



News Release

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Alternative Spring Break Students Choose Mountains Over the Beach

KEUKA PARK, N.Y.—A rustic camp set in the tall pine trees of the Cumberland Plateau in Tennessee.

Probably not a place where *MTV Spring Break* would be filmed.

But an appropriate location for an alternative spring break.

The alternative spring break is a Keuka College tradition. For several years, students have traveled to Florida to build houses for Habitat for Humanity. And this year, 15 students will participate in Spring BREAK OUTreach, a college mission experience hosted by Mountain T.O.P. (Tennessee Outreach Project). Mountain T.O.P. is an interdenominational Christian mission affiliated with the Tennessee Conference of the United Methodist Church and dedicated to rural life ministry in the Cumberland Mountains.



“Keuka students want to experience a culture different from their own while having a significant positive impact on others,” said Keuka College Chaplain Gerry Fish, who arranged for the students to participate in Mountain T.O.P. and will be accompanying them on the trip. “The Appalachia region of Tennessee is a great way to do that. Compared to the national level, this area has some of the highest rates of unemployment, people living below the poverty line, children living in poverty, high school dropouts, and infant mortality in the country.

“Through meeting different expressed needs, whether they be physical, social, emotional, or spiritual, Keuka students taking part in this alternative spring break can show this area that there is still hope in a region that is often referred to as the “Forgotten Appalachia,” and that the love and hope of Jesus can be with them no matter how desperate their situation,” added Fish.

The Keuka students will join other college students from all over the country at a Mountain T.O.P. camp, where they will spend two days performing repair and rehabilitation work on cabins, landscaping the grounds, painting, and general maintenance in preparation for summer mission events. The remainder of the week will be spent working with local church or community service agencies that don’t have the funds to keep up their own facilities.

(more)

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“Helping with upkeep and upgrades better enables these agencies to be in service to the local families,” said Fish. “This has direct impact on the services provided to the Appalachian people.”

The students will depart for Tennessee Saturday, March 26, and are planning to arrive at the camp on Sunday. On Monday, the work begins. The students will leave the camp Saturday, April 2. If time and financial resources permit, Fish said the group might visit the Grand Ole Opry its way back to campus.

The group was awarded a \$4,000 grant from the Chatlos Foundation to help fund the trip. Founded in 1953 by William F. Chatlos, the Chatlos Foundation provides support to nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations in the U.S. and around the globe. The Foundation’s areas of interest are Bible Colleges/seminaries, religious causes, medical concerns, liberal arts colleges, and social concerns. Grants to liberal arts colleges total seven percent of the Foundation distribution and range from \$2,500-\$15,000. Priority consideration is given to private colleges.

The group raised additional funding for the trip through various activities, including a pizza sale.