

## Alternative spring break service trips inspire students

Through [Campus Ministry at Dominican](#), Rebecca was one of 11 students in 2014 who joined Campus Minister Lianni Castro to build houses and relationships in the state of Washington. Dominican has partnered with Yakima Valley Habitat for Humanity since 2012.

In addition, 13 Dominican students joined Sister Carla Kovack, for the 11th time, and alumni Francisco Ortiz '06 on an alternative spring break service trip to LaBamba in Tijuana, Mexico and another 10 Dominican students participated in a service trip to Caritas Creek in Occidental as part of [Dominican's Engaged Learning Opportunities](#).

They were committed again to spending their spring break helping others.

"I can put my time toward something that I am going to learn a lot from and have an amazing, unique experience. I will get to work with and learn from new people and do some community service, which is really important to me," said Rebecca, then a senior nursing major in the [Department of Nursing at Dominican](#). "It's more rewarding. I'm serving someone and they are hopefully serving me, too, by sharing their story and knowledge. I can go to the beach any day the rest of my life, but I won't always have the opportunity to do these incredible trips."

Rebecca, in fact, did three. Prior to signing up for the Habitat for Humanity assignment in Yakima, she traveled to LaBamba and, before that, to El Salvador on an Engaged Immersion Experience. That trip, her first outside the United States, was life-impacting.

"It changed my service experience. I am more aware of the issues affecting people and their life stories instead of simply performing service," Rebecca said. "I feel as though that trip tied together everything I have learned, both in and out of the classroom, until that point in my life."

The El Salvador trip confirmed Rebecca's goal of serving people and inspired her to register for the spring alternative break journey to LaBamba her junior year. Father Robert Haberman, director of Dominican's Campus Ministry, led the Tijuana trip 35 times, establishing a long-standing relationship with Casa de los Pobres.

Rebecca and fellow Dominican students served meals in a soup kitchen at Casa de los Pobres and heard the stories of some of the people who receive meals there. They also distributed food to villagers, organized a community children's fair, and handed out donated toothbrushes to kids while teaching them proper oral care.

"Any trip with Campus Ministry is amazing, whether it's to a conference or aboard," Rebecca said.

Rebecca, who was accepted to Dominican Volunteers USA upon graduation and now works as a public health nurse in Tuolumne County, was heavily involved in helping people on campus. She was a Resident Advisor. She was a campus advisor for the American Cancer Society's "Relay For Life." She participated in Service-Learning partnerships with Homeward Bound, LIFT-Levántate, and The Garden of Eatin' preschool. And, four years ago, she was instrumental in resurrecting the annual Christmas Tree Lighting Celebration outside Angelico Hall.

Finally, at Commencement in May of 2014, Rebecca was presented with the Spirit of Alumni Award and was the recipient of the Veritas Cup, given annually to a graduating senior who has been a "friend to the class" and especially supportive of her classmates.

"There's a simple explanation. I've always loved being involved in my school and my community," Rebecca said. "Dominican has given so much to me and I want all the traditions in the community to continue so other people can have the same experience that I've had."