

## SERVICE WITH A SMILE

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When **Chalee Madden '06** graduated from Rivier, she decided to take her volunteering experience to the next level. “I really enjoy working with people, doing community service,” she says. While many new graduates were busy searching for jobs or preparing for graduate school, Chalee signed up for the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC).

In September 2006, Chalee began training in California, then she and her team were sent to the Gulf. “I didn’t expect it to be as bad as it still is,” she says. She drove through areas two miles long and five streets wide that were still evacuated because of mold—people weren’t allowed to return to their homes. “There are still large areas of devastation,” she says.



Chalee explains that while there are many organizations involved in the Gulf recovery, there are few constant volunteers and little consistency, which slows the process of rebuilding. “There were 10,000 people helping during spring break, then they all left,” she says. Though progress may be slow, people in the area are grateful for the assistance they have received. “It’s nice to see that people are still thinking about the Gulf, when it seems to have happened so long ago.”

Chalee and her team helped in many different ways. They worked with Habitat for Humanity rebuilding homes, cleared trails in a park, and tutored fourth graders in a failing school district to help them pass Louisiana’s Education Assessment program. “The kids are so thankful to have people come in and help tutor them,” Chalee says.



For her last seven weeks in the Gulf, Chalee was part of the Gulf Liaison Team. The select group of six visited every AmeriCorps NCCC team working in the area to determine which projects were running smoothly and which needed some adjustments. The Liaison Team reported their findings and looked for new projects and new ways to help people.

Chalee spent her last two months in Oregon, setting up a nonprofit summer art camp. She says her time with AmeriCorps has been a great experience. “I’ve really enjoyed working with lots of different nonprofits,” she says.

Working in the nonprofit sector has been such a positive experience for Chalee that she hopes to make it her career. She plans to go to graduate school for business; the AmeriCorps program has set aside money she can apply towards her education. “I’d like to focus on accounting—I know how tough it is managing money when you don’t really get much funding,” she says. “And it’s important to me to keep these kinds of programs going.” ■

\* **JENNIFER LISKOW** works as a Public Relations and Web Writer in the Office of Marketing and Communications and teaches in Rivier’s Professional Communications program. Jenn earned her bachelor’s in English and communications from Notre Dame College in Manchester, N.H. in 1996. In 2002, she completed her master’s in writing and literature at Rivier. She began writing in junior high school; since then, she has had poems, short stories, features, and essays published. In her free time, Jenn enjoys practicing yoga, ten-pin bowling, and listening to live music with her husband, Tim.