

Conference Students Selected to Travel to Thailand and Laos!

Kaitlin Choquette, Sloan, Iowa, and Jon Foley, Lee's Summit, Missouri, were two of 6 students nationwide to be selected to travel to Thailand and Laos through a special youth mission opportunity coordinated by the office of world Mission and as a follow-up to CHIC2009's mission emphasis.

Kaitlin is a senior at Westwood Community Schools in Sloan, and the daughter of Marty and Joan Choquette. She has always been interested in missions and has been looking for an opportunity to minister to God and others through a short-term mission opportunity.

Jon Foley, member of Deerbrook Covenant in Lee's Summit, Missouri, found the trip amazing and thanks each and everyone who helped send him on this trip. Says Jon, "It was a complete learning experience and I can't wait to continue on with missionary work for and to spread the word of God to those who sometimes are never given the chance to learn.

Kaitlin's trip began the day after Christmas, flying to Los Angeles to meet the others in the youth mission team and then onto Bangkok, where the team met with Peter and Ruth Dutton, Covenant missionaries to Thailand. The trip included cultural visits as well as mission opportunities in both Thailand and Laos. Some mission opportunities included seeing first hand business as mission sites, a mission church and an orphanage and school.

Fundraising for her trip was through a harvest dinner held at the church in early November and letters to friends and family. She exceeded her fundraising goal by mid November and has donated the balance of extra funds directly to the work of the Dutton's in Thailand and Laos.

Jon, in sharing about the trip, said, "It is never easy to fly around the world with a group of people you barely know, and even more difficult being the only guy! Out of the group of six students and one leader, Jon was the only male on the trip. As one might think it easy to have more quiet, one on one time at night alone with God, Jon actually found it frustrating. He found himself feeling somewhat lost, and very alone, which is never a good thing when you are so far away from home. He also felt frustrated upon seeing the 10-day itinerary, noticing that the group would do a lot of site-seeing and not as much of God's work. His perception of a mission trip was that you got down and dirty, working for the people, building houses, etc. **He discovered however, that God works in many ways and proved to Jon that a mission trip is much more, and can be totally different than digging in and meeting people's needs by strength.** God showed him that sometimes people that are already missionaries, need some hope, and just a little bit of encouragement, and that often, even just by coming and talking with people, can mean a whole lot more than just that.

Please contact Jon or Kaitlin at their church to have them share more about their mission work! Jon shared his story about the trip and we will share part of that story as follows:

Our main focus was on **Business as Missions**. A Business as Mission is exactly what it sounds like, a business brought to a tribe, city or country in hopes that it will grow and improve said tribe, city or country. Improve the economy and bring work, supplies and resources to that area and, through this business, they be able to share the word of God to workers and customers in hopes of changing their lives.

The group talked with the manager of a local café, who purchased the business and has expanded the company to three additional locations, hoping to continue the expansion into other areas. Students learned that business managers working in Laos where Christianity is almost outlawed, are not allowed to openly speak the gospel to their workers; however, it is short-term missionaries that bring Bibles to the tribes and who are able to spread the Word. If people realize you are a Christian,

they may ask you about Jesus, and as trust develops, sharing the gospel can begin. The students asked this business manager, "How can your workers tell that you are a Christian?" He answered, "If we are Christians, we are missionaries, not always by going out and shouting the word of God on the streets, but through our actions, the way we treat people, and the way we invite everyone into our arms the way God does. We don't always have to openly express our views of religion." Explains Jon, **"This was without a doubt the best thing I took away and learned from my trip."**

A second local business students visited, they learned from the owner that when working with the tribes, you can only do so much. You can show them who God is, but you cannot force God into their hearts. You can show them the way, and pray that God shines His light over them.

Both Jon and Kaitlin thank their congregations, families, and friends of the conference for supporting them in their ministries. The trip was a wonderful learning experience and may we all pray they and their local youth groups will continue to openly share the word of God to those they meet at home and around the world!