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## **STUDENTS SPEND BREAK HELPING IN NEW YORK**

**NEOSHO, MO** - This year, some Crowder College students experienced a different kind of holiday break – spending nine days of it helping survivors of Hurricane Sandy in Staten Island, New York, as part of the Baptist Collegiate Disaster Relief effort.

The effort for Hurricane Sandy was a special, first-time project of the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) for the North American Mission Board that included more than 500 students from 22 states.

The group of 11 from Crowder included three international students, one faculty member, two community members certified in disaster relief by the SBDR and was led by Baptist Student Union campus minister Aaron Werner, also disaster relief certified.

“The work we did was hard and the conditions difficult,” Werner said. “However, I believe we left a new friend with a refined sense of hope and brought home students with a new understanding of helping others. It was not about us but about the giving of ourselves.”

After driving 24 hours, students cleaned out houses affected by flood waters from the storm, which usually involves sewage or chemical contamination as well as mold. The process includes removing mud, sludge, and ruined items as well as sorting out salvageable items and then ripping out floors and walls. The last step is power washing, disinfecting, and treating for mold.

“Serving others is an important part of my life, and this trip was a life-changing experience for me,” said Yulia Denisyuk, business administration major from the Ukraine. “I proved to myself that I am a strong person and can do things I thought I could never do. Through the hard work in extreme conditions, I realized how great and pure my life is when I share my time, skills, and love with others and do not expect anything back.”

Students prayed with homeowners and gave them Bibles, often inscribed with names and personal notes from volunteers.

“The purpose of college students serving here is not just to work on houses but also to minister to homeowners by listening, showing kindness, and caring,” said Susan Peugh, volunteer coordinator for North American Mission Board (NAMB).

Since Sandy made landfall, SBDR volunteers have prepared 1.8 million meals, cleaned debris from more than 1,000 homes and made 4,600-plus ministry contacts. Volunteers have shared the Gospel with more than 800 people, resulting in 88 professions of faith during 32,543 ministry service days.

Crowder’s trip concluded with a sightseeing cultural day in Manhattan, including major sights such as the 9/11 memorial, Time Square and Wall Street as well as lunch in Chinatown and Italian ice cream in Little Italy.

“The most memorable moment to me was standing on the Staten Island Ferry looking at the city lights, taking in the day’s events and thanking God for the opportunity,” said Brian Savard, theatre major from Greenfield, Mo.

This is not the BSU’s first service project. Last spring break, a group traveled to New Orleans to refurbish a church and grounds and also served meals for Joplin’s Extreme Makeover. In fact, the BSU has taken two service trips a year since

2000, including Cleveland, Chicago, Mobile, Cheyenne, Colorado Springs, said Werner, noting that service to others is at the heart of Christianity.

“To drive thousands of miles, spend thousands of dollars, working and staying in these kinds of conditions for someone you don’t know is insane... but that’s what Christians do.”

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Larger photos are attached (descriptions below). If you have additional questions please contact my office or Mrs. Latonia Bailey, 417-455-5410 or [latoniabailey@crowder.edu](mailto:latoniabailey@crowder.edu)

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Brian Savard and Scott Bishop, Crowder students, remove drywall from a flood-damaged home in Staten Island, New York, as part of the Southern Baptist Collegiate Disaster Relief effort.



Crowder students and community volunteers spent nine days of their Christmas break assisting Hurricane Sandy flood survivors in Staten Island, New York. Participants include Those traveling include seven students: Kyle Rummins, Mansfield, Mo.; Brian Savard, Greenfield, Mo.; Scott Bishop, Neosho; Kristen Geary, Neosho; Yulia Desisyuk, Ukraine; Esther Aidelomon, Nigeria; Kaori Sawamoto, Japan; as well as four chaperones: Aaron Werner, Neosho; Bill Webster, Neosho, Eric Harris, Neosho; and Latonia Bailey, Goodman.