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Encouraging you to travel with purpose since 2008

Out of the Social Action Leadership Team (SALT) mission and call to develop and practice a Christian theology of social action, SALT members created VIA to encourage students to be intentional with time spent traveling.

The VIA is a publication dedicated as a forum for people to explore, share and learn about various social justice issues as they journey away from the familiar and back again. Through essays, short stories, photos, poetry, art, and other creative expressions, students will be provided with an opportunity to share their experiences and concerns for the current state of the world. It will serve as a guide to future travelers and social justice agents to be intentional about their experiences as a journey filled with opportunities to learn, share, educate, and serve. This magazine will support the celebration of diversity along with the recognition of our common humanity; its contributors hold the hope that it will encourage and challenge those in our own community to uphold and promote these values.

SALT is the social justice ministry of the
Chapel of the Resurrection,
Valparaiso University
valposalt.org

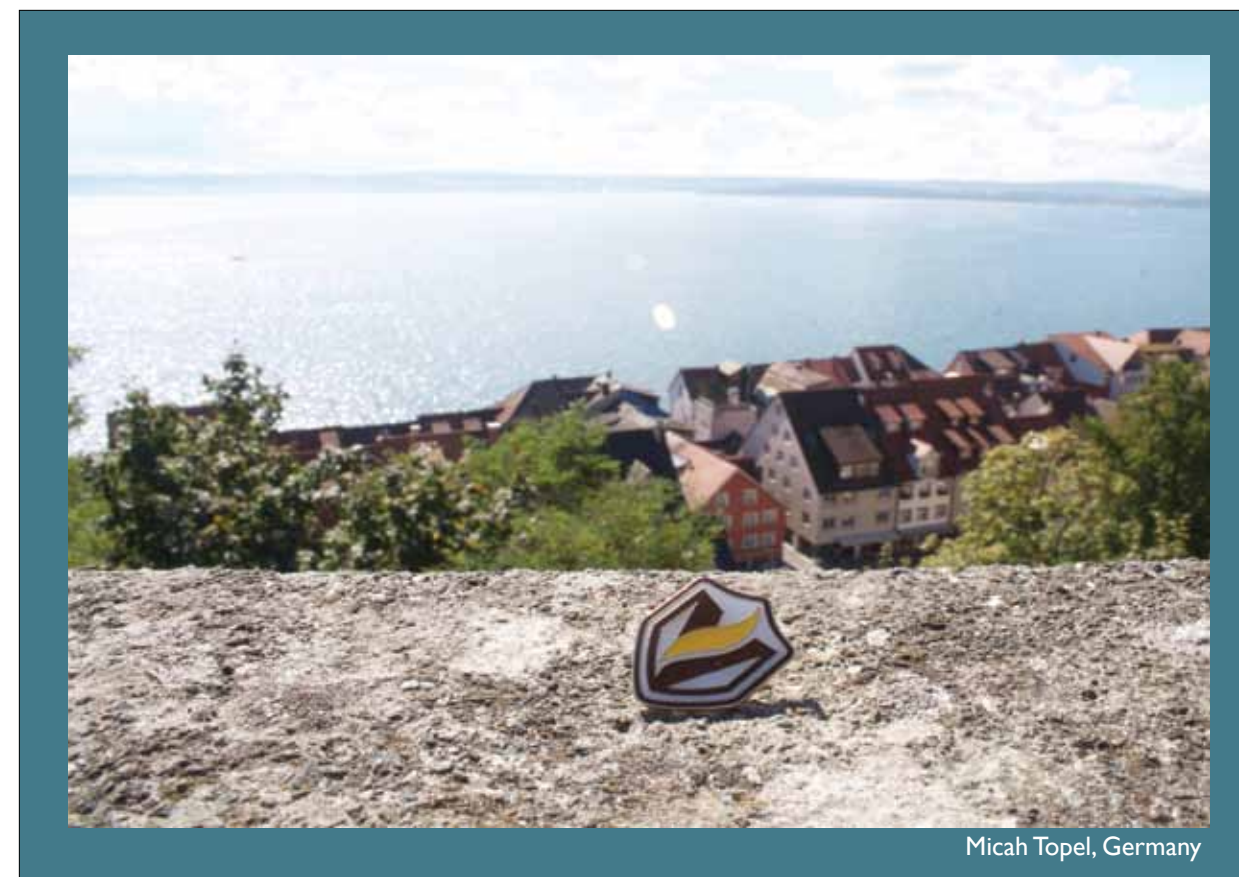
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A Call to Understanding



Photo Provided by Victoria Bruick

Only a block away from my apartment, I passed this 19th century Roman Catholic cathedral constantly, but only An iron wrought gate stood open inviting me into the wor-

ship space. A man knelt praying in a pew. A woman wearing a hijab walked slowly around looking up. I was pleased to hear an organist practicing, finally a real musical gesture. Picking up a pamphlet I read about the bells in the tower. The “random ringing” was called change ringing which was a mathematical practice of ringing using permutations. Sitting in my own pew, I looked up to the rising arches laughing at myself.

Victoria Bruick
Cambridge, England

“How much larger your life would be if your self could become smaller in it.”
– G. K. Chesterton



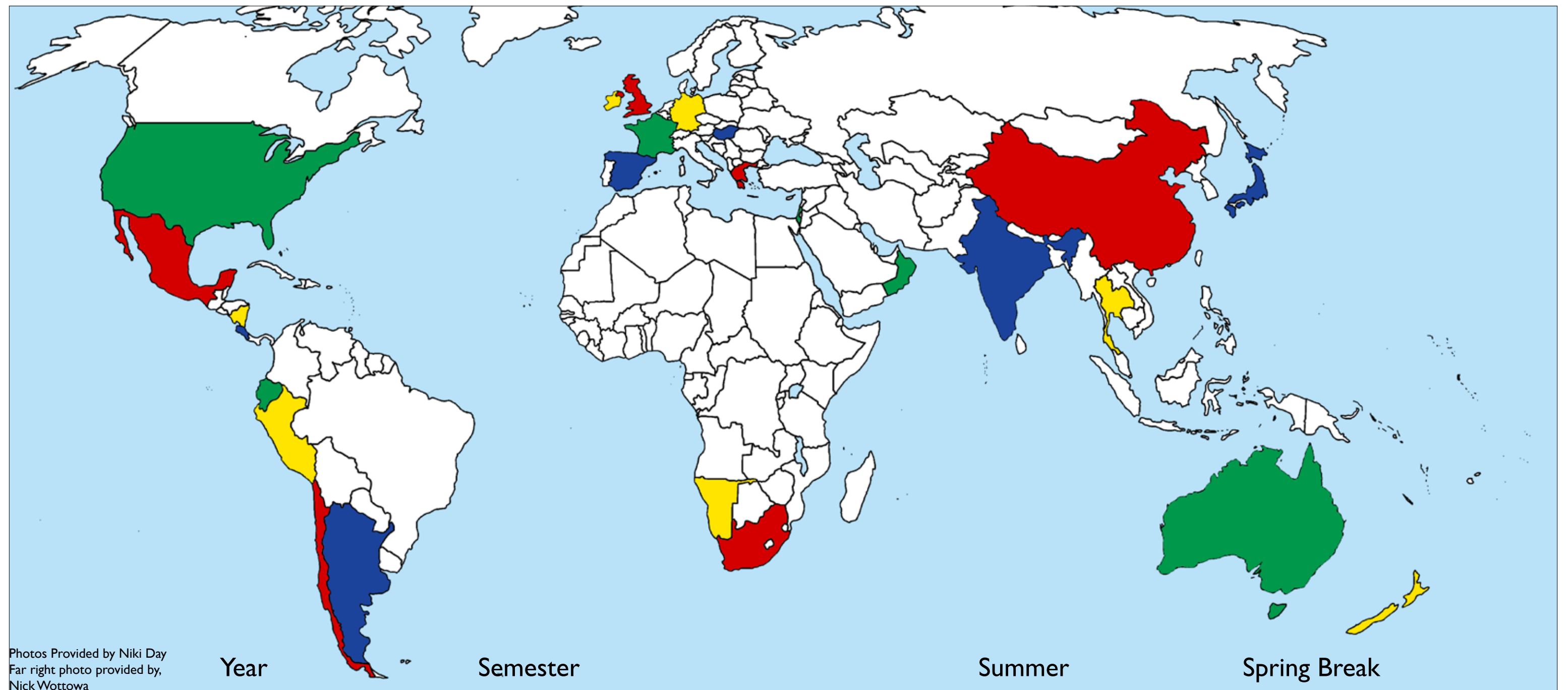
“A journey is best measured in friends, rather than miles.”
– Tim Cahill



Photos clockwise from top right: Ali Peters, Kylie Schreiber, & Eric Smith; Emily Kunkle & Tiphannie Marbach; Emily Kunkle, Shannon Egan, Gabby Serna, Tiphannie Marbach, Niki Day, Izzy Gonzalez, Jordan Dubberke, & Abby Bray; Caitlyn Alario; Jennifer LeCaptain, Victoria Bruick, Bethany Weiss.

Valparaiso University ~ Study Abroad

Where will you travel with purpose?



Engagement through Volunteering



Bethany Wiess Zaragoza, Spain

I had just finished my summer job at my local YMCA when I started my semester abroad in Zaragoza, Spain. From what I had heard, the program I was enrolled in at the university there was a much lighter load than what I was used to at Valpo, so I was looking forward to finding other things to fill my free time. My second day in Zaragoza, my host mom walked me to the university. During that short walk, I was pleased to find Zaragoza's YMCA right next to where I would be studying for the next few months. I knew I could not pass up this opportunity to volunteer there.

After a few different attempts to volunteer, my friend from London and I were invited to a meeting at the YMCA by the

Being in another country sometimes made me question if I was capable of doing certain things.

volunteering supervisor. He told us about the various programs and how it is different than the YMCAs of the United States. At that meeting, my friend, Kim, and I decided to work with school-aged students with their homework after school once a week. Being in another country sometimes made me question if I was capable of doing certain things. I knew I could definitely help them with their English homework, but would I be of much help as a non-native Spanish speaker in other areas of their studies? The supervisor told us we would be of help no matter what.

For two months of my time abroad, we helped at the homework center where students ages six to eleven came every day af-

ter school. They were bright eyed and excited to see new, foreign faces. Contrary to many Americans' experiences abroad, these students could not figure out where I was from. To them, I spoke English so I must be from England. Once they found out I am from the United States, questions about celebrities, New York, and Los Angeles flooded in and I was left to say I've never met anyone famous nor had I visited America's most famous cities. Nonetheless, they were still interested about my life or they were just humored by my accent.

Kim and I helped the students with more than just their English. We helped with math, science, social studies, and even their Spanish grammar and literature. I thought English would be where I could help out the most, but their classes were all based on the UK's English which still confuses me. Who knew a rucksack is what we call a backpack? There were times when I definitely had no idea what the American English equivalent was. Spending time with these students is one of my favorite memories while in Spain. I was introduced to the culture of Spain's young people, and was reminded that no one needs to be an expert to volunteer.

Most of these students were children of immigrants to Spain. The Zaragoza YMCA has an established program helping immigrants including an adult Spanish language class, community and individual growth, and providing resources. Having worked at the YMCA previously, it was interesting to see what this

Y was doing meet the needs of their community. I often wish I had taken pictures of my young, Spanish friends, but I did not want to invade their privacy in any way.

To anyone anticipating a study or travel abroad experience, I encourage you to seek out ways you can volunteer in your new community. Research opportunities online before you go or ask native friends and professors when you arrive. Not only does an experience like this form a closer connection to the people, it also makes you realize that everyone is equipped

to help others in some way.

No matter your language proficiency, knowledge of the area, or ability to work with people, there are always ways to get involved.



Photos Provided by Bethany Wiess

"I was introduced to the culture of Spain's young people, and was reminded that no one needs to be an expert to volunteer."



Inspiration in South Africa

Through my time in Southern Africa, one of the main things my classmates and I were forced to confront was finding hope in a place where it is so often hard to find. Just like how poor, black townships are hidden by the infrastructure of an apartheid regime still standing, our hopefulness was sometimes hidden behind the oppressive systems that seemed to stalk us.

One day I was getting picked up from class from my host family who lived in Katutura, a township area outside of the city of Windhoek, Namibia. That day in my class on development, we were discussing Namibia's Vision 2030, which is a set of development goals set by the government to be achieved by the year 2030. It was currently 2015. Once in the car, I persisted in questioning my Namibian parents about their opinions on the goals.

They responded by aggressively narrating a story of hopelessness, saying the government was corrupt and the people were unable to get their voice heard. Despite this I naively tried to search for solutions, some way to organize people, to create advocacy, but my host parents won in the end. They drove me to my host father's brother's home, which was a hand built, tin shack in the middle of the vast expanse of the poorer area of Katutura. I shook his hand and toured his one room home and looked at all the other similar houses stretched for miles around me and tears sparked in my eyes when my host mother asked, referring back to Vision 2030,

"Do you think all these people will have homes by 2030?" Despite my usual optimism, the only word that came out of my lips was, "no."

While there were many situations like this one that made my classmates and me feel empty, there were just as many that made us feel whole again. We met students younger than us organizing and advocating for delivery services on behalf of their community. We met people whose loved ones had been taken from them but who were still speaking on their behalf. We met HIV/AIDS activists, feminist leaders, and scholars who taught us to see justice in new ways. We met a socially conscious Methodist preacher whose words had us smiling for the rest of the trip, and children in an orphanage whose laughter was infectious (as were their runny noses).

These activists brightened our lives, and gave us a vision of a Southern African future to believe in. All the people living in Katutura may not have houses by the year 2030, but I'm confident that through the work of the inspiring people we had the opportunity to meet, they will get there eventually. Through their work, I found a vision for myself; of how I could help to change the world in ways that it's seeking to be changed. Ultimately through this trip, I learned that even when your heart becomes heavy with hopelessness, someone else's passion and strength will always be there to lift it back up again.

Rachel Briegel
Namibia



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Photos Provided by Rachel Briegel



When World News Hits Home

Victoria Bruick
Cambridge, England



I woke up disoriented at 5 a.m. on a bus. Waking up in a new place is weird enough; to be in the wrong place when waking up was terribly confusing. According to Google Maps I was still in France, though the bus should have been pulling into London Victoria Station hours ago. My eleven hour ride from Paris to Cambridge was dragging on and on, and no one around me knew why. Our Italian bus driver spoke little English and even less French leaving every passenger on the bus frustrated. After three stops at different customs checkpoints, people were starting to get angry.

“This route takes us through the Chunnel!!” “Maybe we’re boarding a ferry?” “I’m never taking this coach again.” Grumbles rose through the bus, yet of course they did nothing to help. Eventually we boarded a ferry, drove to London, and 12 hours after I was scheduled to arrive, I made it back to Cambridge.

Through conversations with the U.K. Border Control officers and scrolling through news articles online, I was able to piece together what happened. Syrian refugees in France were trying to reach England, so they decided to risk their lives and walk through the Chunnel, an underground passageway beneath the English Channel only meant for trains and buses. With thousands of refugees walking, trains and buses were delayed and rerouted.

The summer before I had left to study abroad, I closely followed the Syrian War and the crisis refugees faced as they fled the conflict. But for so long, the war, though it was heartbreaking to hear about, seemed so distant.

Not until the plight of others intersected with my life for a second, did the national news story become real for me. In the end, it was a long bus ride that I would never want to repeat. However, I know the slight inconvenience is nothing compared to the devastating war affecting millions of Syrians.



The sun rising over France as our ferry finally departs from Calais.



The White Cliffs of Dover welcoming our ferry back to England.

Photos Provided by Victoria Bruick



Photo Provided by Shannon Segin



A Collision of Passions

Shannon Segin
San José, Costa Rica

In the cramped and dirty town of Río Azul, a neighborhood in San José, you will find “Casa Hogar San Lázaro – Ven Connigo.” This organization seeks to serve meals and academic support to the students living in the neighborhood, a neighborhood specifically for Nicaraguan immigrant families.

During my semester abroad, I worked as an intern at “Ven Connigo,” and with the Spanish I had accumulated over the course of the semester, I was able to serve as a tutor in math and English to students ranging from grades K-12. Prior to this experience, I had worked as a peer tutor and done other related work, however this experience opened my eyes to a need that is present not only in Río Azul, but cities across the world.

More specifically, one morning, a mother came in asking for help on a homework assignment that she was completing so that she could assist her son with his 5th grade assignment. This simple interaction was representative of the larger population of the community, one that I had never been exposed to. The majority of parents in the neighborhood did not graduate from high school, many did not graduate grade school, and some could not read or write. Coming from an affluent suburb of Chicago, the only familiarity I had with this topic was through personal research and investigation.

Though it is cliché to say, some things really cannot be learned in the classroom, and sitting down to teach a mother grade-school level mathematics so that she can help her 5th grader with his homework was the first real experience I had that fueled my passion to work as a teacher in communities where the majority of parents have not received high-school diplomas, where there is a need for academic encouragement and support that does not come from within the home.

I was blessed with the opportunity to work with these students for seven weeks, and it was this time that provided a real experience that fueled my passion to serve as a teacher in high need areas.

Before my time at “Ven Connigo,” I pursued academics for academics sake. Now, I pursue academics no longer for a paper to hang on the wall, but rather for a population, for a people. That is not to say that I hope to have this population to serve for the rest of my years, but rather the opposite: I have found a collision between one of my passions, to empower through education, and one of the world’s needs, educators that seek to serve a neglected population in hopes that one day education is equally valued and provided across divisions, city lines, and borders.

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Finding Support in a New Home



Making a decision to study in the United States was one of the toughest decisions that I have made because no one among my family and relatives studied in the United States before. So, when I decided to come to the United States to study for my Master's, my family, relatives, and friends were not sure that I made the right decision because they thought I could not survive being away from home (Kurdish region Iraq) where I spent 26 years of my life. But I am glad I made that decision and that the first plane I'd ever been on flew to the Jordan, then the United States. After being in the United States for two and a half years, my journey has been phenomenal and I really don't want it to end. It has adjusted my life and personality in many good ways. I must admit that the first two months were tough and the weather

Sarhang Sherwany
Erbil, Kurdistan

was unacceptable and I was homesick.

The education system here was kind of confusing for me at the beginning since the strategy of teaching, and atmosphere of class are completely different from where I came from. Imagine, at home I finished my undergrad without sending a single email to any professors, but here everything is different.

I came to the United States because it is a land of opportunity, and the quality of education in excellent, and I strongly believe that Valparaíso University has been a great place for me to achieve my goals and get more encouragement from those people who believe in me.

Even though I have been treated unfairly by some people occasionally, here in Valparaíso University I am surrounded by some amazing people who won't

let me feel like a foreigner (outsider) which makes more me confident in calling Valparaíso University a second home. People here in the United States and especially at Valparaíso University are supportive and they encourage you to do what are you interested in. The program that I enrolled in has given me enough freedom to explore different areas and it has taught me through various experts in their fields.

In my first semester here at Valparaíso University I got involved with a documentary project about Syrian refugee in Kurdistan Region of Iraq along with a professor and another student from my program. The project has taught me from the first day till now that a lot of people admire what you do which rarely happens where I am come from.



Photos Provided by Sarhang Sherwany

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A Diversity of Cultures



Hannah Chapman
San José, Costa Rica

A few weeks ago, our group traveled to the cities of Cahuita and Limón so that we could experience the Caribbean coast and indulge in the Afro-Costa Rican culture. The first day was long, filled with the travel to the coast and a lot of traffic, however we made it to our hotel shortly after night-fall. The first night we stayed up laughing and excited to explore the town in the morning. Next morning came and we had an amazing breakfast consisting of over-easy eggs, toast with jelly, spicy gallo pinto and amazing coffee. After breakfast we made our way into town where we met with our nature guide and our other professor, Alfonso. I do not remember our guide's name but he was funny and was knowledgeable of the area. There was also an interesting fact that I learned. On the east coast of Costa Rica English is a common language while Spanish was a language that was forced on the people residing there. It was fascinating how diverse the small country of Costa Rica can be. Consisted of different climates and cultures, it's no wonder how the "rich coast" received its name.

Our nature walk was educational and engaging. Our guide knew all the perfect spots for observing sloths and other wildlife. He taught us of the history surrounding the national park and how they are desperately trying to preserve its foundation. Although Cahuita National Park's main draw is the pristine white-sand beach with its picture-perfect line of coconut palms and lush coastal forest backing it, the park was actually created to preserve the massive coral reef the lies just offshore. According to our guide, the reef contains 35 species of coral and provides a haven for hundreds of tropical fish. We walked through the canopy of the trees and the trail of ant hills, past the venomous snakes and under tree branches in hopes of encountering the monkeys. Unfortunately, we left empty handed, however, after the tour our guide was kind enough to give us samples of juicy pineapple and rich chocolate as a reward for our long walk through the forest.

After our tour, we went to Miss Edith's restaurant where we were introduced to authentic Caribbean cuisine. We ate marinated chicken submerged



in a coconut sauce along with rice and accompanied by a handmade ginger-root beer. The chicken was amazing and filling and the ginger beer was packed with flavor. I tasted every flavor and each was distinct. It was nice not going out to a popular restaurant or having an average Costa Rican meal. This meal was a real test for me as most of my life I have been a finicky eater. My palate has expanded and I have no fear in trying a variety of food in different countries. It is exciting and a part of culture, I just had to get out of the United States to see that. Miss Edith is a local legend and has been serving traditional meals for decades out of this humble, open-air restaurant. Miss Edith's is family-owned and she receives help from her daughter and other family members.

The next day, we stopped by the city of Limón where we

looked at the Catholic Church and walked the street commons. Afterwards we stopped by the Black Star Line restaurant for lunch. The Black Star Line was a shipping line incorporated by Marcus Garvey, who was the organizer for the Universal Negro Improvement Association. The shipping was to facilitate the exchange of goods and transport for African Americans throughout the African global economy. The Black Star Line became a key part of Garvey's contribution to the Back-to-Africa movement. This building is filled with history and now serves as a restaurant and banquet hall rental space. The food wasn't a special cuisine but nevertheless it tasted great.

After lunch we headed for home taking in the scenery and said goodbye to Columbus' voyage end.

"A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions."

– Oliver Wendell Holmes



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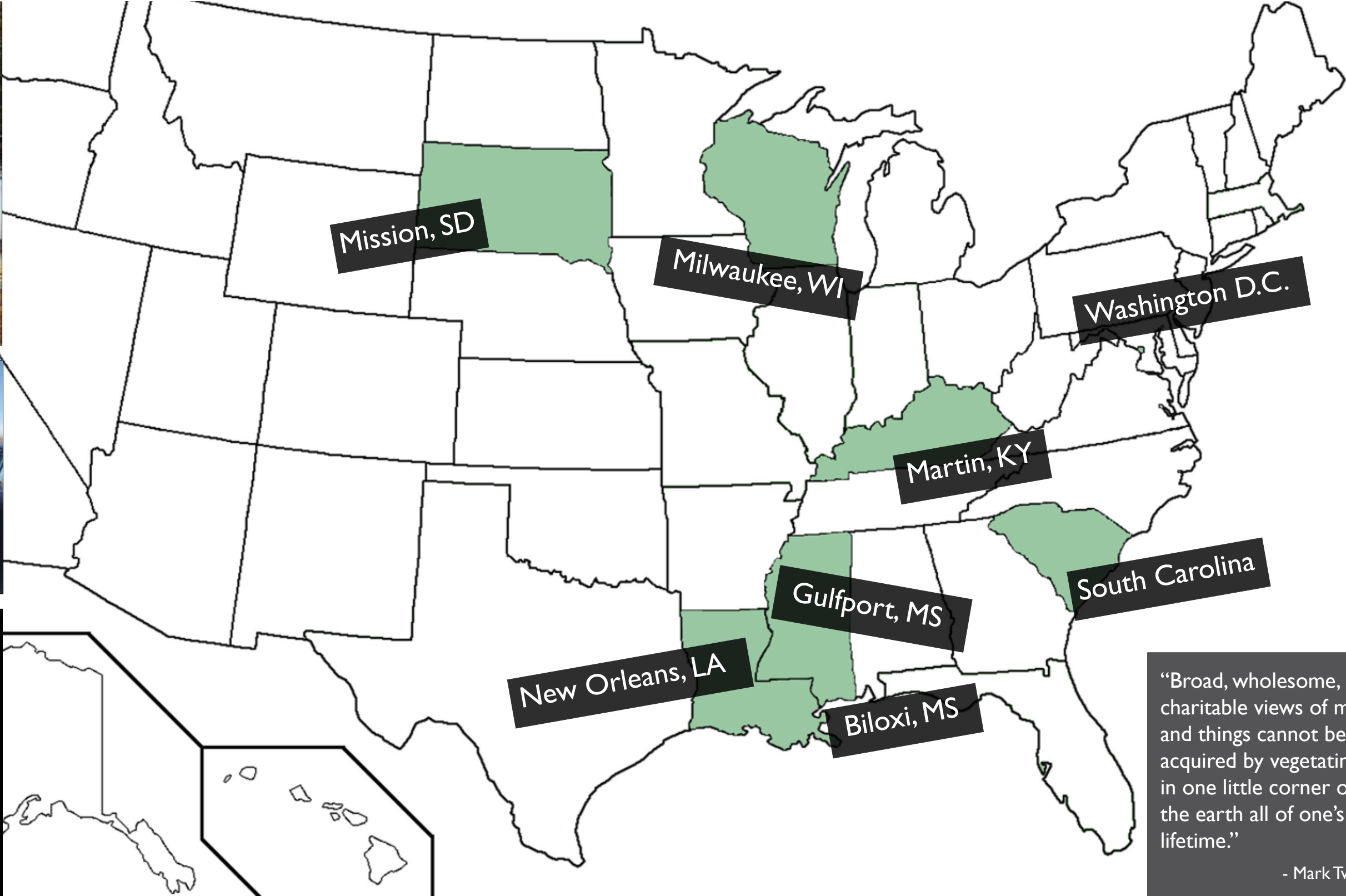
Photos Provided by Hannah Chapman

Spring Service Trips

Where will you travel with purpose?



Photos Provided by Victoria Bruick



“Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all of one’s lifetime.”
- Mark Twain



Sparking Lifelong Passion

Two years ago, I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to go on a spring break service trip to New Orleans, LA. Initially I went because I wanted a chance to see a place that wasn't the inside of my house for two weeks. But after I got there, I knew there was more than the chance to get away; it was the place that changed my life.

Our group spent a week helping others in the community, and even though we did a lot of work, there was tons of work still to do when we left. No one would think after nine years there would still be work to do from Hurricane Katrina, but there is. Actually there's a lot of work to do, mostly with rebuilding the community of New Orleans. There are buildings, shops, schools, restaurants, hospitals, churches, etc., but this wonderful city is missing the community of people who were there before the disaster. Many people were displaced by the storm and have yet to return, because there is nothing to call them back. Organizations and diligent community members are attempting to rebuild this community.

While we participated in a lot of projects during our week there and created an impact, I left feeling unaccomplished. My feelings stemmed from a couple I met on my last night

in New Orleans. A little group of us went to find a gift for one of the faculty members who came with us on the trip. As we were checking out, we started a conversation with the couple behind the register. In the course of our conversation, we told them what brought us to New Orleans. And their reaction was to thank us. The gentleman actually came around the counter to shake all of our hands and tell us how much he appreciated us taking time to help his city. Until that moment, I didn't comprehend how much of impact our work did for the community.

We didn't see the community center we helped to demolish be finished nor how tall the trees we planted in the Mississippi Delta would be (that would take 50 years), but we did get to see the gratitude on someone's face.

Even after two years, I still remember that feeling I got when that gentleman thanked us. And it's not about being recognized for the work; it's about knowing that I contributed to the renewal and growth of New Orleans. After that trip, I decided what I was going to do with the rest of my life. Post-graduation life holds a job in non-profit for me, most likely working in New Orleans. I'm drawn to finish what I've started: helping re-grow the community of New Orleans.

Jillian Holtzer
New Orleans

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do.”

- Mark Twain



Even after two years, I still remember that feeling I got when that gentleman thanked us. And it's not about being recognized for the work.



Photos by Ian Olive

INTERLINK

As another way to learn about traveling with purpose, we asked some INTERLINK students questions about adjusting to life in America, and what they missed most about their home countries. Here are some of their responses:

What do you miss most about your home country or culture?

One of the things that I miss most about Saudi Arabia is my family. My family and I usually gather with each other each Thursday. That includes my grandmother, grandfather, aunts, uncles, cousins, and of course my mother, father and sister. We usually drink coffee and eat dessert while the children are playing around us. One is laughing, one crying and two are usually fighting with each other. Each week my grandfather brings ice cream and each week we pretend that it was a surprise. I also miss the way my grandmother cannot eat until everyone is there. The way she tries to keep my cousin quiet and they don't listen to her. One of the things that I miss most is the way they make me feel. I used to get bored of going each week, but I would do anything to go back and sit with them.

--Ayah Al-Saigh, Saudi Arabia

One of the things that I really miss is food. I miss food because there is no Kurdish food in Valparaiso city, my mother's food, and fresh food. One of the factors that made me miss back home food is no Kurdish food in Valpo that made me more curious for Kurdish food. The second is I definitely bring me back to miss my mother's food. When my mother is preparing food this food has different taste and smell. Finally, in the USA almost all foods are like frozen food not fresh, but in my country the foods are usually fresh food not fast food. Fresh food emotionally make me more comfortable with eating and it seems particular taste with frozen food.

--Akam Ahmed, Iraq

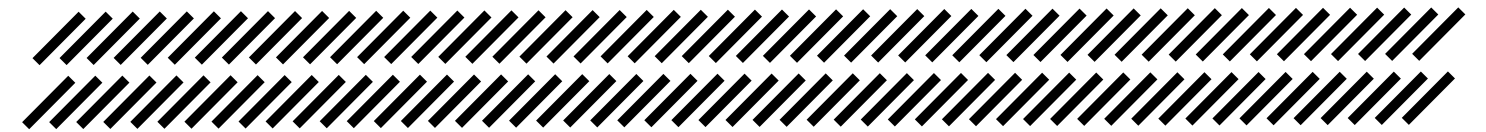
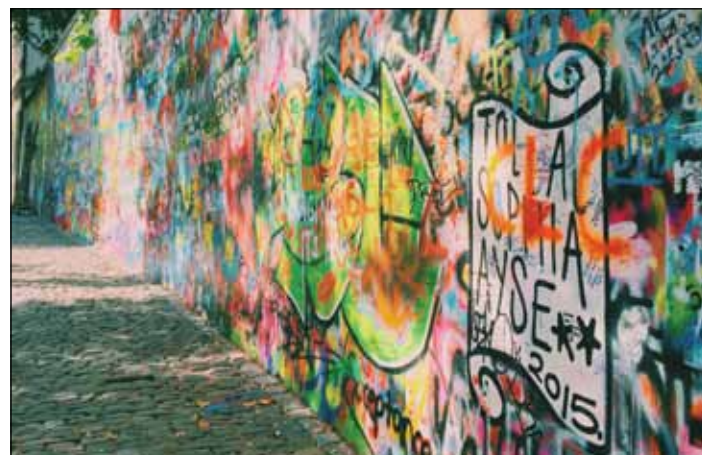
What is the most challenging thing about living in the United States/ Valparaiso?

I think the most challenging thing is not having a car... just joking. The most challenging thing I think is language, but it's not very difficult anymore. The first day I came here, I had trouble understanding what people say. But now I feel better. It isn't a big problem anymore. Actually, I still can't understand everything when I go to VU class, so it continues to be a challenge. I still need to improve my English.

--Zhaotong Liu, China

Being independent. Because when I was in China, my parents could take care of me. But now, I have to cook by myself, shop by myself and do housework. In addition, when I want to buy something or do something like rent an apartment, it's hard to communicate.

--Jiahong w, China



How has this experience changed how you understand the world?

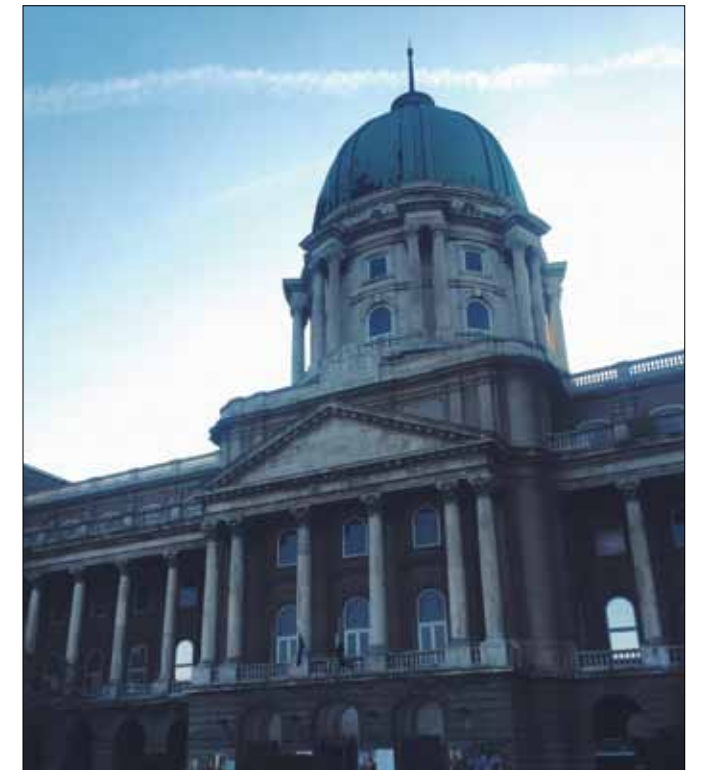
This experience gave me different mind. Even though we have different language and different culture, we will become good friends one day. When we have friends from different country, we can learn a lot of knowledge and help each other. We didn't feel alone. We can make different friends from different country. They can push us so we have a wonderful experience in our life.

--Qun Lin, China

Living in a foreign country provides various experiences and may change your perspective about the country. Therefore, three things have surprised me since I came to United States that change my perspective. Firstly, linking whole United States by one strong security network, is the thing that surprised me a lot, providing security and safe environment, help international student to feel comfortable and free. For example, in any cases you can call 911 and police will be in touch with you until you feel safe. Secondly, having more than one kid by most families, is surprised me also, because as I heard it is difficult for American families to have a lot of children because of daycare expenses, work and other responsibilities. Finally, people's nature, people here are so friendly and responsible. If you ask for help, they will help you in their way for helping and using special body language which has a huge effect on foreign people especially international student. Thus, living in United States is a journey with full of adventure. You can obtain various skills and experience about lifestyle and technology. If you want to have information about America you should not judge by appearance, instead you have to come and live the experience.

--Zryan Hamid, Iraq

INTERLINK is a language center through Valparaiso University that provides international students with whom English is their second language training, cultural orientation, and academic preparation as well as help with university placement and conditional admission to assure a successful and memorable educational experience in the United States.



Photos by Niki Day

What has been your favorite experience since coming to the United States/Valparaiso?

The most thing good that I did in America is study. Also I made many relationships with American, Arabic and Chinese people and I learned so much about the culture for different countries. Now I am happy in America because people are friendly and they like helping people and America has a very good education and many kinds of sports. I advise people to study in America especially in Valparaiso because it is close to Chicago and you can enjoy life in Chicago and it is very quiet and people are friendly.

--Abdullah Alabdali, Iraq

Since I came to the United States, I have had much experience. My favorite experience is my friend took me to go to Lake Michigan. It's like an ocean, but it is just a lake. I like ocean, I like it. Lake Michigan is very pretty. It's the beautiful lake what I see. In my past, I didn't see the beautiful lake like this. The world is big. Many things wait for me to see.

--Liya Yan, China



SALT is the social justice
ministry of the
Chapel of the Resurrection,
Valparaiso University

valposalt.org

