

# Students volunteer with Habitat for Humanity in New Orleans

By Tiffany Benson  
Staff Reporter

People to People International, known as PTPI, is an organization focusing on international relations, and aims to give students the opportunity to become familiar with other cultures. This organization sponsors a program known as IMPACT and four students from Park had the opportunity to participate in a project with Habitat for Humanity. In January, juniors Tarrah Bossert and Rachel Dryden and seniors Brady Hanssen and Brian Todd traveled to New Orleans with a mission to help rebuild homes destroyed in Hurricane Katrina.

Hanssen said he has been a part of PTPI since 2010 and New Orleans was his service trip with the organization outside of the Kansas City area.

"This is the first trip we have been on together and I felt like we were a part of something bigger than just our campus," said Hanssen. "Without our help there was no way the house would have gotten finished in time. I felt like we all made a lasting difference on this project."

Park's chapter of PTPI has only been around for a few years but it has presented many students with ample opportunities for local volunteering. Some of the projects include AIDS Walk, Operation International Children where money is raised for kids' school supplies all over the world, and there are some smaller projects that involve making cards for hospital victims. Essentially, the program serves to create an awareness of needs in the local community and offers some solutions. Hanssen, who says he has been involved with volunteer efforts since high school,

believes that most of his opportunities to make an impact have come from his years spent in college. Among other organizations, he is also a member of Park Services Organization and has enjoyed several service projects in the Parkville area. Since Hanssen has always liked international service work and traveling, it didn't take him long to find a passion for helping others in need.

"If more people volunteered, we would not have half the problems we have, he said. "Everything is connected and ultimately, if you are helping someone else then you are helping yourself. Volunteering is a win-win situation."

Tarrah Bossert, in an email to the Stylus, told about her experiences with IMPACT and the volunteer project in New Orleans.

"The thing I liked most about IMPACT New Orleans was the feeling that I had actually accomplished something and made a difference," Bossert says. "We could see the progress on the house that we had made from the roof, the siding, shelves, and painting. I also think it was a good bonding experience for the four of us that

participated. There was a good balance of work and play. We also made great connections for future PTPI trips and this one will definitely not be my last." When asked why he volunteered and what he found most



Photo courtesy of Tarrah Bossert.

fulfilling, Hanssen says, "My reason for volunteering is grounded in my faith in Christ," says Hanssen. "We love because He first loved us. Volunteering is my way of showing others that love. I want my life to matter. I want to leave a legacy and for my years on earth to be spent with the purpose of changing others lives. The world already has enough of those who are out for personal gain."