

Volunteer Resource Center

[Home \(/volunteer/\)](#) > [Alternative Breaks \(/volunteer/learn-more-about-our-program\)](#) > About CU
Alternative Breaks

About CU Alternative Breaks

[About \(#About\)](#) | [Vision \(#Vision\)](#) | [Service \(#Service\)](#) | [Timeline \(#Timeline\)](#) | [Testimonials \(#Testimonials\)](#)

What is Alternative Breaks?



Alternative Breaks, a program of the Volunteer Resource Center, sends teams of college students (between 12-18 students) to engage in community-based service projects during each college break, providing opportunities for students to learn about the problems faced by members of communities with whom they may otherwise have had little or no direct contact. This immersion in diverse environments enables students to experience, discuss, and understand social issues in a significant way, ultimately, moving students towards action to make a positive impact. Students either fly or drive together from Boulder to their location. All costs for each trip are inclusive of food, lodging, side

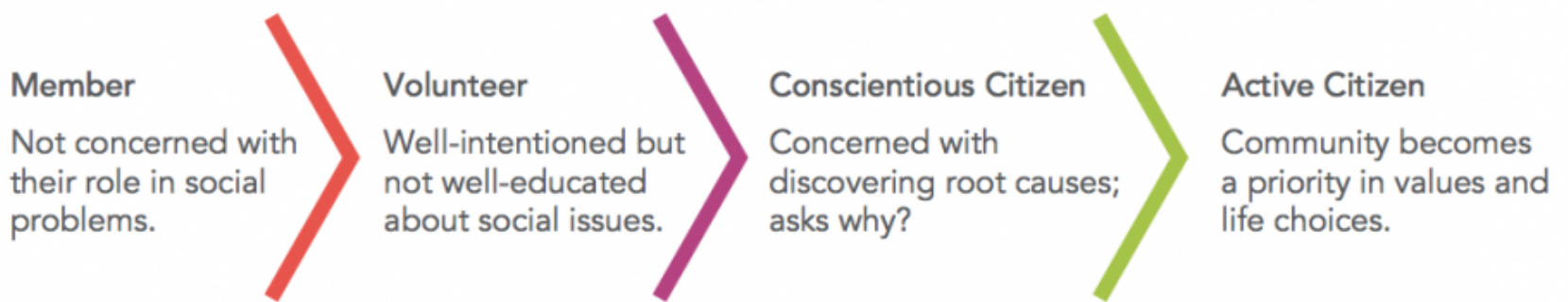
trips, a t-shirt, education and program fees. Students should not have to pay anything additional while they are on the trip.

CU Alternative Breaks program is a chapter member of Break Away. [Break Away: the Alternative Break Connection, Inc. \(http://www.alternativebreaks.org/\)](http://www.alternativebreaks.org/) is a national nonprofit organization that supports the development of quality alternative break programs by providing training and information primarily to colleges, universities, and nonprofit organizations interested in creating lifelong active citizens through these intensive service-learning programs. As part of a quality Alternative Break experience, participants will become more educated and experienced in all sides of social and environmental issues. Upon return, they will be empowered to make more informed decisions and take meaningful action that supports a greater good.

Our Philosophy

We follow two main philosophies when training students in the Alternative Break way. Both models come from Break Away.

The Active Citizen Continuum



Pre-Break Transformation

Prepare students for on-site experience and provide initial education about site-specific social issues.

- ▶ Education, orientation, and training
- ▶ Pre-break direct service
- ▶ Preflection: goals and expectations
- ▶ Icebreakers and group building

On-Break Transformation

Encourage participants to look critically at the root causes of social issues and challenge them to evaluate the role they have in the community.

- ▶ Strong direct service
- ▶ Ongoing education
- ▶ Community involvement
- ▶ Daily reflection tied to direct service and social issue education

Post-Break Transformation

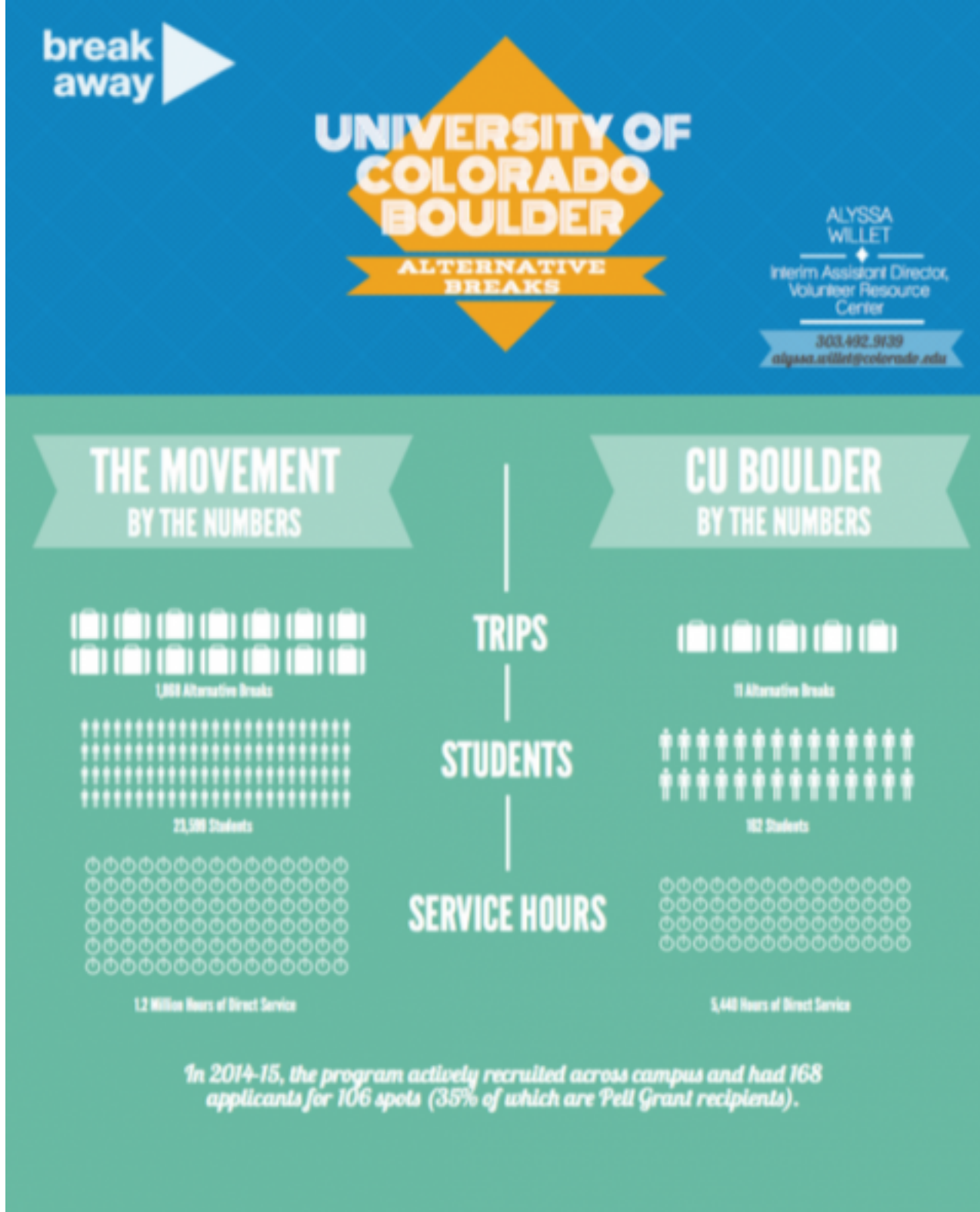
Help participants find avenues for continued community involvement and support their efforts to take action locally.

- ▶ Organize or join small groups of thoughtful, committed citizens
- ▶ Continued education
- ▶ Reflection about reorientation process
- ▶ Post-break direct service, advocacy, and philanthropy
- ▶ Life choices that benefit the community



www.alternativebreaks.org

Our Impact in 2015



What is our vision?

To create a society of active citizens: people who value the community as a priority when making life decisions.

Who do we serve?

Community Partners

We couldn't do the work we do without our community partners who are willing to provide us with service learning opportunities, education and sometimes even housing. Our community partners are located throughout the US and the world. We've worked with a few of the following organizations in the past:

- AIDS Project, LA

- Hands on Gulf Coast, MS
- Re-Member, Native American Reservation SD
- Shiprock Home for Women and Children, NM
- The ReBuilding Center, OR
- Midpines Yosemite trail building, WY
- Teach For America, TX
- Rancho Feliz, home re building, MX
- SafeHome, KS
- Orphanage Outreach in the Dominican Republic

Just in March 2014, students spent approximately 5,066 hours in service with our community partners!

Who Participates in an Alternative Break Trip?

Alternative Break trips could not run without the partnership and collective work of Participants, Site Leaders, Faculty & Staff Partners, and Community Partners. See below for a quick overview of each partnership along with role clarification for each group.

Participants – Over 150 students participate in the AB program each year and are involved in educational meetings and a service activity before and after the AB trip. There are approximately 8-10 student participants on each trip.

Site Leaders – AB site leaders spend a year leading a team and facilitating meaningful discussions on social justice and social change. Site Leaders participate in a six-month long training process and are responsible for planning and facilitating learning before, during and after trips.

Staff/Faculty Partners – AB staff & faculty partners attend trips as participants. They are encouraged to use their experience and knowledge to support site leaders in emergency or conflict resolution situations.

Community Partners – AB community partners interact directly with the community in which the AB will serve and serve as the host to our site leaders and participants during their alternative break. Community partners help organize the direct service, and serve as resources for education, orientation, and training.

AB Coordinators – AB Coordinators assist and develop the areas of marketing and recruitment, fundraising, outreach, training implementation, and event planning. The Coordinators are crucial to the continued student-centered focus and growth of the program.

What does the Upcoming AB timeline look like?

February- 2016 AB Site Leaders application opens

March- 2015 Spring Break Trips occur

May - 2016 Site Leader's Selected for the following year. Summer Alternative Break group heads to Nicaragua. When participants return from Nicaragua, reorientation occurs.

June - August - Planning for 2015-2016 trips occurs

August - March - Weekly site leader training happens. Participant meetings occur every spring semester before trips happen.

What are people saying about Alternative Breaks?



“Alternative Breaks was an awesome experience for me because it caused me to stop and look at my life, and start asking questions about myself. The other students in my group had so much insight and knowledge, and definitely challenged me in a positive way. Helping a community in need turned out to be really fun. Since my trip, I’ve become involved in planning future Alternative Break trips so that more students can have the awesome experience that I did.”
- Kirsten Hayda

“Brittany, Jackie, Matt, Katie, Allison and Lacee were excellent ambassadors for your program as well as the University of Colorado at Boulder. They worked very hard during their visit and are outstanding individuals. Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this incredible project!” – Phillip Hollon, Director of Residential Services [The students listed above worked in a dining facility that serves approximately 1800 meals a day to the homeless and hungry in southern Nevada.]

“When I decided to join Alternative Spring Breaks, I was really looking forward to doing some community service. As a freshman, completely new to the campus and to college life, I heard that the best way to adapt is to find your own niche. I picked Alternative Breaks, because, with studying, meeting new people, and making up new food concoctions, I wasn’t doing anything to show my appreciation to anyone about the great new opportunities now at my finger tips. In high school I was a community service junkie donating at least four hours a week. As soon as college life had me pinned down for time, I didn’t keep my habit going, I missed it and realized what a huge part of me it was. Not only was I given the chance to help others, but work with excellent people who wanted to be there, and to benefit a community that has been overshadowed, but in no less need of service.” – Sabrina Sameshima

“My experience with the Alternative Spring Breaks program was excellent. Not only did it increase my awareness of issues pertaining to low income housing, but it also brought me together with the most intellectual and caring group of people I have encountered in a long time. Together, we learned a lot about different areas in the US, community service, and most importantly, ourselves.” - Sarah Dobson

