



ECUMENICAL CENTER
at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay

For Immediate Release

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Service and Learning at a Native American reservation is at heart of Spring Break for 12 UWGB students

GREEN BAY, Wis. – What are college students doing over Spring Break? Some are enjoying the warm weather of Orlando, FL, others are catching up on their homework, the third group is visiting family and friends “back home,” and then, a small group of UWGB students is.....RIGHT NOW, doing service in South Dakota.

The Ecumenical Center, a non-profit organization that serves the UWGB population, in collaboration with the University’s Office of Student Life, has sponsored a service immersion trip to the Pine Ridge reservation of the Lakota Native Americans in South Dakota. After a 15 hour ride, 12 students and a staff member arrived to Custer, SD this past Sunday, and for 6 days they will be contributing to this unique community while transforming the way they see and understand their own lives, consequently growing their leadership capacity.

The service trip has two main objectives according to Hung Nguyen, executive director of the Ecumenical Center. “One is to get people out of their comfort zone and learn a little bit about who they are and how they relate to the rest of the world,” he said, “The second reason is to give a selected few an opportunity to apply what they learn in their textbooks to day-to-day reality.”

Eager to learn from the Lakota people -- about their life, culture, history and traditions, this group of volunteers will be working on renovating a home, splitting wood to provide fuel to heat people’s homes, and will be working with school kids.

According to Katie Kilsdonk, a junior business administration major and one of two trip leaders, this trip gives her an opportunity to “gain a better appreciation for the things I take for granted in my life.” Jenny Kuehl, another trip participant, joins in this feeling and adds her appreciation to the Ecumenical Center for providing an opportunity for students to learn about Native Americans.

“I think opportunities like this help an individual to grow into a better person, one who appreciates and values life and diversity of all people,” Kuehl said.

Since the Ecumenical Center is a nonprofit organization that operates independently from the

University of Wisconsin system, students have worked hard to raise money for the supplies needed to do the various service projects while in South Dakota. They organized a bake sale, spaghetti dinner, and have written letters to their friends and family asking them to support their Spring Break endeavor.

“It is important that people support us and know what we are all about,” said Nguyen.

The trip is a partnership between the Ecumenical Center and the University’s Office of Student Life, “a great partnership,” according to Nguyen. “I think with any project, you have to have partners to pull it off,” he continued.

The Ecumenical Center hopes to continue to organize service trips in the future and is open to input. “Students should tell us where they want to go and what they want to do. We are always looking for input,” Nguyen concluded.

For more information, please visit: www.ecuwgb.org or contact Adi Redzic at 920.465.5133 or aredzic@ecuwgb.org.

The Ecumenical Center is a non-profit organization that operates within the scope of the University of Wisconsin at Green Bay, and serves its students, faculty and staff, as well as members of the local communities in their pursuit of self-discovery and spiritual exploration. The mission of The Ecumenical Center is to provide opportunities for the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay community to explore faith, nurture the spiritual life, and serve others. The Center’s vision is to be recognized as a leader in promoting spiritual development and the values of respect, peace and justice. The Center welcomes all people and all spiritual perspectives.

www.ecuwgb.org