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University of Dayton

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SIX MONTHS AFTER SEPT. 11, UD STUDENTS SAY THEY ARE REJUVENATED FOR SPRING COMMUNITY SERVICE

DAYTON, Ohio — Like much of the nation, Lisa Baute sat and stared in horror at the TV set. She prayed for the uncle who worked less than two miles from the Pentagon and who traveled often to New York City on business.

“Sept. 11 made me think about things other than myself,” says the University of Dayton sophomore. “It forced me to re-evaluate my life. I mean, how could it not?”

Her uncle would eventually call to let the family know he was unharmed. But for the secondary education major, “a shift in my value system” had resulted. “I was determined to make a difference in another person’s life,” says Baute, 20, a Cincinnati native. “I’m not comparing myself to those who died trying to save others. I’m talking about small steps one day at a time.”

Baute, along with 106 fellow UD students, will take one of those steps when she heads to Trenton, N.J., as part of UD’s Spring Break-Out program March 22-30, an annual event designed to introduce students to community service projects throughout the country. There, she will help re-hab low-income houses and tutor Haitian refugees.

Baute may not be alone in her post-Sept. 11 “search for meaning.” A recent survey by the Independent Women’s Forum found that the vast majority of American college students say they have been affected by the atrocities of that day. And nearly a quarter of those 600 students polled said they now spend more time volunteering.

Emily Niese, 20, a religious studies major from Medina, Ohio, also is heading to Trenton for her service trip. Sept. 11, she says, convinced her to focus her volunteer efforts within the U.S., despite opportunities to serve abroad.

“The terrorist attacks showed just how connected we are to one another,” the junior says. “It was a wake-up call to all of us Americans that we’re in this together. We need each other.”

Service trips started at UD in 1989 when a small group of students in the Pax Christi student service club organized a trip to the Bronx. By 1991, 35 students participated in four service trips, and the number has grown each year since then. This year UD students chose...
from 12 service trips.

Last spring, almost 35,000 students across the nation participated in some type of alternative break experience, according to Break Away, a national resource for information on alternative break programs that is based at Vanderbilt University.

UD Spring Break-Out projects this year range from experiencing American Indian culture and building Habitat for Humanity homes in Eagle Butte, S.D., to learning more about the civil rights movement while touring historical sites in the South, such as Birmingham, Montgomery and Selma, Ala.

One group of UD students will provide a wide variety of social services to Latino and African-American communities in Chicago, including helping out in a Head Start program and youth center. Another group will travel to Salyersville, Ky., to perform a variety of service projects in this rural Appalachian community. Still another will travel to Juarez, Mexico, to learn about immigration issues and worker exploitation along the U.S.-Mexican border.

"This is a chance to do something worthwhile for others," says Nick Cardilino, coordinator of community outreach and service clubs for UD's Center for Social Concern. "It's more than an opportunity to see the issues faced by other cultures. It's a really a way to make deep friendships and to reflect and pray on the experience."

Cardilino believes Sept. 11 has especially inspired those students who already have a history of volunteering.

"All of our students, I'm sure, were horrified at the attacks and equally moved by the acts of kindness and heroism that followed," he says. "But Sept. 11 seems to have reinforced the desire to participate in community service in those students who already choose to give of themselves."

So "crushed beyond belief" by the events of Sept. 11, sophomore Christine Kimball, 20, asked Cardilino for permission to create a new service trip that would take UD students within a subway ride of New York. She and 12 others will spend a week in Paterson, N.J., building houses for a low-income families.

"It's just 35 miles south of New York City," says the exercise science and fitness management major from Cincinnati. "While we're there, we're going to take a break to visit Ground Zero. It's something I've needed to do since the attacks. I'll be able to build something constructive as well as pay my respects to the dead, all in the same trip."

For media interviews, contact the students before March 22 or after March 30: Lisa Baute at (937) 627-1233 or via e-mail at bauteela@notes.udayton.edu, Emily Niese at (937) 627-8624 or via e-mail at nieseemj@notes.udayton.edu, and Christine Kimball at (937) 627-5339 or via e-mail at kimbalct@notes.udayton.edu (prefers e-mail). Nick Cardilino can be reached at (937) 229-2524 or via e-mail at njc@udayton.edu. For more background, see the spring break-out Web site at http://www.udayton.edu/~csc/springbreakouts.htm/.