

WMU student volunteers for "Bronco Breaks"

By Grant Berry

Nicole Haase started working at Orchard Market when she was a junior at Fruitport High School. Now that she is a junior at Western Michigan University, she continues to run a cash register during her summer and holiday breaks. However, before heading home after the fall semester, Nicole and a group of eight other students piled into two rented vans and headed to New York for an Alternative Winter Experience.

Alternative Winter Experience is part of Alternative Bronco Breaks, which is a student-led organization at Western Michigan University, which tackles a variety of social issues and provides students an alternative to the traditional spring, summer, and winter break destinations.

In fact, this is Nicole's third Alternative Bronco Break. As a freshman, she traveled to Oklahoma, and last spring she led a trip to Philadelphia. Both of those trips dealt with poverty issues, but the trip to New York this winter was to help refugees from Iraq, Burma, and Bhutan get established in the United States.

"They came here because they felt unsafe in their own countries, whether it be from their religious or government views," Nicole said. "Some of them waited for over a year in a refugee camp before they could come over."

The organization helped set up apartments for the refugees and helped them get started. They also delivered presents to refugee children and worked in the donation center, organizing and making it look nice.

Nicole spent one week in New York with the refugees. She left the Friday of exam week and returned the following Saturday. Since Nicole is studying Organizational Communication, she chose the social issue she wanted to undertake, and the Alternative Bronco Breaks organization placed her.

"I loved it!" Nicole said. "I had more fun and got more out of it than if I'd gone on a regular spring break trip. It made me feel like I made a difference."

Kathy Haase, Nicole's mom, is happy with the choices Nicole is making in college. "I am so proud of her," she said. "I hear nothing but good things about her. I'm glad she can find positive ways to help people, and I like how much she enjoys doing this."

Bethany Schuitema, Nicole's neighbor and best friend since childhood, is also proud of her. "We're very best friends," she said. "We keep in touch when she's gone. I've watched Nicole grow into a beautiful young woman."

In addition to volunteering, the trips also provide opportunities to experience landmarks in the local area. For example, Nicole has visited the Niagara Falls in New York, the Oceanside in New Jersey, and many historical sites in Philadelphia. "I have also met some really great people through my trips," Nicole said. "One being my current roommate and one of my closest friends, Ashley. I would not have met Ashley if it had't been for Alternative Bronco Breaks."

Nicole does not receive any college credits for her participation in Alternative Bronco Breaks, just the satisfaction of volunteering and helping others. After graduation from Western Michigan University, Nicole plans to stay on at Western and pursue her Masters in Higher Education - Student Affairs. "I love working with the student population," Nicole said. "I plan to stay at Western my whole life, either in admissions or student affairs."

Until then, Nicole plans to continue working at Orchard Market during the summer and on her breaks from school and when she's not volunteering for Alternative Bronco Breaks. •

Registrations open for Home, Garden & Remodeling Show

(Submitted by the Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce)

Booth registrations are now taking place for the second annual Home, Garden and Remodeling Show. Preference of booth space is awarded on a first come, first served basis.

The show will be held Thursday, March 21 through Saturday, March 23 at the Lakes Mall. The hours are 5 to 9 p.m. Thursday and Friday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday. The cost is \$500 per booth for a Chamber member; \$750 for future members.

A limited number of sponsorships is still available.

Contact the chamber at (231) 722-3751. •

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