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Scholarship Recipient 2018

**To the County of Santa Clara Florence Sister County Commission:**

My experience in Florence, Italy, immensely shaped who I am today and I am so grateful to the County of Santa Clara Florence Sister County Commission. With the scholarship, I was given the opportunity to travel and live comfortably – allowing myself to fully enjoy the experience and say yes to everything that I possibly could.

While studying in Florence, I was a part of an internship program that my university held. I was given the opportunity to intern at Amblé, an original café in the heart of Florence near the Arno River that upholds Florentine history and traditionalism. My position was the Marketing Communications and Design Intern under the owner, Fabrizio, and the architect that he had hired to re-design the café, Chiara. Working closely with them, I researched sustainable furniture and trendy designs for Chiara to use for the re-creation of Amblé while also inventing new merchandise for the store to sell. Aside from design and merchandise, I supported them in globalizing and modernizing their website and social media.

Learning about the city's business society and closely working with Italians who enveloped me with love made me feel included into the culture. I made connections in Florence that I hold dear to my heart while also increasing my marketing and international business skills for my future. I learned about small cultural differences like what they conceptualize as delivery and catering and how we would categorize it. I also discovered more about their reasons for needing to re-vamp the café and it interested me that they were having to modernize the café to attract more tourists in order to be a successful business in the heart of Florence.

The hustle and bustle of the city were invigorating, yet my favorite part of my time there was the quiet walk to school each morning. This is when I was able to see the truest Florentine culture during the day. Tourists were not out flooding the streets yet, store owners were using buckets of water to clean off the sidewalk outside their stores before opening and chatting with one another, parents riding their bikes with a small child on back with their colorful helmets, the

sun had just risen and the clouds reflected off the Arno as I crossed the bridge, and high schoolers smoked outside gossiping and laughing before school. The city was slow in the morning and it was calming. It was one of the few moments that allowed me to see the few Florentines who still live in the city center and I cherished it.

My university was also in Piazza Santo Spirito, a piazza known for being the only area left that is true to Florentine culture, where everyone dislikes speaking English and dealing with tourists, and where the artists still abound in their skill. My marketing class frequently held field trips, one of which being to Giuliano Ricchi, a world-renowned, yet humble jeweler in the same piazza. We were taught about the history of his family and the process he performs to construct beautiful works of art. I learned to appreciate how the Italian culture incorporates their history into everything they do which flows into the beauty of the creation.

Studying the Italian language also was an incredible experience. By the end of the semester, I was comfortable having conversations with Italians that I had met or become friends with and was excited to learn more from them. It made me appreciate how difficult the language is to learn and how elegant it is. I began to revere other cultures and their norms because I learned the reasons and history behind their traditions, holidays, language, and mannerisms. I struggled with returning to the US where it seemed as though people were more careless and rude to others. The Italian culture had at times seemed rude to me at the beginning of my semester, but as time progressed, I had morphed some of my mannerisms or terms to be like theirs. I valued the reasons they had for acting certain ways and loved it. I dearly miss the conversations with people who would take the time out of their day for you but also miss the pushing and shoving along the narrow sidewalks.

Through each of these aspects of my time in Florence, which still cannot capture my full time there and true love for the city, I was shaped and molded. I grew to become more independent, spontaneous, responsible, easygoing, and learned how to be more appreciative of others and their backgrounds. I could not have had such a wonderful and life changing experience with stories to share for a lifetime if it had not been for the Commission. I thank you from the bottom of my heart again for the opportunity.

Thank you,

Megan Beveridge