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ELTAP to Thailand

Summary: A dream since her middle school days was realized when Theresa Novak traveled to Thailand this past summer through the English Language Teaching Assistant Program (ELTAP) at the University of Minnesota, Morris.

(October 8, 2007)-A dream since her middle school days was realized when Theresa Novak ('08, Coon Rapids) traveled to Thailand this past summer through the English Language Teaching Assistant Program (ELTAP) at the University of Minnesota, Morris. While in Thailand, she taught grades five, seven, nine and 11, about 800 children who attended the Modindaeng Demonstration School in Khon Kaen, with a different schedule each day.

Although teaching so many children was an experience in itself, Novak also experienced other challenges: an extremely humid climate, a sleep schedule that changed by 12 hours, extremely spicy food and a language barrier. She had only a few conversations with people of the area, primarily in “broken English.” Fortunately, Novak picked up on some of the language, which was difficult, because the Thai language consists of five tonal variations. “If a higher or lower tone was used it changes the meaning of the word completely,” she said. Novak enjoyed the Thai culture as well as everything the city had to offer. “The Thai people were so nice and they just have the biggest hearts,” said Novak.

She stayed in a hotel on the university’s campus and went out with a colleague several times to night markets, which are huge stands selling a variety of products from food to clothing, all of which were very inexpensive. She also enjoyed eating out.

Novak is an anthropology/sociology double major. She said her sociology and anthropology classes at UMM helped to prepare her for the country’s culture change and theory classes at UMM helped her to interact with people from a different culture. The classes she has taken as an undergraduate have also helped her complete her ELTAP assignments.

Her advice to those who are interested in traveling abroad is to “pick a country you are already interested in and strongly think about pursuing a trip there.” Novak feels that her trip changed her and she has discovered a newfound passion for travel. Novak also suggests that other students should talk to someone who has already been abroad about his or her experience. “The experience was worth it, I definitely feel like I’ve grown as a result.”

ELTAP offers UMM students who are fluent in spoken English and willing to help people in another country learn English, the opportunity to share knowledge of their culture and language with teachers and students who are studying English. They can also become part of another culture and community - living, serving and learning – and make a difference in the lives of others. ELTAP participants experience life in another culture as no tourist can and receive assistance in finding accommodation for reasonable cost. Through ELTAP, a student can earn credit toward undergraduate or graduate degrees.

For more information about ELTAP, visit [ELTAP](#).

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