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## NKU students find spring break alternative

### 13 travel to Mexico to lend hand in hospitals, small village

BY HOWARD MCEWEN | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

Thirteen Northern Kentucky University students spent their spring break in Mexico. They weren't sunning on the white sand playas. They were working in one of North America's oldest hospitals in Guadalajara and building a fish pond in the small village of Mazamitla.

NKU billed the trip as an "alternative spring break program."

Josh Grimm, a 22-year-old pre-med student from Fort Thomas, was one of the students who stayed at the hospital. He spent his time assisting physicians at a rehab center and shadowing doctors.

"I decided to go to Mexico because I thought it would be a great opportunity to gain insight into medical practice in a foreign country, as well as learning about Guadalupe culture in general," said Grimm.

"When you visit a completely different culture than you are accustomed to, it takes you out of your comfort level and leads to personal growth and development."

The trip was sponsored by the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, Northern Kentucky University Institute for Freedom Studies, Study Abroad Program, Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement, African-American Student Affairs, Residential Life, Latino Student Affairs and Department of Literature and Language.

Leo Calderon, NKU's director of Latino student affairs, accompanied the students to Mexico and spent most of his time helping to build the fish pond.

"Some of the students were not familiar with Spanish but what they lack in skills they compensated by being open," said Calderon. "Once you are open, people see that and are able to interact because you're making an effect."

Calderon said that while the students were able to apply much of what they have learned at NKU, the most valuable lessons were less practical.

"They learned more about who they are and what they have in the United States - how fortunate they are. They learn about people from different cultures, languages and customs," he said.

Grimm agreed.

"The most important lesson I took away from the experience is that there is no right or wrong way cultures approach issues - just different," he said.

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