to fulfill needs that are otherwise unanswered. It is only through this quest for future projects that SHN is able to more adequately hear the outcries of the victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. SHN has discussed and plans to implement several projects both this spring and beyond. These projects include but are not limited to a court watching program designed to more accurately determine the need for an eviction clinic in New Orleans. It is SHN's and many community lawyers' suspicion that as rental assistance moves from FEMA to DHAP that many will fall victim to the mountains of bureaucracy. As tent city continues to grow in numbers, SHN plans to do its part to better inform our community partners as to potential preemptive strikes that may be made against these injustices. SHN also continues to pursue a partnership with Algiers Community Collective as they attempt to build a strong community free of corruption. It is through partnerships such as

this that SHN hopes not merely to send a message that SHN cares about Algiers, but that SHN is married to the communities in which it serves. Other projects are also being explored including a gutted housing homelessness survey project as well as continued projects in partnership with other organizations.

II. SHN EVENTS

First SHN Annual Report issued, October 18, 2006

In the Fall of 2006, in order to help update law students on the work SHN had completed since Katrina and in order to provide our supporters with a report on how SHN law student volunteers had affected the rebuilding communities of the Gulf Coast, we compiled and published “Law Students Working Within the Post-Katrina Legal Landscape: The Student Hurricane Network Annual Report, October 2005–October 2006.” The report served three broad functions. First, it identified some of the work that law students have been doing in the hurricane-affected areas over the past year. Second, it articulated our general perspective on some of the legal issues we had encountered. Third, it outlined some of the ongoing activities we were coordinating so that law students who were interested in getting involved could be aware of some of the opportunities to do so.

The report broke down past SHN projects and future SHN projects while also giving a detailed analysis of the variety of student volunteer placements grouped by organization. The report focused on four primary areas which students had been involved in action: criminal justice, housing, workers’ rights, and voting rights. It was initially distributed at the 2006 Equal Justice Works Conference in Washington, D.C., but was also published on the SHN website and sent to dozens of community organizations.

First Leadership Meeting

On January 6, 2007, SHN convened the first annual Leadership Meeting at Tulane Law School. Over 60 student participants from all over the country participated. We heard from local activists about the landscape on the ground and a brief history of SHN. After a lunch where students socialized, the group broke up into small-group discussions according to interest. The groups corresponded to the established committee structure at the time—Institutional Liaisons, Communications, Administrative/Development, Student Trips, Remote Research, Matchmakers for Justice and Disaster Preparedness. Students discussed strategy and the future of SHN in each of these categories.

New York City Report Back Event, Feb. 12, 2007

“Legal Needs in the Wake of Hurricane Katrina: How Law Firms & In-House Counsel Can Help.” A panel of five SHN students and five attorneys presented on the pro bono work they had done in the Gulf Coast in reaction to Hurricane Katrina. The event was planned over several weeks of conference calls with pro bono counsel, school administrators and students in New York City and the Gulf Coast. The event was cosponsored by pro bono counsel at Kaye Scholer and Shearman & Sterling, the New York City Bar Justice Center, and SHN. Bill Quigley and

Martha Bergmark attended and briefly presented. The goal of the event was to present the work that law students have been doing in the Gulf Coast, on the persistent legal needs in the region, and on the ways that firms and companies have been able to get involved. Over sixty students, attorneys, pro bono counsel and law school administrators attended.

First National Advisory Board Meeting, March 30 and April 1, 2007

From March 30 to April 1 of 2007, Student Hurricane Network's inaugural National Advisory Board held their inaugural retreat. The retreat began with an overview of the history of SHN as described by Morgan Williams and Lauren Bartlett. On March 30, several members of the National Advisory Board also had occasion to meet with a contingent of MBA students that had chosen to help SHN create a new structure. The meeting officially began March 31 with a roundtable discussion of visions for SHN and visions for social justice in the Gulf Coast generally.

Lunch began with a large discussion involving many of our community leaders. Representatives included lawyers from NOLAC, Loyola Law Clinic, Tulane Law Clinic, NAACP, Pro Bono Project, and many other organizations dedicated to providing legal relief in the Gulf Coast. These leaders emphasized both the strengths and weaknesses of SHN. It was from these conversations that the new National Advisory Board would draw future designs for improvement and initiatives.

Following lunch, discussions ensued with other student organizations including NLG, NBLSA, and ABA Law Student Division. Members of the Society of American Law Teachers (SALT) also participated in a helpful and meaningful discussion geared towards creating a cohesive partnership. The day concluded with a summation of the day's events and a brainstorming session designed to create and assigned next steps. A member of Americorps was kind enough to invite the new National Advisory Board to a traditional crawfish boil that evening.

The meeting concluded on April 1 with an extended brunch. The main topic of brunch was the future of SHN and community involvement in SHN. The conversations around community involvement were heated and passionate, but one thing was clear: the new National Advisory Board was dedicated to helping the people of the Gulf Coast in a meaningful manner, not merely thrusting help upon them.

New York City Criminal Justice Panel, April 12, 2007

“Re-imagining Justice in New Orleans: How Lawyers, Law Firms, and Law Schools Can Fulfill Gideon’s Promise.” Professors Steven Singer (Chief of Trials, Orleans Public Defender; Professor, Loyola Law Clinic) and Pamela Metzger (Member, Orleans Public Defender Board; Professor, Tulane Law Clinic) described their efforts to rebuild and reform the public defender system and outlined both systemic problems in the criminal justice system and the systemic solutions attainable through impact litigation, public policy initiatives, and law firm and law school partnerships.

Organized by SHN, the Orleans Public Defenders, and the New York City Bar Justice Center, the goal of this event was to connect OPD with pro bono counsel in New York City for assistance. Pam Metzger (Tulane Law professor and Orleans Indigent Defender Board member) and Steve Singer (Loyola Law professor and Chief of Trials, OPD) presented to a crowd of about 25. Before the event a smaller meeting was held at Kaye Scholer to discuss how private firms could best be involved in pro bono activities with OPD.

Philadelphia Panel

On June 27, 2007 an outreach event entitled, "Rebuilding the Gulf Coast," was held at the Philadelphia Bar Association. Local attorneys, students and law school representatives attended the event to discuss ways to provide remote legal assistance to The Pro Bono Project, "TPBP" (a legal service organization based in New Orleans). Featured speakers at the event were Sandie McCarthy Brown of TPBP, Temple Law Professor Bill Woodward and Andy Cowan, a Cornell law student and TPBP volunteer. After each speaker delivered a passionate message to the attendees, students and pro bono attorneys were inspired to accept succession cases on the spot. Since the event, members of the Philadelphia legal community have continued to rally and support TPBP as they waded through the back-log of cases that resulted after the hurricanes.

SHN Mission Statement Changes, July 2007

Finally, in summer of 2007 we made good on an agenda item from the previous January's Leadership Conference – changing the mission statement. SHN students gathered in Washington, D.C., to alter the existing SHN mission statement to better reflect our move away from recovery and relief-based tasks and toward advancing social justice. It shows our awareness that the issues that arose after the storm were not temporary, but emblematic of larger issues in the Gulf Coast. The changes in the mission statement were presented on several conference calls and at the Equal Justice Works conference in fall of 2007.

Second National Advisory Board Meeting, August 25 & 26, 2007

In August of 2007, the National Advisory Board members convened at Tulane Law School for the second retreat of the year. At the weekend retreat, more seasoned board members shared their views on what has and has not worked within the organization. We reviewed our volunteer placement procedures, the structure of our volunteer orientations and our past and present projects.

After dissecting the organization's history, all members expressed their visions of SHN's future. The general consensus was that we all envision SHN as a sustainable organization with great potential. In order to ensure our longevity, one of our main goals is to strengthen our ties within the Gulf community and within our national student body. NAB members agreed to split up duties of reaching out to other student organizations (i.e. NLG, BLSA, LALSA, ABA). Other tactics discussed include: reaching out to SHN Alumni, creating a more resourceful website, encouraging greater communication and increasing the organization's transparency. For further details, please refer to the meeting minutes posted on the website.

FEMA Trailer Mapping Project Report Release December 10, 2007

A major difficulty in assisting Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) trailer residents to overcome obstacles is an understanding of the issues, legal or otherwise, that these residents face. During the week of March 12-16th, 2007, over 160 law students from 18 law schools interviewed residents from 557 trailers in New Orleans and Jefferson Parishes, as well as residents living in the Renaissance Trailer Park outside of Baton Rouge. This project was fully coordinated and carried out by law student volunteers through the Student Hurricane Network (SHN). The report of the project's findings was released on December 10, 2007 and was written by Lauren Bartlett, Staff Attorney at the Louisiana Justice Institute (LJI) and SHN alum, and Aran Thomas McNerney, a law student at Brooklyn Law School

New website

SHN is a national organization that makes extensive use of its website as its "home office", but our website was not as nimble as we needed it to be. After establishing a relationship with Pro Bono Net, a non-profit that provides web support services for public interest organizations, SHN launched its new website in mid-2008. The new site will allow for easy updating by the National Advisory Board and other SHN members so that the most recent information about SHN activities will be available on the website. The new site can be found at www.probono.net/shn. Currently, efforts are being made to have our old domain name (www.studenthurricanetwork.org) linked up to our new Pro Bono Net site.

Second Leadership Meeting

On January 12, 2008, SHN convened the second annual Leadership Meeting at Tulane Law School. Over 35 student participants from all over the country participated. We heard from local attorneys and community organizers about the situation on the ground, a synopsis of SHN's history and the continuing needs. After lunch, group broke up into small-group discussions and reconvened to discuss in large group the current strengths and weaknesses and the shared visions going forward.

Clinton Global Initiative University, March 14 and 15, 2008

As an organization, SHN was selected to participate in the inaugural Clinton Global Initiative University Meeting in March, 2008. Four members of the National Advisory Board were able to attend panels and discussions with other student actors and activists about issues in CGIU's focus areas: Human Rights, Global Health, Energy and Climate Change and Education. SHN made two commitments to CGIU. The first was to become more environmentally sound by lending its person power to environmental work in the regional, as well as offset students' travel. SHN also committed to develop criminal justice support programs that allow students' work to provide the feet on the groundwork to implement criminal justice reforms in New Orleans.

Third National Advisory Board Meeting, March 14 and 16, 2008

On March 14 and 16, 2008, Student Hurricane Network welcomed the second National Advisory Board to the fold. From approximately 30 applications, 8 new members were selected by the outgoing-board. At the meeting, outgoing and continuing members discussed the history of the organization, the goals the outgoing board shared as well as tips on successes and pitfalls.

III. STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

http://www.stjohns.edu/academics/graduate/law/news/pr_law_070129.sju

"Because of tensions between the immigrants and the Lowe's or Home Depot, there is a heavy police and national guard presence in the areas they congregate. Another one of our duties was to monitor police and National Guard interaction with the day laborers. We did not personally witness any brutality, but were told that it happens regularly. A police car or National Guard Humvee circled the area at least twice on the hour. Sometimes officers would disperse the group. We made note of the time this incident happened and the nature of the interaction. The general feeling among the laborers I spoke to is fear of the police and national guardsmen. Many have friends who have been beaten up and held in jail for indefinite amounts of time. It is my understanding that this is a more prevalent method of addressing the issue rather than turning them over to the Department of Homeland Security. Watching the humvees circle the day laborers and men and women in fatigues with large guns approaching us was very jarring. I just think that these are inherent symbols of war and purposely send a signal that this is a war zone."

~Zoe Polk (2L)

"Visiting New Orleans to participate in Project Gideon was the most amazing experience in my legal career thus far. I spent four days interviewing prisoners who had been incarcerated for up to two times the maximum sentence for crimes for which they had not yet been formally charged. Most prisoners had been in jail for over a year without seeing an attorney let alone the inside of a court room. The situation in New Orleans is an extreme example of the problems that institutional racism and poverty can cause in a community. Being in New Orleans and witnessing this first hand has reaffirmed my devotion to doing public interest work and advocating for social change and equality."

~Debra Smith, (2L)

"The trip helped me gain real-world legal experience, while also helping others. I found it to be very rewarding, and I hope to do more to help those affected by Hurricane Katrina."

~Heidi Roll (1L)

Amanda Golob, 2L, initiated this project at the law school through the Student Hurricane Network, a nationwide student organization dedicated to providing long term assistance to communities affected by Hurricane Katrina. Amanda Golob commented, "talking face to face with people who survived the Hurricane and its aftermath, people who lost everything and are now trying to rebuild what is left of their former lives, was awe-inspiring. To know that my legal education could be used to help those in need, improve their lives, or simply bring long awaited comfort was an amazing feeling. It really showed me how the skills I am learning at St. John's can be used in the real world and can be used to bring positive change to others." "I met with a

few clients, listened to their horror stories of what they went through during Katrina, during the evacuation, and then during the following months as they were sent from state to state, city to city with no shelter, money or idea of what was to come next, then after all this to receive federal money to help rebuild their shattered lives only to have FEMA, a year later, try and take back that money."

~Amanda Golob (2L)

"The St. John's students were honored to be able to help these families along that process by writing and filing succession papers, including renunciations and affidavits of death."

~Tracy Romano (3L).

"With the help of these volunteers, the public interest attorneys who run the Pro Bono Project are able to bring their clients one step closer to moving on with their lives."

~Erica Coleman (2L)

One week ago from today, I sat in my living room packing my bags. Now, seven days later, I'm back in California. How can I describe what this trip means to me? I have been struggling to describe the people, the places, the sounds, the food and the smells of New Orleans. Every time that I sit down to write a blog entry, I step away, unable to articulate my surroundings, my thoughts and my feelings.

It's impossible to describe in words my experiences in post-Katrina New Orleans this past week. Some images pop into my head: the atmosphere at Cafe du Monde where waiters and waitresses bustle around small circular tables with trays filled with hot, powdered sugar beignets and cups of milky-rich cafe au lait; the conversation that Gabrielle and I had with an elderly African-American woman who was applying for a Road Home grant to rebuild her home (who used her laughter to hide her pain and sadness over her personal losses); and the daily thirty minute morning walks with Neta, Deborah, Gabrielle, and Alison through the Marigny, the Quarter, and the CDB (Central Business District) from our inn to our legal aid work assignments. Words just don't do it justice.

Returning to NOLA has been an emotional journey for me. I lived in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina; in October 2005, just less than two months after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, I learned that I had lost almost all of my belongings – clothes, shoes, jewelry, furniture, pots and pans, and little knick-knacks due to mold damage. I came to terms with my own losses. Yet, nineteen months after the levees broke and destroyed parts of the city, people are still struggling to get back to a “normal” life. Most restaurants close at 10 p.m., non-functioning traffic lights sit on the corner of streets curled up, twisted and uprooted from their cement bases (oftentimes, streets lack street signs), and basic essentials – access to education/schools, health care, and food – are absent in many parts of the city. I found myself wondering, "How can this be?" and "How can *this* be happening in America?"

~Raamah S.

(<http://students.law.ucdavis.edu/halo/2007/03/final-thoughts.html>)

My name is Jane Vu. I am a first-year law student at The University of Mississippi School of Law. During our winter break, a group of us law students spent a week in Biloxi volunteering at the Mississippi Center for Justice. For most of the week I worked with Crystal Utley placing cases with volunteer attorneys, updating clients on the status of their cases, and helping to raise awareness in the community about the MS Center for Justice.

Having grown up in Biloxi and experiencing Hurricane Katrina, I enjoyed being able to help out any way that I can and knowing that any work I did was helping the community. My experience with volunteering with the MS Center for Justice has made me realize the many issues that are still prevalent in the aftermath of the storm over 2 years after the hurricane. One day, Riley Morse, an attorney with the MS Center for Justice, asked us to look at this brochure from the Center for Disease Control and help him figure out what language the flier was in because no one had been able to tell. Being of Vietnamese descent, I was able to make out that the flier was supposed to be in Vietnamese. It appeared that there was a miscommunication and the flier at one time may have been correctly translated but, because of formatting issues, had become distorted and incomprehensible. I was able to get my parents to help me re-translate the Center for Disease Control brochure.

I was happy to know that I made a huge difference during my week on the Gulf Coast. Being from the Gulf Coast and of Vietnamese descent, I know that Biloxi has a large Vietnamese community and it is distressing to think that this distorted brochure from Center for Disease Control, that was meant to inform the community about help that may be available to them, was going to be mass distributed to a community that would not be able to understand or take advantage of what was offered. This trip has been a great experience for me and I was able to develop a deeper connection with my community and have a greater appreciation for all of those who are still trying to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina long after the storm.

We gathered a colossal amount of data in our week on the Gulf, and saved the overtaxed attorneys at the Mississippi Center for Justice from a great deal of legwork that they just didn't have time to do. We also managed to give them much more work to do, in the form of leads and cases that will require many, many hours of attention from individuals far more skilled than we. It felt great to help in Mississippi, but it also made me aware of how much work remains to be done. There are four full-time attorneys at the Mississippi Center for Justice, and they work their fingers to the bone, but still cannot help everyone in need of assistance. They need more volunteers like us, to help out with the basic but time consuming groundwork, and they critically need help from attorneys and upper-level law students who can commit more time to help develop the cases, so that suffering apartment tenants (and other hurricane victims in need of help) needn't wait another six months for relief. We saw only a slice of the post-Katrina legal needs in coastal Mississippi. When I think of all the miles of the Gulf Coast, from Mississippi to Texas, that have been ravaged by the storm, the enormity of the tasks ahead, legal and otherwise, is staggering.

~Excerpt from:
<http://www.law.umich.edu/currentstudents/p>

ublicservice/Pages/betseyjournal.aspx