

# B.R.A.D.

## *Be Responsible About Drinking*

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## **ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK**

“The stereotypical wild and crazy spring break scene is on the wane” says Student and Youth Travel Association director Michael Palmer, “the Millennium Generation is more traveled, more conservative and more likely to do a multi-dimensional trip than the X Generation.” “They consider more diverse offerings, are more likely to combine a trip hanging out with friends with, say, an interview for an internship or charity.”

For many young adults this year’s spring break will mean hard work. During for the 2006 spring break season, it is estimated that 35,000 students nation-wide will participate in an alternative spring break trip. Alternative spring breaks are service trips organized by schools, churches, synagogues, and community organizations. These trips are geared toward providing young adults with learning experiences surrounding many issues—ranging from literacy to homelessness. Alternative

spring break trips are an excellent way for young adults to volunteer their time and skills, while coming away with a meaningful, fulfilling experience in service. Organizations like Habitat for Humanity have many service projects throughout the nation and abroad. Habitat for Humanity has built more than 200,000 houses around the world, providing more than 1,000,000 people in more than 3,000 communities with safe, decent, affordable shelter.

Break Away, The Alternative Break Connection, is a non-profit organization based out of Tallahassee, Florida, that connects colleges, universities and highschools to alternative break trips. They primarily provide training and information to schools interested in creating lifelong active citizens through intensive service-learning programs. “Break Away’s vision is a society of active citizens: people who value the community as a priority when making life decisions. Participants will become contributing members of society and will weigh in on issues that impact their communities.” Break Away currently has 2000 member schools, each school sponsor-

ing around six to ten trips for this year’s spring break season. Break Away director Jill Piacitelli says that many of the trips this year are service trips to the gulf region devastated by hurricane Katrina this past August. Other trips include tutoring migrant farm-workers in Florida and building homes in Appalachia. Eastern Michigan University, a member school of Break Away, will sponsor 25 trips, involving 600 to 700 students, this spring break season. Students from Milliken University recently returned from the gulf region after a winter break trip that Break Away helped the University organize.

Alternative spring break trips are service and learning experiences that enrich the lives of all involved.

Sources for this article:

[www.syta.org](http://www.syta.org)

[www.habitatforhumanity.org](http://www.habitatforhumanity.org)

[www.alternativebreaks.org](http://www.alternativebreaks.org)



*Spring Break 2006 is right around the corner and thousands of high school and college students will be hitting the road with friends or family for sun and fun. Although such "hot spots" as Florida, Mexico and the Caribbean have a reputation for offering a 'wild and crazy time', most students enjoy safe spring break vacations. A safe spring break means being aware of and making responsible choices about alcohol, sex and the law.*

Many colleges and affiliated organizations are doing their part to make sure students have fun with safety in mind. Cornell University and Emory University host annual Spring Break "fairs" to provide students, not only with helpful travel information, but tips on avoiding alcohol poisoning and assaults while on break. The University of Michigan offers students a "Road Trip" brochure suggesting healthy do's and don'ts while on break, in addition to listing signs of alcohol poisoning. Even Panama City, Florida, a perennial spring break mecca, provides safe behavior information on their website: [www.springbreakpcb.com](http://www.springbreakpcb.com).

Many students take spring break to a whole new level by participating in alternatives to a "traditional" spring break. In 2005 The College of St. Benedict in Minnesota (with a student body of 1,057) sponsored 13 different alternative spring breaks. St. Benedict students built homes, worked in homeless shelters and taught children during their week away from classes.

However, Spring Break is also a multi-million dollar industry benefiting travel agencies, tour promoters, airlines, hotels and resort destinations. Plenty of well-funded marketing translates into a culture that encourages young people to consume alcohol in a high-risk manner during spring break. Some tour promoters have been known to promise "50 hours of free drinking" at some Mexican vacation spots along with reinforcing the notion that the 18 year old drinking age is "rarely enforced". Many tour promoters sell "all you can drink" packages to teens, never questioning their underage drinking status. For parents and concerned planners, please check thoroughly into promotion packages and report irresponsible spring break venues.

### Alcohol Poisoning:

Alcohol use and misuse are at the heart of dangers facing young people who participate in spring break. In Cancun, where more than 100,000 young people visit each year, spring break revelers average 18 drinks per day for boys, 10 for girls. According to a University of Wisconsin study, 75 percent of college males and 43.6 percent of females reported being intoxicated on a daily basis during spring break. Nearly half of the males and more than 40 percent of the females also reported being drunk to the point of vomiting or passing out at least once during break."

Young people who over-consume alcohol are more vulnerable to crisis situations, such as injury, rape, exposure to sexually transmitted infections (STI's) and arrests. No young person on spring break envisions these consequences as part of a fun, relaxing vacation. But these situations are all too common when alcohol is involved.

Given that spring break trips often involve alcohol, it is critical to know the overall facts on young adults and alcohol use. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), students who drink have higher rates of injuries, assaults and other health problems each year compared with their non-drinking counterparts. Annually, the NIAAA reports that 1,400 college students died from alcohol related, unintentional injuries with more than 500,000 injured while under the influence of alcohol.

By limiting, or abstaining from, alcohol use on spring break, young people can enjoy their time away from school and not put themselves in jeopardy. At the very least, young people should have a sober monitor who is watching out for the group and is able to respond or mitigate a crisis situation. "Parents and students need to recognize there is a dark side to the spring break madness they see on MTV," says Frank Guglielmi, whose 19 year old son died after falling off a balcony in Panama city Beach, Florida.

The following are important facts about alcohol consumption and alcohol poisoning to keep in mind before going on spring break:

- Different people experience different effects of alcohol. There are no absolutes.
- If a large amount of alcohol is in a person's system, it can result in unconsciousness. The heart and lungs can be slowed to the point of stopping.
- It is dangerous to assume a person will just sleep it off. People may pass out before all of the alcohol reaches the brain.
- When in doubt, call for emergency assistance.

The best way to have a great time on spring break is to be aware of the risks and have a plan. Should someone you are with over-consume, here are some steps to deal with alcohol poisoning:

1. **Wake the person up.** Call their name; Shake them; Pinch their skin. If they don't respond, get help!
2. **Turn and keep the person on their side** so that if they get sick they will not choke on their vomit.
3. **Check the person's skin.** If his/her skin is pale or bluish or is cold or clammy, get help!
4. **Check the person's breathing.** If it is irregular, or too slow/shallow (less than 8 breaths per minute or more than 10 seconds between breaths), get help.
5. If you discover any **one** of the above problems, **stay with the person and call 9-1-1.** It is important to contact emergency services quickly!

### Safer Sex and Sexual Assault:

The risk of sexual assault multiplies exponentially with alcohol misuse. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, alcohol is used by 67 percent of sexual aggressors and 50 percent of victims. Drinking and sex can go hand in hand on spring break and the repercussions may last long after the trip is over. A high school counselor, quoted in a recent Detroit Free Press article, stated "We have kids come back with induced psychosis from being drug poisoned or kids who have been raped or lost their virginity when they have no idea whether they did or didn't want to."

The Bacchus and Gamma Peer Network found that between 90 and 95 percent of college students are safe, sober and selective when it comes to their sexual decision-making. Most young people do not use drugs. However, young people on spring break need to be especially aware of predatory drugs. These include Rohypnol or “Ruffies” Gamma-hydroxybutyrate (GHB) and the most often misused drug, alcohol. There are many ways that young people can protect themselves and their friends from becoming victims of assault, rape or unintentional drug use. The most important way to is watch out for one another. In addition, young people should keep their drinks with them at all times.

**Legal Repercussions:**

When young people are traveling for spring break, especially abroad, they should be sure to educate themselves on local laws. This is important because young people need to know their rights and also understand that laws surrounding alcohol may be stricter in other countries. According to the United States Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs, more than 2,500 Americans are arrested during spring break each year, usually for drugs and alcohol.

By limiting or abstaining alcohol consumption, young people can avoid being perpetrators or victims of a crime. “Arrests, citations and incidents of sexual assault, simple assault and other crimes typically show an increase in resort towns during spring break. Medical emergencies including drug reactions, drug overdoses and alcohol poisoning also increase during this time.”

**Initiatives on how to have a healthy spring break:**

As noted earlier, many colleges and universities provide safe spring break tips through their school websites.

The University of Iowa Police provide the following spring break safety tips:

- Bring sufficient money for gas, food and shelter, and plan to take extra emergency money for unexpected problems. If driving, respect speed limits, traffic laws, get sufficient rest and drive safely.
- Confirm reservations before leaving town and let your parents/guardians know how and where to reach you.
- Know your traveling companions well and look out for each other.
- If you choose to drink, do so in moderation and do not operate a vehicle.
- Do not set a drink where something could be placed in it and do not accept drinks from others.
- Always watch the bartender pour your drink. Not all bartenders are on the "up and up." Some might be working with the perpetrators to slip date rape drugs into your drink.
- Do not involve yourself in any activity that might jeopardize your safety or increase your risk of being victimized, or lead to your arrest.
- Protect your property; do not openly exhibit large amounts of cash and make sure to lock your vehicle and hotel/motel room.
- Before leaving for break, unplug unnecessary appliances and other electronic devices, and make sure that your room or apartment is secure.
- Carry your wallet in an inside coat pocket or side trouser pocket. Carry your handbag tightly under your arm with the clasp toward your body. Never let it dangle by the handle.

- Keep your wallet or handbag closed and with you at all times. Never put it on the seat beside you, on the counter next to you or under a seat when dining.
- Be aware of your surroundings and the people around you; trust your instincts.
- Stay in well-lighted and well-traveled areas.
- Walk with your head up, shoulders back and your eyes scanning the people around you. If you are expecting guests, do not open your door until you know it is the right person.
- Always ask to see identification of visitors you don't know.
- If attacked, don't panic! Get a good description, direction traveled, etc. and report the incident to the police as soon as possible.
- Report any suspicious activities to the police.

It's important to unwind and have fun. By enjoying a well planned, safe spring break, young people can get to the heart of what spring break is all about: relaxation and fellowship. It's even fun to give of yourself and help others, as thousands of students have discovered by participating in alternative spring break experiences. Make the choice to have a fun, but safe spring break! □

**For More Information, visit:**

[www.brad21.org](http://www.brad21.org)

The American Medical Association also provides 10 important Spring Break Safety Tips for Parents to discuss with their children. Check out:

<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/9914.html>

Hazelden's "Clue's for a Healthy Spring Break"

[www.hazelden.org/servlet/hazelden/cms/ptt/hazl\\_alive\\_and\\_free\\_html?sh=t&page\\_id=29655](http://www.hazelden.org/servlet/hazelden/cms/ptt/hazl_alive_and_free_html?sh=t&page_id=29655)

Student & Youth Travel Association

[www.syta.org](http://www.syta.org)

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Sources used for this article:

- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)
- Hazelden
- University of Iowa
- United States Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs
- The Atlanta Inquirer
- The Bacchus and Gamma Peer Education Network

# Mailbox

*The B.R.A.D. Foundation appreciates all the thank you letters we receive.*

*Share your thoughts with us at [contact@brad21.org](mailto:contact@brad21.org).*

*Here is what a few of you have to say...*

“My son, Richard, turned 21 on December 30. About a week before his birthday, we had our little talk about being responsible on his birthday (and New Year's Eve), but a couple of days later, your "birthday card" came. Wow, what a brutal reminder of the realism of our fears! If Richard didn't listen during our first talk, he sure paid attention to the message in your card! My husband and I would like to thank you for your wonderful crusade in the name of your son. You are doing a great thing. You touched our lives. We are sorry for the loss of Brad. We can only imagine the pain you experienced. God bless you. Thank you again.”

Ann and Rich Mattea

“Hey, I'd just like to thank you for coming to our school. I was the big kid in the back giving you a standing ovation). I don't know what it was about it but it really got to me. Maybe its because a drunk driver killed my uncle, in 1999. Thats a reason why I'm not going to be drinking any amount of alcohol. I'm sorry to hear about your son. Keep up the good work, and keep spreading the word, I hope to also.”

Dennis Menard, Escanaba, MI

## B.R.A.D. Staff

Cindy McCue : Founder and President, B.R.A.D. Foundation

Jasmine Greenamyer: Program Director, Editor

Lauren D'Amore: Program Assistant, Lead Writer

Amy Wiegand: Program Associate

## B.R.A.D.'s Mission

To impart information that will encourage and enable responsible decision making.

Our purpose is to educate young adults and their parents as to the responsible use of alcohol, the effects of alcohol and how to deal with excess by others.

## Evaluating the B.R.A.D. Card?

Each month we receive inquiries about schools other than Michigan State University evaluating the B.R.A.D. 21st Birthday card. We would love to share your results with other schools, or give them your contact information. Please let us know of your efforts at [contact@brad21.org](mailto:contact@brad21.org).

## Information and Materials:

To order our educational materials, visit:

[www.brad21.org/request\\_literature.html](http://www.brad21.org/request_literature.html)

or call us at (248) 842-4021.

**B.R.A.D.**

**P.O. Box 1021**

**Clarkston, MI 48347**