

# The Daily Tar Heel

## Vigil held to support Gulf Coast residents

### Event part of national week

By: [Abbey Caldwell, Staff Writer](#) Issue date: 4/10/07

Burning candles warmed the chilly air Monday evening during a silent vigil in support of Gulf Coast residents.

The vigil, held by the steps of Wilson Library, was hosted by Extended Disaster Relief, a campus group that aims to raise awareness about disasters, even when they've drifted out of the media spotlight.

Although many other campus groups hold vigils, Mary Small, co-chairwoman of Extended Disaster Relief, said this one was different.

"The ones in the past have been in memory of those who have died, but this one is to stand in solidarity for those still alive and struggling to survive."

The group, whose current focus is Hurricane Katrina victims, also assists disaster areas by donating funds and manual labor.

Bernard Holloway, a senior who attended the vigil, said that after leading a Spring Break trip to New Orleans, the ceremony had a special significance to him.

"After being there and gutting houses, helping to reopen schools and, most importantly, talking to the residents, there was one thing they told us: Bear with us," he said.

"The key is bearing witness that awareness matters and that we can't forget."

Monday's vigil also marked the kickoff of [National Post-Katrina Summit Week](#).

Small said the main goal of the week is "to catapult the issues of the Gulf Coast back into public awareness."

Forty college campuses will be hosting various events throughout the week, with the common goal of obtaining signatures to petition the U.S. Congress to enact legislation that would create 100,000 jobs for Gulf Coast residents.

Small said the lack of jobs in the area contributes to the devastation.

"People aren't coming home until there are jobs," she said. "There are no jobs, so people aren't coming home."

Although the candles at Monday's vigil were extinguished after only 30 minutes, Extended Disaster Relief members said they aim to constantly remind people of those still suffering.

"It's easy to forget when it's not in your face all the time," said Laura Williamson, Extended Disaster Relief co-chairwoman.

The group will inform passersby about Gulf Coast issues from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. today through Thursday in Polk Place.

The week's other events include a bar night at 10 p.m. tonight at Jack Sprat Cafe; a discussion panel titled "What Now?: Rebuilding the Gulf Coast" at 7 p.m. Wednesday in Greenlaw 431; and a screening of "When the Levees Broke," a documentary directed by Spike Lee, at 7 p.m. Thursday in Greenlaw 431.

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