

My Spring Break 2010

By Kevin Cresswell

This year during my college spring break I decided to do things a little differently. In past years, I'd usually be hopping on a plane and flying somewhere with lots of sun and a sandy beach; however, this year I chose to spend my two weeks volunteering for several charitable organizations in Pennsylvania and Delaware. The first was the Chester County Food Bank, located in Parkesburg, Pa. Working with the food bank and all of its volunteers was a blessing. On my first day volunteering I was told that in Chester County alone one out of ten people miss at least one meal a day due to lack of resources. To resolve this food shortage the Chester County food bank works with churches, community groups, and corporations to collect food which is then given to food distributors throughout Chester County, as well as the monthly food drive. Another interesting aspect of the Chester County Food bank is its gleaning project which includes involving local farmers to provide produce for the people in need. While on the outside the Chester county Food Bank may seem like a small warehouse run by a few individuals, it truly is a community driven, well organized organization fighting the war on hunger and poverty.

As previously mentioned, most of my volunteer time was completed in the Food Bank's main warehouse in Parkesburg. This task included working with several other men to organize the food, load trucks/ pallets with food to be taken to distributors, and check through the food to ensure it hadn't been damaged or outdated. After working there several times, I was really able to see the full capabilities of the Food Bank while participating in the monthly food giveaway at a nearby church. On this day we woke around 7:00 AM and began loading trucks with tons and tons of food. This we delivered to the church where several others were already setting up tables and clearing out the sanctuary. By 11:00 a.m., the sanctuary had turned into a grocery store, with tables filled with all sorts of foods and local residents already lining out the door anticipating its start. Along with over twenty volunteers, we assisted the people walking through the church with gathering their groceries and helping to carry the food to their cars. During this experience, I was able to interact with people of all ages, faiths, and ethnicities and see how one organization can make such an impact on the community. Because of the enjoyment and satisfaction I felt from working with the Chester County Food Bank, I am looking forward to working with them on future school vacations.

The other organization I worked with over my break was Shoes2Share which was located out of Wilmington, De. Here, the primary focus of almost everyone was the "T.H.E.R.E" project or "The Haitian Earthquake Relief Effort." The main goal of "THERE" was to provide medical

equipment and shoes to the island of Haiti and the people in need there. It was unbelievable to learn that the majority of Haitian children don't have shoes to wear, while in America we dispose of over 300 million pairs a year. As with the Food Bank, I was once again working in a warehouse; this time organizing, separating, and binding shoes that were to be shipped to the Haitians. This organization, like the Chester County Food Bank, allowed me to work with a group of people I'm not as familiar with. Several of my co-volunteers were autistic which made the job at hand both informative and very enriching, being that I was not too familiar with the disease. After all the valuable life experience I gained through working with these two non-profitable organizations, I can surely say that on my next few school vacations I will volunteer my time to make the world a better place.