9-19-2005

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Recommended Citation

"Dayton Early College Academy Students to Help with Hurricane Relief Efforts in Mississippi" (2005). News Releases. 9592.
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DAYTON EARLY COLLEGE ACADEMY STUDENTS TO HELP WITH HURRICANE RELIEF EFFORTS IN MISSISSIPPI

DAYTON, Ohio — A group of students from the Dayton Early College Academy (DECA) will travel to hurricane-ravaged Pascagoula, Miss., to help with clean-up efforts Oct. 5-9.

"They'll be distributing goods, shoveling mud, cleaning up debris and helping with landscaping," said Judy Hennessey, principal of DECA, a Dayton Public Schools high school housed on the University of Dayton's campus. "I think it might be a life-changing experience for the kids."

Ten students and two teachers will travel 800 miles by van to Pascagoula, a city of about 26,000 along the Gulf of Mexico, where they will distribute infant formula and food, diapers and canned goods. According to news reports, at least 18 people died and 25,000 were left homeless in Pascagoula and surrounding Jackson County.

P.R. Frank, media adviser, and Tracy Martz, a science teacher who serves as an emergency medical technician in Preble County, will accompany the students, who are expected to camp in tents and eat their meals at Eastlawn United Methodist Church.

Those interested in donating goods or making a financial contribution to offset DECA's travel expenses may contact the DECA office at (937) 542-5630.

"When the students realized the deep impact of Katrina, they asked me if we could make a trip. One student said, 'I don't mind the bugs, the mud and the heat as long as I'm helping other people,'" Frank said. "We're going to document the trip, so that when we come back we'll have a short documentary of what we did and the situation down there."

Now in its third year, the Dayton Early College Academy, featured Sept. 14 in the
Christian Science Monitor, enrolls first-generation college students from low-income neighborhoods who might not otherwise be able to attend college. Last year, DECA 9th - and 10th-graders took more than 60 college courses at UD and Sinclair Community College. In February, WestEd, a nonprofit organization, named DECA one of the nation's five most innovative "small-scale" high schools that is effectively reaching low-income and minority students and dramatically improving skills.

DECA requires community service. Last year, students spent hundreds of hours volunteering with community organizations, such as Habitat for Humanity. They also participated in community events, including the Walk for Women's Wellness, and worked on educational projects with community organizations, undertaking such tasks as identifying trees at Woodland Cemetery and Arboretum. In addition, students participated in the Dayton Mediation Center's peer mediation program.

For more on University of Dayton hurricane relief efforts, see [http://KatrinaRelief.udayton.edu/](http://KatrinaRelief.udayton.edu/).

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For media interviews, contact P.R. Frank, DECA media adviser, at (937) 414-7975 or Judy Hennessey, DECA principal, at (937) 542-5630.