This was the first time, for many of us, to attend an Alternative Spring Break service project. We all wanted to learn more about how we could help the people and communities beyond our little bubble of the university world; and what better way to do that than to take a week’s worth of our time to travel down into Galveston, Texas to serve alongside the Galveston Bay Foundation?! We all embarked on a journey to learn more about the environmental conservation of the Galveston Bay and came back with a greater appreciation and understanding of how important it is to protect this area. The earth is our home, and although we have made great strides in advancing human civilization over the years, we must remember to take care of the natural environment and ecosystems that are affected by our activities.

I think it is appropriate to say that it was quite insightful to see how another part of Texas operates and lives. Coming from a big city like Dallas and from the hustle and bustle of suburban life, it is not always easy to experience and get to see the beauty and craftsmanship of nature like we got to see during our time serving with the Galveston Bay Foundation. The communities that thrive down in Galveston make a living off of the fishing and oyster industry along with tourism to their beaches. One of the main resources they also take from is the Galveston Bay. This bay provides and circulates water to big factories in Baytown, Texas that supply electricity and natural gas to the surrounding residential homes in the area.

We learned the importance of replenishing and maintaining what we take from the Earth. The work we helped with, during our time in Galveston, is work that will not only benefit us now but for future generations to come. We spent our time planting forty trees that will serve as habitats for migratory birds to the coastal wetlands. We bagged 1.8 tons of oysters to create oyster reefs that will help maintain the health of the bay and replenish oysters for the seafood industry. And we served time caring for plants in a wetland nursery and developed visual educational materials to teach nearly 1,000 local students a year about the unique uses of the Galveston Bay. Through all these experiences and so much more, we gained a lot of knowledge and appreciation for what the bay supplies us with and how it functions.

We were constantly reminded throughout our work alongside the Galveston Bay Foundation that Dallas, does indeed, have a bay—the Galveston Bay. The health and overall functioning of the bay has a ripple effect on surrounding areas, such as Dallas, that although may not be directly linked to using the bay; have networks and connections that are tied into and have multiple uses of this area.

Overall, we all walked away with an expansive knowledge on how coastal ecosystems work and why they are so important, the importance of educating people and communities on the preservation of the bay, and a greater and more profound appreciation for the environment and natural land around us that provides so many resources in order for us to thrive.

In our closing remarks we would like to thank the Galveston Bay Foundation for working with and educating us during our week of service with them. In addition, we are very grateful for the kind staff that hosted us at Clear Lake United Methodist Church, who graciously provided our lodging and sleeping accommodations. And last but not least, thank you to the UT Dallas
Office of Volunteerism for providing us with the enriching opportunity to experience a week of service and volunteerism we will truly never forget and treasure for years to come.