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News-Tornado Relief

The cities of Hattiesburg, Petal and Oak Grove were recently hit by a multiple-vortex EF-4 tornado. The twister left thousands without power, hundreds without homes and dozens injured. Disaster relief began almost immediately. Within days, people from surrounding cities gathered to start the rebuilding process. Jones County Junior College soon became part of that relief effort.

For several days, the college collected needed goods at the football stadium for delivery to the affected area. A number of groups and organizations at JCJC, including the science division, nursing students and numerous athletes and coaches took part in the relief efforts. A group of about 15 Bobcat Brigade members and welding students, along with employees Kayla Bradley and Brad Harrison, traveled to Petal on Feb. 14, to assist with the tornado relief effort. The focus of this particular trip was to help the family of Kollin Napier, a JCJC student.

“We went on Valentine’s Day, the day of love,” said Kayla Bradley, JCJC recruiter. “We were sharing Bobcat love with our Petal family.”

“We helped with a little bit of everything from cleaning up trash to sawing down trees to clearing the building,” she said. “Just offering our support for the family helped them.”

Many people have offered their support and sympathy in different ways. Yet in this time of need, everyone is united.

“It’s a natural instinct to want to help. You’re supposed to help your fellow man when he’s in need. This is especially true since this victim is a member of the JCJC family,” said Bradley. “I went through Hurricane Katrina and I know that having people help out, helped us. I definitely felt compelled after seeing the pictures of the damage done by the tornado.”

Bradley said that the best part of the trip for her was seeing the progress made because of their help.

“Seeing the ‘before and after’ was the best part. We got there and it was chaos. There were different people coming together to help and nobody cared about getting dirty,” said Bradley. “The family continued thanking us over and over. The mother’s overwhelming love and appreciation was amazing.”

Although the main goal was to focus on helping the family in need, the students that were lending a hand learned from the experience. They displayed compassion and selflessness through their actions.

“We saw that little things make a big difference. We showed up to chaos and left with some organization,” said Bradley. “I think the students saw the importance of serving others. They showed selflessness by not only going with us, but going on their own time as well. It’s really a joy to see that response.”

Bradley said that she would like to go back for further assistance in the rebuilding process.