

Students spring for alternative break

by Vanessa Virbitsky - Friday, March 21, 2008

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/641/students-spring-for-alternative-break/>

As the semester reaches its mid-point, Spring Break plans are set, and many University of Wisconsin Oshkosh students will hightail it out of the frozen north to the warm waters of Miami, Cancun and Acapulco.

A few UW Oshkosh students, however, will be earning up to four credits by traveling with psychology professor Kathleen Stetter to conduct research on Black Howler Monkeys in Belize, March 21-30. Stetter has been leading this program since 1998.

“I believe that students acquire a rudimentary understanding of the complicated problems facing developing countries as they deal with questions of habitat preservation versus economic development,” Stetter said of the program. “I think students recognize that there are no easy answers to these questions, and that we in the United States must be a part of the answer.”

UW Oshkosh student Christa Droste is one of this year’s participants.

“I wouldn’t say that I am ‘giving up’ my spring break,” said Droste, who previously has taken a Spring Break in Florida. “This trip is something I have wanted to do for a long time, and I feel very fortunate that I’ve been given the opportunity to be a part of something so great.”

Droste said the group will be learning and practicing field research techniques.

“I’m very excited to be able to work with a species of which not much is known. It has given me my own research ideas,” Droste said.

Student Brittany Decker, who is applying for graduate school next year, also is participating in the program.

“I wanted to gain professional research experience with a group of students and faculty in a different country,” Decker said. “This is the first time that I have ever studied abroad, and hopefully it won’t be the last.”

A large component of this program is teaching students the importance of giving back to the Belizean community. Decker is contributing to this component of the program by bringing Beanie Babies to donate to school children in Belize.

“All the Beanie Babies came from my personal collection that I have accumulated over the years, and I felt that other people could benefit from them,” Decker said.

Stuffed animals aside, the UW Oshkosh crew will provide informational posters to be displayed in

Belmopan's Archeological Museum.

For more information on this program, visit the group's [blog](#).