

UWM Honors College  
Alternative Spring Break

*New Orleans*



# Getting Hands On in New Orleans...

## Round Two

On the second annual Honors College Alternative Spring Break trip, twenty impassioned Honors College students, along with Honors College faculty member Benjamin Schneider and Honors College Director Peter Sands, returned to New Orleans.

Primarily a service trip, ASB partnered again with HandsOn New Orleans, a local non-profit organization, who welcomed the group back for three and a half days of volunteering.

On the first two days, the ASB team volunteered at Sojourner Truth Neighborhood Center, near the Lafitte Greenway and adjacent to both old and new public housing. The Center's director, Ms. T, explained how much the Center means to the community and the immense pride they take in empowering the residents they serve. The volunteers set to work early Monday morning beautifying the back of the Center by repainting and lining the parking lot and planting and mulching open areas.

On the second day, the group tackled the front of the Center. While a handful of zealous students power washed the building's windows, the rest took up power tools to build outdoor furniture for residents to enjoy.

Alyson Nordstrom (Nursing) remembers that she "was so excited to be volunteering and helping the community. Plus, it was super fun working as a team to build that table from scratch, especially knowing it was for a good cause."

Nathan Kohls (Computer Science and Math) felt the impact of the service work immediately because "it felt amazing to give to an organization that does so much good work for the people they serve."



After congregating in the hotel lobby on the morning of the third volunteer day, the students hopped on a city bus to the Central City neighborhood to contribute to the long process of blight reduction.

As the group walked to the work site, HandsOn manager Peyton Juneau told the group about the importance of keeping empty lots clean for the neighborhood.

Kate Ferguson (Human Resources Management), says participating "in the service work in New Orleans has inspired me to do more work in the Milwaukee community. The service trip to New Orleans was life changing in that it provided me with a new perspective."

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For the last day of volunteering, the group worked with Arc of Greater New Orleans to sort over one ton of donated Mardi Gras beads. After sorting, Arc resells the beads and the proceeds go to help people with intellectual disabilities with life experiences, personal care, and employment.

Mariah Schaller (Occupational Therapy) was pleasantly surprised when she learned about ARC's mission: "I had no idea my spring break trip would somehow tie into my exact career aspirations, but it did. The fact that it did reminded me of all the little ways life can be unexpectedly connected."

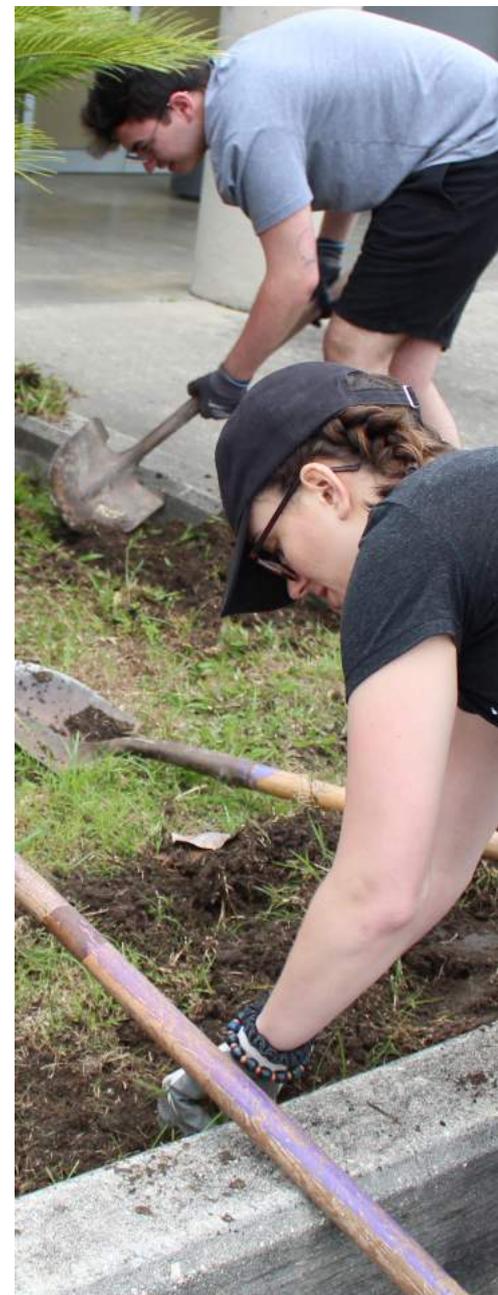
Aaron Arendt (Nursing) adds that "bead sorting was my favorite day of service work because we were able to work on a distinctly New Orleans problem." He recalls that sorting the beads in groups "got competitive and it got competitive fast."

Although the work was demanding, the students smiled through their sunburn and embraced the city. Reflecting on her experience, Lena Orwig (JAMS) is "grateful for the opportunity to have attended this trip twice, because it has helped me feel like I belong in the Honors College. It gave me the chance to meet other people as passionate about community service and learning as me, and I am a better student, person, and friend because of this experience."



- Story by Halie Gehling

“The beauty and resilience of the city and its residents has inspired me in innumerable ways to be a better person, student, and artist, and it has inspired me to approach everything with an open heart, mind, and with hands ready to get to work. I only wish every student has an experience as liberating and affirming as this alternative spring break trip.”  
- Lena O.



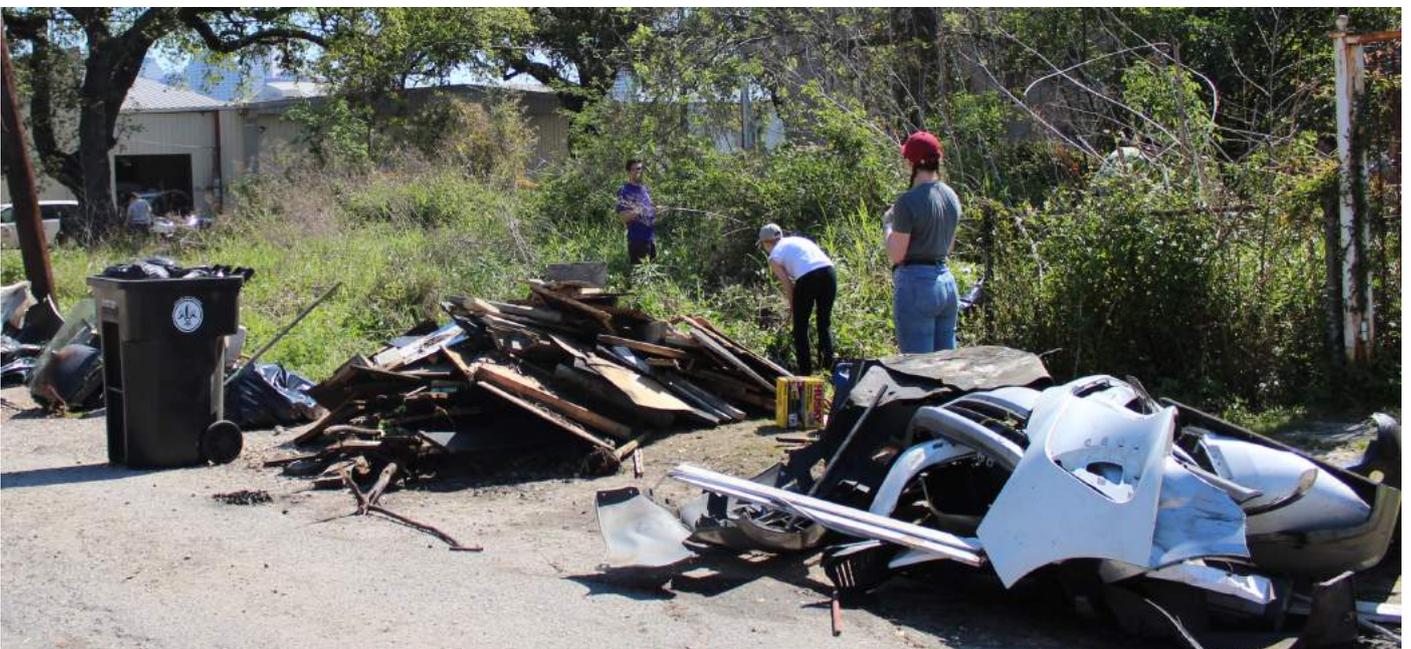


**More than anything**, the trip taught me a degree of sensitivity and compassion that can't be taught in a classroom. My biggest hope is to bring these qualities into my life and my interactions beyond New Orleans, integrating them into my community here in Milwaukee.  
- Sal G.





“I remember one community member driving up to us as we picked up trash. He pointed to a newly built house in the adjacent lot and said, “We built this house! The neighborhood is on the upswing!” They were grateful for the work we put in and we were happy that we could help.”  
- Kate F.





“It is amazing how quickly a week of travel with 20 mostly strangers can turn into what feels like a second family. When I think about the memories we made in just a week together and the friendships I have made for the rest of my time at UWM, I know my Spring Break was well spent.”

- Aaron A.



Every day in New Orleans, this year and last, was its own adventure and had its own adversities, resolutions, and value. These trips have been invaluable to both my education and my personal growth over the last few years.

- Mariah S.





This is the first time that I've felt I was fully immersed in the culture of a city. From getting the opportunity to talk to the people who live there, to trying new foods, to watching parades and listening to live bands, I have learned so much about New Orleans in a very short amount of time.  
- Mackenzie Z.







**“Exposure** to the city didn’t make us heroes, but rather helpers and fellow people, and I firmly believe that was the best part of the trip. (Not, of course, discrediting the fun experiences and fantastic food that made working those long service days far more motivating. I wouldn’t have traded the crawfish boil or food halls we went to for any other dinners, no questions asked.)”  
- Haley K.



Many thanks to everyone who helps to make this trip happen!

## Milwaukee

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Margaret and Jack Brahm  
Glenna Cose and Brad Brin  
Kris Hill and Sanjay Deshpande  
Patricia and Richard Johnsonbaugh  
Nora and Mark Fardella  
Keri Duce, UWM Director of External Relations  
The UWM Honors College faculty and staff  
Students of the UWM Honors College  
The Sunkin Suns  
Josh Trimble  
Pineapple Migraine

## New Orleans

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Big E's Airport Transportation Service  
Trace at Treme Coffeehouse  
Denise and Alton at Bywater Bakery  
Hillary at Laurel St. Bakery  
Sonya at Clesi's Restaurant  
Mike at Willie Mae's Scotch House  
Ms. T at Sojourner Truth Community Center  
Ms. Jeannette at Garden on Mars  
Chris and Peyton at Hands on New Orleans  
Robert and Greg at Historic New Orleans Tours  
Angela Catalano at Shotgun Cinema  
Logan at French Quarter Phantoms  
Kelsi at Best Western French Quarter Hotel  
Toni at Arc of Greater New Orleans