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Students Serve Hurricane Victims on Fall Break

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- Fall break for college students is typically a time of rest and relaxation amid a busy semester. But for one group of Cedarville University students, fall break meant exactly the opposite, as they traveled to Florida to serve locals impacted by Hurricane Ian.

During Cedarville University's fall break during the last week of October, a group of 12 students drove more than 15 hours to Fort Myers, Florida, to clear debris from Hurricane Ian's devastating tear through the state.

"It was pretty heartbreaking to look around and see so many memories turned into what is now debris" said senior Chloe Metaxotos from Merrimack, New Hampshire. "It was truly fulfilling to help people in the name of Christ, while being there in their suffering and grieving. There was so much joy in that work."

The Student Volunteer Team

Others involved included seniors Eli Wicker from New Market, Tennessee; Will Imfeld from Danville, Kentucky; Jonah Lynch from Clermont, Florida; Zach Forehand from Chichester, New Hampshire; Ethan Kelly from Plainfield, Illinois; Caleb Stechschulte from Delaware, Ohio; Micah Spaulding from Willow Grove, Pennsylvania; Evan Lyon from Lititz, Pennsylvania; Braden Whitehead from Brownsburg, Indiana; and Lindsay Murch from Nashua, New Hampshire and junior Sydney Mason from Heath, Ohio.

The group connected with human aid organization Samaritan's Purse to organize their service efforts.

"Samaritan's Purse organized groups into teams and gave us assignments for service projects," said Metaxotos. "We worked with homeowners, digging through what was left of their houses to rip out flooded drywall, flooring and insulation."

The group was sponsored by Cedarville University's global outreach office, which provided the group with university-owned vans and funding for gas and food.

"Global outreach took away the entire financial burden," noted Metaxotos. "It's super cool that I go to a school that makes service easy and possible for all students."

The students were able to clear out four homes in all, spreading the love of Christ as they went. The group even went so far as to present each family they encountered with new Bibles, including one couple that had lost theirs in the storm.

“The people were our priority,” said Metaxotos. “We were there to do manual labor, but the people are who we really focused on. Getting to hear people’s stories and spread the gospel along the way was the biggest mission work of all.”

While the trip wasn’t the typical restful fall break from schoolwork, it replenished the students in a whole new way.

“As physically taxing as it was, it was still restful spiritually,” said Metaxotos. “It was so encouraging to be around other believers and see the impact that your labor can have for the gospel. It makes you want to do it all the more and show others that Jesus seeks and saves.”

About Cedarville University

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 5,082 undergraduate, graduate, and dual enrolled high school students in more than 175 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is one of the largest private universities in Ohio, recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, high graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and the #4 national ranking by the Wall Street Journal for student engagement. For more information about the University, visit cedarville.edu.

Written by Alex Boesch

Photo captions:

- 1- Will Imfeld (left) and Evan Lyon (right) serve in Samaritan’s Purse Gear.
- 2- Students work in a damaged home.

Photos by Chloe Metaxotos, Cedarville University