

## Students find spring break can be more than partying and relaxing

**Kristen Schwaegerle**  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Spring break is an opportunity to get away from schoolwork, maybe take a vacation or relax at home. Some students, however, use their break as an opportunity to change others' lives for the better.

UNH's Campus Ministry, St. Thomas More, and the Catholic Student Organization work together to offer service retreats where students can get away from the busy world to focus on serving others, and to learn about a different community and themselves. Students can choose between two locations: Bethlehem Farm in rural Pence Springs, W. Va.; and San Francisco de La Paz in Honduras.

The program is based on four cornerstones: community, service, prayer and simplicity.

"The program started 15 years ago by taking trips to Honduras and the Appalachians," said University Chaplain Julie Tracey. "We do service with the community, and not for people. It creates a different sense of solidarity."

"These trips help us view the world through different eyes."

### Honduras

The students that went to San Francisco de La Paz worked on local farms and gardens at schools and homes, said Christine Frazier, a senior business administration major. Students also worked on the Hogar, which is a central dormitory and medical clinic for volunteers.

Frazier said many people have helped her in her life so far, and she wanted to go on an alternative break this year to attempt to pass that helping nature on.

"There was a lot of poverty down there," said Frazier.

She said Honduras is the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. In spite of their poverty, Frazier said, the Hondurans were welcoming and appreciated all the work done by the students.

"We went one day to the school



**UNH students helped shingle a shed, renovate a bathroom and build a handicap-accessible ramp on Bethlehem Farm, W. Va.**

and we tutored in English," said Frazier.

The UNH students worked with seventh, eighth and ninth graders, although two of the ninth grade students were 17 and 19 years old.

Honduran public school students have to pay for their uniforms and notebooks, which is sometimes too much for a family to pay for year after year. For many students, there might be years between consecutive grades.

"The older boy that I was working with could barely write in Spanish, no matter saying much in English," said Frazier.

Frazier said helping families and schools was rewarding and would recommend a service trip to any student.

### West Virginia

Other students stayed closer to home, spending their break working at Bethlehem Farm in a rural, mountainous area in West Virginia.

"The town where it is has so much poverty," Hayley Very, a sophomore biology major. "I felt like I was in a different country."

Students spent time shingling a shed, renovating a bathroom and building a handicap-accessible ramp, among other things.

Very was surprised at how easy it was to connect with the people they were helping.

"They welcomed us into their homes, which was very powerful," said Very. "You give hugs to everyone. It is a completely community-loving atmosphere."

Valerie Schoepfer, a junior environmental sciences major, went to Bethlehem Farm for the second time and said it was an experience she would never forget.

"The people of Appalachia are different from anyone you will ever meet," said Schoepfer. "Many people walked past, and each one said 'Hi,' nodded or smiled. And many asked what we were doing, when the store would open, how we liked the warm weather, or anything to start a conversation."

Schoepfer took her positive, service-oriented attitude away from her spring break trip, which were influenced by such events as "listening to an elderly man's stories, picking up a can as you walk to class, or smiling at the police officer at the intersection."

"I think it is much more important now than ever to do service work," said Schoepfer. "With a rough economy, it is harder for everyone to get by."

## UNH continuing to promote 'low-risk' drinking

**Terri Ogan**  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Drinking: everyone does it, right? It's an activity so prevalent in college culture that it seems impossible to thwart. That's why Health Services is strongly promoting their idea of "low-risk" drinking to help modify student's tendencies instead of trying to stop them all together.

"I've never found that the idea of prohibition has ever worked," said Anne-Marie Matteucci, an alcohol, tobacco and drug counselor and educator at Health Services. "We want to give people strategies to protect them from risky drinking, and even identify what risky drinking is."

The Office of Health Education and Promotion has been consistently putting up posters and informational tables in the Hamel Recreation Center and the Memorial Union Building to give students tools to avoid dangerous drinking. Their website offers more than a dozen links including tips for low-risk drinking, being alcohol free, alcohol educational programs, helping a friend, a self-assessment, even a link for parents to explore.

Educators, authorities, and counselors don't have the power to stop students from drinking, but they do have the resources to give students tactics for risk-free alcohol consumption, Matteucci said.

The self-assessment on the Health Services website helps students identify whether they're drinking in a dangerous way or not. There's also a calendar with a list of alcohol-free events both on-campus and in the Seacoast area that are offered to anyone in the UNH community.

"We want to provide the students with options and activities if they choose not to drink," said Matteucci. "Saying no to drinking is always a viable option, but if someone does choose to drink, we want them to do so in a way that doesn't cause them any harm."

Counselors at Health Services meet with hundreds of students, whether they are mandated or self-referred, and get the opportunity to promote their philosophy of low-risk drinking.

"If those of legal age make the informed decision to include alcohol in their life style choice, we expect that the choice includes responsible consumption," said Deputy Chief of Police Paul Dean. "This includes knowing all the health and legal risks associated with making poor choices."

UNH feels so strongly about their low-risk drinking philosophy that an online drinking program for first-year students became a requirement this past year.

"We want students to know that not drinking is OK," Matteucci said. "Fifteen percent of students don't drink, which is surprisingly high. The survey

we conduct every other year will show us whether or not the required online alcohol program has an effect on alcohol consumption."

Another school that supports the idea of low-risk drinking is the University of Connecticut. Carolyn A. Lin, a professor in the Department of Communication Sciences at UConn, is the brain behind a campaign called "Remember Last Night," a student-driven movement to help promote the safe use of alcohol.

The first campaign was launched in March 2008 and recommenced with new ideas and strategies on Feb. 28 this year.

"I noticed that there was a lot of drinking going on, and I mean a lot," said Lin. "Every weekend all I hear are ambulance sirens because students are being taken to the hospital for alcohol reasons. I know there's no way to stop drinking all together, but I thought, 'Gee if I could just give some tips to moderate it.'"

Lin was first inspired to launch the campaign, a product of a research project funded by the U.S. Department of Education, when she witnessed the excessive drinking that occurred during UConn's Spring Weekend.

This is the three days before the last week of classes when up to 20,000 students from all over the nation come to the small town of Storrs, Conn., to engage in different activities. The main events feature different drinking games and "blacking out," Lin explained.

"I want to give students the knowledge of what alcohol does to you," said Lin. "This includes health problems and safety issues."

The RLN campaign consists of three main categories: "Know the score," "Watch my back," and "Set your game plan."

"Know the score" is about understanding facts about alcohol. For example, how much alcohol content is in one drink, how much your blood alcohol level can affect your judgment, and signs of alcohol poisoning.

"Watch my back" involves standing firmly to peer pressure, helping to prevent friends from heavy drinking, and taking precautions as a group.

Finally, "Set your game plan" is about practicing safe drinking as a group and spreading these safe-drinking norms.

The RLN campaign uses methods of outreach such as advertising, media outlets and student organizations to relay their message to as many students as possible, Lin said. Prior to Spring Weekend, student members of the campaign do outside tabling, go door-to-door to hand out posters and flyers, and talk personally with as many students as possible.

"Confronting our culture is the No. 1 challenge we have," Lin said. "We have to get students to pay attention and alert them of our campaign. So far, we've made a lot of progress."

**D.A.N.C.E.**

Presented By

**W  
U  
N  
H**

91.3 FM

GET YOUR **D.A.N.C.E.** ON

**WILDCAT DEN SAT. APRIL 11th**  
Free Event

[www.TNHonline.com](http://www.TNHonline.com)