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Spring Break Service

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University of Dayton sophomore Annie Hulefeld is "pumped" for her spring break trip to Central America next week.

But instead of relaxing on a beach and enjoying the sun like so many of her peers, Hulefeld will be working in poor villages of rural Honduras, providing healthcare services to children.

"This is what I want to do with my life, to get involved in international medicine," said the pre-med major from Covington, Ky., "It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

As one of 23 UD students traveling to Honduras to assist Cincinnati-based nonprofit Shoulder to Shoulder, Hulefeld joins more than 150 UD students spending spring break in service.

UD's Center for Social Concern is coordinating a series of domestic and international "breakout" trips for these students March 15-23.

"These trips connect the students' faith life to a sense of social justice," said Mary Niebler, coordinator of cross-cultural immersion for the Center for Social Concern. "They spend time over their breaks encountering people of a different culture, particularly people who are less off than they are. Others just involve sharing in the lives of people."

The Honduras partnership is the first between the University and Shoulder to Shoulder, which runs a medical clinic in Santa Lucia, said Robert Kearns, a biology professor and director of the pre-medical programs office at UD. He arranged the trip after talking with a UD graduate who joined the nonprofit in 2005.

"This will give them an opportunity to see what medicine is all about in a developing country and get them involved in an extremely important service activity," Kearns said.

Students will participate in four different projects, he said. These include visiting local villages and performing healthcare check-ups on children, assisting with patient care at the medical clinic in Santa Lucia, conducting water quality assessments, and meeting with teenage girls to discuss proper nutrition in an effort to reduce birth defects.

The combination of service and cross-cultural experience is what has drawn senior religious studies major Holly DeHaven to participate in three breakouts during her years at UD.

Next week, she is joining a team that is volunteering with Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans to continue the rebuilding effort in the city.

"People think, 'Hurricane Katrina happened three years ago, they should have it taken care of,' but the reality is there are a lot of people who still live in trailers, who haven't had their homes rebuilt," she said. "It's important to keep going until the work is done."

DeHaven hopes the trip will benefit her as much as the ones she helps.

"I love being a student, but I feel like I learn a lot more when I go on trips like this. When you serve others, you learn so much from their experiences," she said.

UD junior Liz Albanese, a religious studies major, is leading a small group of students to Camp Stevens in Julian, Calif. The camp calls itself a "place apart" for reflection and deepening a sense of respect for self, others, creation and God. The team will work in an organic garden, do landscaping and learn about environmental responsibility, Albanese said.

"We learn about the importance of service through caring for the environment, that how we treat the environment does affect the larger spectrum of global justice, and it is connected to poverty," she said.

For list of all spring breakouts, which include trips to Chicago, Appalachia, the Dominican Republic and El Salvador, visit the
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