

Students aid indigenous people of Gulf Coast

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<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/1780/students-aid-indigenous-people-of-gulf-coast/>

Seven students from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Inter-Tribal Student Organization (ITSO) have chosen to spend their spring break giving back to tribal people whose communities have been devastated by natural disasters over the past several years.

The students will spend their spring break in Dulac, La., home of the Native American Houma Nation, where hurricanes have ravaged homes and resources. The students' empathy for the Native American people of the Gulf Coast has moved ITSO to create a Houma Relief Service Trip.

The ITSO students, who are from the Menominee, Stockbridge-Munsee and Oneida nations, hope that this service trip will have positive impact not only on the Houma Nation, but also on the student participants and their communities. Students will present on their experiences at Native Pride on May 8 at UW Oshkosh and for other groups as part of their University courses.

The Houma Nation (www.unitedhoumanation.org) was devastated not only by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, but also in 2008 by hurricanes Gustav and Ike, which hit the bayous with enormous force.

The students participating in the service trip are Kala Kimberly Cornelius (Oneida); Gerald Mose Kaquatosh (Menominee); Jessica Miller (Stockbridge-Munsee); Elyshia Otradovec (Stockbridge-Munsee); Renee Waukechon Ross (Menominee); Roger Wescott (Menominee); and Sammi Jo Wescott (Menominee). The students will be accompanied by their advisers, Barb Miller (Stockbridge-Munsee) and Miriam Schacht.

In addition to helping with recovery and rebuilding efforts, ITSO hopes to have the opportunity for cultural exchange and to get to know tribal people in the community. As Native American college students, they also have a unique opportunity to serve as role models.

"I think it is an awesome opportunity for us Native students to help other Natives in need," said Kala Cornelius, one of the student participants. "Their situation helps us realize that we should not take what we have for granted, and if an opportunity comes along to help out, we should do it."

Mose Kaquatosh, ITSO president, hopes to continue this service trip in the years to come.

"Students turning down the beach to do relief work is something powerful, and I cannot wait to share my experience and hopefully get more people involved in what will be our second annual service trip next year," Kaquatosh said.

In order to make this trip financially accessible to all participants, ITSO and the UW Oshkosh American Indian Student Services office are covering most of the participants' expenses and also hope to provide cleaning and rebuilding supplies for the Houma Nation as well as books for children.

The trip is sponsored by the Inter-Tribal Student Group and American Indian Student Services, and is supported by donations from the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans, the North Star Casino, and Oneida Bingo and Casino.

Questions about the service trip can be addressed to Miriam Schacht at schachtm@uwosh.edu or (920) 424-7475 or Barb Miller millerb@uwosh.edu or (920) 424-0229. Donations can be sent to Miriam Schacht, Department of English, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, Oshkosh, WI 54901.

This article was written by Miriam Schacht of the English department.

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