

Bonner work trip repairs houses

SARA BLAU | STAFF WRITER

On March 4, more than 30 students climbed into vans headed towards Riegelwood, N.C., in order to spend their spring break rebuilding and repairing houses damaged by a Nov. 17 tornado that killed eight people.

Joining the North Carolina Friends Disaster Service (FDS), students slept in a Presbyterian church and ate hearty and heart-heavy meals at the neighboring Baptist church. From 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., volunteers re-roofed houses, repaired dry wall, set the foundation for a new house, and completed other small, but much needed projects.

Much of the student volunteer effort went toward one family in particular. The Martinez family had lost three members to the devastating tornado. In an amazing display of appreciation and love, the family cooked dinner for the entire FDS crew and Guilford students, more than 70 people in all.

In addition to completing satisfying work, students learned life lessons and skills from the elder FDS members. They realized how a small group of people could affect the lives of one town in a big way. And they formed dozens of new friendships because, despite being the largest work trip group ever, everyone got along.

Every night of the work trip was a "hypes and gripes" session where students could discuss highs and lows of the day as well as any concerns that surfaced. Every night the hypes overshadowed and outnumbered the gripes. Here are some of the hypes:

"Finishing the roof of the Martinez' temporary house was an incredible feeling ... my hype was being able to see the result of our hard work and knowing that it would benefit a family who had lost so much." — Kylie Gilliams

"Coming together with fellow

students to work as a team, figuring things out, and helping others in a community that needed assistance was a really awesome experience." — Mo Grumbly

"(My hypes were) the FDS men who all had so much to share and the same silly old men jokes to make; amazing food and fellowship with the Martinez family; and getting to know some wonderful, amazing, spirited and unique people on this trip who all truly wanted to spend their spring break doing something meaningful to help others." — Laura Houpt

"I was delighted to see such a marvelous mixing and mingling of folks from Guilford who normally don't hang out with each other on campus. After the tough weeks we've had at the college following the 'late unpleasantness' of Jan. 20 and the soul-searching about fissures in our campus community, it was wonderful seeing such seamless intermingling. And not only among ourselves, but with the older FDSers, too." — Max Carter

"It is satisfying to see the finished job of a new roof or a solid foundation that you put your muscle and sweat into. Not only was the work fun, but it was also meaningful since the people we were helping were so grateful for our services in a time of crisis and transition. Picking up the debris from a house that was leveled by the tornado, I rediscovered how fleeting and destructible the material world is." — Malcolm Kenton

"My biggest hype was getting to know the Martinez family. It amazes me that after such loss, the family is still strong, and the kids seem indestructible. They would fall and literally bounce back up from cement or gravel. It was amazing." — Matt Blalock



PHOTO COURTESY OF MATT BLALOCK

FANNIE DOOLEY (ON PORCH) WATCHES AS A VOLUNTEER WITH FRIENDS DISASTER SERVICE PICKS UP DEBRIS LEFT FROM HER ROOF. THE DAMAGE WAS UNRELATED TO THE RECENT TORNADOES BUT THE HOUSE WAS IN DESPERATE NEED OF REPAIR. DOOLEY TEACHES AT A LOCAL SCHOOL AND HAS LIVED IN RIEGELWOOD FOR 40 YEARS.

WQFS hosts Underground concert

SIMON KELLY | STAFF WRITER

For fans of experimental indie, rootsy folk rock, and psychedelic pop, the WQFS-sponsored show held Feb. 22 in The Underground turned out to be a true sensation.

The bands were, in order of appearance, Dead Elephant Bicycle, Health, and Dr. Dog. The Philadelphia psychedelic pop outfit, Dr. Dog, was the headlining act.

After a nice leisurely sound check, the full five-piece assemblage of Dead Elephant Bicycle took to the stage. Fitting the profile of an artsy, idiosyncratic indie band, the group looked rather hopeful at first, as everything from their attire to their unconventional array of instruments, which included a trumpet, a cello and a mellotron, seemed to be full of promise.

However, promise and words of its ilk that generally connote good feelings may be misplaced when used in reference to the music of Dead Elephant Bicycle. While singer Dylan Angell's lyrics were compelling, their unflinching bleakness may have been a little draining on the serotonin stores of the average listener, especially in songs like "Drunken Child." Opting for a kind of funereal minimalism, the musicians didn't so much play their instruments as lament over them. And indeed, as their set limped on, piling one dirge on top of another, members of the audience may have begun to feel as though their psyches were being rolled over repeatedly by, yes, a dead elephant riding your pouty 14-year-old sister's broken Huffy.

I watched the set from one of the benches towards the back. It was there that I was fortunate enough to meet the one person in the audience who was qualified to help me comprehend the ominous otherworldliness of this band — the venerable "Doctor" Caleb Gardener, music connoisseur.

"Dead Elephant Bicycle is experimental, so they generally don't fit easily into a category," said Gardener, "but if you must call them something, it would be Post-Americana."

Post-Americana, eh? A glossary of musical jargon might be useful at this point.

"I'd say that they were heavily influenced by Joan of Arc and The Rachels," said Gardener. "Put that in your story; they'd like the comparison."

To be fair, Dead Elephant Bicycle was admirable for their intriguing mixture of narrative and gloom, as their performance made for an altogether haunting experience that few groups are able to match. Appropriately enough, they also cov-



DAN KATZMAN/GUILFORDIAN

DEAD ELEPHANT BICYCLE PLAYED IN THE UNDERGROUND ON FEB. 22

ered a Tom Waits song towards the end of their set. Like most of their songs, however, it was received with polite, but subdued applause.

"I couldn't understand what the guy was saying," said first-year Jonathan Richter after their set, "and now I think I'm feeling a little depressed."

The next band to take the stage was Health, serving a breath of fresh air with their rootsy, honest folk rock. Instantly, the composition and disposition of the audience changed as Shaina Machlus, the WQFS organizer, cheerily bid everyone to stand saying that "this is the kind of music you're going to want to get up and dance to!"

And indeed, spirits were raised and legs were stretched as lead singer Jonathon Moore led the band through their set of bouncy, open-hearted rockers with his warm Midwestern-sounding voice that belied his Maryland origins. As said on the band's MySpace page, "Health is real American music," putting them in a league with other no-frills acts like Wilco, The Jayhawks, and The Black Crowes. Ideal for midsummer highway coasting to no place in particular, their music invoked all that is wide-eyed and wonderful.

Health's members first met as undergrads at Guilford College, and in the spirit of the school, their music is at times openly egalitarian. Take for instance the painfully short "I Do" (available for listening at myspace.com/healthypotions) which, half way through, turns into a soaring call-and-response

dialogue between Moore and bass player Mark Wingfield.

Where're you from? ... I'm from around.

Whatcha done? ... Walked on the ground.

Who do you like? ... Folks that I meet.

Who do you meet? ... People on the street.

I had planned to conduct at least a semi-formal interview with members of the group after the set; however, the unexpected struck in the form of Mr. Haling W. Dwang, self-described sculptor of potpies. His work, he says, is most comparable to that of photo-realistic artist Chuck Close.

"Some of the potpies are open; some of them are intact," said Dwang, "It sounds weird, but when you're in a helicopter and you're looking at my work, it's (right) on."

Mr. Dwang answered for the band when they felt they could not and claimed that his personage alone has served as the primary influence on Health. Moore and keyboardist Anna Murray could only nod humbly in agreement.

The third and final act, Dr. Dog, was also the most anticipated. Having opened for acts such as The Raconteurs (Jack White's other band), Dr. Dog has garnered considerable success thus far, and undoubtedly has much still to come. In fact, they managed to land a spot on Late Night with Conan O'Brien for Monday, March 12. This may be due in part to their irresistible style of catchy, yet sophisticated, pop melodies that unfold in the kaleidoscopic fashion of "Sgt. Pepper's"-era Beatles, complete with vocal harmonies that rival The Beach Boys or The Zombies at times.

Of Montreal also came to mind for many listeners. However, unlike Of Montreal, Dr. Dog's canon is refreshingly devoid of long-winded song titles. While cheery psych-folk numbers like "My Old Ways" seem to bear the bands signature sound, songs like The Jackson 5-esque "The Worst Trip" and the mellow countrified strummer "California" show that Dr. Dog is a band that is in a continual state of evolution.

"They played really happy music," said first-year Anne Marie Drolet, attesting to the concert's about-face from start to finish. The evening certainly ended on a positive note.