Hello, my name is Emily Riddell, and I was a part of the Social Services trip. Our group traveled to San Antonio and served the local community at the San Antonio Food Bank and Catholic Charities.

Throughout the week at the Food Bank, our team pulled weeds in the garden, cleaned up trash around the outside of the facility, and helped build 1200 meal boxes which were to be distributed to the local elderly community. The boxes we made were described as “opportunities”, instead of just being called meals for the elderly; the San Antonio Food Bank, whose mission is Fighting Hunger, Feeding Hope, provides opportunities to their community by providing those meals so that the people who receive them have opportunities to pursue other activities without worrying about when and what they will eat next. The Food Bank has over 27 acres of farmland, on which they grow their own produce to be distributed or sold, as well as a hydroponics system (a way for plants to grow without soil – I still don’t really understand it), a massive warehouse where nonperishable foods are kept, and a small group of chickens. We really enjoyed our time working with the Food Bank.

When we weren’t fighting hunger and feeding hope at the Food Bank, we were at Catholic Charities, which is a national organization that supports local communities who are at or below the poverty line in a number of ways. The Catholic Charities we served at provided help with taxes and finances to families, clothes to those in need, and an after-school childcare program. Our team was able to sort several bags of clothes that would later be distributed to families who needed them. We also spent time with the kids in the after-school program, playing games with them (way too many rounds of Apples to Apples for our own good) and showing them love and care.

Before participating in Alternative Spring Break just a few weeks ago, I had thought that the trip would be solely made up of serving the community. I had pictured getting to know my team members in a way that was very surface level. What I didn’t expect was for our team to bond as well as we did. Our team was made up of students who are part of the Fraternity and Sorority Life on campus. We all had an instant connection of being involved in Greek life, and it was very easy for us to build real friendships. We spent hours in cars together, we visited way too many Walmarts, we played endless hours of ping pong, pool, and cards, we ate on the famous and crowded San Antonio Riverwalk and at the less-famous and empty PizzaRitas just off the Riverwalk, we played mini golf, and we even jazzercised. I didn’t picture these things when I thought of ASB, but now I do. I think it’s fitting that our trip, Social Services, was able to not only provide social services to the San Antonio community but was also able to provide social services to our team with long-term friendships and lasting memories.