

# Volunteers help storm victims rebuild lives out of the rubble

April 3, 2009

GALVESTON—Sitting on the grass in front of a pile of rubble, Tamara Brooks works quickly, quietly, carefully knocking the mortar off each brick. She chips away all day with a hammer and chisel, cleaning the bricks, chip by chip.



Tamara Brooks, who leads the University of Houston Baptist Student Ministries, works to knock the mortar off bricks.

These bricks will be used again, and she hopes not only to restore the house in which they will be used, but also the family they will protect.

The work that Brooks, who leads the University of Houston Baptist Student Ministries, and her students are doing is illustrative of the continuing recovery in Southeast Texas—from Galveston to the Beaumont area. Months after Hurricane Ike hit, progress remains slow in places, sometimes even a brick at a time.

For many, life mirrors the buildings that line the streets, said Carolyn Porterfield, who is helping partner churches with Southeast Texas missions

opportunities for the [Baptist General Convention of Texas](#).

Although many buildings appear to be fine on the outside, they have been ravaged on the inside, even hollowed out. Likewise, some Southeast Texas residents appear to be moving through their daily lives, but still are trying to recover emotionally and spiritually.



Puppets shows helped entertain the community as renovation work went forward.

“You quickly realize, too, that there is much grief and emotional turmoil that is going on inside the hearts and minds of people that you don’t immediately pick up on until you spend some time listening to their stories,” she said.

“Perhaps one of the best ministries offered is simply the gift of listening. Everyone has a story, and they want to tell you about their experience. The words come pouring out, and often tears are seen in the eyes of those sharing. There isn’t much you can say, and they don’t expect you to say anything. But you can listen and then offer a prayer of hope and a hug of love.”

During Spring Break, there were a plethora of hugs to be found. Hundreds of volunteers from across the state and around the country descended on the region, helping with construction projects, benevolent ministries and clean-up efforts. They included youth groups, college groups, adults and

families.

The volunteers' combination of caring for others and sharing the hope of Christ with others embodies the spirit of Texas Hope 2010, a BGCT initiative to share the gospel with every Texan by Easter 2010.



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buildings-and people-  
have not recovered.

A group of 12 students from the University of Texas at Dallas Baptist Student Ministries found they can use each moment to build relationships with others, said Rusty Reams, a campus missionary with the BSM. Through those ties, they can encourage others and share their faith.

While they connected with others through projects, UTD students also did so during down times like waiting for a ferry or resting, Reams said. By working on projects and visiting with people, they were able to meet physical and spiritual needs.

“I really feel like while doing (projects), we had some really good conversations with people we worked with, but also with people we met while there,” Reams said.

Six men from Parkway Baptist Church in College Station spent the week working on the parsonage of Rose City Baptist Church near Vidor. The men repaired the home to the point that it can be painted. The church is in the process of looking for a pastor, who could move into the home upon completion.

“We wanted to do something,” said Parkway Pastor Chris Snidow. “We wanted to serve the Lord. We felt there were still a lot of needs from the hurricane, even though you don’t hear it much.”

Twelve students with the BSM at the University of Houston worked on a variety of projects beyond cleaning the bricks, including cleaning a garage.

The mission trip provided a model for how students can connect with those around them—meet physical needs and opportunities to meet spiritual needs will arise, Brooks said.

“There are people around them that are in need,” she said. “Not only physical need but spiritual needs as well.”

To learn more about opportunities for service in Southeast Texas, visit [www.bgct.org](http://www.bgct.org) or [www.nehemiahsvision.com](http://www.nehemiahsvision.com).