Heart of Hearts

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Many people have a heart for service and use it to positively influence others in the world. Some use that heart to aid those in their immediate area, while others journey to help those in other parts of the world. Shelton State student, Annabeth Fuller, meets both standards and has quite a story to tell about her journey. Ms. Fuller, a product of Tuscaloosa County High School, has attended Shelton State for the past two years while doing local and global service and plans to attend the University of Alabama at some point in the near future to earn her degree.

In her journey of service, she has been offered many opportunities and has taken a leap of faith with each one. Her first global opportunity occurred when she was a junior in high school and visited Israel with her father, a local pastor, through Perry Stone Ministries. “We spent about two weeks traveling all over the country and attempting to absorb as much as possible,” Fuller commented about the trip. She describes the trip as one of the most amazing events in her life and considered it a once-in-a lifetime opportunity, but luckily for her she has been able to return to the Middle East twice.

Her second trip came not long after the first, as a part of a discipleship class ending in a one month visit to Israel and the surrounding area. “We went all over and it was a transformative trip for the group,” she said. Even with all the hustle and bustle while on her second sojourn to Israel, Fuller still had plenty of time for fun including receiving her scuba license in the Red Sea, which she simply describes as “Super cool.”

Another opportunity of service came in 2009, when she was offered a position at JH Ranch in California. The ranch serves as a summer camp for teens and parents. A high adventure guest ranch in northern California is the description Fuller offers of the organization she loves and has dedicated herself to for the past two summers. The story got even better for Fuller when she was offered a chance to be a part of a select group of ambassadors for JH Ranch to the nation of Israel making it her third trip. The city of Ariel, Israel, formed a relationship with the administration of JH Ranch in the early 1990s blossoming into the city desiring a JH Ranch of their own in the late 2000s. In April of 2010, the facilities of the Ariel National Youth leadership Development Center were completed, and Fuller was a part of the staff sent to train the future leaders of the new center in Ariel. “We were working with others from around the country of Israel to setup the center,” she said. Despite the fun of visiting the Middle East under the JH Ranch banner, Fuller is not shy when saying it was a new experience with challenges along the way. “It was definitely out of my comfort zone,” she said. “Stepping into a new culture and learning from it was a challenge.” Her group was forced to rely on new friends, and relationships were essential for the visitors from America. During her time overseas serving JH Ranch, it was falsely reported that Fuller was in the vicinity of a bombing in Jerusalem. She was supposed to be in the city with a group the day of the attack, but she had other responsibilities at the camp that day and as a result was not near the explosion. She did, however, experience some of the violence that often
occurs in Israel. While she was staying in Ariel there was a brutal murder of some Israeli nationals in a nearby community, but there was no direct harm to her or anyone else from the group.

Looking back, Fuller reflects about what she learned while in the Middle East. “Working with others, making friends, and forming relationships was the most important part,” she stated. After this exciting journey, Fuller returned home and continues to do service through JH Ranch in California, where she will be returning for a third summer, and in her local community of Tuscaloosa. With the recent storms and tragedy that have struck the Tuscaloosa area, Fuller has been involved with some of the recovery efforts through her church. She has been encouraged by the way the community has faced the return to normalcy. “It’s been great to see everyone pull together and begin to rebuild the community,” she said. There is plenty of work left to do and this servant is ready with many others on the front lines.