

# STUDENT HURRICANE NETWORK



## STUDENT TRIP PLANNING HANDBOOK<sup>1</sup>

### **A. Background**

Since the Winter Break season of 2005, over 4500 law students from over 130 schools have traveled the Gulf Coast to provide legal assistance through Student Hurricane Network.

This handbook will provide you with information on what to do before you arrive, information for once you are there, and also the role of the Student Hurricane Network in supporting your plans.

Fortunately, you will receive a lot of help in planning. The Student Hurricane Network provides support for Student Trips in terms of placing students at organizations, giving information about planning and on-the-ground logistics, and coordinating orientation and social events during your trip.

### **B. Before You Get There**

#### ***Recruiting***

Once you have decided to take on the awesome task of planning a service trip for your school, your first task will be to recruit students. Consider first talking to your school's public interest or student affairs director about trips that students have historically organized at your school. If other student organizations at your school are planning annual trips talk to them about their recruiting strategy and the possibility of working with them to promote student participation in an "alternative spring break."

Distribute handouts about the mission and goals of the SHN, press coverage from projects that students have worked on, and any other information you may have that will help students determine whether they would like to participate.

Discuss the logistics of the trip as it relates to your school, i.e. 1) dates, 2) cost and fundraising possibilities, 3) housing, 4) transportation, 5) projects students are likely to be working on. Emphasize to students that this will be a service trip and that while

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<sup>1</sup> Last Updated February 10, 2009.

everyone involved hopes to make the experience the best it possibly can be for each student, much flexibility from everyone is necessary to make it work. When hundreds, if not thousands, of law students arrive in the area over a short period of time, the legal and community-organizing community is grateful but often strained because of limited resources. As time goes on, many students have worked with certain organizations and reasonably request to work there again. Of course SHN attempts to honor those requests, but students and planners should understand that with so many folks in town over a short period of time, it may literally not be possible for everyone who has worked at organization A before to work there again. Fortunately, we work with nearly every legal organization and many community groups in the region and have a wealth of diverse and interesting placements. Students should also keep in mind the true purpose of the trip.

Many students have misconceptions—they may think of the trip as a resume-builder or the chance to party on someone else’s dime. It is crucial that you are very clear with students that while we hope their experience is really, really fun, **the purpose of a trip through Student Hurricane Network is to serve and to learn.**

Naturally students will be interested in the type of work they might be doing. To give them a sense, you can tell them that during Winter Break, we placed students at the following organizations:

- ACORN
- Alliance for Affordable Energy
- Appleseed
- Catholic Charities
- Common Ground
- Gulf Coast Fairing Housing
- Hispanic Apostolate
- Louisiana Capital Assistance Center
- Louisiana Justice Institute
- Loyola Law Clinic
- Mississippi Center for Justice
- Moving Forward Gulf Coast
- Neighborhood Planning Network
- New Orleans Legal Assistance Corporation (NOLAC)
- New Orleans Advocacy Center
- Orleans Public Defender
- The City Attorney’s Office
- The New Orleans Workers’ Center for Racial Justice
- The Pro Bono Project
- Turkey Creek Community Initiatives

Additionally, SHN plans projects during the break periods with our community partners to maximize the effectiveness of the student volunteers. Past projects include the Katrina-Gideon Interview Project<sup>2</sup> and the FEMA Trailer Survey Mapping Project.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Fundraising***

First, try to create a budget for your trip. Consider the following factors: 1) how many students plan to participate, 2) cost of transportation including flights to LA/MS and/or cost of rental vans, 3) cost of housing. Some schools choose to raise money to reimburse the costs of food, some do not. It may make sense to shoot for the moon, but have an idea of what will be necessary to cover the minimum expenses (lodging and transportation.)

Second, talk to your school's administration, development office, student affairs office, student bar association/student senate, and public interest office about sources of funding. If your school has a well-established public interest office with numerous student organizations, consider establishing a permanent chapter of the SHN that includes an annual budget.

Some schools have had great success contacting alumni, friends and family and local firms or businesses and asking for donations. Schools have sponsored bar nights, concerts, sold mardi gras beads in school colors at athletic events, held bake sales, raffles and nearly anything else you can think of. If this is your first trip, you may want to reach out to the liaisons at other schools in your city or region to see what has worked for them.

Many schools, after some trial and error, have found that requiring students to pay a small portion of the cost, or put down a nominal "deposit" (\$50 or \$75, for example) provides seed money for fundraising efforts and allows reservations and plans to be made. An added benefit is that students may be more committed because they have to fundraise to get that money back and are less likely to drop out at the last minute.

### ***Press***

Develop a relationship with your media relations office at your home institution. The office should be happy to help publicize the SHN. They can help you publish information in both your school publications as well as local and national media sources.

Use sample SHN press releases as a basis for writing your own press release to submit to the local media. Sample SHN press releases are available on our website under the Members & Liaisons tab.

Encourage students participating in the trip to send the press release to their hometown and undergraduate newspapers and any other media sources and make themselves available to talk about their experiences.

Plan a speaking event at your school featuring a professor or local practitioner that works on issues related either directly or tangentially to the hurricanes/Gulf Coast (e.g..

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<sup>2</sup> Katrina-Gideon Interview Project enabled 150 students from across the country to provide vital assistance to the Orleans Public Defender by interviewing hundreds of inmates awaiting trial in Orleans Parish, many of whom had never seen an attorney.

<sup>3</sup> The FEMA Trailer Survey Mapping Project sent hundreds of law students to FEMA trailer parks to assess the legal and other needs of residents, to map objective indicators of disrepair in Orleans Parish, to widely disseminate the information gathered and to assist legal and social service organizations and institutions in determining what services are needed and how to better provide them. A follow-up survey was conducted in January 2008.

poverty, race, criminal justice systems, healthcare). Notify the press in advance of the event. Also make sure your alumni relations folks know what you're up to—they love it!

***Personal and Professional Development***

Getting your group to the Gulf is only one part of the project are you undertaking. You are coming as professionals to serve and to learn. Spend a significant amount of time before you come down learning about the history of and issues affecting the region.

Many valuable resources about New Orleans are collected here:

[http://www.csworkshop.org/katrinareader/table\\_of\\_contents#27](http://www.csworkshop.org/katrinareader/table_of_contents#27)

Also read <http://www.nola.com> regularly before you come, watch for news stories and make a point to talk to people about their experiences and perceptions about the Gulf Coast. We cannot emphasize this enough—your experience will be so much richer for all the of the preparation that you and your group do beforehand. The issues are diverse and serious—take the time to learn about them!

***Placement***

**As soon as you know when your school will be coming, let [shntrips@gmail.com](mailto:shntrips@gmail.com) know! And as soon as you have a general sense of how many people will be coming with you, send that along, too. Advanced planning is much more possible if we know University of X is coming over a certain week with about 30 people.**

**First**, Each person who is volunteering during Spring Break must complete the Spring Break Trip Registration Form (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/cy472q> or <https://spreadsheets.google.com/embeddedform?key=pcnBneoJWctfF6AUI8qnnLA> and from our website at [www.studentjustice.org](http://www.studentjustice.org)).

You must complete this form at least one month prior to arriving in the Gulf Coast so we can place you with one of our fabulous partner agencies.

*Please keep in mind we serve areas throughout MS, LA, and TX - they all need our help.*

**Then**, please email us at [shntrips@gmail.com](mailto:shntrips@gmail.com) at least one month in advance of your trip to let us know (1) the name of your law school, (2) when you are coming, and (3) the names of the people who will be attending. This deadline is very important because it gives your placement agency time to prepare for your arrival and plan for your service project(s)..

<b>Work Week</b>	<b>Preferred Deadline to Submit Student Information</b>
Week 1: March 2 - 6, 2009	February 2
Week 2: March 9 – 13, 2009	February 9
Week 3: March 16 – 20, 2009	February 16
Week 4: March 23 – 27, 2009	February 23
Week 5: March 30 – April 3, 2009	February 30

Many students and schools have existing relationships with organizations or may be tempted to “go around” Student Hurricane Network. There are four main reasons why this is actually very destructive during school break periods.

1. We take the burden off busy attorneys. They have so much to do, keeping track of who is coming when and where they should stay and all the logistics that SHN is *very* good at is a waste of their time and resources. We can do it!
2. SHN has a macro view of the volunteer situation in the area over a given period. We have relationships with so many organizations that we can ensure volunteers are spread throughout the region where they are needed—it is impossible for someone planning a trip remotely and/or from scratch to do this. We also know about cool stuff you might otherwise never have found out about.
3. Some placements conflict with one another. We place students at organizations that may be on opposite sides of litigation. However, because of the aforementioned macro view, we can make sure students from the same school are not placed in situations that create conflicts.
4. It is much, much, much more work for a school to be doing their own thing and maybe or maybe not letting us know what is going on. Something invariably falls through the cracks, too many or too few students are sent to placements and again a burden is put on the organizations we are trying to help.

For the reasons above, we believe that groups that are genuinely concerned with only helping and doing so in the way most helpful to those they are trying to help—will go through SHN. Again, we will work to accommodate requests to the extent that they are feasible.

Transportation: search for flights and/or rental vans using [www.orbitz.com](http://www.orbitz.com), [www.cheaptickets.com](http://www.cheaptickets.com), [www.hertz.com](http://www.hertz.com), [www.budget.com](http://www.budget.com), etc. You can usually save a little money by then booking flights directly with the airlines themselves. Consider contacting airlines about discount fares. Some schools have even gotten flight donated by airlines! Also, talk to your school’s development and student affairs offices about any institutional discounts they might have with certain airlines or car rental companies. You don’t want to run into transportation problems once you’re in on site—**it is usually much, much preferable to have a number of cars than one van, for example**. Often students will be on rather different schedules in different locations.

Housing: First, determine whether your budget will allow you to pay for hotels/motels. If so, see what hotels/motels are once again open and have rooms available through [www.hotels.com](http://www.hotels.com), [www.expedia.com](http://www.expedia.com), [www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org), [www.hotwire.com](http://www.hotwire.com) etc. Make sure to contact the hotel directly to confirm your reservation; do not rely on the confirmation from Orbitz, Expedia, etc. If your group will need a place to stay for free, first consider contacting alumni that live in the area. Also, ask students participating if they have relatives/friends in the area that would be willing to let a couple of students stay with them. In addition to cheap hotel deals on travel sites, students have recommended staying at:

## MISSISSIPPI:

First United Methodist Church of Gulfport  
2301 15<sup>th</sup> Street  
Gulfport, MS  
228-863-0047 (church)

Has been offering volunteers free housing for awhile. Students need to bring air mattresses, sleeping bags etc. They have a kitchen which can be used as well.

Handsonnetwork.org  
Contact: Sara Hamilton, 228-257-6094  
SHamilton@handsongulfcoast.org

Handson in Biloxi has housed 15 of our volunteers per week in the past. In the past, they have charged \$10 per person to house and feed volunteers. They could provide airmattresses. However, some students have reported they are almost always full or charge more than students are willing to pay.

Bayou View Baptist Church  
4709 Chamberlain Avenue  
Gulfport, MS 39507  
228-863-2482

<http://www.bayouview.org/pages/>

Some students from American University stayed here in March 2006.

First United Methodist Church of Long Beach  
208 Pine St.  
Long Beach, MS  
Housing Coordinator, Marsha - 228-868-3957

## NEW ORLEANS:

### **Hostels**

India House Backpackers Hostel  
124 South Lopez St  
\$17.50 per night per person  
[www.indiahousehostel.com](http://www.indiahousehostel.com)  
**(504) 821-1927 Guest Line**

New Orleans Hostel-Marquette House  
2249 Carondelet Street  
[www.hostelz.com/hostel/2407-New-Orleans-Hostel---Marquette-House](http://www.hostelz.com/hostel/2407-New-Orleans-Hostel---Marquette-House)

Joe & Flo's Candlelight Hostel  
1129 Robertson St

<http://www.hostelworld.com/hosteldetails.php/JoeFlosCandlelightHostel>  
NewOrleans-NewOrleans-6771

**Bed & Breakfast or Guesthouse**

St. Vincent's Guesthouse  
1507 Magazine St

[http://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel\\_Review-g60864-d249682-Reviews-St\\_Vincent\\_s\\_Guest\\_House-New\\_Orleans\\_Louisiana.html](http://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g60864-d249682-Reviews-St_Vincent_s_Guest_House-New_Orleans_Louisiana.html)

St. Charles Guest House  
1748 Prytania  
504-523-6556

--Also operates an unstaffed hostel near the Superdome (on O'Keefe) called the Depot House. Dennis Hilton (owner) (504-523-6556)

Avenue Inn Bed & Breakfast New Orleans  
4125 St. Charles Ave.  
970-928-7875, ext. 1

Creole Gardens Guesthouse  
1415 Prytania St  
504-569-8700  
[www.creolegardens.com](http://www.creolegardens.com)

**Helpful Housing Websites**

[www.wisenomad.com](http://www.wisenomad.com)

[www.cheapbeds.info](http://www.cheapbeds.info)

[www.hostels.com](http://www.hostels.com)

[www.itravelnet.com](http://www.itravelnet.com)

[www.travel-library.com](http://www.travel-library.com)

<http://neworleans.craigslist.org/sub/>

If you find a good place—let us know!

***The Matching Process***

**Be Flexible, Patient, Creative.** The SHN will do its best to match students to specific projects based on their preferences; however, because of the enormity of this coordination effort, the SHN is unable to guarantee any type of placement for any particular student. As such, students should be flexible in terms of their project and in

terms of their geographic location. That said, we recognize for planning purposes schools and students need to know in general where they will be. If you designate New Orleans or Gulfport/Biloxi, we will make that happen and you can go ahead and plan your trip. If one location is overwhelmed, we may ask trip planners who is willing or able to travel some to get to work.

**The work is varied.** Some students come on an SHN trip expecting to write briefs and spend their day on Westlaw in an office. Others think it would be silly to travel so far to sit in a office. Regardless of their preconceptions, students must be prepared to do what is asked of them by the people who are doing this work every day on the ground. Students may be out in the field, surveying and talking to residents. Or they may be conducting data-entry in an office. Students may be confident that any type of assistance is greatly needed and incredibly helpful. As we develop projects for the Spring Break period, we will let the trip planners know so if something particularly appeals, school can lock their spot in it by taking assisting with the coordination. This is another reason to tell us ASAP when you will be coming!!

**Nuts and Bolts.** Institutional liaisons/trip-planners must meet the deadlines above. Because of the late nature, we understand the deadline for the first week of trips is very soon, this can be flexible. However, open communication is key. **Nearly everyone involved in SHN is a law student—from trip-planners to those doing placements.** This means we must respect one another and the work we are trying to do together by being communicative and honest. Stick to the deadlines, tell us if there is a problem or a delay.

## C. Once You Are There

### 1. Louisiana

#### TRANSPORTATION – New Orleans

**Transportation to/from the airport:** Students placed in New Orleans should fly into MSY. If you are not renting a car/van, there are options for airport shuttles and taxi service from the airport. A bus service is another possible option.

**Transportation around town:** Public transportation continues to improve. For details and updates on the public transportation system in New Orleans, see <http://www.norta.com/>. Now some streetcars and many buses are running. However, we strongly recommend having access to cars. Many of the placements require students to get from one place to another or get themselves to a specific community. In general, your lives will be easier, you will be more helpful and your trip will be smoother if you can transport yourselves.

#### ENTERTAINMENT – New Orleans

As New Orleans continues to improve, so do the entertainment options! For news and events, see <http://www.nola.com/>, <http://www.cityofno.com/portal.aspx>, and

<http://www.offbeat.com/>. *We will send out orientation materials as the dates approach with much for information on logistics, dining and entertainment.* While we would all hope it would not need to be said... sadly this issues presents itself every season. **Be responsible as an adult and a professional: enjoy everything that makes New Orleans great within reason. Stay safe and able to work for the entire short time you are in town.** Remind your students that many people have worked very hard to make their trip happen and that negative reviews from placements or even one unfortunate episode can jeopardize trips from your school in the future.

## 2. Mississippi

### TRAVEL TO AND FROM GULFPORT/MISSISSIPPI COAST:

#### *Driving from the Northeast*

Take I-95 south/New Jersey Turnpike toward Baltimore/Richmond

Take I-85 south toward Montgomery/Columbus

Take I-65 south toward Mobile

Exit onto I-10 west

Merge onto US-49 south to Gulfport

#### *Driving from the Midwest*

Take I-57 south toward Memphis

Take I-55 south to Memphis/Jackson

Pick up US-49

Take I-59 south to New Orleans/Gulf Coast

Take I-98 east to Mobile/Lucedale

Take US-49 south into Gulfport

#### *Flying*

There is a small airport in Gulfport, located near the intersection of I-10 and US-49. Most flights (Delta, AirTran, Northwest) will connect in Memphis or Atlanta. Some volunteers have found cheaper flights in and out of New Orleans, which is only 75 miles from Gulfport. While this option certainly is viable, please try to arrange transport to/from New Orleans well ahead of time.

### TRANSPORTATION:

Cars are necessary in Mississippi. It is wise to have enough transportation to cover multiple trips to Wal-Mart, fast food joints, casinos, wherever, as there is little in “walking distance.”

Group transportation is also important for the work you will be doing. Many of the Mississippi projects involve field-work and dividing up into groups/cars is essential.

Public transportation is not readily available. There is the occasional taxi/limo service for rides to and from the airport (although there should be a friendly, helpful volunteer to offer up a ride!) For the most part, the team of volunteers must depend on each other—which makes the experience that more fun.

Before your group is ready to go, have a good idea of the number of cars available. Determine if rental cars are needed, and how many. If possible, try and solicit funding from your respective schools to help alleviate some of the transportation cost.

#### ENTERTAINMENT:

Truth be told, our volunteers had the best nights camped out with Taboo, Cranium, and a case of Bud<sup>4</sup>. But, if you're hell-bent on going out in Coastal Mississippi, there are a few things to do.

1. Casinos—mentioned above. These three are currently in operation, with several others expected to open over the next few months. A fun outing, but slightly depressing to see the FEMA check-cashing station in the downstairs lobby.
2. Local Restaurants—in Gulfport, most of the traditional, mainstream restaurants can be found on US-49. Applebee's, Chili's, Los Tres Amigos, all are found here. It is important to remember, though, that these places close at 10 p.m. The Mississippi Center for Justice has a helpful guide at:  
<http://www.mscenterforjustice.org/documents/KatrinaRecoveryOfficeVisitorGuide.pdf>
3. Shopping—on Beach Boulevard/US-90, in Biloxi, there is the Edgewater Mall, home to mall favorites from Pac Sun to Victoria's Secret. Near I-10 and US-49, there is a Prime Outlets shopping center, with outlets like Gap and Banana Republic.
4. Movies—the Silver Screen movie theater is located on Beach Boulevard in Biloxi, close to the Edgewater Mall. Cinemark is located at the Cross Roads shopping center Near I-10 and US-49.
5. Come on over to New Orleans for an evening!

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<sup>4</sup> Please drink responsibly.