



XAVIER

UNIVERSITY *of* LOUISIANA

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XULA STUDENTS HELP HOMEOWNERS CLEANUP AFTER A DEVASTATING TORNADO

New Orleans LA – Xavier University of Louisiana students – including members of several athletic teams, sororities, and fraternities – helped homeowners to clear debris from their properties ravaged by an EF3 tornado in New Orleans East four days after the storm.

Alfred Williams, Xavier Head Men’s Basketball Coach said though the team is well into the basketball season, it became a priority to help out once he heard the news and saw the devastation.

“I told the team that this (natural disaster) is bigger than basketball and that it’s about people and relationships,” Williams said. “What happened here puts things in perspective and this is a great opportunity for us to give back.”

It is the second time this school year that team members assisted after a natural disaster. In August of 2016, they helped with cleanup in Baton Rouge, La., following record flooding.

According to the National Weather Service, the tornado packed winds of 140 miles per hour that stretched two and half miles wide, leveling hundreds of homes and businesses leaving some families homeless. This tornado was the most powerful to hit Orleans Parish since record-keeping started in 1950.

New Orleans Mayor, Mitch Landrieu, reported that 5,143 structures were impacted; 643 of those were seriously damaged and 300 homes were destroyed. Despite the destruction, thankfully there were no fatalities.

Homeowner Lois Holifield, who has lived in the area for 30 years, was one of the few that sustained minor damage to her property. She said she will need to repair her roof and buy a new fence for her backyard. Xavier's Brianna Warren, a junior from South Bend, Ind., helped Holifield move the damaged fence to the curb for pick up.

"People should give back to their communities," said Warren. "If you see there's a need, you should act on it and not just talk about it."

Holifield couldn't agree more. "They (Xavier students) are doing a great job. It's good to give back whenever you can. Always pay it forward, because you never know, you might be that person they're paying it forward too," she said.

Jana Morgan, a sophomore from Houston, Texas, could be seen off in the distance raking leaves and trash at the home of Edward Washington who has lived in the neighborhood for 41 years.

"You start to feel very appreciative and blessed of what you have when you see what people don't have and you want to support them because they're going through such a tough time," said Morgan.

Washington was one of the lucky ones. He too sustained minor damage but his next door neighbor's house was totaled.

"I just thank God that I'm blessed," said Washington. "It could have been a lot worse for me, but I've got to tell you, I have never seen anything like this. I think this is worse than Katrina because at least once the water went down, people still had a structure they could work with, in this case, some folks don't have a home at all."

Xavier students spent roughly three hours that day, going door-to-door assisting homeowners when possible. Downed power lines and heavy debris made it difficult to access some spots but they did what they could.

"Servitude is definitely a culture at Xavier," said Warren. "In everything we do we try to push for a more humane and just society. I think service is the best way you can do it."