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Edward Fitzpatrick
Roger Williams University

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March 11, 2019

Law School News

A Spring Break That Teaches - and Gives Back

On Alternative Spring Break, law students provide free legal services to the neediest in more than a dozen locations from Cranston, R.I., to Haiti.



An RWU Law student works at the Rhode Island Center for Justice during ASB.

March 11, 2019 Edward Fitzpatrick

BRISTOL, R.I., March 10, 2017 – As part of Roger Williams University School of Law’s Alternative Spring Break program, 61 students will provide free legal services to impoverished communities in 17 locations ranging from the Bronx to Haiti.

On the program’s first international trip, three RWU law students will offer know-your-rights presentations at the YWCA in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, talking to young women about domestic violence situations and addressing privacy issues related to social media and internet use.

Closer to home, eight RWU law students will go to the women's prison at the Adult Correctional Institutions, in Cranston, to offer legal rights presentations and to conduct research on civil law matters for individual inmates.

“The goal is to provide direct legal services to communities that need free legal services,” said Suzanne Harrington-Steppen, associate director of pro bono programs at the RWU School of Law. “Also, we want our students out there, working with public interest lawyers so they can understand what public interest law is all about and so they can see the legal needs of low-income communities firsthand. That way, they're not talking theoretically about access to justice – they're looking it right in the eye.”

The Alternative Spring Break program also will send law students to two organizations in Colorado this year. Some students will work on immigration law issues with the Colorado African Organization, while others will work in the public defender's office in Salida, Colo.