



Staff Voice

By Jarod Wilson, Assistant Coordinator of Community Service
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Jarod Wilson, Assistant Coordinator for Community Service, traveled to Managua, Nicaragua in June to co-facilitate the staff track at the Alternative Break Citizenship Schools (ABCs). The ABCs was hosted by Break Away, a non-profit focused on forwarding the national alternative breaks movement.

Here is Jarod's Experience

For twelve days in June, I had the chance to work with Break Away, the National Alternative Breaks movement, to assist in facilitating a staff track at the Alternative Break Citizenship Schools in Managua Nicaragua. It was truly an honor to be asked to work with such a great organization and have the opportunity to use the knowledge and skills that I have gained while working with the Alternative Breaks program at IUPUI and share them with schools around the United States.



My role in the staff track was to help facilitate a week-long conference of sessions focused around issues such as "Ethics of Alternative Breaks," "Pursuing Funding," and "Developing Community Partners." Each of these sessions was co-led by myself and one staff member from the College of William and Mary and one staff member from American University, two of the strongest Alternative Breaks programs in the country.

While the conference specifically focused on improving Alternative Breaks programs, it consisted more for than sitting through workshops. The conference is designed to model a "typical" Alternative Break, allowing participants to see best practices while experiencing it. To help achieve this, all participants in the conference worked with two schools in the Monte Tabor region of Managua and focused all education and learning around Nicaragua's "Literacy Crusade"—a governmental movement in 1980 that helped to reduce illiteracy in the country from roughly 51% down to approximately 12%.

Working through Panorama Service Expeditions, an organization whose founder and current president are native Nicaraguans, we lived and worked in a community that requested our services and had a huge say in the types of projects that we would be doing. One of the schools, Centro Escolar Elim, had requested that we assist them in building a kitchen for their school so that meals could be cooked on-site instead of in the homes of school children. At Instituto Diocesano Monte Tabor, we were asked to help renovate one of the school buildings that originally held four classrooms, but had since fallen into neglect and had not been used for more than 10 years.

In living, learning, and working in the neighborhood that would be impacted by our presence, we were able to see the importance of community voice in all aspects of service work. More than this, though, we were able to see how important it is for our work with Alternative Breaks to be more than one-time experiences, but that we must be able to create strong, sustainable partnerships in order to create positive, sustainable change in our world. Because of this, the staff members agreed to begin the process of creating compacts among Break Away member campuses. Two compacts that were created during this week is an international compact centered around Nicaragua and a domestic compact focused on Appalachia. IUPUI's Alternative Breaks program proudly signed on to be a founding member of the Appalachia compact, committing us to helping to create sustainable change through our trips to the region of Appalachia.



Even though I was asked to co-lead this staff track and share my knowledge of Alternative Breaks with other campuses, I was able to gain new knowledge that will help to grow Alternative Breaks on IUPUI's campus. Each year that the Alternative Breaks program here at IUPUI grows, new challenges and opportunities arise. Through my participation in this, I am excited to see how I can continue to improve the amazing program that we already have in place.