

Jocelin Thau, Delta Lambda - Muhlenberg College

'There's Nothing Like Giving Back'

Service, international flair define Phi Sig student leader Jocelin Thau

SEVILLE, Spain - There's nothing ordinary about Jocelin Thau's life these days. And that's just how she likes it.

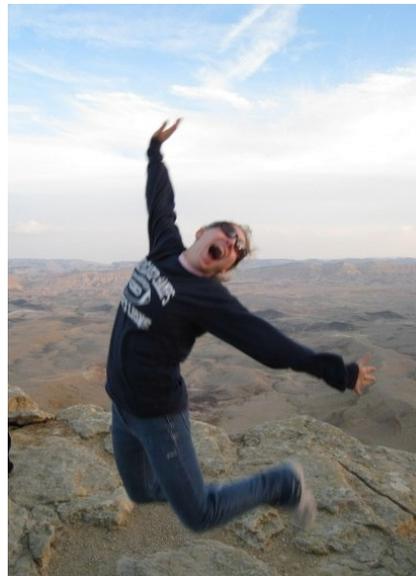
Upon waking each morning before classes, this Phi Sig sister finds herself not at [Muhlenberg College](#) in Allentown, Pa., where she's an active member of our successful Delta Lambda chapter, but instead in the 2,000-year-old city of Seville nestled along the picturesque banks of the Guadalquivir River.

Currently a student at [The Center for Cross-Cultural Study](#), she's immersing herself in Spanish culture, Moorish architectural influences, fiestas and flamenco, and speaks the native language all day long - a perfect opportunity for this Spanish major with a dance minor.

Yet Spain, too, seems worlds away from where Jocelin was in late December: on the outskirts of an embattled area of Israel, where she was performing a range of community service projects with a group of other Greek campus leaders during a trip sponsored by the Israel on Campus Coalition and Jewish National Fund.

The group arrived during several days of intense military conflicts that got widespread media attention around New Year's Day - though Thau notes that she and her friends were never in any danger.

In fact, they traveled Israel freely: peeling potatoes in soup kitchens, painting and repairing walls, collecting trash, picking clementines and even planting trees - and finding much to love in the beautiful countryside, historic places, friendly people and modern cities there.



World traveler, volunteer



For Jocelin, of Mountainside, N.J., one of the best ways to understand the world is to get out there and be a part of it.

"What we see in the media is not necessarily the reality," she says. "My travels have definitely helped me be more aware of that."

Last year, Jocelin opted for an "alternative" spring break - meaning that, instead of going to a beachside resort with friends to enjoy fun in the sun, she devoted an entire week to helping a Catholic ministry build a school for

impoverished children in Juarez, Mexico.

Life of service

It was hard work - mostly manual labor. No one asked her to participate. They didn't have to.

Jocelin, a junior on track to graduate in 2010, says she has always felt compelled to volunteer and make a difference in the lives of others - a main reason she joined Phi Sigma Sigma in 2007.



"There's nothing like giving back," she says. Her deep commitment to philanthropy explains why she's involved in so many activities, on campus and off. Among them:

- the Second Mile program, where young students from inner-city elementary schools pair up with college mentors and role models
- summer camps for kids with cerebral palsy and autism
- an Allentown-area hospital, where she assisted in the physical therapy department (she plans to apply to a post-graduate PT program next year), and of course
- multiple service projects through Phi Sigma Sigma, including a "Twister Tournament" this past fall with Phi Kappa Tau which raised funds for a special needs school.

As if that's not enough, Jocelin is also a Muhlenberg campus tour guide, a member of the college's dance association and a resident advisor.

New perspectives

Jocelin admits that, with all she's involved in, she can feel a bit overwhelmed and stressed at times. (Indeed, that's a challenge she shares with many Phi Sig collegians, who go the extra mile and strive to be the very best.)



More and more, though, she's putting the stress associated with high achievement in perspective.

"Someone in Israel - the man who was caring for the trees - overheard me say the work we were doing was getting my stress out," Jocelin says, explaining the manual labor was therapeutic for her.

His reaction - at a time when bombs were going off elsewhere in the country? Honest surprise. "He said, 'What are you stressing about?' ... It really made me think."

Specifically, it made her consider how fortunate she and most Americans are compared to many people in the world who face devastating problems such as war, poverty and disease - problems she's personally witnessed.

Jocelin hopes to bring back these and other stories of her travels and share them with others who want to expand their appreciation of the world at large. She returns to the states in May. And when she arrives, she can't wait to see her sisters - among the best friends to be found anywhere, she says.

"I love being a Phi Sig," she adds. "Being in our sisterhood is an extremely positive experience for me. I enjoy every minute of it."