

VOLUNTEERS wanted

Combining Vacations And Volunteers

(NAPSA)—Volunteers come in all shapes, sizes and ages—from students to those looking to give back once they've retired and have more time.

There's also a wide variety in the ways people can volunteer. For example, one of the latest trends in volunteerism is "volunteer vacations." This involves traveling to a location in need and spending anywhere from a few days to a few months working on a project.

United Way has been very active in the concept of "volunteer vacations" through its Alternative Spring Break program, which started in the aftermath of the Gulf Coast hurricanes. The program was designed to mobilize young adults ages 18 to 24 for a week of service during March. As a result, hundreds of young people traveled to the Gulf Coast to help in the rebuilding process by repairing homes, fixing buildings and clearing debris.

The first Alternative Spring Break was called Storm Corps. In a partnership with *think* MTV, volunteers assisted in rebuilding areas in Biloxi, Miss. and Foley, Ala., by completing projects such as removing debris from yards, repairing porches and roofs, tearing out walls and preparing homes for mold mitigation.

This year, participants will work in Lake Charles, La., an area devastated by Hurricane Rita, and will rehabilitate existing homes, build new ones and rehabilitate a Camp Fire USA youth camp. The program is sponsored



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by FedEx and national video game retailer GameStop/EB Games. MTV is the media partner.

If the concept of a volunteer vacation intrigues you, there are plenty of resources available to help you decide where to go and how to spend your time. One such resource is CheapTickets.com, whose commitment to volunteerism is reflected in its interest in helping those reach their destinations affordably.

You can also search the Internet for more information by typing in "volunteer vacations" to any search engine. Many find that spending time away from home helping others can be among the most rewarding experiences of their lives.

For more information about United Way's Alternative Spring Break as a volunteer vacation, go to www.unitedway.org/asb.