

“I know it's cliché, but without my experiences in this country, I would not be the person I am today.”



Reflections 2016

For many in the current generation of young people, lines seem to be blurring. Traditional rigid categories of gender, race, faith and a host of other beliefs are being called into question. Concurrently, advances in communications technology has put the virtual world in the palm of their hands. This is leading to a flourishing of appreciation of diversity, and a more supportive environment for each individual to reach their highest potential.

But despite a more accepting environment, “fitting in” for many is still a concern, and cultural movements tend to advance in fits and starts with many setbacks and pitfalls along the way.

Our students at Farther Foundation can be under great pressure when they embark upon their summer programs and again later when they go to college. They leave the familiarity of their homes and communities and enter new settings where they are considered to be “the diversity” and are often expected to try to fit in. We hope that through their experiences with Farther Foundation, our students (and others) will learn how to thrive in diverse communities. Not simply learning how to fit in, but gaining the self-assuredness to be themselves and the self-confidence to succeed. They can be, and have been, part of the change they want to see in the world.

Please enjoy the photos and stories from the journeys of our class of 2016 in our annual photo journal – *Reflections*.

Sincerely,

David Weindling
Farther Foundation President & Founder



Lauren visited the Holi Festival during her program in Spain

-- On the cover: Kayla faced personal challenges in Panama but left feeling it is her second home

Self-Discovery

Whether you are immersing yourself deeply in an existing passion, or find yourself in an entirely new environment, you can have moments of discovery.

Nora followed her passion to Boston University for a summer theater program where she learned that her hobby could be a pathway to her voice.

Shayna traveled to Bavaria in Germany and lived with a host family for a month in a setting far different from her home in the city.

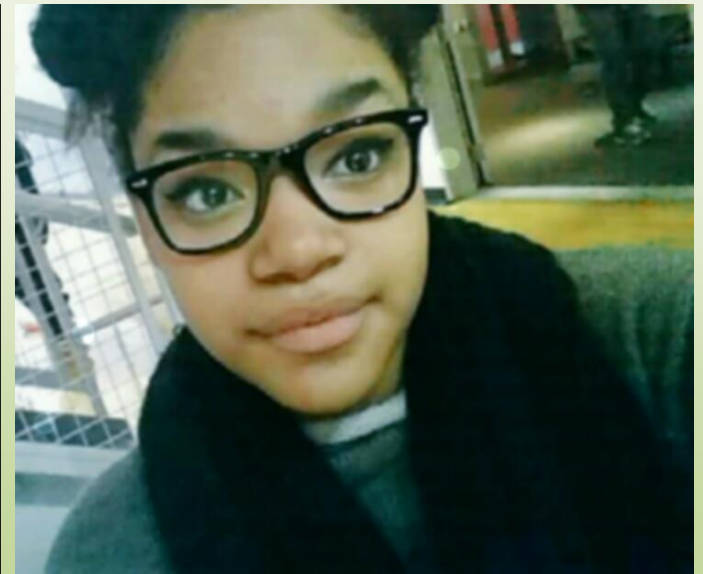


"This summer, I spent five amazing weeks studying theatre at Boston University. In the third week, our teacher gave us an assignment. "Pick out a topic from a newspaper article that you feel is important to talk about." When one of my classmates chose a piece about gun violence, it triggered horrible memories and great sadness for me. In November of 2015, I lost my friend to gun violence. She was, simply, "in the wrong place at the wrong time." Her death rocked me. Now I know I can use my voice, my theatre skills to promote social change, social awareness. I can take all that emotion, all that feeling and put it into my work. And hopefully my performance will drive awareness on issues that are important."

-- Nora

"If it wasn't for Bavaria, I doubt I would've ever been able to truly understand peace, for all that it is and does for a person. I doubt I would've ever had the opportunity to learn that being comfortable isn't a warning sign. I doubt I would've ever believed that peace could last for longer than an ignorant moment. I never knew that peace could be so disarming, something so gentle and sweet. I never thought accepting peace would be something I'd have to learn, but I'm so happy that I did."

-- Shayna



Cross-Cultural Competence

Definition: The knowledge, skills, and affect/motivation that enable individuals to adapt effectively in cross-cultural environments.

“Knowing I was going to be camping, without any experience with the outdoors, was another obstacle. The bugs were not afraid to bite or approach your face. I got aggravated with the small bees trying to enter my ears. It was a stressful and I remember telling myself that opportunities as big as Tanzania do not come often and I learned to cope. As a leader one must have patience while working with others, and be capable of working under pressure. Tanzania taught me what I am capable of doing, and improving it.”

-- Christopher

“The theme of my trip was new technology and urban development. We explored these topics in four different places: Madrid, Valencia, Mallorca and Barcelona. I believe that all people in the African American communities should experience this trip, or any trip outside of the country, to fully grasp the meaning of community, togetherness and life. Many young adults don't get the same opportunities as me, but telling them about the experience and encouraging them to find a way outside of violence is something that I can do for my community.”

-- Lauren



“We were in the indigenous village Embera Quera. We ate breakfast with the villagers and went on a tour of the village. We walked in straight up mud and my shoes were sliding off. I was sweating, getting bit by mosquitos and hit by tree branches, and falling up and down hills. Honestly, it was the worst part of the trip for me. It was also the best part. I was so far out of my comfort zone that it scared me. Looking back now, it makes me not afraid to try new things. Being back in America, I now take more risks and do more things that I wouldn't have done if I hadn't went abroad. I know it's cliché, but without my experiences in this country, I would not be the person I am today. And where did I go you may ask, I went to Panamá, a country that I call my second home.”

-- Kayla

“J.R.R. Tolkien once said, “Home is behind, the world is ahead.” I feel that this quote best describes my experience in China from beginning to end. I like to think that in my case China was my home. Even though I left it, I returned to the world a different person and even a better person.”

-- Luis

Cross-Cultural Competence

“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts.

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

-- Mark Twain



“I'm not just telling you this story to explain how awesome my trip to India was, I'm telling you this to explain to you how changed my views are. I definitely got to experience something I would never get here at home. An example of one would be me walking in the streets of Gujarat and seeing dozens of people lying on the sidewalks or unconscious under the highway or seeing a woman carrying her child who seemed to be sick. It was such a sad sight to see. I wanted to help everyone that I saw lying on the ground, but I was just a foreign exchange student. This trip really opened my eyes as to what is going on in our broken world that I had no idea existed. I came back from India a changed person.”

-- Gabriella



“When you are traveling outside the country you have to become responsible, accountable, independent, and a leader. My experience in Argentina has left me with the stance, “that will not be my last trip.”

-- Charmaine

“I am literally in Japan' it was a once and a lifetime experience that I am truly grateful for. I made some of the best memories of my life there. Something else that made the trip amazing was the people that I met from different countries while there. I can now say that I have friends from Mongolia, Italy, Hong Kong, and different parts of the United States.”

-- Larry

Confidence

Our students have big decisions ahead of them, and they need to discover the best in themselves so that their choices are not self-limiting.



“One of our instructors asked if I spoke Spanish and after I explained why I was fluent, I received a nod of approval -- a nod similar to the looks I received on the streets of Cadiz. Throughout my trip, I was always unsure of what I was doing. I lacked confidence; but after receiving that nod, I realized that Spain was closer to being my home than it was for any of my peers and that I should embrace my ability rather than frown upon it.”

-- Michael



“In Bonaire I had the opportunity to embark upon new experiences each day. Through this experience I gained a higher sense of awareness about ecology and marine life, and how it affected everything from the air we breathe to the food we consume. When I eat salmon and see its bright pink color, I think about the shrimp it fed on. The scuba diving experience made me address my fear and conquer it. It revealed inside of me my tenacity, resilience, and courage to try new adventures. I recognized that you have to believe that you can achieve, because accepting that you can't, only solidifies that you never will.”

-- Nathan

"I think that another thing I discovered was that I am a big fish in a small pond. I have not really been exposed to much outside Chicago and this program definitely helped me figure out how big the world is, how many different types of students there are, and how smart individuals are."

-- Enrique



Confidence

Farther Foundation students learn to take a bold step beyond the familiar.



"I feel that I left half of myself in Ecuador -- the part of me that would always hold me back from doing amazing things. Others noticed this difference too. I shed the person who was nervous about doing new things, amazing things, such as trying new foods, like seafood, or challenging myself at school by signing up to join new clubs and the flag football team. Before, I figured I shouldn't join too many things because it would be difficult to keep up with homework, but I have found that it helps me to manage my time more wisely, and most importantly becoming more independent."

-- Vanessa

Service

Serving an impoverished community reminds students that opportunities are precious and need to be embraced



"The sun is as strong as it has ever been. It was hard to breathe because of the smell that lingered around the markets because of the fish and other livestock being sold. It was definitely an uncomfortable month without having the luxury of an a/c and running water. Mornings would always be humid in the bunk house and nights would be cold at the dinner table. There was never a perfect temperature but it was just something that you would get accustomed to. The environment and the people would help you get through it. Knowing that the person right next to you has also not taken a long hot shower and is sweating as much as you can be comforting. Doing community service in Ghana, West Africa was definitely an eye opening experience."

-- Uriel



"We did community service in the small village of Costa Rica called Biolley. One of the biggest projects was sanding down a building. It took about a week because we used our hands which eventually got blisters from the hard work. We then lacquered the wood. Later we painted the building and the rooms that we were staying in because they would eventually become dorm rooms for students. We had to dig holes for plants and for an irrigation system. We worked for five days a week for six hours."

-- Victoria



"I learned when you have a group of people that have never met before but all have a common goal to help a community the group becomes more than just a group but another family."

-- Rodrigo



"Around 100 percent of my heart was captured by the cities of San Sebastian, Spain and Lourdes, France. I believe the most important lesson I learned on my trip is when you are starting something new, no matter what it is, the beginning will be scary, the middle will be filled with joy and adventure, and the ending will have sweet sorrow."

-- Krystal



College Campus Experience

Freshman year success is key to a successful college experience. College offers a dizzying array of new opportunities and demands a new level of responsibility. A pre-college campus experience provides our students with a great headstart in their preparedness for what lies ahead.



"After this summer with a trip to the Dominican Republic then to Brown University, I have become really interested in foreign affairs and cultural history. Learning and meeting people from across the globe has been exciting. In class discussions, we talked about the different parenting styles in the United States and in countries like Ecuador and Singapore."

-- Chyna

"When I stepped onto campus, I expected a glimpse into college life and how my future would look. Not only did I receive that, but I also learned of the injustices that are still in the world, and met those that were trying to fix them. My experience at Georgetown taught me about 'politics in the world,' and that anyone who is seeking change can make a difference. It is not the lesson I expected to learn, but I am grateful for learning it."

-- Elisa



"My entire time there [Brown University] wasn't all dedicated to my class. I spent a few hours looking at the art that was on campus so I could get to know my way around and so I could appreciate the art itself. While I was exploring, I saw a lot of art like the tin foil men and the staircase where students decorated the area with their own art."

-- Adrian

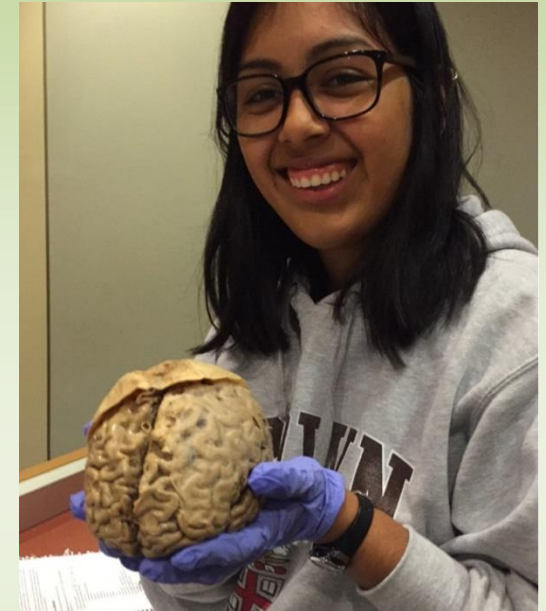
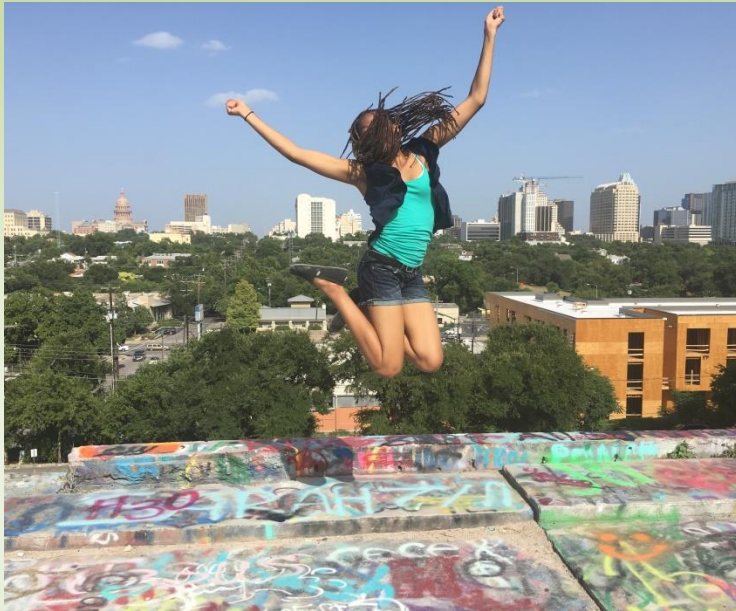
"The experiences I had on this trip will stay with me forever. They will shape who I am and who I will become. They will help when I get into college, and beyond. Now I am home and hope to share my experiences with my family, my community, and those who look up to me. I want them to know that there's a whole world out there for them to explore and learn about. That Chicago isn't their last stop. That the world is theirs to conquer."

-- Jesse



Career Exploration

Some students already have an idea about what they want to do with their lives. A summer program can help them test their ideas.



“Over the summer, I discovered that engineering is my passion. I learned that not only do engineers build things, WE design things. We are problem solvers, thinkers, questioners, suppliers, and innovators. My group had the daunting task of designing and building a drone that flew and could carry a payload. This was by far the most challenging thing I had ever done in my life, yet it gave me the most accurate description of what I wanted to do in life, all by showing me what it actually takes to be an engineer. I gained confidence as well as super valuable, hands on experience.”

-- Kameran

“I participated in some fascinating marine science while at Acadia Institute of Oceanography. I did a shark dissection, went on a whale watch, journeyed up mountains, fished, and even snorkeled. Being able to experience science this way instead of just hearing and reading about it had a strong and positive impact on my appreciation of science and realistically wanting to pursue it as a career.”

-- Gisell

“It felt a lot differently than I thought, after all it was a plastinated brain. Not one oozing with blood, lipids, and other liquids. It was dry, rough, and not at all squishy, which was a relief because I might have fainted if it was. In the end, I learned that I am mentally ready to live on my own as a college student. I also learned that I do wish to pursue majoring in neuroscience because the brain fascinates me both on a 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional scale.”

-- Jazmin



You enable our students to travel around the world, live new experiences and discover the best in themselves.

Thank you so much for supporting our students and their future.

Your tax-deductible donations make life- changing experiences possible. Farther Foundation is a 501(C)(3) charitable scholarship organization.

Donate online via credit/debit or PayPal at: www.fartherfoundation.org

Or send a check to:

**Farther Foundation
223 S. Elmwood Ave.
Oak Park, IL 60302**

Thank you on behalf of the students and families that we serve.

The Board of Directors, Farther Foundation

David Weindling	Susan J. White	Jim Rolfes
Griselda Garibay	Ruth Masters	Laura Swartzbaugh
Angelicca Telles	William Kling	Nancy Baker