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‘TIS THE SEASON...FOR REBUILDING IN THE “BIG EASY.”

Eleven members of MVC community assist in Hurricane Katrina relief efforts on Mission Trip.

Marshall, Mo. (December 29, 2006)—Just as the song says, “*It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year.*” But eleven members of the MVC community have recently learned that for some it is still a time of devastation and not being able to enjoy the holidays at home.

Marsha Lashley, MVC registrar and MVC Mission Team leader, really didn’t know what to expect while traveling from Marshall to New Orleans, La. on a mission trip to assist in relief efforts of Hurricane Katrina.

The MVC Mission Team worked through Dr. Cliff Nunn, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans. According to Dr. Nunn, only about 1 in 300 evacuees have been able to return to their properties. Groups like MVC’s Mission Team, however, are getting more and more people back into their homes.

“Our first mission was successful and educational,” Lashley said. “Although we worked on three homes, much of our time was spent at Ethel’s.”

Lashley and the MVC Team not only helped Ehtel rebuild, but also became friends.

“Our Team had the opportunity to get to know her [Ethel], which made the experience much more meaningful,” Lashley said. “She was a very sweet elderly woman with a strong faith in the Lord. It was a pleasure to work on her home.”

According to Lashley, a team of 50 Presbyterians will be working through the New Orleans First Presbyterian Church after Christmas, and will hopefully finish Ethel’s home.

Lashley was shocked at the devastation that remains today.

“The most disturbing thing that I saw was all of the empty houses and businesses. Street after street, row after row of empty houses with spray paint on the outside from the search and rescue teams,” Lashley said. “In some areas it looked like a ghost town.”

New Orleans residents that the Mission Team encountered were thankful for the group’s efforts.

”The people of New Orleans were very kind to us, many expressing their gratitude to the volunteers, saying that they volunteers were the ones rebuilding New Orleans.”

Lashley thinks this was an excellent experience for her and the students, especially at this time of year.

“Our students worked very hard and this was a positive, yet humbling experience for them and the staff,” Lashley said. “I found myself wondering how our campus community or town would handle such a tragedy—would I move back to my brick bungalow on Brunswick street with a

black spray painted “X” on the outside, with all of my belongings covered in mold, and my perfectly finished woodwork warped beyond repair. Or would it be too much to handle?”

Other MVC Mission Team members included: Pam Sebastian, adjunct religion faculty member and pastor of the First Presbyterian Churches in Marshall and Slater; Rob Dittmer, MVC student from Marshall; Susan Dittmer, MVC speech faculty member; Ashley Graham, freshman from Farmington, Ark.; Wesley Kessler, freshman from Marshall; Melody Wiegert, senior from Liberty, Mo.; Brandon Stiko, senior from Indianapolis, Ind.; Jennifer Jeffress, senior from Otterville, Mo.; Laura Lewis, sophomore from Cabool, Mo.; Kris Scoville, freshman from Ava, Mo.; and Bob and Linda Jeffress, parents of team member Jennifer Jeffress.

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ABOUT MISSOURI VALLEY COLLEGE

Missouri Valley College is a liberal arts college that provides educational, social and cultural experiences in a Christian environment. Established in 1889, MVC offers 27 majors and 7 pre-professional programs, and 12 sports and 20 varsity teams. The liberal arts heritage focuses on scholarship, critical thinking and academic excellence to prepare students to become members of a responsible citizenry. For more information, call (660) 831-4000 or visit www.moval.edu.

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