The University of Toledo

Students to volunteer in NYC during spring break

By Nicolette Jett : February 29th, 2012

Diane Hazrilla has chosen to give up lazy days on the couch for a more fulfilling spring break experience. She is one of about 30 UT students who have chosen an alternative spring break trip to New York City to volunteer and serve the community.

“A lot of people get turned off by the idea of having to volunteer over their break,” Hazrilla said. “The trip is not all service hours. The trip provides everyone involved a way to understand and help others around us in a positive direction.”

The American Language Institute and the Leadership Through Service Living Learning Community will travel and work together for the first time to participate in an alternative spring break trip in the Big Apple. UT’s spring break is Monday through Friday, March 5-9.

As part of the 2012 trip “Homelessness and Hunger,” students will volunteer for the week at various homeless shelters in New York. When volunteering, students are encouraged to reach out to those in the shelter and learn about their circumstances revolving around their current living situation.

“The alternative spring break gives students from both groups, the Leadership Through Service Living Learning Community and the American Language Institute, an opportunity to give back to others,” said Kristin Huffman, graduate assistant for the Center for International Studies and Programs. “The trip allows students to use real-life skills in this practical experience and see instant positive outcomes.”

The Leadership Through Service Living Learning Community provides an opportunity for students to make their first year at UT exciting, supportive and unique while connecting with like-minded peers who are energized about outreach. As part of the program, students must complete at least 300 hours of community service and are awarded $1,000 toward their education at UT.

The American Language Institute was founded in 1978 as an intensive English program at the University. The institute offers exceptional English language classes to students from all over the world as well as local residents and businesses. The program features reading, writing, listening and speaking skills practiced in units about interesting topics and grammar instruction about the English language.

“The trip offers the American Language Institute students an opportunity to meet UT students as well as become involved in our country,” Huffman said. “It is such an amazing and humbling experience for everyone involved.”

The goal of the alternative spring break program, along with all programs in the Center for International Studies and Programs, is to encourage students to step outside their comfort zones and seek diverse initiatives that will equip them to be change agents for the future, said Dr. Sammy Spann, executive director for the Center for International Studies and Programs.