

## Alternative Spring Break- Atlanta

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Going to Atlanta for an Alternative Spring Break Program wasn't my first instinct while planning for my Junior year spring break. I had ideas of the beach, tanning, being with friends, maybe a road trip, and definitely a lot of sleep.

When I first heard of Alternative Spring Break I had many of the stereotypes as a lot of people. I thought it was an attempt to curve people away from "bad choices" during spring break and to make spring break somewhat less fun. After a long 8-hour drive to Atlanta, Georgia I was surprised at how much fun and more meaningful spring break became.

While there, 5 students and 2 staff members worked with a Non-Profit organization, "Essential 2 Life", which strives to empower underprivileged urban youth in the city of Atlanta. "E2L" exposed us to a variety of different organizations that they work with to immerse us into some of the social issues that currently exist in Atlanta. Everything from racism, poverty, drugs and violence, and gentrification were issues we saw from working in government housing projects, the Boys and Girls club, an underprivileged elementary school, government housing for older citizens, and a soup kitchen for the homeless.

What made this experience better than any beach day was I was able to travel to an entirely new city and realize how much I, as a student, can have an impact on where I go and what I do. I was able to paint a mural, nothing amazing, but a lasting imprint of my time at an elementary school struggling for support. The administration gave me free range of creativity to just paint what I felt needed to be on a plain cream wall. With a few dirty brushes and some left over paint I was able to leave an image that will stay in a school I had visited once in my life. Even though I was a perfectionist and thought it was rough, the gratitude and thanks from the teachers and the curiosity of the students was just the coolest realization at what a little work can do. That opportunity in itself was probably one of the best. Not to mention meeting a 5-year-old girl who took me on adventures to Jamaica, China, and South America to watch people dance and feed the tigers- now who said you can't travel the world in just 6 days?

After my trip it was amazing to have so many fun and interesting experiences but also was a kick in the face realizing my little Rollins and Orlando bubble is not the only world out there that needs support. Looking into the future it is our place as students to step outside our comfortable beaches and realize the power we have to change the life of a child, a grandparent, someone who just needs someone to say hi to them. Maybe a little idealist, but it's what has to happen. If not us, then who?