

## Alternate Spring Break for Andrews Student

Lianne Wynne sponsored by United Way for trip to Washington D.C.

[Agenda](#) | Posted on April 16, 2015



The Alternative Spring Break group met with the White House Council on Women and Girls. (Photo contributed by Lianne Wynne)

Lianne Wynne, a sophomore social work major, was recently invited to Washington D.C. to participate in an alternative spring break by United Way. The “Alternate Spring Break” program is sponsored in partnership with Kimberly-Clark Corporation, and provides an opportunity for 25 young women who are leaders from college campuses across the country to join together for a week of service and advocacy.

The week-long event was held in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area, and afforded Wynne an opportunity to learn about and participate in events focused on critical issues for women such as human trafficking, STEM education for girls, women and girls’ health, women’s leadership and more.

Wynne, who is minoring in leadership, says that United Way’s Alternate Spring Break program was influential in helping her decide how to employ her talents and passions to empower women. Having previous experience with Girls On The Run and working with United Way of Southwest Michigan won her over.

“For a long time I’ve been trying to figure out what I wanted to do and what population I wanted to work with and it’s slowly coming to me. Several professors have told me that they believe I’d be great in advocacy and I’ve always ran away from it. I’m trying not to anymore. I’m becoming curious about my abilities in that area.”

As part of the program, Wynne got to spend time with other driven and brilliant college-aged women carrying out service projects and advocating for policy change on Capitol Hill. When asked what her favorite memories include she recalls, “having dynamic conversations with these brilliant girls from around the country and the world, and bonding with the program director, Lauri Valerio.”

“The most rewarding part would have to be getting a realistic, hands-on experience, even though it was in the smallest capacity, in advocacy. I have a better understanding of what it takes to effect change, and how long it can take. This was also great for me because, as a social work major, working in the realm of social policy and advocacy was something that I wanted to explore and find out if it was right for me. This experience made things a lot clearer and I have a more solid idea of what exactly I’m interested in.”

While Wynne fondly reminisces about her experience, she also admits that it was largely a surprise to be selected for the program because of the limited number of annual participants.

“Alternate Spring Break wasn’t even on my radar until the day before the deadline. I was scrolling through Facebook and saw United Way out of the corner of my eye. When I looked it said something about spring break and I clicked it because I had worked with United Way doing research for Girls On the Run and I was just really curious. I read through it and thought that it sounded really awesome! When I started reading, it said that they would only select 25 women! I thought that was a small number compared to the many that might apply. I wasn’t so sure I’d be selected! But, I thought it wouldn’t hurt [to apply].”

Wynne brings an interesting perspective to her advocacy, and one that she thinks might have set her apart from other possible candidates. When asked what she thought was more important to empowering women, service or public policy, she chose service.

“I thought service was fundamental to informing public policy. From a social work perspective, being intimate with the issues at hand and practicing in communities allows us to experience firsthand whether or not these policies are effective. Sometimes things may be great on paper, but in practice they can be problematic. I also thought that service gives a more immediate effect with regards to observable change in the lives of these women...”

“So, long story short? I love the opportunity to be able to serve. I love being able to make someone’s life a little better, and this experience is definitely that opportunity. I want to cause and facilitate change! I want to get involved.”

*By Samuel James Fry, IMC student writer*