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## Trending@RWU Law: Tom Peterson, 2L's Post: An Alternative Spring Break "Post-Ex"

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# ***Tom Peterson, 2L's Post***

## **An Alternative Spring Break “Post-Ex”**

Posted by Tom Peterson on 05/20/2015 at 10:26 AM



Having served 22 years in the Navy before coming to law school, some habits die harder than others. One thing that we always stressed during my time in the Navy was filing a Post Exercise report – or “Post-Ex” for short – to let everyone know about what happened during an exercise and think ahead to the next time that event would be held.

So now that Alternative Spring Break 2015 is in the record books, I just wanted to take a second and file a Post-Ex to let you know how it went.

This year’s Alternative Spring Break (ASB) was our largest ever with 58 students participating in 17 placements across seven states.

One of the highlights was that we had nine new placements this year – and many of our supervising attorneys were RWU School of Law Alumni, including:

- Akin Adepoju '04 at Pittsburgh Federal Defenders;
- Deborah Gonzalez '07 at RAICES in San Antonio, Texas;
- Luis Mancheno '13 at Bronx Defenders;
- Tim Gumkowski '06 at Brooklyn Defenders;
- Nick Battista '08 at Island Institute in Rockland, Maine;
- Amanda Walsh '11 at Victim Rights Legal Center in Boston;
- Tom Mello '04 at CPCS in New Bedford;
- Matt Jerzyk '08 and Bobby Weber '12 at the Central Falls City Solicitor’s Office;
- Shannah Kurland '13 at PrYSM in Providence; and
- Misty Delgado '11 and Marisa Janton '11 at the Rhode Island Center for Justice, also in Providence.

On April 15, 2015, the participating students made a formal presentation to faculty and staff, highlighting our accomplishments during the week.



One of the great things about ASB this year was the diversity of the placements available, ensuring that just about anyone could find a pro bono project to fit their preference.

We had placements with public defender offices, with civil legal practitioners who serve underrepresented communities, with children's rights groups, with city government, with environmental non-profits; placements assisting incarcerated women at the Adult Correctional Institute in Cranston, and placements focusing on immigration.

The presentation also made clear that RWU Law students had an impact on the organizations they served, and that the work that they had done during their short five-day stay had made a difference in the students' lives.

The highlight of the presentation was a "TED Talk" style presentation by Alice Cunningham, a 3L who had been the team leader on our trip down to San Antonio, Texas, to work with the Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services, an organization dedicated to helping the women and children caught in the crisis at the Mexican border.

It was clear from her presentation (and from the reaction of the audience) that the work she accomplished along with 3L Ana Maria, 2L Maria Viveiros, and Deborah Gonzalez, Esq. '07 – former and future Director of the RWU Law's Immigration Clinic) had a tremendous impact on her and the rest of the team. We hope that a trip to San Antonio might not be necessary in the future if the situation at the border changes, but we have already talked about offering it again next year if there are still unmet legal needs.

Feedback from everyone was incredible and it was great to be able to help coordinate ASB this year. Some of the many comments from students included:

- “An amazing experience! Definitely something that everyone should do. I learned tons of information and it was so rewarding.”
- “It is a great way to get out of the books and get some hands-on experience.”
- “I am much more likely to pursue a career in public interest. It is unbelievably rewarding.”
- “An amazing experience. Helps make you realize why you are in school.”

These and many other comments made it clear that ASB has had and will continue to have an impact on the law school and the law students for many years to come.

Planning has already begun for ASB 2016 and its student coordinators – 1Ls Brittani Mulholland and Trevor Bernard – have already been chosen. Congratulations! I am sure that it will be better than ever.

Finally, none of this would have been possible without the assistance, patience and support of the many fine organizations that host our students:

- The Bronx Defenders, Bronx, N.Y.
- Brooklyn Defender Services, Brooklyn, N.Y.
- City of Central Falls, Solicitor’s Office, Central Falls, R.I.
- Conservation Law Foundation, Providence
- Committee for Public Counsel Services, Fall River and New Bedford, Mass.
- Connecticut Veterans Center, New Haven, Conn.
- Immigration Law Education and Advocacy Project, Catholic Social Services, Fall River, Mass.
- Immigration Assistance Project, Dilley, Texas
- The Island Institute, Rockland, Maine
- Juvenile Rights Practice, Legal Aid Society, Brooklyn and Manhattan, N.Y.
- Pittsburgh Public Defenders, Pittsburgh
- Police Misconduct Project, Providence
- Rhode Island Center for Justice, Providence
- Southeast Louisiana Legal Services, New Orleans
- Victim Rights Law Center, Boston
- Women in Prison Project, Providence

Thank you again for supporting ASB and we look forward to working with you in the future!

Start planning now, Spring Break 2016 will be March 7-12, 2016!