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Helping Hands

Giving back to the community through variety of service projects

Trips help travelers reach communities across country

By Amber Wilhelm
Rocket Contributor

If students are looking to do something with their spring break other than spending the typical week at the beach, the AmeriCorps Care Break may be the way to go.

Every year, AmeriCorps members organize spring break trips across the country for students to participate in. At each of the locations, students volunteer their time doing a variety of service projects.

Lizzy Lawson, a sophomore communication major, is a member of AmeriCorps and a leader on the AmeriCorps Care Break to Las Vegas. Las Vegas, among many other locations across the country, will be one of the destinations for the Care Breaks scheduled for the upcoming spring break.

"You don't have to be a member to come on a trip," Lawson said. "It can be anyone. We need more people to sign up."

Care Breaks are all about community service. Valerie Kremer, a junior social work major, has gone on many Care Break trips as a member of the AmeriCorps program.

"Last time, I went to Phoenix," Kremer said. "We worked at a food bank and put together food boxes."

In addition to putting together food boxes, the volunteers also took part in other service projects.

"We also did fruit cleaning," Kremer said. "Basically, we went to different farms and picked fruit like oranges and lemons. They donate that fruit to homeless shelters and also give it to after-school programs."

Alice Kaiser-Drobney is the director of the Institute for Community, Service-Learning, and Nonprofit Leadership and the SRU AmeriCorps program.

"(Service trips) make students more sensitive, compassionate and understanding of the world," Kaiser-Drobney said.

Kaiser-Drobney feels that in the future, a former Care Break student would be equipped with the knowledge to help in any crisis situation. In a natural disaster or an area with a community need, students will know how to organize a group to help, she said.

Getting involved in AmeriCorps prepares students for leadership roles, Lawson said.

"In some projects, we lead trips and events at the school, like when we work at the I-Care House," Lawson said. "It's really cool to be able to do all that."

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SUBMITTED PHOTO

One of the Care Breaks organized last year through AmeriCorps was to Phoenix. On the trip, volunteers organized a penny carnival for children at Vista Colina Apartments, a family shelter a part of the Central Arizona Shelter Services.

Human Services Team helps people in need

By Elizabeth Rekowski
Rocket Focus Editor

Some students watch television in their spare time, others may go to the gym, but there is a select group of students on campus that spend their extra hours doing something more than that.

Volunteers for the AmeriCorps Program at SRU organize the majority of the volunteering opportunities on campus and spend their time giving back to the community.

The AmeriCorps' Connector Corps at SRU branch is located at the Lowry Center and focuses on several different areas of service.

One of the areas of service, called the

Human Services Team, specializes in caring for and giving back to people in need.

Among the focuses of the Human Services Team is to help the elderly. Other focuses include working with the homeless and mentally challenged adults.

Val Kremer, a social work major and member of the AmeriCorps' Human Services team, has been working with the team since August 2006.

"I went on a Care Break to San Francisco," Kremer said. "Afterwards, AmeriCorps members asked me to join and I had such a great experience (in San Francisco) that I did."

Kremer works mostly with the elderly,

but also likes to work with the homeless because she feels it relates more to her major.

"We get assigned to our team based mostly on our major," Kremer said.

Other service teams include the Special Projects Team that plans events and is organized by mostly communication majors with a public relations emphasis and the School Success Team, which is run mainly by education majors.

Jennifer Denardo, a 23-year-old graduate student in the community-counseling program is the Human Services Team leader. As an undergraduate at the University of Pittsburgh, Denardo

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Martin Luther King Day to be celebrated through service

By Samantha Shaner
Rocket Contributor

In honor of Martin Luther King Day, the Office of Intercultural Programs and AmeriCorps will be organizing the fifth annual Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service where they will be organizing special service projects throughout the weekend and on Monday in order to help students give back to the community.

The events for the day of service include volunteering time at elementary schools and nursing homes in the area and also a basketball tournament food drive and penny carnival organized by the campus AmeriCorps branch.

The number of volunteer groups put together for nursing homes and elementary school locations will be determined by the number of volunteers that show up to participate at the pre-registration. Locations for the service projects have yet to be finalized.

Pre-registration for the Office of Intercultural Programs' events will begin at 8:30 a.m. in the University Union Multi-Purpose Room. Na'im Akbar, a scholar, author, and lecturer will be giving a speech after pre-registration. Currently, Akbar is on the faculty in the Department of Psychology at Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida. Akbar's lectures often pertain to his insight and his analysis of the social concerns affecting African-Americans.

Following Akbar's lecture, the scheduled volunteer

work will begin and continue until 3 p.m.

Robert Clay, the assistant director of the Office of Intercultural Programs and co-chair of the planning committee, has been working to organize the day of service. Clay has been with SRU for five years and is the one who originally came up with the idea of creating the day of service dedicated to Martin Luther King Jr.

"Dr. King fought for civil liberties for all people, and the Martin Luther King Day of Service is a great opportunity to honor his life and legacy," Clay said.

DaNine J. Fleming, director of the Office of Intercultural Programs, makes sure that the volunteer programs for this event run smoothly as possible while giving back to the community and getting involved. As a part of her job, Fleming supports services designed for the diverse minority student population at SRU.

Fleming said she believes that students should get involved for a variety of reasons.

"We have people going (that) want to assist our community any way they can," Fleming said. "What could be a better way to join the community then to work shoulder to shoulder with others who have the same goal?"



IMAGE COURTESY OF MCT CAMPUS

She also said she thinks that this the day of service is a great way to bring the entire community together.

"It doesn't matter what race or gender you are, because

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