

## **MSU students lead service learning projects with Arby's grants for Alternative Spartan Break**

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EAST LANSING, Mich. – A group of Michigan State University students dedicated to service and civic engagement received a boost from Arby's this spring with a mini-grant challenge for projects performed during Alternative Spartan Break.

Seven proposals received funding based on student-led designs for service endeavors dealing with childhood hunger and homelessness. The top three projects involved a resource activity on nutrition for children and their families at a Memphis, Tennessee hospital; a school garden project in a Chicago elementary school; and a food sustainability effort on the Rosebud Native American Reservation in South Dakota.

The mini-grant program is a Michigan-based initiative, in which the Arby's Foundation worked with Lansing franchiser Anne Ganakas, an MSU alumna.

"Because of our commitments to community, Arby's and MSU working together is the perfect meld. It's heartwarming to know we could help Alternative Spartan Break make a difference in the fight to end hunger, malnutrition, and homelessness," said Ganakas.

An earlier partnership between Arby's, Michigan State University, and the University of Michigan involved a spirited competition for team cup sales benefitting student scholarships. It was so successful that Arby's decided to align additional donations to help fund ASB students trips that specifically focused on projects to address hunger, malnutrition, and homelessness.

Applications for the mini-grants sharpened students' planning and desired outcomes for their service initiatives, according to Karen McKnight Casey, director of MSU's Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement.

"Arby's requested projects centered on issues of hunger abatement and nutrition, along with SMART goal setting (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely). Our students excelled at describing community needs and measurable outcomes. We are so proud that Arby's considered these seven projects worthy of their philanthropic expectations," said McKnight Casey.



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Michelle Chavdar, a human biology senior from Rochester Hills, Michigan, was a site leader/coordinator for an indigenous rights project in Appalachia during this year's Alternative Spartan Break. She will serve as an ASB coordinator for the 2012-2013 academic year, and values Arby's partnership with MSU's Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement.

"The mini-grants helped diminish the costs for these ASB projects. The supplies, travel, and lodging can eat into a student budget pretty quickly, and the money provided through the mini-grants can make a big difference in the way that we are able to accomplish what we set out to do," Chavdar said.

Alternative Spartan Breaks was established to encourage MSU student and faculty participation in active citizenship. The program, administered by the Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement, offers meaningful community-engaged service trips addressing critical issues such as children and education, health, HIV/AIDS, hunger and homelessness, indigenous rights, immigration and refugee services, disaster relief, and environmental stewardship.

During the 2011-2012 academic year nearly 250 MSU students and staff contributed approximately 30 hours each to 20 separate ASB endeavors. The more than 7,000 hours they spent planning and implementing these projects encouraged the participants to learn more about their world and their ability to have a positive impact in a community during a brief amount of time.

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The mission of the Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement at Michigan State University is to provide active, service-focused, community-based, mutually beneficial, integrated, learning opportunities for students, building and enhancing their commitment to academics, personal and professional development, and civic responsibility.

Michigan State University has been advancing knowledge and transforming lives through innovative teaching, research and outreach for more than 150 years. MSU is known internationally as a major public university with global reach and extraordinary impact. Its 17 degree-granting colleges attract scholars worldwide who are interested in combining education with practical problem solving.