An Alternative Spring Break

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Being a resident of New York, I experience my fair share of tourists and visitors, and spring break is no exception! With the onslaught of teens, tweens and families visiting the "Big Apple" in late April, I was pleasantly surprised to meet a group of high school students at our Community Kitchen who are more interested in community service than Cancun.

These were not your usual spring breakers. They were not in their bikinis and board shorts — instead, they were wearing aprons and gloves, helping our pantry customers shop for their weekly groceries. Part of a larger group of 49 visiting from Erie, PA, this marks the tenth year that Cathedral Preparatory School has organized an alternative Spring Break to New York City. The group sees the sights in the evenings, and daytime is spent volunteering at programs throughout the five boroughs.

After volunteering, the group comes together to reflect on the day's work, feeling great about serving hundreds of meals at Project Hospitality or helping bag groceries for some of the four thousand families who visit the food bank's pantry. However, Chris, the group's adult chaperone, made it very clear that despite feeling exhilarated by helping so many New Yorkers, the group also feels saddened by the enormous need found in our city. "Even one person is one too many," he expressed to me while discussing the magnitude of poverty in New York. "It feels good to be helping so many people, but it's also hard because we wish we didn't have to help any."

This is a sentiment expressed by many who work with the food bank. We are happy to have the ability to help the four million New Yorkers struggling to afford food; however we wish we didn't have to. I agree with Chris, even one hungry New Yorker is one too many.