**Report Internship 2017 - Derek and Stella**

Unforgettable and Multifarious Experiences

In Hong Kong, university students have many options to choose for their summer holiday. Local internship related to one’s major, summer exchange program, part-time jobs and summer semester are some popular choices. We, however, have chosen a unique overseas internship program called Global-Y Trainee Program, jointly organized by the University YMCA (Uni-Y) in Hong Kong and YMCAs from all over the world.

In contrast to other overseas internship programs, the program prepared by Siegerland YMCA was special in a way that it included activities of different nature. Apart from working as an intern inside the YMCA hostel in Wilnsdorf, we met many friendly people around Siegerland. We had different activities and we learnt a lot about German culture. The most exciting part was participating in a kids-camp and a teen-camp, with YMCA Flammersbach and YMCA Westbund respectively.

As the name of the program implies, we worked in the YMCA hostel in Wilnsdorf. Assisted by Andreas, Bettina, and other staff, we had some routine work to do in the campsite such as renewing things in the toilets, cleaning the sportsground and transporting drinks to the storage room. We also went to a school with YMCA staff Christine to assist a Christian workshop for students. It was a special experience for us.

After working in the hostel for the first week, we started having a variety of activities with many nice people in Germany. Uwe, one of the board members of YMCA Siegerland, and his family brought us to Freudenberg and we were honored to visit the church there with the pastor Thomas. We also enjoyed the German barbeque and home-made cocktail there. Annette, also the board member of YMCA Siegerland, and her family brought us to Siegen and we enjoyed playing mini-golf there. It was also memorable to share our Chinese culture and language after a delicious dinner in their house. Jochen, pastor of Burbach, and his family brought us to Herborn and Attendorn. Herborn is a relaxing place and the houses are unique. Attendorn is famous for its Atta Cave and it was our first time ever to see some beautiful mineral curtains inside a cave. And lastly, Thomas, the chairman of YMCA Siegerland and also the person who was in charge of everything of our internship, showed us many places with his family; Anne, Leni and Paula. They are very nice and provided us with unconditional support during our stay. They first introduced the city center of Siegen to us in the first day of arrival and we knew more about the city and its past. We had a nice meal, including the famous schnitzel, near the Siegen castle. During the internship, they brought us to Cologne and we visited the famous Cologne Cathedral. We visited their house and had a great barbecue. We watched a popular cartoon called ‘Die Sendung mit der Maus’ together. We also had some sports-related activities, such as hiking in Zeppenfeld and watching a football match in the stadium, as a fan of Schalke 04. The most unforgettable activity was joining the Elspe Festival in the weekend. We really enjoyed the live show of Winnetou. The explosions and running horses were very exciting.

In addition to joining different cultural activities, we also learned many things about Germany from some visits. We visited a gymnasium in Neunkirchen, with YMCA staff Martin and Karsten, where a special project week was carried out in the campus. We met Mr. Volker Peterek, the General Youth Secretary of Church District Siegerland, and he brought us to the ‘Bluebox’ in Siegen and ‘Chilli’ in Freudenberg, where we learnt about the church and youth work in the district. We then met Mr. Bernhard Baumann, the Mayor of Neunkirchen. He invited us to visit an old iron mine, an important place of mining industry in Siegen long time ago. It was really an eye-opening experience. Another important person we met was Mr. Volkmar Klein. It was our honor to visit his house and we also met his wife Dorothee and his two interns. Mr. Klein is a friendly and easygoing person, with a sense of humor. The conversation was casual but inspiring, and we learnt more about the economic, social and diplomatic development of Germany. Finally, we visited Thomas’ company, Vetter Industrie. It was very amazing to observe the production process of metallic fork arms inside a big factory.

Throughout the internship, we had pretty much opportunities to meet the kids and teens in Siegen. On 5th of July, we were assigned to meet a girl’s  children group in Wiedersterin-Zeppenfeld. It was also the group which Leni and Paula were in. Since it was our first time to take part into the group, so we had a self introduction section at the beginning for warming up. Afterwards, a very organised water game was started in order to create fun for the kids and for sure, we were also the participants.The game was so successful indeed as every participators were so immersed and enjoyable.

Few days after on 11th July, we were invited to join the children group in Flammersbach. The size of this children group was slightly bigger than the previous one. Probably as it was composed of both girls and boys. In this gathering, the children usually would have some chit-chatting in exchanging their current status. Then the next section would be an indoor activity and a tea time talk. The process was around an hour. We believed it was a grateful timing for them as they could engage with the peers for the sake of enhancing their interpersonal skills.

Among all the gathering with the children and the teens, visiting the YMCA centre in Weidenau should be counted as the most impressive one. Why? It was because we had a large scale of barbecue at this meeting. It was actually quite an interesting and warm activity. We could interact with them in discussing the differences in between  Hong Kong YMCA and Weidenau YMCA, on the other hand, we could have some food and drinks to taste. It really made us felt a sense of contentment.

In the mid of July, we had the most looking forward part of our internship. It was the kid and the teen camp. We participated in the kid tent camp first. The age of the kids were approximately 8 to 12 years old. Most of them were just the first time to approach in this type of camp. By our point of view, we reckoned that the camp was so unsophisticated and with love which could be observed from the smile of the kids. In this camp, we attempted to be a camp instructor for holding some entertainments for them. Although it was not a complicated task, we felt like we could distribute the contributions, it was extremely joyful. However, if the camp was going with a sunny weather, it could be much perfect and faultless.

Another crucial event in this internship was the eight days teen camp. It was the longest camp we had participated. During the whole period of the camp, we thought it was so organisable and also rendered adequate freedom for the teens. They could have a very flexible schedule to arrange their plans. For instance, joining the activities class, going to the centre with their fellows, swimming, grouping in a team to organise some ball games on behind of the morning meeting and the meal timing. That was also distinct in compared with Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, we will have a very packed timetable in every single day of the camp. It could not claim this as bad but just the differences. What’s more, we did keen on the atmosphere of the camp, it was so energetic and hilarious. The cohesion among the teenagers were the best we had ever seen. Though the teens were not well in touch with each other at the first beginning, we observed their friendship were getting much closer day by day. We were surprised.

Also, a deep gratitude was sent to a Hong Kong woman we met in the camp. She acted as a translator for us as we were not better in German. She was one of the elements could make us fully enjoy the content of the camp. Besides, we got to know some German teenagers. They were all so welcoming and led us having a precept of we were a big family. Overall, it was truly memorable.

After the internship, one of the interns, Derek, met Mr. Klein again in Berlin. Despite a busy schedule, he still invited Derek to come and visit his office. Mr. Klein’s colleague also showed Derek around in the Deutscher Bundestag. This was a valuable experience that a normal tourist will not normally have during the visit in Berlin. We are so thankful to meet Mr. Klein in our stay in Siegerland.

The overall internship was a wonderful and extraordinary experience. It could even be one of our highlights in university study. We were so grateful to meet so many nice people in Siegerland. Their hospitality was invaluable and the friendship meant a lot to us. Although we are separated by nearly 9000 km, we will definitely meet one another again in the future.

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Derek Chu and Stella Chan