

## WHAT IS AN ALTERNATIVE BREAK?

The concept is simple. An alternative break program places teams of college students in communities to engage in community service and experiential learning. Students leave behind the world of books and laboratories and enter communities grappling with issues as varied as urban poverty, racism, hunger, inadequate housing and environmental damage. In so doing, these students are able to contribute to the community through their hard work. Communities benefit from the tangible work completed, while students gain a broader understanding of the world around them. Many students have hailed the experience as fundamentally life-changing and the best week they've ever had.

## WHY SHOULD YOU GO ON AN ALTERNATIVE BREAK?

**Educational opportunities.** Living in a different culture, even for a week, teaches more about that culture than almost any amount of classroom instruction. In addition, many people take what they have learned from being in the community and look to books, faculty, and other sources to find out more about it.

**Fun.** Hey, nobody wants to spend their spring break doing something that's not fun. Almost everyone who participates in an alternative break program says their experience was easily their best break ever.

**New concept of community.** Often, we think we know what the community needs without consulting the members of the community as peers. Alternative break programs allow us to expand out campus-centric focus in a positive way.

**Personal satisfaction.** One of the greatest feelings in the world is the ability to look back over a week of hard work knowing that your efforts have made a difference. Furthermore, many individuals find the physically challenging work to be a terrific builder of self-confidence.

**New friendships.** Participants rave about the friends they make in the communities they visit, and many keep in touch and even return for visits. They also rave about the new, meaningful friendships they have their fellow students, many of whom they perhaps might not have met unless they had been on an alternative break program together.

**New people.** An alternative break program can change people's perceptions of service. Even folks who shudder at the sound of the words "community service" take part in an alternative break program because of its reputation on campus as a great experience. Many then return to campus and become involved in existing service groups, serve on their own in the community, and even seek out leadership roles.