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United Way Alternative Spring Break Begins in South MS

Gulfport, Miss - March 29, 2010 – College students from across the country will spend the week of March 29 – April 2 volunteering throughout the Mississippi Gulf Coast for United Way’s Alternative Spring Break. This is the third year for United Way of South Mississippi (UWSM) to host Alternative Spring Break in South Mississippi.

More than 50 student volunteers and United Way professionals have chosen to take advantage of their Spring Break this year and lend a hand in South Mississippi as part of United Way’s Alternative Spring Break program. Young people will spend an entire week working with five local nonprofit agencies to rebuild and restore homes damaged during Hurricane Katrina, conduct a youth asset mapping of Biloxi, clean and paint a local women’s shelter, and apply finishing touches to a neighborhood beautification project in Ocean Springs.

The students come from all walks of life, but they all share the desire to advance the common good. “I know my work as a volunteer is so important to this community’s long-term recovery process and I am excited to be here,” said Mickey Trowbridge, Team Leader for United Way’s Alternative Spring Break. “It feels good to know that I am able to make a positive impact on the community while I am here.”

United Way of South Mississippi and the United Way for Jackson and George Counties have partnered with Enterprise Community Partners, Inc. (Enterprise) and Mercy Housing Human Development (MHHD) on one project in Ocean Springs. Volunteers will paint and landscape at the work site on Gibson Road, which features 75 cottages owned by Enterprise and MHHD. These cottages will serve as permanent affordable housing for many families who lost their homes during Hurricane Katrina.

“It is wonderful to see this level of collaboration from our national and local community partners,” said Sue Suter, CEO for UWSM. “By working together we are able to maximize the impact these young volunteers can make in our community. We are happy to have so many strong partnerships in our area.”

In addition to their volunteer efforts, the young people will also have the opportunity to enjoy all that the Mississippi Gulf Coast has to offer: beach bonfires, shrimp boils, homemade jambalaya, and many other delights. Some of the early arrivals were also able to catch a Mississippi Surge home game over the weekend. It is a goal of United Way’s Alternative Spring Break program to immerse the students in the southern culture and show them the beauty of South Mississippi. In between volunteering, they will also learn about the area, the people, and the history of the local community.

United Way works to advance the common good throughout South Mississippi by encouraging everyone to give, advocate and volunteer. For more information about how you can volunteer in South Mississippi contact the UWSM Volunteer Center at (228) 896-2213, or visit www.uw-sm.org to register as a volunteer.

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Enterprise is a leading provider of the development capital and expertise it takes to create decent, affordable homes and rebuild communities. For more than 25 years, Enterprise has introduced neighborhood solutions through public-private partnerships with financial institutions, governments, community organizations and others that share our vision. Enterprise has raised and invested more than \$10 billion in equity, grants and loans to help build or preserve more than 250,000 affordable rental and for-sale homes to create vital communities. Enterprise is currently investing in communities at a rate of \$1 billion a year. Visit www.enterprisecommunity.org and www.enterprisecommunity.com to learn more about Enterprise's efforts to build communities and opportunity.

Mercy Housing and Human Development (MHHD) collaborates with other organizations whose mission and values are similar, utilizing integrated strategies to provide housing, community and economic development for low-wealth families in Mississippi. Through research, analysis, advocacy, direct services and community organizing, MHHD responds to contemporary needs.

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