



**2010 National Alternative Break Awards  
Host Site of the Year  
*Association House of Chicago***

**Nominator:** Elizabeth Sullivan, Central Michigan University

**Background:** The Association House of Chicago serves a multi-cultural community by providing comprehensive, collaborative and effective programs in English and Spanish. The agency promotes health and wellness and creates opportunities for education and economic advancement through more than 30 bilingual, direct service programs that impact the lives of nearly 20,000 individuals and families each year. Programs are organized into five service areas: community services, child welfare services, behavioral health services, out of school time programs, and El Cuarto Año Alternative High School.

**Highlights:**

- Provides on the first day, an orientation tour where breakers are taught about the different services provided by the Association House, as well as encouraging questions and providing information about the difficulties the children face at home, at school and on the streets.
- Mixes strong elements of direct service, educational components and community interaction. Breakers were given the opportunity to work directly with the children being served by the agency in tutoring, creating stories, playing football, learning karate, writing plays, and recording music. Simultaneously, Association House staff members exposed and connected breakers to the policies and struggles that the kids and the city of Chicago face within the public school system and civic service sector.
- Focuses overtly on diversity - and the potential that lies in working together and exploring the talents within one room, helping breakers to comfortably discuss and experience this topic.
- Commended for the ability to strongly connect and work with both experienced and new volunteers.
- Association House staff allowed alternative break group to engage with the kids over the expected hours by watching them play games in a community building basketball league, which demonstrated the importance of similar organizations working together.
- Staff served as a powerful example of active citizenship to the alternative breakers by hosting events, recitals, art nights, and other events to demonstrate the work that the kids have done.

**“We have never worked with such a dedicated and passionate group of people. The Association House staff is a phenomenal group of individuals who put the lives and potential of the children they work with first. They run programs... and are extended family to the kids and their parents. We were deeply inspired. Their dedication helped light a fire within every person who worked with at the site. Because of (them) we have many more active citizens in our community.”**