Beans and Rice Basic Information

ORGANIZATION VISION AND/OR MISSION

Beans and Rice, Inc. improves the economic well-being of low-to-moderate income families through hunger relief, after-school programs that improve educational opportunity for at-risk children, job creation for low-to-moderate income families, and savings programs that help families buy their first home and children save for education.

ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

Beans and Rice is a unique alternative break site. The program combines workshops on community development with working in the community through our programs. These workshops combine didactic presentation of material with learning circles to develop an understanding of what community is, how it can be developed, and the role of individuals working to develop community.

You will be working both with children and adults in a variety of settings and projects. We offer a broad range of opportunities to meet the diversity of skills and interests brought by university service groups.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Beans and Rice, Inc. is a community economic development corporation serving Virginia’s New River Valley. Its main offices are in Radford and Pulaski, VA, located on the eastern edge of Central Appalachia.

WHO AND HOW WILL I SERVE?

You will serve at risk children in an afterschool academic enrichment environment. Additionally, you may participate in food distribution, gardening projects, and with other community groups on restoration, blight reduction, and housing service projects. If the trip occurs over a K-12 school holiday break, you will spend more time with projects and little or no time with children.
WHAT DOES THE TYPICAL SERVICE EXPERIENCE INVOLVE?

Alternative Break participants will be mentors/tutors for the children participating in the programs. Break participants will also do special service projects that are needed to be completed and participate in a series of workshops on approaches to working with people living and poverty and the role that community economic development can play. Special service projects are more typical for fall breaks given the shorter time over a weekend when program are not in session. There will be time every day for journaling, group reflections with the Beans and Rice staff and for reflections as a group.

WHAT LODGING AND MEAL ACCOMODATIONS ARE PROVIDED?

Participants will stay in our Community Development and Learning Center in downtown Pulaski. Part of the Break experience is to get a feel for what life is like living in an economically distressed community. The facility has two bathrooms and a complete kitchen. Showers are provided offsite at a nearby YMCA. The evening meal is a community meal. Breakfast and lunch are self-prepared with food provided by Beans and Rice, Inc.

WHAT SHOULD I BRING?

Bring a sleeping bag, sleeping mat, pillow, towel, personal hygiene items, coats, hats, work clothing and shoes, clothing appropriate to wear in a K-12 school, and comfortable clothes such as jeans, T-shirt/sweat shirts and running shoes. It is suggested you bring about $25 for optional cultural and recreational events.

WHAT MAKES THIS EXPERIENCE UNIQUE?

Beans and Rice was started in 1997 by a faculty member at Radford University and several of her students who were participants in several alternative breaks together. Two of the founders are still involved, the executive director and executive director emeritus. This is an opportunity for students to witness what their experience in alternative break can grow into as work for social justice.