St. John’s University offers its students an almost limitless array of opportunities to study abroad and encourages all of them to go global. Some even do it more than once.

Stephanie Flory ‘09SJC, ‘11SJC is one of many students who have chosen the benefits of going global at every point in her St. John’s education—in her graduate as well as undergraduate studies.
This past spring, Stephanie, who is earning her master’s degree in Speech Pathology, traveled to Guatemala for a week-long program volunteering at a hospital-orphanage that serves children who have problems with swallowing and feeding. “It was truly a life-changing experience,” she said. While addressing the clinical needs of the children, she stressed, “there was a lot of personal contact—holding, playing and just being present for them.”

In a nation that lacks basic resources and desperately needs assistance from those willing to serve, Stephanie and her fellow St. John’s students also held fundraisers and were able to purchase urgently-needed supplies for the hospital.

“First-Hand Experiences” With Other Cultures
Stephanie had her first study abroad experience at St. John’s as an undergraduate majoring in Speech Pathology and Italian. Taking advantage of St. John’s international presence, Stephanie spent a semester at the University’s Rome campus. She strengthened her Italian-language skills while interning with the Italian government. “It was very intense,” she said. “We learned about Italian culture in class, but what better way to learn than experiencing it first-hand?”

During her internship Stephanie had the chance to experience the fast pace of the Italian House of Representatives, attending meetings and assisting with office work. She noted that while she was used to speaking Italian with her family this experience completely immersed her in the language and culture of her surroundings.

In Guatemala, unlike Italy, Stephanie did not speak the language, but that never hindered her. “They were such different programs, but both great experiences.” While dealing with the clinical needs of the children there, she stressed there was also “a lot of holding and playing.” She and her fellow students also held fundraisers and were able to purchase urgently needed supplies for the hospital.

Stephanie added that what sets St. John’s apart from other study abroad programs is the service component. In Rome, she volunteered in soup kitchens and her entire Guatemala experience revolved around service to the disadvantaged.

An enthusiastic ambassador for the program, Stephanie currently works as a graduate assistant in the University’s Office of Global Studies. “It helps when you can speak to interested students from first-hand experience. We’re a resource for them and know the logistics of the program. The fact that all the student workers here study abroad enables us to give it a personal touch.”

Opening Students’ Eyes to “Expanding Horizons”
She noted that while she had traveled extensively prior to studying abroad she still felt homesick at times, but she made friends quickly. “People who study abroad have an interest and a thirst” to expand their horizons, Stephanie stressed. “It helps you become more independent.”

Stephanie added that there are excellent opportunities during the summer and winter intercessions for more specific study abroad opportunities. “We offer so much more than the traditional programs for people with very specific majors.”
Both study-abroad experiences opened Stephanie’s eyes to the wider possibilities available to her when she embarks on her professional career. With her language proficiency Stephanie could become a bilingual speech therapist and possibly work abroad, or within the U.S. Going global, she stressed, “Opens doors to the fact that there are so many options. You could work in this country or work abroad.”

Volunteering in Guatemala taught her the value of service, something she now considers integral to her life. “We made more of a difference in those children’s lives than I could ever have imagined possible.”

Global Studies is a vital part of a St. John’s education. Students can spend a semester, winter or summer break living and learning at locations throughout Europe, Asia and Latin America. Through St. John’s innovative “Discover the World” program, students can earn 15 credits in three cities in a single semester.