Campus Ministry Alumni Service and Immersion Program in New Orleans
One the first day we visit the lower 9th ward the area hardest hit by Katrina. Canisius Alumni pictured with Mr. Robert Greene Katrina Survivor and Lower Ninth Ward resident. From L to R: Tim Blewett ’67 and Robert Greene shaking hands, Dr. Nicki Calabrese, Peter Tassini ’10, Kathryn Foegen, Diane Cortese ’78, Paul Gersitz ’64, Domenic Cortese ’78, Dr. John Hoffman ’67, Dr. Richard Uschold ’53, Wol Ayay ’10
Robert Greene has become a spokesperson around the world on Katrina and the plight of the residents of New Orleans. He has welcomed us into his home and his heart and shared his faith filled story with us.
Robert Greene known as the “Rooftop rider” lost his mother and granddaughter during Katrina. They climbed up on the roof of their home in hopes of survival. Hope never arrived; they slipped off and were swept away.
For more than four years the Greene's lived in a FEMA Trailer.
Some of Robert Greene’s hopes and dreams were written on the side of his FEMA trailer. It’s a patriotic message from his heart.
Today, the Greene's live in a new home at the same location of their home that was washed away.
Even today many people are still not in their homes. There still is a great need for help!
Most of our community service work is done with St. Bernard Project which is home renovation and repair, similar to Habitat for Humanity ministry.

Nathan James ’13  works on a circular saw.
Applying caulk to the side of a house

Meghan Wierchowski, D.O. ’10 and Kim Pepe ’10
Sealing up a house and painting

Paul Gersitz ’64 and Mark Tortelli ‘10
Your family members are welcome to join us even if they did not graduate from Canisius.

Tim Blewett ‘67 and his son Evan at the worksite in New Orleans.
We also prepare and serve a meal at the Rebuild Center a collaborative ministry of the Jesuits in New Orleans. The center cares for the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the homeless population in New Orleans.
Sr. Enid Storey says “You can serve someone a meal and that is important, more important just visit with them. When they tell their story, they begin to heal.” By us being with them is a form of respect. It gives dignity to their life and dignity to our lives. We learn we are more a like than we a different.
Rich Hilliker ‘14 visits with a guest at the Rebuild Center

Father Greg Boyle, SJ, often points out Kinship—is not serving the other, but being with the other. Jesus was not a man for others; he was one with others.
In the kitchen at the Rebuild Center

Jen Kasprzak ‘00, Paul Gersitz, Mike Slish ‘12 and Rich Hilliker ‘14 prepare meals
There is plenty of time to relax and enjoy each others company

Tim Blewett and Jeff Amplement ’11
On Saturday morning we join the Sisters of the Holy Family for Mass and breakfast at their Motherhouse.

Allison Tortelli ‘10 and Allison Braun ‘13 with Sisters of the Holy Family
Reflection is an important part of the experience. Many are moved to tears during the week special moments spiritual awakening people experience.

We always have rich conversations and leave with greater faith and insight.
We always take the time to enjoy the culture of New Orleans visiting jazz clubs, museums and churches.
The Alumni Association sponsors a dinner for our group on the last night we are all together.
• We hope these pictures tell the story of our Alumni Service and Immersion program in New Orleans.

• Each of us entered into the week with anticipation of helping and serving others. We found that we were served beyond what we could have imagined.

• In the end we all had a profound sense of gratitude for the week, for one another and for God. We returned home renewed and full of life.

• If you are an alumnus of Canisius, a faculty/staff member or a friend of the Canisius please consider participating with us. For more information contact Joe Van Volkenburg, in campus ministry vanvolkj@canisius.edu or 716.888.2875.