

# Learn and Serve in Cambodia

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## USU Eastern Blanding Students - Learn and Serve in Cambodia



Ryan Taylor moves rocks around base of library in Pursat, Cambodia.

Nine students from Utah State University Eastern Blanding spent two weeks in Cambodia during their summer break helping promote health programs and sharing cultures with the local Cambodians.

The trip was coordinated through Youthlinc, a non-profit organization with the mission to provide students and youth with opportunities to provide service and leadership to societies around the globe. In total 19 students from Utah State University participated in the trip, along with faculty and staff leaders from the university.

During the trip students participated in several service projects including building desks at Sustainable Cambodia (a local NGO primary and secondary school), teaching English and public health lessons, and rebuilding classroom infrastructures for the Sustainable Cambodia campus. Prior to the trip, USU students worked to raise funds to acquire the supplies needed for projects in Cambodia.

Jessica Roueche, a staff member and student at the Blanding campus, was a key player in coordinating and recruiting for the trip. Roueche has

volunteered internationally with Youthlinc since 2011, and in 2016 she traveled with USU to Honduras for a summer study abroad and service trip. Her experience in Honduras and passion for service led her to work toward introducing more students from the Blanding campus to the service programs with Youthlinc.

“Having been exposed to the study abroad programs with USU, and with volunteer services through Youthlinc, it was my goal to have these opportunities available to students here in Blanding,” Roueche said.

The 2017 study abroad Cambodia program was led by Steve Hawks, Ph.D., a faculty member and administrator at USU Moab, and by Justin Powell, executive director at Youthlinc.

Several students in the program came from Native American communities in the Four-Corners Region, served by the Blanding campus. The trip provided an opportunity to share the Native American culture with the people of Cambodia. The Cultural Ambassador Performance Program dance group from the Blanding campus shared performances of Native American dances while in traditional dress to the communities visited in Cambodia.

Beyond the service projects, the students were able to visit and tour several historic sites while in Cambodia. Their trip started in the capital city, Phnom Penh, where they toured the city, the Killing Fields and the Royal University of Phnom Penh. Near the end of the trip, they had the opportunity to visit Siem Reap to visit the Angkor Wat Temples, Angkor Children’s hospital and the Cambodian Landmine Museum.

“The impact from the exchange of cultures is an experience I had never had before,” said Roueche, speaking of the trip as a whole. “I was very impressed to see our students not hesitate to help, despite the language barrier. When there was a project issue, they were quick to communicate and work with the Cambodian people.”

Based on the success of the trip the Office of Global Engagement through Study Abroad at USU plans on continuing the study abroad program to Cambodia each year, providing students with further opportunities to study and provide service abroad.

The Global Community Leadership (GLC) program to Cambodia will be offered in May 2018 for students at USU in Logan, as well as for the USU Eastern Price and Blanding campuses.

~ David Mathis