

Contributor Series: Impactful Moments

Student finds community in studying abroad



KELLY ABRAHAM

During her time at Taylor, Abraham studied abroad in Ireland and learned several lessons during her time there.

Unfamiliarity was not an obstacle Kelly Abraham avoided, but one she pursued on her trip to Ireland.

Abraham calls Northville, Michigan home, but has considered Taylor University a second home for nearly four years. As a senior, she reflects on memories that continue to make an impact on her life.

Originally a psychology major, Abraham decided to complete a portion of her general education classes abroad in Greystone, Ireland, forty minutes outside Dublin. She took Foundations, Irish history and Irish dancing—Irish dancing was particularly exciting and unique for her.

One of the most important lessons she took away from the trip was the reality that she was away from family. She was in an unknown territory, which grew her independence. Juggling different tasks and activities improved her time management skills.

While she was away from family, Abraham developed new friendships that remain today.

She recalled specifically the hospitality of Koert and Diana Verhagen, who entertained the students whose parents were not able to visit. They ensured that the students were comfortable and made them homemade food. They taught Foundations and gave tours.

Abraham also keeps in contact with the owner of the YWCA — a hotel in Greystones — John Ellis. John's son, Theo, and Kelly became close friends during this time, which they remain to this day.

Chef Pam's cooking was a fan favorite because of the array of food she made: brie cheese, traditional Irish stew and, of course, tea. Abraham said that there was

also no shortage of cafes and local restaurants nearby.

Abraham said that the hill climbing course pushed her out of her comfort zone during their hiking adventures. The hikes were arduous and long, but they were worth it because of the scenery. She learned the geography and political history of Ireland, especially the background between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland and the tension between the countries. One of the assignments required students to identify as Catholic and write in the perspective of a Catholic living in Ireland.

“That assignment stood out to me because it was so helpful for us to take the time to think about where another person might be coming from,” Abraham said. “It helps end stereotyping and generalizing and ended up being a more unifying experience.”

Moreover, Professor of Psychology Vance Maloney’s vision to engage the students with various cultures in a respectful way is something Abraham really appreciated.

Three years have passed and some changes have been made in regard to her path and career. She is currently an English major with a psychology minor. She hopes to pursue publishing.

Overall, Abraham found Ireland to be a rewarding experience and expresses interest in returning to Ireland with her family or on her own time. To speak highly of this trip is not difficult for her to do, which conveys its meaningfulness to her. A rare opportunity, she recommends freshman students partake in this experience.

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