



# BLUFFTON

U N I V E R S I T Y

Report to Allegheny Conference 2014

## Bluffton group aids tornado cleanup

While some college students migrated to Florida beaches for spring break in March, a group of Bluffton University students braved zero-degree temperatures in Illinois to serve others.

Members of Shining Through, Bluffton's music ministry team, spent a day sorting through snow-covered debris from a home destroyed by a November 2013 tornado in Washington, Ill.

Ashley Litwiller, then a Bluffton junior and student coordinator of Shining Through, is an Illinois native who knew of the devastation the tornado had caused. "I knew that there was still some work to be done," she said.

She arranged for the group to aid in disaster relief while on its spring-break tour, during which the members performed worship music at churches in Illinois, Indiana and Ohio.

They faced an immediate weather-created obstacle after arriving at the home site. "As we started picking through the pile, we realized a lot of it was frozen together," Litwiller said.

Fortunately for the group, a good Samaritan stopped and offered assistance. "Turns out, the man was a neighbor and had a skid loader back at his house," she said. The man was able to break up the frozen rubble, allowing the group to move it more easily toward the street for pickup. "It was such a blessing," she added.

Shining Through's 2013-14 theme was "God's Love: Beyond All Measure," which drew on Ephesians 3:14-21 and focused on "being rooted and established in God's love," Litwiller said.

Although the tornado caused much destruction and heartbreak, she believes acts of service allowed the group to put God's love—which can handle anything, she said—in perspective.

She said, too, that times of tragedy are an opportunity for churches to reach out to those in need. "When something like this happens, God provides us with a community that will help support you through tough times," she said.

"It's not just family helping out family," Litwiller added. "If you are hurting or struggling, God's Kingdom will reach out to help you as Christians are called to do."

Stephen "Tig" Intagliata, campus pastor, traveled with the group's 11 student members. "They were really glad to give back to a community that suffered so much devastation," he said.

The combination of leading worship services and providing service—which was like "offering ourselves in God's service," he explained—was a good one, and "something we want to continue to do" on future tours, he added.

### Thank you, Allegheny Conference!

One student from the Allegheny Conference, **Sam Stucky**, a sophomore from Pittsburgh Mennonite Church, attended Bluffton in 2013-14. He was a Sunday Night Worship band leader and also a member of the chapel band; the church supported him with \$1,000 in matching grant funds.

For more information on Bluffton University:  
Robin Bowlus, director of public relations  
419-358-3453  
bowlusr@bluffton.edu  
www.bluffton.edu