

## Final Forum of Winter Term '09 Explores Service

Some helped the homeless in Washington. Others repaired drywall and cleaned debris from hurricanes in Louisiana and Texas. All learned more about service. **Elon University** students shared their experiences in recent courses in a forum held Jan. 27 as part of the Winter Term 2009 theme "Emerging Futures: Foresight for Global Good."

The Tuesday forum, "The Future and Public Service," followed previous programs that explored politics and economics, information, war and peace, and the arts. More than 300 students and 17 faculty members took part in the five forums. Students in "Volunteerism, Social Justice and Civic Engagement in the Wake of Hurricane Katrina" traveled to New Orleans this month to assist in rebuilding efforts.



"The most important thing is that they're gaining an understanding of the importance of this kind of work," said Ocek Eke, an assistant professor of communications who led the course "Volunteerism, Social Justice and Civic Engagement in the Wake of Hurricane Katrina."

"Getting an education is not just about later making money," he said. "It's also about learning to be of service to others and realizing the commonalities we all have as members of a democratic society."



Eke's students traveled to Louisiana to aid a nonprofit there, The Phoenix of New Orleans, which assists residents with rebuilding their lives post-Hurricane Katrina. The students shared on Tuesday their findings from interviews with storm survivors and with journalists at The Times-Picayune, the only daily newspaper in the city.

Students in "The Call to Service," a course led by assistant professor Beth Warner in the Department of Human Services, traveled to the nation's capital as volunteers for local nonprofits including homeless shelters and a food bank. Participants said they're experiences there, including conversations with homeless residents, altered their perceptions of the problem.

"They don't want to be invisible...all they want to know is that people care," said Kaity Burns, a freshman human services major from Mt. Laurel, N.J. "They're still here and they're still American citizens."

In "Impacts of Hurricane Ike," a course co-led by lecturer Staci Saltz in the School of Communications and Amanda Tapler, a lecturer of health education, students saw firsthand the massive damage caused by Hurricane Ike in August 2008. They also contrasted the media coverage of the disaster in Texas with what followed Hurricane Katrina three years earlier.

"So many people's homes are just completely destroyed," said Shannon King, a freshman from Roswell, Ga. "The need for contractors is so high and it's almost impossible to get one."