

Senior Project

and the

National Relief Network

Parent Handbook

October 2007 edition

Joint venture between Senior Project and the National Relief Network

Why is this program so important? The joint partnership pilot program between Senior Project and the National Relief Network establishes an excellent altruistic foundation for high school seniors across the nation. The National Relief Network has brought more than 10,000 student volunteers into federal disaster areas to assist families with their seemingly impossible recovery efforts. In the years to come, Senior Project and the National Relief Network will bring thousands of high school senior volunteers to the aid of families struggling to rebuild, not only their homes, but also their lives.

Minimum Program Size: The minimum number of required volunteers needed for each week is only 40 students. Once this minimum is met, one chaperone per ten students may attend at no cost. If you are a parent of a participating student and you would like to attend at no cost as a chaperone, call us toll free at 1-866-286-5868.

Program Fee: The program fee is \$399 per student for a six day/five night program. The program fee covers all local transportation including; to and from the airport (if students choose to fly to the disaster area), to and from daily worksites, to and from one evening activity plus transportation for fun/cultural day activities. In addition the fee covers accommodations, two NRN/Senior Project student volunteer shirts and all NRN in office event planning and on site program coordination. The program fee also includes all meal and beverages at the disaster site. The fee does not include the evening entertainment event or the cost associated with the fun/cultural event. Students need to provide their own transportation to the disaster area and back home.

Projected Program Dates: Student volunteer disaster relief programs will be made available starting in 2008 throughout the month of March, the week between Christmas and New Years and for upcoming seniors, three weeks in July. Each available week will be limited to 200 participants and will be available on a first come first serve basis.

Signing up for Participation: Students will sign up with the program by calling the National Relief Network beginning at 9:00 AM EST on the Monday eight weeks prior to their departure date. The NRN will receive the calls and inform the student that they may pay the program fee via MasterCard or Visa. If they choose to send in a money order we will hold their reservation for five working days. If a program fills to capacity, students may sign up on a waiting list. Waiting list students will be notified via phone or email that they may attend. These students will have 24 hours to respond to the NRN's office before another student on the waiting list is invited. At the time a student signs up for our program, they will be provided with four items. The first is a liability waiver to sign if they are 18 or older. If the student is under 18 a parent or guardian must sign the waiver. The second is a sponsorship form to assist them in fundraising. The third is a list of items to bring. This list will inform them what to wear as well as all the items they should bring along with them. The fourth item is a sample agenda. The agenda is to be shared with their parents to give them a good understanding of the week's schedule. Samples of these documents can be found on our website, www.nrn.org.

Accommodations: The National Relief Network will schedule the accommodations for all volunteers. Each week we will set up two separate locations for accommodations. Each location will house 100 volunteers. Typical accommodations include school gymnasiums, church family life centers, city community buildings, college dorms, scout or Salvation Army camps or state group camp facilities. Disaster relief accommodations can be anywhere that has a large room for placing sleeping bags on a floor, a kitchen to prepare our meals and a shower facility.

Transportation: The National Relief Network transports student volunteers via charter coach. We will not transport volunteers in 12 or 15 passenger vans due to safety reasons.

Attire: Each volunteer will be given two National Relief Network team shirts. Each participant is expected to dress appropriately at the work site and during free time. The participating student school dress code is to be followed at all times during the trip.

Chaperones: The National Relief Network has a list of experienced disaster relief program chaperones; however, this is a remarkable program to share with your students, sons or daughters. If you would like to be a chaperone, please contact the National Relief Network at 1-866-286-5868. There will be ten students assigned to each chaperone. Chaperones should sign up three months prior to a relief trip. Chaperones must pay a deposit but will receive the deposit plus a \$200.00 travel compensation upon completion of the relief effort. The chaperone deposit of \$300.00 is due at the time they sign up. If for any reason you do not attend, your deposit will be forfeited. We must be assured that we have an appropriate number of chaperones for each relief effort. The safety of every student volunteer is our foremost concern, thus chaperones must submit their social security number for a background and security check at the time they sign up.

Meals: On site meals are provided by the National Relief Network. Each bus holds 45 to 55 students/chaperones. Each bus will be divided into teams of ten students and one chaperone. Teams will be selected each day to set out breakfast and clean up duty after breakfast. The same team will then set out lunch items and put them away prior to departing for work sites each morning. Alternate teams will wash up after returning from work sites each evening and prepare dinner. The same team will also clean up after dinner.

Evening Events and Last Day Fun/Cultural Activities: The National Relief Network believes that it is important for students to see the beauty that surrounds federal disaster areas not just the devastation. It is also important that they experience the many different diverse subcultures within the United States other than the culture enjoyed in their home community. It would be an injustice to bring a student from the center of the United States to the coast without giving them a chance to dip their toes in salt water or have the opportunity to enjoy the culture of other states and communities. Students should bring \$10 for their evening event and \$40 for their fun/cultural activities.

Introduction to the National Relief Network

The National Relief Network (NRN) is an organization committed to bringing large numbers of volunteers to state and federally declared disaster areas for the purpose of helping families in their efforts to rebuild their homes, their communities, and their lives. We administrate volunteer relief programs for organizations such as churches, youth groups, corporations, colleges, universities and high schools. The NRN makes it possible for many organizations, who may not have the necessary resources or access to an organized group relief effort, to lend a helping hand. We make our resources available to any group who wants to stand up and make a difference. One volunteer said it quite nicely, "All of us have something we can contribute, for many it is hard work, for others it may be equipment, funding, supplies, or even prayer. It takes all of us to pull together as one united team and do our part for the victims of these devastated areas."

The National Relief Network has no membership fees. The cost to each volunteer is a donation to the NRN for approximately fifty dollars per day. This donation covers transportation, accommodations, meals, a relief team T-shirt, and all disaster work coordination. Our Program has already become a phenomenal success. According to the Salvation Army, the NRN is the first and only organization of this kind in the United States. We are currently administrating volunteer disaster relief programs for more than sixty organizations and this number is growing. We foresee a future where the biggest problem in the aftermath of disaster will be where to house all the volunteers!

The second goal of the National Relief Network is to make this volunteer experience available to as many people as possible. The cost for a church youth group member to attend a mission trip, which is similar to the program we offer, is \$800.00 to \$1,000.00. With the National Relief Network administrating their program, we are able to reduce their cost considerably. By keeping our volunteer cost as low as possible, we dramatically increase the number of volunteers able to travel to disaster areas. These trips provide a life-enriching experience for teens as well as adults. By keeping our volunteer cost low, we provide a greater opportunity for all students to become a volunteer.

Everyone who takes advantage of our program wins. From the disaster victims who desperately need the help, to our volunteers who always ask when climbing aboard the bus to return home; "When are we coming back?"

Through our program, the National Relief Network will be able to introduce volunteerism to thousands of teens and adults who will make volunteering a part of their life style for decades to come. Participants will learn that volunteering brings as much joy to the volunteer as it does to the people they are helping. Their volunteer efforts will not stop with the NRN, but will continue locally with churches, schools, museums, hospitals, nursing homes, and with many other organizations and community events. Our volunteers will share in the rebuilding of the lives of others in these communities, while building and improving on their own personal lives.

Mission Statement

The National Relief Network brings as many volunteers as possible into federal disaster areas to assist devastated families and communities while teaching the values of giving and enriching the lives of volunteers across America.

Our History

During the summer of 1993, Missouri and other parts of the Midwest experienced what many called the "Flood of the Century." Thousands of homes and businesses were destroyed, thousands of people evacuated, never to return, and communities were changed forever. Soon after the evening news began broadcasting news and photos of the destruction and heartbreak, PBS aired a NOVA documentary about the "Great Flood of 1993." Scott Harding, then a corporate executive at a West Michigan company and now NRN's Executive Director, found himself moved to action after watching this show. He saw husbands, wives, and children struggling to recover from this horrific catastrophe. NOVA interviewed one couple, who confessed, after returning to their still-standing farmhouse, that the hardships had just begun. Scott states that as he saw the wife crying as she looked over her home that he knew he had to help her. He went to work the next day and began to organize an employee disaster relief trip. This first trip traveled to Missouri over Labor Day Weekend 1993. This trip was so well received by his colleagues that two more trips were organized and sent out before the end of the year.

During 1994, Scott organized four trips for his colleagues that aided communities affected by floods and tornadoes. At the end of that year, a co-worker who had participated in one of these trips asked Scott to put together a trip for her son's high school. This led to similar requests from co-workers' churches and other organizations, and the National Relief Network began. The National Relief Network was incorporated on June 25, 1995, and it received its a 501(c)(3) non-profit status in 1996. Scott eventually left his corporate position to devote all of his time to the NRN. The National Relief Network has been growing ever since.

For over a dozen years, the National Relief Network has brought groups of volunteers to locations all over the country to aid in flood, fire, tornado, and hurricane relief. Our volunteers come from high schools, colleges, churches, corporations, and civic organizations. The NRN has responded to the attacks of September 11; Hurricanes Floyd, Camilla, Lily, Isabel, Charlie, Ivan, Dennis, and Katrina; flooding in Ohio, North Dakota, North Carolina, New Jersey, Georgia, Minnesota, Missouri, Virginia, West Virginia, and Iowa; tornadoes in Kentucky, Kansas, Mississippi, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana; and forest fires in California.

Joining hands to defeat disasters remains our mission.

FAQs

What is the National Relief Network?

A coalition of various organizations and disaster relief agencies combining resources, experience and expertise to:

Promote corporate volunteerism.

Provide an avenue for volunteers of any organization to take part in large coordinated disaster relief efforts.

Bring much needed physical aid to victims of natural disaster.

Lift the spirits of devastated families at a time when they are not only struggling to rebuild their homes, but they are also struggling against depression.

Who can be members of the National Relief Network?

Corporations

Churches

High Schools

Colleges

Universities

Alumni Groups

Unions

Retirees

Any organization or group of people (35 or more) that would benefit from this life enriching experience

What Will A Membership With The National Relief Network Provide Your Organization?

When traveling cross country to bring aid to disaster victims, the highest expenses are transportation, accommodations and meals. These are provided for you at minimal cost.

The NRN will coordinate all administrative details including accommodations, menus, transportation scheduling, and work site set-up; connect your volunteers with families who are most in need; provide your group with lists of items needed for their specific relief effort; and take care of hundreds of other details that go into a successful relief effort.

The NRN provides you with guidance from beginning to end, from suggestions on recruiting trip participants and fundraising program fees to one or more of our staff accompanying your group of volunteers to disaster areas. We make sure there is nothing left to chance in order to make your relief program successful.

An additional note for corporate members: the NRN offers excellent benefits to your employees, benefits for which many others organizations charge hefty fees. During a disaster relief effort your associates experience corporate companionship, team building enhancement, stress reduction and improved morale. Best of all, your associates are gaining these benefits while bringing help to people in need. Nothing available today compares to the program the National Relief Network offers.

Volunteer Program Fee Details

Event Specific Financial Report

As reported by The National Relief Network annually to The National Association of Secondary School Principals in Washington, DC for the National Committee on Student Contests and Activities

Program Name: National Relief Network's – Joining Hands to Defeat Disasters – A Student Volunteer Disaster Relief Program

No. of Participants Min. 35

National Relief Network Program Fee \$399.00

TOTAL REVENUE \$13,965.00

Expenses per student:

Meals \$35.00*

Beverages \$20.00*

Housing Allotment \$30.00*

Tool and Building Material Allotment \$25.00*

Transportation \$150.00

Team Shirts \$20.00

Program Manager \$25.00

Additional Program Staff and Administration \$60.00

Miscellaneous Expenses \$34.00

Total Expenses per student \$399.00

TOTAL EXPENSES PER PROGRAM \$13,965.00

National Relief Network's program fee is based on traveling up to 800 miles from the point of departure for a six day/five night program. The program fee is increased \$25 per student per day for each additional day. The program fee is increased by \$25 per student for each 1 to 100 miles traveled over 800 miles from the point of departure to cover the additional cost of transportation.

*Based on an average over a one year period.

Sample Agenda for Senior Project/National Relief Network's Joint Venture

DAY 1, Sunday

1:00 PM Shuttle pick up at airport begins
5:00 PM Dinner
7:00 PM Orientation - Evening Activities – Local speaker general scheduled

DAY 2, Monday

6:30 AM Wake up
7:00 AM Breakfast
7:30 AM Make lunches
8:00 AM Depart for work sites
9:00 AM Arrive at work sites
12:00 PM Lunch at work sites
4:00 PM Work site clean up
4:30 PM Depart work sites
5:00 PM Showers
6:00 PM Dinner
7:00 PM Free time

DAY 3, Tuesday

6:30 AM Wake up
7:00 AM Breakfast
7:30 AM Make lunches
8:00 AM Depart for work sites
9:00 AM Arrive at work sites
12:00 PM Lunch at work sites
4:00 PM Work site clean up
4:30 PM Depart work sites
5:00 PM Showers
6:00 PM Dinner
7:00 PM Free time - Student outing scheduled, bowling, movie... bring \$10.

DAY 4, Wednesday

6:30 AM Wake up
7:00 AM Breakfast
7:30 AM Make lunches
8:00 AM Depart for work sites
9:00 AM Arrive at work sites
12:00 PM Lunch at work site
4:00 PM Work site clean up
4:30 PM Depart work sites
5:00 PM Showers
6:00 PM Dinner
7:00 PM Free time
8:00 PM Meeting (Reflections)

DAY 5, Thursday

8:00 AM Wake up
8:30 AM Breakfast
9:00 AM Depart for fun/cultural activity... bring \$40.
5:00 PM Depart scheduled activity
6:00 PM Dinner
7:00 PM Shower and clean accommodations

DAY 6, Friday

7:00 AM Shuttle to the airport begins
2:00 PM Shuttle to the airport ends

What students have to say...

David Witte

Mission Trip David Witte

A fourteen year old, angry, boy headed seventy mph straight to a flood disaster site in the middle of nowhere. This was not the ideal summer that I, as a 7th grader, had in mind. With my parents deciding that I needed a character building experience, and community service hours, I was on my way with St. Thomas Church and the National Relief Network (NRN) to help rebuild a small town in West Virginia.

The anger I felt toward my parents was almost blinding at times on the sixteen hour car ride. With the charter bus broken down, we were crammed into a fifteen-seater van. The conditions could not have been worse. When we turned on the air conditioner and warm air pored out, I almost screamed. One full week of my summer was being wasted. Instead of relaxing at the beach, I had to clean up other people's houses. Were they just lazy? Why did they need forced, child labor to accomplish household chores? My view of a mission trip was to drastically change throughout the upcoming week.

With a long a car ride, I had more than enough time to re-evaluate my situation. Since I was already on my way, with no turning back, why not try to have a little fun? This open view helped turn the dreaded mission trip into a life changing experience.

We arrived at night and unpacked our loads into the basement of a church. Now it was time for a night of restful sleep. What seemed like five minutes later, my ears exploded to the sound of a bugle playing a wake up tune. Did I ever fall asleep? I swallowed my bad thoughts and proceeded to pack for a long day of hard work. When we were driving to the drop site, my jaw dropped in disbelief. Even four months after the flood was contained, the town was in shambles. Trees were down; people everywhere were outside, trying to patch up the remains of their homes. My bitterness of the trip instantly turned to pity. What a horrible person I was to selfishly want a week of fun in the sun, while people were living with six feet of mud in their basements. The Red Cross came in to stop all the life threatening conditions, then skirted off to some other "major" disaster. This was the NRN's fifth trip back down to the same town, and you could see people look up from their work and smile with eagerness for help.

The job of shoveling smelly, heavy, sloppy mud was never an easy task, but the elements of rain and gravity (hauling up stairs) made things worse. I never complained once. How could I complain, when these people depended on me to help them bring their lives as back to normal as possible? From project to project, I was rewarded. It was volunteer work, of course, but after clearing a garage that once had a river flowing through it, and retrieving priceless items for an old man, the look of gratitude on his face was worth more than any amount of money. After one week of work, I felt like a million dollars.

Once home, I could not wait until next summer to sign up again. Last summer, I completed my fifth mission trip: two floods, two tornado disasters, and stocking a warehouse with supplies that came in for all volunteers on ground zero after 9-11-01. I believe that working with disaster relief is my call to work. I get a great feeling when I help others and I hope to continue doing it my entire life.

I believe that with a lot of hard work and the proper training, I can reach my goal of being a doctor or some medical assistant in a developing nation. I deserve a chance to develop my talents in order to help others. With a college degree, my talents can expand exponentially. I look forward to the day when I can change someone's life and really make a difference.