



Student Voice

By Taylor Pennell, Community Service Leader, Center for Service and Learning

Ten IUPUI students and one staff advisor visited Boone, North Carolina on October 14-18, 2011 to take part in the annual IUPUI Fall Alternative Break trip. The trip offers students an opportunity to serve a community outside of Indianapolis, learn more about an issue facing our society, and develop their leadership and civic skills. Student site leader Taylor Pennell, a Junior in the School of Education and a Sam H. Jones Community Service Scholarship recipient, details her trip.

Read Taylor's Take on FAB:

For Fall Alternative Break (FAB) this year, we travelled 9 hours to Boone, North Carolina. After a long and tiring trip, we arrived around 1:00 in the morning, pitched our tents and went straight to sleep for an early wake-up call. For the following two days we worked with the Friends of the Mountain-to-Sea Trail to help maintain a part of the trail that leads up to Rough Ridge, which includes a beautiful view of the fall trees and the city of Charlotte. Each day consisted of carrying various hand tools—such as saws and hedge trimmers—along a 2.5 mile stretch of the Tanawha Trail. The trail had been damaged by an ice storm two years ago and had since been nearly impassable by all but the most seasoned of hikers. We spent many hours cutting back the trail, removing invasive species, and beautifying the trail so that it could be better opened for public use.



Taylor Pennell (right) with Jillian Conley

We spent our evenings preparing dinner and getting to know one another. A very important part of Alternative Breaks is the camaraderie that is built among the participants. We tried many different foods from peanut butter and bologna sandwiches to roasted chocolate bananas. Each night was very chilly, but we had layers and huddled around the camp fire so that we could have reflection time. It was great to hear everyone's experiences and see what made them come on the trip and what they wanted to do when they returned home.

While working on the trail, we talked with many of the local residents who were very thankful for our presence and the work we were doing on the trail. They also encouraged us by telling us how much it meant to them and the community. This met the exact goal of the trip, because the social issue we focused on was community development and this was what truly brought it home for us. Seeing how our work actually impacted the community was a very meaningful experience. Also, this trip was my first time leading an Alternative Break and it gave me confidence for next semester when I lead my week-long Alternative Spring Break!