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NEWS

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March 11, 2002

For Immediate Release:

EIU STUDENTS/EMPLOYEES AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS LEND HELPING HANDS

CHARLESTON - Teams of Eastern Illinois University students, faculty and staff are doing what they can to make a difference in other people's lives as they participate in this year's Alternative Spring Break.

The program, sponsored locally by Newman Catholic Center's Student Volunteer Center, places teams in communities around the country to engage in community service and experiential learning. All trips involve hands-on service, education, reflection and cultural experiences.

Volunteers pay a portion of their own way - for most, \$130 - which includes transportation, site fees, housing, most meals and a t-shirt. The remainder of the cost is subsidized by the Newman Catholic Center.

This year, nearly 100 participants are spending the week (March 8-15) - Eastern's spring break - at sites, including those that deal with the environment, homelessness, the elderly, urban and rural poor and inadequate housing.

A list of participants follows. This year's sites include:

St. Francis Inn (Philadelphia, Pa.): This site provides a setting in which volunteers serve the poor and work for justice. It allows volunteers to witness their faith through

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2003 ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK

prayer and a simple lifestyle. Work includes the preparation and serving of meals in a soup kitchen and work in a thrift store.

Big Oak Girls Ranch (Springville, Ala.) and Big Oak Boys Ranch (Gadsden, Ala.):

Volunteers spend a week clearing land, painting, putting in water lines, etc. More than 30 girls or boys (depending on the ranch) between the ages of six and 18 who have been abused, neglected and/or abandoned live at the ranches year around in homes with other girls and boys and their house parents. This site allows volunteers the opportunity for friendship and fellowship with these girls and boys.

St. Francis of Assisi (Bessemer, Ala.): Volunteers spend spring break helping out this poor parish in the south. Participants will spend time assisting with children in a Head Start program and helping with cleanup or improvement projects around the church and school.

Glenmary Farm (Vanceburg, Ky.): Participants here will experience mission firsthand by reaching out to the local people of Appalachia. They will learn the Appalachian culture, the socio-economic conditions and the problems of the poor through discussion and by providing manual labor, home repair, visiting a health care center and working with the emotionally challenged.

Project Open Hand (Atlanta, Ga.): Volunteers spend the week helping to prepare and deliver cooked meals to those with AIDS or HIV-related illnesses or disabilities. More than 3,000 meals are served daily, seven days a week, to more than 550 men, women and children in the metropolitan area.

Focus: HOPE (Detroit, Mich.): This organization seeks to unite a multicultural community in common efforts to overcome injustice and build racial harmony. Volunteers will work

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with technology training programs, food programs and pre-school education programs, as well as with various social service agencies in the Detroit area.

Global Village - Habitat for Humanity (Nicaragua): This site introduces participants to the exciting hands-on, grass-roots, house-building work at a Habitat affiliate in Nicaragua. Participants work alongside homeowners and partners while experiencing global ministry.

Collegiate Challenge (Jackson, Miss.): Participants at this site put their faith into action by building and renovating homes with people sharing a common goal. Participants will learn and use construction skills while working with Habitat for Humanity and partner families.

L'Arche Daybreak (Ontario, Canada): Participants to this site live in community with corps members (persons with disabilities) and assistants (volunteers). They help cook meals, go on outings, work at the craft studio and on projects around the house.

El Puente de Esperanza (Queretaro, Mexico): Participants here teach women sewing, child-rearing, cooking and other skills in preparation for the time when these women can move back to their homes and earn a living without displacing themselves and their children. Volunteers may teach, renovate homes, work with children and/or work on special projects.

Seamless Garment Catholic Worker House (Marietta, Ga.): This site provides a safe place for pregnant women to prepare for the birth of their babies. Volunteer activities may include prayer vigils, visiting the sick and elderly, working in an organic vegetable garden, cleaning, painting, caring for children, preparing lunches and/or recycling. Daily discussions and devotions are included.