Christina Sparacino to join volunteering program over winter break at KU

Sixty-three University of Kansas students will spend a week during winter break volunteering at sites across the United States.


KU’s student-run Alternative Breaks program centers on service-learning trips that provide opportunities to include volunteer efforts in a student’s educational experience. Following their selection for the program, students attend two-hour weekly class sessions to prepare for their trip. They may participate in weeklong winter or spring breaks or in shorter weekend breaks.

Students in Alternative Winter Breaks will work Jan. 5-9 with agencies in Arizona, Florida, Illinois, North Carolina and Texas that focus on human rights, health care, environmental preservation and rehabilitation, education and help for people with disabilities. The program costs participants $275 ($235 for site leaders) and covers their transportation, housing and meals.

KU students have volunteered at six of the locations in previous years. A new destination this year will be the U.S.-Mexico border human rights organization No More Deaths/No Mas Muertes based in Tucson, Ariz., where 14 students plan to work.

Ben Berning, Shawnee senior, and Heidi Pierson, Clay Center senior, are Alternative Breaks co-directors. Meghan Connolly, Omaha, Neb., senior, is the winter breaks site coordinator. Administrative advisers are Linda Luckey, assistant to the vice provost for academic affairs, and Rubeen Perez, director of the Student Involvement and Leadership Center.

The program was established at KU in 1995 with a spring break trip to El Paso, Texas. Since then it has expanded, with volunteer opportunities being added annually. Alternative Breaks works in partnership with KU’s Center for Community Outreach, a student-run and student-funded organization that runs 15 core volunteer programs plus additional local programs and serves as a coordinating group for KU students interested in volunteer projects.

KU participants in the Alternative Winter Breaks program are listed by hometown, major, level in school, destination and leadership role, parents’ names (when available) and high school www.news.ku.edu/2008/november/21/altwinterbreak08.shtml.

Alternative Winter Break sites: AIDS Foundation Houston, Texas
This foundation collaborates with other organizations to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS and to support those living with HIV/AIDS.

Web site: www.aidshelp.org
Give Kids the World, Kissimmee, Fla.

This nonprofit wish-granting resort facility near Orlando, Fla., creates memories for children with life-threatening illnesses.

Web site: www.gktw.org
Misericordia/Heart of Mercy, Chicago, Ill.

Operated by the Sisters of Mercy, Misericordia is home to more than 550 individuals with developmental disabilities ranging in age from infants to adults offering individually designed programs to help them achieve and maintain the highest level of independence possible.

Web site: www.misericordia.com
Mountain Housing Opportunities, Asheville, N.C.

This North Carolina program provides safety-related repairs to homeowners of Asheville and Buncombe County, whose income meets or falls below the local median.

Web site: www.mtnhousing.org
No More Deaths/No Mas Muertes, Tucson, Ariz.

. This organization’s mission is to work within legal protocols to end death and suffering on the U.S.-Mexico border through civil initiatives to uphold fundamental human rights.

Web site: www.nomoredeaths.org
Teach for America, Chicago, Ill.

This national corps consists of college graduates from across the country who commit to teaching for two years in under-served schools in urban and rural areas.

Web site: www.teachforamerica.org/about/regions/chicago.htm
United Cerebral Palsy of Metropolitan Dallas, Texas

This program works with people of all ages and backgrounds to improve the independence, productivity and full citizenship of people with cerebral palsy and other disabilities.

Web site: www.ucpdallas.org
Among the students involved in the program is Christina Marie Sparacino daughter of Dorothy and Jeffery Sparacino, a sophomore biology
student who will be working at the AIDS Foundation, Houston, Texas. Chris is a Southeast of Saline Senior High School graduate.
Joint water and energy meetings being slated for early December

“Water and Energy: reduce, reuse and recharge” is the theme of the second annual Kansas Water Issues Forums scheduled for December.

The dates and locations of the forums are Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2008 at the Sedgwick County Extension Education Center, 7001 West 21st Street North, Wichita, and Thursday, Dec. 11, 2008 at the Kansas State University Agriculture Research Center 1232 240th Avenue, Hays. The meetings are free and open to the first 150 members of the public to preregister at each location. To see the agenda or to register, go to www.kwo.org, and click on the Water & Energy Forum button.

“An outstanding line up of speakers will address the hot topics of the day, particularly the close ties between water and energy development, use and conservation,” says Tracy Streeter, Director of the Kansas Water Office.

There will be presentations from experts in water and energy issues in the morning, followed by three breakout sessions with a town hall discussion format.

A highlight of the day may be the afternoon debate on the resolution: “The free market provides the most efficient and equitable manner to distribute water resources and energy supplies.”

Questions from the audience will be taken by the debaters. The audience will be polled before and after the debate on their stance on the resolution.

Speakers include Karl Brooks, University of Kansas associate professor of history and environmental studies; Martin J. “Mike” Pasqualetti, professor of geographical sciences, Arizona State University; and Doug Karlen, USDA's Agricultural Research Service; and Michael Hightower, Sandia Labs.

Brooks will discuss the importance of timely development of a water and energy policy; Pasqualetti, the relationship between water and renewable energy, energy trade and power plant technology; Karlen, the effects of biofuel feedstock production on soil and water; and Hightower, the challenge of competing demands for water and its effect on electric power generation.

At each location, the afternoon’s program also will include breakout sessions. The two topics common to both locations are “Water Harvesting in Kansas: Will it Work?” and “Biofuels: What are the Environmental and Economic Impacts?” In Hays, the third topic will be “Republican River Compact: What Happens after We Get the Water?” In Wichita, it will be “Expense of Water Treatment: Is there a Better Way?”

After the forums, attendees and other members of the public are invited to offer their opinions at a public hearing that will begin at 4 p.m.

One hearing topic is a new policy proposal to extend the life of the federal reservoirs through sediment reduction by way of stream bank stabilization and wetland and riparian area protection. The other is the five-year update to the Kansas Water Plan.

“Combining the two activities offers those interested in water issues a chance to both learn and actively participate in one location on a single day,” Streeter says. “The Kansas Water Plan covers a wide spectrum of water-related issues. Knowing that many of the people concerned with water will be at the forums, we wanted to make it convenient for them to participate.”

The updates to the Kansas Water Plan are posted on the Kansas Water Office’s web site at www.kwo.org. Comments received at the hearings and through 4 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 23, 2008 will be considered by the Kansas Water Authority at its Jan. 29-30, 2009 meeting in Topeka prior to adopting the updated 2009 Kansas Water Plan. The Kansas Water Office address is 901 S. Kansas Ave., Topeka, KS 66612 or e-mail to kwo-mailer@kwo.ks.gov and note “December Public Hearings” on the e-mail subject line. If testifying in person at the hearing, please bring a written copy of the testimony.

If accommodations are needed for persons with disabilities, please notify the Kansas Water Office at 901 S. Kansas Avenue, Topeka, KS 66612-1249 or call (785) 296-3185 at least two days prior to the meeting.
The Johnson County sales tax rate will increase next year by an eighth cent, .125 percent on each dollar, after voters approved Nov. 5 the Education and Research Triangle tax to benefit three college campuses in the area.

The tax is expected to generate about $15 million annually for the Kansas State University campus at the Kansas Bioscience Park in Olathe, the University of Kansas Edwards campus in Overland Park and the KU Cancer Center proposed for Fairway.

It's clear where revenue generated from that tax will go. And it's clear where revenue will be directed from a quarter-cent sales tax for the county's public safety projects – the last taxing authority for the county unless additional authority is approved by the state Legislature – which was approved during the August primary.

But what about the rest of it? Where does it all go?

The retail sales tax rate paid by Olathe residents is currently 7.525 percent on each dollar spent (except in five areas where a 1 percent transportation development district [TDD] tax has been imposed, increasing the tax rate to 8.525 percent on each dollar).

So in Olathe, add .125 percent for the Triangle tax and it's 7.65 percent on each dollar, beginning Jan. 1. It will be the same in Overland Park. The sales tax rate in Lenexa will be 8.025 percent on each dollar spent after the first of the year. Lenexa's tax rate is slightly higher because of the 20-year, three-eighth cent sales tax approved by voters in June for streets, parks and a new civic center.

How it works

The revenue generated from sales taxes paid by Kansas residents is broken down into three parts for each taxing entity where it's distributed: the state, county and city in which the money was spent.

Take Olathe's tax rate, at 7.525 percent, excluding the Triangle tax, since its proceeds will go directly to the three projects.

First of all, all tax revenue first goes to the state. Kansas keeps the first 5.3 percent. The next 1.1 percent is remitted to the county, and the remainder, 1.125 percent, goes to Olathe.

But hold on.

County

The county – whose 1.1 percent portion is broken down into several parts including 50 percent local, 10 percent stormwater, 25 percent public safety (passed in 1996) and another 25 percent public safety (passed August 2008) – shares sales tax revenue with its cities.
“We levy 1.1 percent, but we only get back .555 percent,” said Robin Cook, the county’s assistant budget director. “The rest goes to the cities. The cities get their own taxes plus a portion of what

How it’s divided locally

City of Olathe
89 percent is remitted to its general fund
125 percent goes to the park sales tax fund
A small percentage is put into a separate account for TIF districts

Johnson County
50 percent local
10 percent stormwater
26 percent public safety (passed in 1996)
25 percent public safety (passed August 2008)
Where the sales taxes go

From I
the county levies.”

- The distribution from the local sales tax portion is 27 percent to the county and 73 percent split among the cities.
- The stormwater sales tax portion is remitted entirely to the county for stormwater management products.
- The distribution for the public safety sales taxes portions is 64 percent to the county and 36 percent is split among the cities.

The new public safety sales tax is expected to generate about $18.9 million for the county and $10.6 million for the cities next year.

Cook said the distribution among the cities was based in part on their populations and was determined by the Kansas Department of Revenue.

Including use taxes — taxes from out-of-state businesses who remit tax dollars back to the state from purchases made by local residents — sales tax revenue, more than $59 million, will account for about 16 percent of the county’s general fund (its operational fund) revenue in 2009.

Cook said the county is more dependent on property taxes, which makes up 31 percent of the county’s general fund revenue.

City

In Olathe, sales tax revenue accounts for about half the general fund.

Excluding revenue it receives from the county, Olathe levies 1.125 percent on each dollar spent in the city.

- Of that, nearly 89 percent is the city’s general sales tax that is remitted to the general fund.
- The remainder goes to the 10-year, eighth-cent (125 percent) park sales tax for new parks projects and existing facility renovations that took effect in 2005.

Some of Olathe’s sales taxes are, however, put into a separate account after being returned by the state for reimbursable project costs when tax increment financing (TIF) districts are granted, said Maureen Rogers, the city’s accounting manager.

TIF is basically a loan from the city to the developer to redevelop infrastructure in blighted areas including demolition, but can’t be used for vertical construction. It’s repaid by sales and property taxes generated at the new development. Olathe can grant up to 50 percent of its general sales tax at its discretion.

Rogers said TIF revenue is remitted by the state in a lump sum that must be separated for each project to help repay the bonds. The rest is covered by the incremental increases in property tax revenue.

Revenue from TDDs works a little differently, Rogers said. TDD revenue is returned to Olathe by individual project to back the bonds issued for its traffic infrastructure. The city’s five TDDs include: three at Olathe Gateway, which includes Bass Pro Shops, at 119th Street and Renner Road; Olathe Pointe at 119th and Black Bob Road; and Ridgeview Falls at 119th and Ridgeview Road.

Because of the current state of the economy, the city is projecting its revenue from sales taxes to decrease next year from 2008, the first time since 2002. So Olathe took measures such as reducing its workforce through attrition and layoffs to close a budget gap.

State

Kansas works a little differently. Retail sales tax is one of several sales taxes that contributes more than $1.7 billion of the state’s nearly $6 billion general fund, said Rich Cram, director of policy and research for the Kansas Department of Revenue.

“There are a dozen or so taxes that feed into the state’s general fund, but retail sales tax is not quite a third,” he said.

- Cram said additional sales taxes like those imposed on liquor and tobacco also contribute to the state’s general fund.
- Those funds, he said, are then divided to run the state from fixing highways to paying state employees’ salaries.

So remember when making your next purchase in Olathe; you’re contributing to what will amount to be half of the city’s operational revenue, but before your hard earned dollars get to the city, the state takes a chunk. And some is given to the county.

But don’t let that stop you from buying local. It all adds up.
County Commission adopts levy for Research Triangle

SPECIAL TO THE DISPATCH

A 1/8th-cent sales tax to fund projects and programs for the Johnson County Education Research Triangle Authority will become effective on April 1, 2009.

A resolution to adopt and levy the sales tax was approved Thursday by the Johnson County Commission. By state law, the tax becomes effective at the end of the next calendar quarter.

The action follows voter approval Nov. 4 of countywide Question No. 2 regarding creation of the Education Research Triangle Authority and authorization of the proposed sales tax. The question was approved by 57 percent of the voters, 154,360-115,917.

Legislation passed by the 2007 Kansas Legislature authorized the county to propose funding for the authority by a levy up to 2 mills or a sales tax up to 0.2 percent, or both. The November ballot question proposed a 1/8th-cent sales tax. The tax is expected to raise approximately $15 million per year. There is no sunset on the tax.

Proceeds from the tax will support education and research projects and programs at facilities now located or proposed for construction or acquisition in Johnson County, including: Kansas University's Edwards Campus Business, Engineering, Science and Technology Center in Overland Park; Kansas State University's Innovation Campus National Food and Animal Health Institute in Olathe; and, KU's Cancer Clinical Research Center in Fairway.

The sales tax revenues will be equally divided among the three institutions.

The Johnson County Education Research Triangle Authority is a board composed of seven members who must be elected officials in Johnson County. Members of the authority will be appointed by the governor, the Kansas Board of Regents, the Board of County Commissioners, KU, KSU, and Johnson County Community College. The Board of Regents will maintain its constitutional authority over the universities.

In separate actions, the County Commission affirmed the creation of the authority and established a special fund for proceeds from the sales tax imposed for support of the authority. Members also appointed Chairman Annabeth Surbaug to serve as the county's representative to the authority.

The state of Kansas and Johnson County both have the authority to audit the Triangle authority at any time. The authority also will have a regular, independent audit.
Kansas pharmacist numbers ailing

WICHITA (AP) — Thirty-one of Kansas’ 105 counties have only one pharmacy, while six others have none.

Experts say those numbers could get even worse if state budget cuts delay a $60 million expansion of the University of Kansas’ School of Pharmacy.

The pharmacy project — which includes a new building on the Lawrence campus and expansion of a building at the university’s Wichita campus — has been approved this year for $20 million in bonds from the state. Lawmakers also planned to spend $15 million of expected gambling revenues in each of 2010 and 2011 on the project.

The University of Kansas is raising the other $10 million. Of that, $5 million would pay for a second floor to the university’s School of Medicine campus in Wichita to train 40 pharmacists.

The new building in Lawrence would add space for about 45 more students on top of the 105 already enrolled.

But Gov. Kathleen Sebelius’ budget office has asked the Board of Regents to cut $15 million from its budget, a cut the regents have voted to appeal.
Law school honors new Rice scholars and scholarship recipients

Lawrence — Five first-year law students at the University of Kansas have been selected for the prestigious Rice Scholar Program, which offers full tuition scholarships to Kansas residents who have outstanding academic records and proven leadership ability.

The 2008-09 Rice scholars are Ashly LoBurgio Basgall of Great Bend, Joseph Jarvis of Lenexa, Kristen Koemen of Lenexa, Nathan Micheli of Dodge City and Evan North of Lenexa.

They were recognized during an Oct. 23 scholarship reception, as were the more than 130 recipients of law school scholarships for the 2008-09 academic year.

Faculty members select Rice scholars from the pool of first-year law students based on merit, as evidenced by undergraduate academic achievement, Law School Admission Test score and record of leadership. The scholarship is renewable in the students' second and third years of law school if they maintain a minimum grade point average.

Trustees of the Ethel and Raymond F. Rice Foundation and former dean Martin Dickinson created the Rice Scholar Program in 1979 to honor the Rices and pay tribute to Raymond Rice's dedication to scholarship, the legal profession and the KU School of Law. Since then, 145 outstanding Kansans have become Rice scholars.

Following his graduation from the KU School of Law in 1908, Raymond Rice became known as one of the great corporate lawyers in the country, with clients in Chicago and New York. Closer to home, he became general counsel for the Kansas Electric Power Co., forerunner of Kansas Power and Light. A member of the law school faculty from 1913 to 1926, Rice served on the Kansas Board of Law Examiners for 26 years and reviewed thousands of candidates for admission to practice. Throughout his life, Rice dedicated himself to the highest standards of the legal profession and to public service.

The scholarship funds are managed by KU Endowment, the independent, nonprofit organization serving as the official fundraising and fund-management organization for KU. Founded in 1891, KU Endowment is the first foundation of its kind at a U.S. public university.

The new Rice scholars are listed below by their hometowns.

Conway Springs Joan Lowdon, Gary and Paula Ast, Warren D. Andreas Scholarship; Law Fee Grant, Conway Springs High School, Kansas State University.
Student serves on winning team

An Independence student was part of a team that received the Sustainability Leadership Award from the University of Kansas Center for Sustainability.

England Porter, an Independence senior majoring in environmental studies, was part of the team of engineering, architecture and environmental studies students who designed a rain garden that will be planted on Earth Day 2009 at the David A. Ambler Student Recreation Fitness Center.

The center presented leadership awards Nov. 11 in five categories to individuals and campus projects. Porter, the daughter of Paul and Susan Porter, was part of the six-member team that received the Student Initiative Award.
Number of Kansas pharmacists waning

WICHITA, Kan. — Thirty-one counties in Kansas have only one pharmacy, while six others have none.

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The new building in Lawrence would add space for about 45 more students on top of the 105 already enrolled.

But Gov. Kathleen Sebelius’ budget office has asked the Board of Regents to cut $15 million from its budget, a cut the regents have voted to appeal.

“The budget is so bad for 2010, if they only cut $15 million, they’re going to be lucky,” said state Sen. Jean Schodorf, a Wichita Republican.

Also, prospects aren’t as clear that the gambling revenues will be there to pay for later phases of the expansion project.

University spokeswoman Lynn Bretz said the university needs the bulk of the pharmacy school money before construction starts.

She said if the money for the later phases isn’t there, it brings up the question of whether plans for the expansion should continue.

Merlin McFarland, who owns Kingman County’s only drug store, said he almost had to close last year because he couldn’t find anyone to fill two open pharmacist positions.

“If I hadn’t put the staff together, I maybe would have looked at closing the store down,” said McFarland, who has owned Kingman Drug Store for 34 years.
KU student volunteers break time

A Coffeyville student attending the University of Kansas will volunteer her time to help people with cerebral palsy.

Rebecca Lo, daughter of Victor and Susan Lo, will work as site leader for United Cerebral Palsy of Metropolitan Dallas, Texas, as part of the Alternative Winter Break program Jan. 5-9. KU students spend a week during winter break volunteering at seven sites in Arizona, Florida, Illinois, North Carolina and Texas.

In addition, Mauntell Ford, daughter of Howard Ford, of Cedar Vale, will volunteer with the organization No More Deaths in Tucson, Ariz., as site leader.

Lo is a senior majoring in community health. Ford is a sophomore majoring in pre-business.
Regents colleges propose increases

Kansas universities want to charge as much as 6.5 percent more for campus food and dorms.

By MARA ROSE WILLIAMS
The Kansas City Star

Students attending any of the Kansas Board of Regents universities may be paying more for campus food and housing next fall.

Regents at their meeting in Topeka on Thursday will hear proposals from the six universities to increase the amount students pay for room and board by as much as 6.5 percent.

University officials said that because student fees and not state funds are used to operate food service and residence halls, rate increases are needed to cover the increasing costs of general upkeep, food, utilities and staffing.

The rate increase presentation is made to the regents about this time every year. University housing departments and food service are asked to anticipate the fees for the upcoming academic year, taking into account past rates and projected costs, said Kip Grosshans, associate director of housing at the University of Kansas.

The proposed increases vary among the universities based on the amount of bonding debt, current occupancy rates, age of residence hall, the capacity of the halls and food service operations.

University officials said students on each campus were involved in negotiating the proposed rates.

Regents will make a decision on the rate proposals in December and if approved the increases would become effective July 1, 2009.

Of all six schools, Pittsburg State University is proposing the biggest percentage increase — 6.5 percent — on its typical double occupancy room and board contract. The contract would go from the current $5,394 a year to $5,744.

For a similar room and board package, KU is proposing a 5.1 percent increase.

The increase for the typical room and board package at Kansas State University would go up 4.7 percent.

The other increases are 3.4 percent at Wichita State University and 4.9 percent at Emporia and Fort Hays State universities.

To reach Mará Rose Williams, call 816-234-4419 or send e-mail to mdwilliams@kcstar.com.