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How long has St. Norbert offered “alternative spring break” programs?

Kelly (Langenecker) Peiffer '97

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March 2014

Question:

Dear Abbot Pennings,

How long has St. Norbert offered “alternative spring break” programs?

Kelly (Langenecker) Peiffer '97

Answer:

My dearest Kelly,

Ahh, spring break – the anxiously awaited week in March when students pause from the routine of study. Many enjoy time at home with family, while others travel to places much warmer than northeast Wisconsin! Still others, as part of college athletic teams and musical groups, spend time together competing in tournaments or performing.

Meanwhile, some on campus devote their free time to participating in the **TRIPS program**. TRIPS – Turning Responsibility Into Powerful Service, a clever acronym coined by 1999 trip leader Natalie Berken '00 – offers students a chance to serve nationally and even globally during academic downtime.

About 150 students participate in TRIPS each academic year during winter break, spring break or a long weekend. This month, 50 students will travel in groups to Milwaukee, Chicago, Iowa, Arkansas and South Carolina. They will join forces with organizations like Elderly Outreach, Habitat for Humanity, Urban Education and Friends With Disabilities to make an impact beyond St. Norbert.



Ask the Abbot

As the founder of St. Norbert College, and having a prime seat in the center of campus throughout the years, I, Abbot Bernard Pennings, hold the answers to many of your burning questions about the college.

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Each TRIPS excursion focuses on a specific social issue. Participants interact with people from a variety of economic, faith and cultural backgrounds. These interactions, often during unexpected and unplanned moments, provide students' most meaningful and memorable experiences. It is certainly gratifying to see our students live *communio* in this way.

While the TRIPS moniker is relatively new, St. Norbert service trips are not. The college has offered such life-changing opportunities since the 1970s. A brief timeline illustrates the history of St. Norbert service trips and a few of the lives they've shaped:

1978

During her senior year, Mary McGlone '78 led the first of three spring break service trips to the Catholic Worker House in St. Louis. Now Sister Mary McGlone, C.S.F., she presently serves as executive director of Fuvirese USA. St. Norbert partners with this Wisconsin-based nonprofit organization to support Ecuadorian people with disabilities.

1986

Julie (Donovan) Massey '87 participated in the first St. Norbert trip to Washington, D.C. The goals of the Holy Week trip were to raise awareness, collect resources, serve in shelters, demonstrate and lobby the Senate. Massey is now senior director for mission and ministry at our beloved institution.

1988

Dan Lunney '90 participated in the Good News Project trip to St. Lucia. He was so moved by his experience that he created an endowment to help future students afford this once-in-a-lifetime experience. Lunney is now a national leader in AIDS ministry.

1998

Danielle (Gilbertson) Lillge '00 returned from a service-oriented training and gathered a group of trip leaders to discuss an alternative break program at St. Norbert. The following year, a group of experienced trip participants laid the groundwork for the current TRIPS program, coordinated by Campus Ministry and the Sturzl Center for Community Service & Learning.

Could one of this year's TRIPS participants find the course of his or her life changed by the experience? Our shared history

would certainly indicate this happy outcome. No doubt you'll join me in wishing our young people all the very best as they journey across the country in these exciting endeavors.

Responses to "Ask the Abbot" questions are penned by St. Norbert College staff in the name of Abbot Bernard Pennings, O.Praem., who founded St. Norbert College in 1898.

St. Norbert College

100 Grant Street
De Pere, WI 54115
920-337-3181
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