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**Sac State students volunteer their break time**

There are plenty of activities for students on Winter Break – skiing, traveling, snowboarding – but several Sacramento State students are spending their free time giving back to the community.

The students are taking part in the University’s Alternative Break program, contributing their time and energy to improve the greater Sacramento community. From Jan. 21 through 25, about 95 students will volunteer at a number of agencies, including the Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services, Meals on Wheels by ACC, a community garden in collaboration with Soil Born Farms and Oak Park SOL, and the Wildlife Care Association, a nonprofit association that rescues and rehabilitates wild animals.

The Food Bank work is offered two days that week with Meals on Wheels, and the community garden and the Wildlife Care Association one day each. Students may volunteer for as many days as they wish. The break is one of many volunteer opportunities offered by Sacramento State’s Community Engagement Center.

“Through our community service programs, Alternative Break and Sac State Serves, Sacramento State volunteers get hands-on experience learning about and addressing the needs of our local communities,” says Program Coordinator Misty Garcia. “And they form a community of their own through knowledge sharing, skill building, and relationships with fellow Sacramento State peers.”

For many of the students, this is not their only involvement in volunteer work.

Tammy Martin is working three days during the Alternative Break week, spending the other two working at her internship. She also volunteers as a peer mentor on campus for the First Year Experience program and as a peer mentor officer for the Social Work Student Association. Martin has many reasons why she volunteers, “but mostly because you can make a difference if you give just a little bit here and there,” she says.

The experience is important for students because it helps them realize their worth. “Maybe they didn’t know they were good at something,” Martin says. “The more exposure a student gets, the more well-rounded he or she becomes as a person.”
For more on Alternative Break and the Community Engagement Center, visit www.csus.edu/cec/. For media assistance, call Sacramento State’s Public Affairs Office at (916) 278-6156.

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