



SUBMITTED BY GRACE STOCKERT

A group of students and Texas community volunteers place a tiny house on concrete blocks for support. This tiny house used to be a shipping container.

## AU students rebuild homes in Texas after Hurricane Harvey

**BEX HUNTER**  
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Winter break is a time for students to finally relax and take time off from their studies. This year some students travelled, others visited friends and family, some worked jobs and internships, some just binged Netflix for 3 weeks straight. But for junior Grace Stockert, at least one week of her break was dedicated to helping people.

Stockert spent Dec. 15-22 in Oak Island and Anahuac, Texas, on a mission trip to help with the damage caused by Hurricane Harvey.

“There was a group of 16 of us, ten of us were students and the six others were adults in the Ashland community and so we went through Park Street Brethren Church,” Stockert said. “They went through Community Christian Fellowship Church in Oak Island, so then they just basically housed us and fed us the whole week we were down there.”

The church welcomed Stockert and the group with open arms, immediately involving them in their

work towards helping people.

“We got to just kind of like hang out with them for the week and do projects they were already working on and already had started with their different teams of people,” she said. It was similar to a Habitat for Humanity trip, but it wasn’t run by habitat.

The similarity to Habitat for Humanity and the low price of the trip were two of the biggest reasons Stockert decided she was going to go.

“They made it super cheap for us, it was like 50 bucks for the whole week, so I was like ‘heck that sounds cool and it’s only 50 dollars, let’s do it,’” Stockert said. “I had gone on a Habitat trip spring break freshman year to Birmingham, and that was a super fun time, so why not do it again, except over Christmas break?”

The 16 of them who decided to go on the trip were split into two different groups. The first group helped a mother and son whose house was damaged by the hurricane. They worked on turning two shipping containers into tiny

homes for the family, leaving it on their plot of land.

“They were busy digging trenches, running lines, cutting up some drywall, putting it in, insulating it, making walls, and whatever. The built stairs up to the things so basically just like putting all the bones needed into the containers,” Stockert said.

The second group, the group Stockert was a part of, helped an elderly woman whose house was also damaged in the hurricane. The house had not been touched since the natural disaster, so the furniture needed removed. Stockert said they had to saw the woman’s couch in half because it was so waterlogged and incredibly heavy.

There was also mold growing “I think like probably a foot up” on her walls, so the walls and moldy wood had to be torn out, the electricity had to be rewired, and new insulation put in.

“We had to pull so many nails,” she said. “I stepped on two of them that wasn’t fun, but I don’t have tetanus so that’s good.”

Stockert said that her group was a little disappointed because they couldn’t finish the work, but also very proud of the work they got done over the course of the week.

“We wish we had finished it, but it was like a good week’s worth of work to even get to that point, so we’re pretty proud of ourselves,” she said. Taking into consideration there were only five people in the group and not a lot of experience between them, they got a lot of good work done.

During the free time between working, eating, and sleeping, Stockert said the group got to talk with the people in Texas and enjoy themselves.

“We had lots of fun,” she said. “We got to try fried alligator and I think it was one that some guy



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Zach Read, Will Summers, Grace Ecenbarger, and Cameron Johnson put up sheetrock on the ceiling of a tiny home.



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Grace Stockert (yellow jacket) and fellow volunteers visit the Gulf of Mexico.

named George caught in his driveway or something, so it was just ‘super Texas.’” Oak Island, where the group stayed, is the alligator capital of Texas, so they got the full alligator hunter experience. One hunter had a 30-foot-long statue of an alligator in his living room.

While the group got to see alligators and the gulf, Stockert said some of her favorite memories were small moments. She said the good times were the little jokes throughout the day that kept the group en-

ergy going.

Stockert suggests others to go on a mission trip if it is something that interests them, and students can easily overcome money barriers. Mission trips are worth it because of goodwill, good memories, and new friends.

“I think that all of us were different but we worked together so well. It was just nice to not only build a community down there, but build one with yourself and be able to bring that home too.” she said.



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During their stay at Community Christian Fellowship Church, one festive congregation member made dinner for the group.

## Taking on the winter semester blues

**JACOB RAYMAN**  
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As students come back to a snow covered campus this semester, many find themselves suffering from the low wind chills and trudging through the snow to their classes and various meetings. Students struggle to find the motivation they need to take on another semester here at AU. To combat the winter semester blues until spring arrives, students can do any number of things.

### Follow through with your New Year’s resolutions

Over winter break, many students make a variety of New Year’s resolutions, whether that be starting a daily or weekly workout routine, achieving a certain GPA or more personal goals. The weather can be depressing at times, but

setting your focus on a set of goals can spark the motivation to fight through this harsh winter.

Embrace the weather, do not fight it. There are some things in life people just can’t control, and weather is one of them. Being grumpy about the bitter temperatures will not reap a warm and happy feeling. As the ice thickens and temperatures drop, use the weekends to embrace the winter wonderland and have some fun. Gather a large group of friends and take turns sledding in the quad. Olympic Circle has some great hills to pick up speed.

After the fun is over, warm up with some coffee or hot chocolate. The nest always has Starbucks drinks available. Lower Convo even has “hot chocolate bar”, with an assortment of different flavors of hot chocolate, such as the classic blend, s’mores and pumpkin spice.

Also, take advantage of personal drink machines. Make your own hot beverage!

### Dress up in winter gear

A wardrobe opens up many possibilities when getting dressed for the day: for instance, a pair of fashionable snow boots that look good, but do the job well. My advice is to dust off your snow boots, or break in a new pair of boots if you got them as a gift for Christmas.

I have always lived by this motto: if you look good, you feel good. When you wear warm flannels with a vest, topped off with a beanie and set of boots, you gain more confidence. With confidence comes motivation. Every time I dress well before a morning class, I stay locked in the entire time. With style that hats and beanies bring, they also bring warmth.

Dress warm, and dress stylish.

That is where you can find motivation.

### Join a sports club or intramural team

With a new year, take the opportunity and join a club or intramural league at the Rec Center, or other organization on campus. With clubs or intramural sports, you can get active by playing your favorite sports. More often than not, when students work out or play a sport, they tend to have a productive day. The body is warmed up and the blood is flowing, so motivation can often be found after playing sports or competing in activities at the Rec Center.

### Keep an updated schedule

This tip may seem simple and not very important, but hear me out. Keeping an updated calendar or schedule helps you to stick

with your goals. When you see your goals and assignments written down on your computer or posted on a sticky note, it provides a sense of hope follow through with what you wrote down.

A task as simple as writing a daily or weekly to-do list helps. The more you are reminded of what your tasks and goals are, the more likely you are to complete them.

The winter season is always the roughest. When wind chills drop below zero with no signs of class cancellations and several inches of snow pile up, there’s no spirit. Following through with your New Year’s resolutions or joining a new club or sport, all the while staying stylish throughout your week, will help you find more motivation throughout the winter season.

Spring will be here before you know it. Eight more weeks, but who is counting?