

## The Amazing Break

Foley, AL

Mary used to enjoy the sound of her grandchildren scurrying through her home and playing in the yard. After losing her house to roof damage and an electrical fire caused by Hurricane Ivan, Mary of Foley, Alabama found herself living in a FEMA trailer for over a year. Helping raise four grandchildren just didn't seem as lively as it had when they had a place to call home. After the 2005 Hurricanes, FEMA recalled Mary's trailer to provide shelter to victims of Hurricane Rita. Without enough money to rebuild her home, Mary found herself on the verge of homelessness.

Day in and day out, communities, families and individuals depend on United Way's knowledge, networking and fundraising to improve lives. In times of disaster, United Way's unmatched skills become even more critical. United Way can quickly and effectively pull together the vast resources and caring power of communities across the country to address disaster in three vital phases – relief, recovery and rebuilding.

Hurricane-ravaged communities, such as Mary's, spend years rebuilding what took hours to destroy. United Way is there for the long-haul. In the wake of the 2005 hurricanes, United Way of America teamed up with *thinkMTV* to create Storm Corps, an Alternative Spring Break (ASB) program that sent nearly 100 young men and woman to volunteer in the Gulf Coast region.



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These volunteers worked on rebuilding and repairing homes damaged by hurricanes in the past two years. Under the supervision of contractors, about 20 ASB volunteers spent 5 days rebuilding Mary's home. With the efforts of United Way ASB volunteers, Mary soon had a place to call home again. Now when her grandchildren come to visit her newly furnished home with its bright-yellow exterior, Mary feels it is a place where many joys will be shared and new memories made.

“Miss Mary said she was forever thankful to us,” admits 2006 and 2007 ASB participant, Fletcher Burkhardt, “but the truth is, we received more out of the experience than any of us ever thought we would. The week working on her house was probably one of the best weeks of our lives.”

This March, more than 300 young people, like Fletcher, will use their Spring Break to join United Way in long-term recovery and rebuilding efforts in the Gulf Coast region. As in 2006, United Way National Corporate Leader, FedEx is the lead sponsor of Alternative Spring Break 2007. Joining FedEx in supporting ASB 2007 are GameStop/EB Games and media partner, MTV.

By engaging young people to help hurricane victims, like Mary, through the long-term struggle recovering from disaster, United Way is strengthening communities and helping people get their lives back to normal. Your United Way support helps rebuild lives with benefits that ripple throughout the community.

Alternative Spring Break 2007  
Lake Charles, Louisiana

- Hurricane Rita hit Southwest Louisiana in September 2005, resulting in more than \$10 billion in damage and was the third most expensive natural disaster in US history.
- 2-1-1 plays an important role in disaster relief by allowing communities to coordinate responses and ensure that resources are applied where they can meet the most urgent needs.
- The United Way Hurricane Response & Recovery Fund invested more than \$21 million in 73 communities, helping them cope with the aftereffects of the 2005 hurricane season.