National Conference Call
Reorientation: Turning Alternative Break Volunteers into Advocates and Organizers
Wednesday, February 25th | 2-3pm ET

Featuring Bianca Vazquez of the Steinbruck Center, 2014 Alternative Break Community Partner of the Year

Dial-in Number: 605-562-0020
Meeting ID: 656-170-892
Please press *6 to mute your phone.
An **alternative break** is a trip where a group of college students engage in direct service, typically for a week. Each trip has a focus on a particular social issue with exploration and immersion in that issue beginning long before the trip itself. Students educate themselves and each other, then do hands-on work with relevant organizations. These experiences challenge them to think critically and compassionately—and to understand that there’s no such thing as “not my problem.” Upon return, participants are empowered to make more informed decisions and to take meaningful action that support community efforts.
Alternative Break Program Structure

Who’s on the other line?

**Staff Person**
Looking into potential partnerships

**Executive Student Leaders**
Looking into partnerships; setting up logistics; handing off communication to SLs in fall or spring

**Site Leaders**
May be initiating contact or continuing on from Executive Student Leaders.

Program Timeline

*When can you expect to hear from them?*

- **January - February**
  - Recruiting participants
  - Pre-trip meetings

- **September - December**
  - Recruiting & training Site Leaders
  - Alternative Fall Breaks
  - Solidifying service partnerships

- **March**
  - Alternative Spring Breaks

- **April-August**
  - New student leaders
  - Exploring service partnerships
A SNAPSHOT OF THE MOVEMENT

- 1,551 Total Trips
- 717 Student Executive Board Members
- 2,847 Site Leaders
- 17,657 Participants
- 1,310,878 Estimated Hours of Direct Service
- 1,993 Community Partners

2013 – 2014 National Chapter Survey
Break Away: The Alternative Break Connection
TOP TEN | ALTERNATIVE BREAK SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Issues related to **Homelessness**
2. **Environmental Stewardship**
3. Access to Food and **Hunger**
4. Work with **Children and Youth**
5. Issues of **Urban Poverty**
6. **Education** Issues
7. Access to **Affordable Housing**
8. **Disaster Relief** and Recovery
9. Issues of **Rural Poverty**
10. Issues related to **Health**

2013 – 2014 National Chapter Survey
Break Away: The Alternative Break Connection
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Average percentage of “return” community partners that programs are working with this academic year: 47%

- We actively pursue long-term relationships with community partners.
- We actively pursue diverse community partners from year to year.
- We strive to have a balance of "return" community partners and new community partners.

A **Community Partner Organization’s (CPO)** primary function is working with the populations they serve. They use volunteers to build capacity and assist in that work. An alternative break trip typically works with 1-3 CPOs and participants learn about the organization’s mission, vision, history, and community context as a part of their week of service. As a result of these experiences, participants often leave their trip as dedicated and enthusiastic advocates of these CPOs.

An **Intermediary Organization’s (IO)** primary function is working with volunteers, rather than working on a specific social issue in a specific community. They recruit volunteers as a part of programming, charge set fees to provide a quality volunteer experience, and often have headquarters located outside the areas of direct service. IOs remain the conduit between an alternative break program and the local Community Partner to provide service, cultural experiences, and logistical support.
Your SiteBank Listing

The SiteBank is a searchable database of community partner and intermediary organizations; a free listing for the organizations, only accessible by Break Away Chapters.

What Programs Are Looking For

Your organization’s **work and values**

Types of **volunteer support** they could provide

**Times of year** when you could host alternative break teams

Possibility of **housing** accommodations
Complete listings receive more serious interest from schools, and reduce the amount of time spent in communication with alternative break teams.
Eight Components of a Quality Alternative Break

**Strong Direct Service**
Programs provide an opportunity for participants to engage in direct or “hands on” projects and activities that address unmet social needs, as determined by the community. Community interaction during service projects and throughout the week is highly encouraged.

**Alcohol and Drug-Free**
Issues of community impact, legality, liability, personal safety, and group cohesion are of concern when alcohol and other drugs are consumed on an alternative break. Programs will provide education and training on alcohol and other drug related issues, in addition to developing and communicating a written policy on how these issues will be dealt with on an alternative break.

**Diversity and Social Justice**
Alternative break programs include participants representing the range of students present in the campus community. Coordinators recruit for, design, implement, and evaluate their program with this end in mind. Strong programs engage participants in dialogue that furthers understanding of how systems of power, privilege, and oppression relate to social issues present within communities. This deepened awareness enables students to do more responsible, sustainable, and impactful service work.

**Orientation**
Prior to departure, participants are oriented to the mission and vision of the community, community partner, or organization(s) with which they will be working.

**Education**
Effective education provides facts and opinions from all perspectives on the issue, including ways that participants’ personal life choices are connected to the social issue.

**Training**
Participants are provided with adequate training in skills necessary to carry out tasks and projects during the trip. Ideally this training will take place prior to departure, although in some instances it may occur once participants have reached their site. Examples of training include teaching basic construction, learning how to work with children, or gaining first aid skills.

**Reflection**
During the trip, participants are encouraged to reflect upon the experience they are having, synthesizing the direct service, education, and community interaction components. Time is set aside for this to take place both individually and as a group.

**Reorientation**
Upon return to campus, participants transfer the lessons learned on break by identifying local organizations for continued education or service, sharing their experience to raise awareness of social issues, and by organizing or joining other small groups to take action on local issues through direct service, advocacy, and/or philanthropy.
Reorientation

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STEINBRUCK CENTER

at Luther Place
Steinbruck Center -- Staff

- Bianca Vazquez –
  - Graduated Loyola University MD in 2011
  - Student Coordinator of Loyola’s Alternative Break Program, Spring Break Outreach
  - Attended a Break Away Alternative Break Citizenship School in 2008 in Biloxi, MS

- Curley Newgent –
  - Started as Steinbruck Center intern in Summer 2013
  - Stayed as a Program Fellow for two years

The Steinbruck Center hosts approximately 50 groups annually, approximately of which are college alternative break trips.
History – Luther Place Memorial Church

• During the 1968 the church was kept open and sheltered, fed and clothed more than 10,000 people.

• In the 1970’s the church founded [N Street Village](#) and also founded Lutheran Volunteer Corps, a national faith based one year service program.
History – N Street Village

• N Street Village was founded in 1972 by Luther Place Memorial Church.
• Began with sleeping mats in the back of the sanctuary, evolved to be a comprehensive continuum of care for homeless and low-income women.
• Street Village serves 68% of women experiencing homelessness in Washington, DC.
History – Steinbruck Center

• Named after Pastor John Steinbruck, Senior Pastor during 1970s

• Original purpose was to host seminary students and long term volunteers

• In 1990s, became a youth service program provide volunteers to serve N Street Village.

• Ultimately transitioned to hosting short term immersion trips that plug into our justice projects, as well as support N Street Village.
Spring at the Steinbruck Center

- Eastern Michigan University
- Loyola University Maryland
- Davidson College
- Belmont University
- University of Pennsylvania
- Keene State University
- Dartmouth College
- Eastern Kentucky University

Alternative break groups are often 10 – 12 students that we host Sunday to Saturday. We arrange their service opportunities within our projects and provide educational programming.
How do we prepare students for active citizenship post trip?

• **Education before**
  – Pre-packet with articles, discussing homelessness in Washington, DC

• **Education during**
  – Thorough orientation to our history and neighborhood
  – Walking tour that highlights neighborhood institutions and community assets
  – Workshops: charity/justice, structural racism, and DC specific workshops on homelessness and affordable housing
  – Opportunities to explore advocacy, organizing, and policy organizations.
Volunteer Opportunities

• Support our projects, Community Craft Collective and ArtSmart Camps

• Volunteer at N Street Village

• Support other non-profit partners in DC
Justice Focused

- Community organizing:
  - Washington Interfaith Network, Canvassing
- Advocacy
  - The Way Home Campaign
  - National Coalition for the Homeless
- Policy
  - ELCA Washington Office
  - Impact Hub DC
- Action planning & closing reflections
Partnerships

• Habitat for Humanity of Washington DC – Hosts alternative break groups, we provide housing and orientation

• N Street Village -- Provide education for their large volunteer groups

• DC Promise Neighborhood Initiative – schedules large projects around busy alternative break times

• Impact Hub DC

• Community member stipends
Questions?
Active Citizenship

Through alternative breaks, we hope to assist individuals in seeing themselves as contributors to their communities. Alternative breaks are the “what” of Break Away, but active citizenship is our shared “why.” Active citizens are individuals who prioritize the community in their values and life choices. They don’t have to take action on every social issue, but rather, see the world through that lens. They take action on issues that matter to them and their communities.
The Active Citizen Continuum

**Member**
Not concerned with their role in social problems.

**Volunteer**
Well-intentioned but not well-educated about social issues.

**Conscientious Citizen**
Concerned with discovering root causes; asks why?

**Active Citizen**
Community becomes a priority in values and life choices.

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**Pre-Break Transformation**
Prepare students for on-site experience and provide initial education about site-specific social issues.

- Education, orientation, and training
- Pre-break direct service
- Preflection: goals and expectations
- Icebreakers and group building

**On-Break Transformation**
Encourage participants to look critically at the root causes of social issues and challenge them to evaluate the role they have in the community.

- Strong direct service
- Ongoing education
- Community involvement
- Daily reflection tied to direct service and social issue education

**Post-Break Transformation**
Help participants find avenues for continued community involvement and support their efforts to take action locally.

- Organize or join small groups of thoughtful, committed citizens
- Continued education
- Reflection about reorientation process
- Post-break direct service, advocacy, and philanthropy
- Life choices that benefit the community

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www.alternativebreaks.org
QUESTIONS?

Email shannon@alternativebreaks.org or call 404-919-7482.

Visit www.alternativebreaks.org to learn more or to create a SiteBank profile.