

IWIL travels to Chicago to study urban culture

A group from Brevard College's Institute for Women in Leadership (IWIL) recently spent spring break studying Chicago's diverse ethnic neighborhoods.

The group will provide an in-depth look at what they learned about the meaning of community through the trip and a service project on Monday, April 4. The presentation, which will begin at 7 p.m. in Dunham Auditorium, is free and open to the public.

"It was like a cultural pilgrimage to one of the most diverse cities in the world," said Laura Evans, a freshman from Mount Pleasant, S.C. "After leaving Chicago, I have realized how both profound and complex the word 'community' is."

The 15 women who made the trip – made possible by a grant from the Appalachian College Association – were guests of the Chicago Center for Urban Life and Culture.

Each day the Chicago Leadership Center immersed the students in a different neighborhood. On their first day in the city, they visited Pilsen, a community famous for Mexican murals, recent immigrants from Mexico and even a tortilla factory.

"I was impressed by their commitment to their heritage and education," said Savanna Elder, a freshman education major. "They know who they are."

Leighia Eggett, a sophomore and member of the IWIL Steering Committee, was impressed by a Sri Lankan immigrant who spoke about her



Brevard College students Kortney Conner and Laura Evans working with students at the Southwest Youth Collaborative. (Photo by Margaret Brown)

experiences moving to the United States and growing up with international friends.

"Even though there are a wide variety of cultures in Chicago, it still takes a proactive person to fully appreciate that diversity," said Eggett, who noticed that some Chicagoans never visit Pilsen or the East Indian community of Devon Avenue.

During its trip, IWIL group also participated in a service project with the Southwest Youth Collaborative, a community center that advocates for students in inner city schools. Carah Hoover, a freshman from Casselberry, Fla., said that she will never forget the stories she heard about the "push out," expelling students because they couldn't meet end-of-year testing standards. "Hearing stories from students about how they feel in school will have an impact on my whole life," said Hoover. "No student should feel like they learn in prison, with security on every corner, police departments within the school and immense amounts of violence."

The women were most moved by a production featuring the best of education in the city by Chicago nonprofit Barrel of Monkeys, which hosts after school creative writing projects for third through fifth graders in public schools. At the end of three months, the group turns the writing into a play for the students, their families and the public.

"The Barrel of Monkeys was so great, because it was unlike any play I've seen, and a great example of how to improve conditions in any school," said Bethany Humberg, a freshman art major.

Many of the women experienced firsts on the trip: their first time flying; their first time using a city bus; and their first time hearing about immigration from someone who experienced it.

"This was an eye-opening experience for the women who went," said BC Assistant Dean of Students Michelle Harvey. "I know this trip will have a great impact on their lives."

Practice LSAT

Debate Society/YPA to host a practice LSAT on Saturday April 16

- Free for all students.
- Great practice for anyone interested in attending law school.
- Test begins at 10 a.m.

For more information on the practice LSAT check next week's issue of the Clarion, or contact Ralph Hamlett at Hamletra@brevard.edu



A group from Brevard College's Institute for Women in Leadership (IWIL) poses with Jose Guerrero of Pilsen Mural Tours during a recent trip to Chicago. (Photo by Kortney Conner)