**Alternative Break Immersion Trips**

Big Laurel is situated in the southern coalfields of the Appalachian Mountains in West Virginia. Established in 1976 as a community education endeavor, Big Laurel continues to offer programs that strive to build a stronger, healthier community and encourage individuals to reach their fullest potential.

Alternative break participants are immersed into an intentional lifestyle in which they join our community in loving service, participate in a zero waste food challenge, learn about and use composting toilets, conserve energy, use harvested rain water for showers and washing, and assist in sustainable gardening techniques. Our unique location, the ridge of a mountain on a 450-acre forested land trust, also presents endless opportunities for hiking, bonfires, and stargazing.

The spring break immersion trips focus on history, environment, education, culture, economy, health, and how those themes are related in the unique communities of Mingo County, WV. While groups will have opportunities for serving and helping with projects such as gardening or kids’ afterschool programming, getting the work done is not our only focus.

Participants who come willing to listen, learn, try new things, question what they know, and look for deeper meaning will get the most out of this experience. It is our hope that students’ eyes may be opened not only to some of the injustices in this world and the systems in place that intend make and keep people poor, but also to the ways that communities and individuals are challenging those systems and building on successes. We strive to share our understanding of joys and challenges in Appalachia, and the ways students can bring these ideas and experiences back to their home communities.