

## AU students spend day in Owego helping to clear away debris left by flooding

10/04/11



AU students take a break from flood cleanup work.

A group of some 38 Alfred University students spent their Saturday (Oct. 1) hauling out destroyed inventory from Beds 4 Kids headquarters in Owego, clearing the way for the organization to continue its mission of distributing furniture to the needy in the region. The recent Central/Southern Tier New York flooding brought 4 feet of water into the Beds 4 Kids facility in an old middle school on Elm Street, destroying thousands of tons of furniture and mattresses and damaging parts of the building. "Almost all of their inventory was damaged and had to be moved outside, by hand, to be collected/disposed," said Norm Pollard, Alfred University dean of students who accompanied the group along with Jessica Jennings, AU's service learning coordinator, who organized the trip. "Essentially we hand carried moldy/waterlogged chairs, tables, couches, and mattresses outside to the piles," said Pollard. "Some students were given the assignments of cleaning the mud from some of the already cleared rooms, in preparation for restocking their inventory," he added. "Seeing the amount of furniture they had stored and the magnitude of damage incurred by the flood was a bit overwhelming," said Jennings. "The response and determination of those working with Beds 4 Kids is incredible - they're not going to quit until they are back in a position to be serving the community again. Though the hours spent seem inadequate, we were very happy to be able to assist them in the cleanup. In fact, several students mentioned that they'd like to go back and help again in the next few weeks." Reflecting his thoughts, Brendon Cook, an AU sophomore and a son of Glen and Cindy Cook of Elmira, said: "You can see something, you can see a picture or a movie and say, oh that looks really bad. But then, you actually get there, after the flood is gone and you just see mounds of debris everywhere." "This trip was 100 percent voluntary," noted Jennings. "To have so many students show up early on a Saturday morning and spend the entire day on a service trip is fantastic. They all worked hard and did an excellent job. I'm really quite proud of them." The student group was mostly undergraduates but there were also several graduate students involved. "We had international students from Japan, basketball players, different clubs and organizations, faith-based groups," said Pollard. "They were all just wanting to give back and help." It was great to see so many students wanting to help," he continued. "They are great kids, doing good work. We only made a small dent in clearing and cleaning their building. They are not looking for and do not accept monetary donations, but they would love to have some extra helping hands in their efforts to get back to providing needed beds/furniture for families in need." Beds 4 Kids collects overstocked and gently used beds and furniture from retailers and universities for distribution to families. Owner Leonard Hilldale purchased the former Owego Middle School building and launched the charity in 2010 with the goal of seeing to it that every child in Tioga County has something to rest on at night. In the past year, Beds 4 Kids has provided over 30,000 mattresses and box springs to people in need. Hilldale can be contacted at (607) 687-2709. The work by the AU students was captured in a weekend report by YNN. Here is a link to view the piece: <http://binghamton.ynn.com...>