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El Camino College Professor Launches Non-profit Service Learning Program

El Camino College student Jonathan Zisner has international travel plans for the winter recess – but it won't just be a tourist trip. Zisner is headed to Guatemala to help teach English to 6 to 12 year olds at an impoverished village school outside of Antigua.

"I've always wanted to study abroad and learn about new cultures and lifestyles," said Zisner, a fire science major at El Camino College. "During this trip, I hope to increase my knowledge of the Spanish language and to experience life outside the U.S."

"I'm looking forward to everything – from going outside after class, to exploring the neighborhoods and trying new foods. I think it will be a great experience."

The 20-day trip is part of a newly created service learning program founded by El Camino College English Professor Pete Marcoux that sends students to help others in underdeveloped parts of the world. Zisner and other ECC students will join the first excursion under Marcoux's non-profit, Global Service Learners, an organization that offers opportunities for American students to study abroad.

"The service learning curriculum is designed to attract serious students who want an opportunity to see a country from the inside out, while exploring and having fun learning a new culture," Marcoux said. "I chose Guatemala because it is poor economically, but it is rich in history and culture."

Marcoux traveled to Guatemala in January 2011 to scout locations and to build relationships with a language school. From that trip and additional research, he created the service learning program that integrates meaningful community service with instruction that enriches the learning experience, teaches civic responsibility, and strengthens communities.

Anyone over the age 18 is welcome to apply – it is not a requirement to be an El Camino College student. The trip runs from January 6 to 26 and costs \$1,500 not including a roundtrip flight from LAX.

In addition, Marcoux is collecting new and gently used books geared toward 6 to 12 year olds to bring on the trip. For more information, contact Pete Marcoux at pmarcoux@elcamino.edu or go to www.gslearners.com.

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