

# PEMBROKE MARINER

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## Raising the roof for spring break

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Spring break was no day at the beach this year for a group of Boston area students.

Anthony Bagni, 21, of Pembroke, spent his March vacation not playing beach volleyball but helping to repair hurricane-damaged homes in Florida.

Bagni, a 2003 graduate of Silver Lake Regional High School, teamed up with eight other students learning the carpentry trade at Boston's acclaimed North Bennet Street School.

The students donated their time, energy and hard work from March 12-18, fixing up houses in Fort Myers, Fla., an area hit by hurricanes in the summer of 2004 and still recovering from structural storm damage in some neighborhoods.

"It was a really good idea," Bagni said of the spring break adventure. "When I heard about it, I was on board."

Bagni and several others from the school took part in Habitat for Humanity's "Collegiate Challenge." Nationwide, some 9,000 student volunteers participated in this year's program.

The goal of the program is for students to "help build simple, decent and affordable homes for families in need." The North Bennet Street students who traveled to Fort Myers were assigned to help homeowners who had sustained roof damage and other problems as a result of the hurricanes.

The trip was mostly work, but some fun. "Doing a good deed" and applying what students are learning in the 10-month carpentry program, was the main goal, said Bagni.

Habitat provided housing for the volunteers, but students had to raise funds for their own air transportation and food.



**A group of carpentry students spent their spring break in Florida for Habitat for Humanity. From left to right are Patrick O'Shaughnessy, John Toto, Andrew Gelling, Mark Barker, Tony Bagni, and Corey Wells. (Photo courtesy Sean Hardeo)**

Bagni's group stayed in small apartments in Fort Myers for the week. Their housing was arranged by Habitat. They arrived in Tampa and traveled south by bus to Fort Myers.

The students repaired vinyl siding ripped off during the storms, built roofs and other construction related projects. One homeowner with roof damage treated the hard-working crew to a homemade spaghetti dinner.

Bagni said concerns about future hurricanes in Florida are never far from peoples' minds. A new housing development is offering homebuyers a hurricane proof room, with reinforced concrete.

"It's a good program," Bagni said of the Habitat for Humanity project. "I would definitely do it again."

Bagni is the son of Donna and Gerald Bagni of Pembroke.

North Bennet Street School is located in Boston's North End and offers full-time programs in carpentry, cabinet and furniture making, preservation carpentry, piano technology, locksmithing and other courses.

Habitat's Collegiate Challenge has been in existence for 17 years, with young volunteers raising more than \$9.8 million to build Habitat Homes.