

APPLYING FOR (SELECT ONE)

Silver Medal



OFFICE USE ONLY

PARTICIPANT RECORD BOOK

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Date of Birth _____ School _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Employed? Yes, Part-Time ☐ Yes, Full-Time ☐ No ☒

If Yes, List Employer _____

What I have gained by participating in The Congressional Award:

The Congressional program touched my life in all its areas-in service, in self improvement of my future and of my health and in exploring. It has given me a deeper understanding of why all projects are fundamental for me to grow as a leader, a learner and a compassionate person. I have learned through the congressional program that I can better myself and those around me in more ways than one.

I have set goals and met the requirements to earn The Congressional Award as outlined in this submission.

Participant Signature _____ Date 1/1/

ADVISOR INFORMATION

First Name Valerie _____ Last Name Seefeld _____

Address 2301 South University Avenue _____ City Little Rock _____ State AR _____ Zip 72204 _____

Email vseefeld@uaex.edu _____ Phone 5016712352 _____

Are you a parent or relative of the participant? Yes No ☐ ☒

Advisor comments regarding the participant's pursuit of The Congressional Award:

I certify that the participant established goals, completed hours, and recorded the activity stated herein.

Advisor Signature Valerie Seefeld _____ Date 01/16/2020

Submit the completed Record Book to The Congressional Award national office.

The Congressional Award | PO Box 77440 | Washington, DC 20013

Only submit your Record Book after you have completed your goals and the required hours/months in all four program areas.

VOLUNTARY PUBLIC SERVICE

(Each goal should have its own Record Book page. Make as many copies as necessary to accommodate your goals.)

Name _____ Did you receive any class credit for this goal? Yes ☐ No ☒

What is your goal?

Goal 1- I will dedicate more than 100 hours towards human development in my community. It will include literacy enhancement of children, youth and adults, leadership, citizenship and life skills construction for children and youth and uplifting veterans' spirits.

Describe your activities to achieve your goal:

I volunteered at the Public Library leadership, services and special events. I volunteered at 4-H educational and youth leadership events. I played piano to entertain and interact with residents and staff at Arkansas Veterans home regularly.

What did you learn?

I discovered fun activities do with children and youth to keep them engaged in learning processes. I experienced that music can reduce the boredom of people (veterans) and uplift their spirits.

How did you serve the greater community at large?

My services contribute continuing education of all members of our society, encouraged other youth to learn and involve in youth development programs and helped the veterans stay happy, and relaxed.

TOTAL MONTHS for this goal: 18 TOTAL HOURS for this goal: 159

Enter year(s) and check all months where activity was logged for this goal. Only report new hours logged since your last Record Book submission.

YEAR	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2018							8	10	10	10	9	12
2019	8	12	12	14	10	10	8	6	4	4	6	6

VALIDATOR INFORMATION

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Are you a parent or relative of the participant? Yes ☐ No ☒

Validator comments regarding the participant's completion of the goal:

I certify that the above goal, hours, and activities were completed by the participant.

Validator Signature _____

Date _____

Remember, you may have up to four goals for Voluntary Public Service.

VOLUNTARY PUBLIC SERVICE

(Each goal should have its own Record Book page. Make as many copies as necessary to accommodate your goals.)

Name _____ Did you receive any class credit for this goal? Yes ☐ No ☒

What is your goal? (Goal 2) I will spend 50 or more hours/year in community services that benefit nutritional and essential needs of under-privileged populations and victims of misfortune.

Describe your activities to achieve your goal: I participated in packing and providing 1000 meals per year through volunteering at Feed My Starving Children, Augustine Foundation and Life Source meal packing events, Merry Christmas community dinner and other community meal programs. I organized a raffle and dinner tickets selling campaign for Augustine Foundation (a 100% volunteer involved human development organization)'s annual fundraiser event and raised \$501. I also volunteered as a Salvation Army Kettle Bell Ringer and raised over \$250 to support providing food, shelter, taking care of bills and medicine for needy families. I teamed up with my School friends and 4-H members to gather 200 or more nonperishable food items, 300 or more personal items and 20 winter coats to the homeless shelters in North West Arkansas. Additionally, I lead a wound-care supply drive to for the victims of a series of bomb explosions happened in Sri Lanka on 04/21/19 causing over 250 deaths and 400 casualties. Over 200 items (70lb) was delivered to the National Health Service of Sri Lanka.

What did you learn? I learned what type of food is best to pack in meals being sent to other countries, how to properly pack and seal to protect freshness, to keep packing area sanitized, to wash and dry large amounts of utensils in a short time, and how to write grant proposal to seek funding for a community service project. I also learned the particular items that are essential for wound care for victims of bomb explosions and the immigration custom restrictions and regulations of medical supplies to follow when sending overseas.

How did you serve the greater community at large?

I volunteered at agencies that provide food and basic needs at local, national and international levels. My participation in serving meals, gathering essential items for the homeless shelters helped under-privileged populations in North West Arkansas. The funds I raised contributes to sustain the organizations' performances to help the less fortunate people in our area and in our country. The meals we packed and sent to other countries, that has high rate of poverty, provided nutrition to the starving children. My efforts helped Sri Lankan hospitals to replenish wound care supplies and in turn take care of nearly 200 bomb blast victims.

TOTAL MONTHS for this goal: 18 TOTAL HOURS for this goal: 101

Enter year(s) and check all months where activity was logged for this goal. Only report new hours logged since your last Record Book submission.

YEAR	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2018							4	8	6	2	3	8
2019	3	8	6	8	15	3	3	2	1	8	8	5

VALIDATOR INFORMATION

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Are you a parent or relative of the participant? Yes ☐ No ☒

Validator comments regarding the participant's completion of the goal:

I certify that the above goal, hours, and activities were completed by the participant.

Validator Signatur _____

Date / /

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

(Each goal should have its own Record Book page. Make as many copies as necessary to accommodate your goals.)

Name _____ Did you receive any class credit for this goal? Yes ☐ No ☒

What is your goal?

My goal is to dedicate 40 hours or more during the summer and at least 40 hours during school year in planning and preparing for college and improving leadership skills.

Describe your activities to achieve your goal:

I attended camps and conferences in different majors/ career fields. I met school and college counselors and received information to pursue my career goals. I signed up with funding agencies and continuously researched on eligible scholarships. I attended leadership conferences to improve my leadership skills.

What did you learn?

I learned about health, archeology and poultry science related career fields, scholarship requirements and experienced the dorm life, visited collages. I learned preparing for college as a freshman in high school can benefit me for years to come. I learned how leadership trainings and experiences I have can benefit to make good impressions on college applications.

TOTAL MONTHS for this goal: 18 TOTAL HOURS for this goal: 269

Enter year(s) and check all months where activity was logged for this goal. Only report new hours logged since your last Record Book submission.

YEAR	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2018						28	60	10	20	10	10	10
2019	18	8	6	5	8	30	10	4	12	2	14	4

VALIDATOR INFORMATION

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Are you a parent or relative of the participant? Yes ☐ No ☒

Validator comments regarding the participant's completion of the goal:

I certify that the above goal, hours, and activities were completed by the participant.

Validator Signature _____ Date ____/____/____

Remember, you may have up to two goals for Personal Development.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

(Each goal should have its own Record Book page. Make as many copies as necessary to accommodate your goals.)

Name _____ Did you receive any class credit for this goal? Yes ☐ No ☒

What is your goal?

I will gain stamina and control of my breathing in order to reduce the frequency of my inhaler need. I plan on being physically active and improve my step counts from 25,000 to 77,000 steps a week.

Describe your activities to achieve your goal:

I was physically active for at least 100 minutes per week by practicing my basketball skills, walking, dancing, yoga, working out at the gym, and working out at home. I joined the basketball club in school and attended an intensive basketball camp during the summer break. I participated in Walk Across Arkansas program.

How did your skill level change / advance?

My inhaler use reduced from about 8 times a day to two or three times. I have built stamina so my lungs are not as dependent as they used to be and they can function while I am running. I have also become more active after I attended Healthy Living workshops and fully understood the importance of taking care of my body.

TOTAL MONTHS for this goal: 18 TOTAL HOURS for this goal: 298

Enter year(s) and check all months where activity was logged for this goal. Only report new hours logged since your last Record Book submission.

YEAR	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2018							4	4	4	3	3	3
2019	6	5	11	10	6	20	32	12	40	45	45	45

VALIDATOR INFORMATION

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Are you a parent or relative of the participant? Yes ☐ No ☒

Validator comments regarding the participant's completion of the goal:

I certify that the above goal, hours, and activities were completed by the participant.

Validator Signature _____ Date / /

Remember, you may have up to two goals for Physical Fitness.

EXPEDITION / EXPLORATION

(Each goal should have its own Record Book page. Make as many copies as necessary to accommodate your goals.)

Name _____ Did you receive any class credit for this goal? Yes ☐ No ☒

What is your goal?

I will plan an 8 consecutive night trip to Iceland where I will travel 50 miles a day and walk at least 5 miles per day. Throughout my time in Iceland, I will learn about the biogeography in different regions and spend a minimum of 8 hours each day exploring the rich history, culture, and nature.

Provide a brief overview of your planned activities to achieve your goal:

I will explore Iceland through museums, exhibitions, historic monuments, national parks, trying new and unfamiliar foods, and exploring natural phenomena's such as glaciers, waterfalls, geothermal regions, lagoons, mountains and numerous other natural beauties.

TRIP DETAILS

Location of Expedition/Exploration: Iceland

Trip Duration: 10 Days, 9 Nights *Must show at least 6-8 hours of activity to earn a day

Trip Dates: 06/28/19 to 07/08/19

In addition to the information above, please provide a detailed write-up of your Expedition or Exploration by using the prompts on the next page.

VALIDATOR INFORMATION

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Are you a parent or relative of the participant? Yes ☐ No ☒

Validator comments regarding the participant's completion of the goal:

I certify that the above goal, hours, and activities were completed by the participant.

Validator Signature - _____ Date / /

EXPEDITION / EXPLORATION

Use these questions to guide your Expedition/Exploration write-up. Your write-up should read like a journal entry and provide a detailed account of your trip from start to finish. This should include planning and preparation notes, your planned itinerary, and a detailed day-by-day account of your actual activity. Remember, we can only review what is submitted. Be as thorough as possible about your experience and provide a glimpse into what you learned.

- 1) **How did you plan or prepare for this activity? Be as detailed as possible indicating your initiative. Did you investigate and schedule your travel options? Did you research varying venues or locations? Did you coordinate with anyone before your arrival? How did you make your trip or activity happen? If you worked with a group, how did you make this trip happen for you? How did you leave your mark?**

The fact that I turned 13 in Australia sparked my sister's interest to turn 13 somewhere exotic such as I did. I explored a number of places to travel using trip advisor and travelocity.com. My family was excited about the idea of traveling in general, however we got especially ecstatic when we saw good airline ticket deals to travel to Iceland. In order to help pursue this trip, I researched about Iceland and learned the uniqueness of this country as well as the challenges we have to face. We picked the dates of travelling based on ticket price, air lines, layover hours and baggage allowances. I chose a route that allowed us an 8 hour layover in Montreal, Canada. Even though some risks apply, such as not being able to get back in the airport or missing our flight, I wanted to go out of the airport and explore Montreal during the layover time. On our way back, we were coming through Vienna, Austria, another country I have never been to before. We booked a little apartment through airbnb.com and reserved a car through Travelocity.com. Because we don't know anyone there personally, the booking of our apartment and car was essential. Our whole trip is planned on a budget. The major challenge was to meet the costs for food and gasoline. I checked grocery and gasoline prices and realized it will cost \$80 per person per day if we eat out and the price of gasoline is close to \$8.00/gallon. Through research I found out that a Personal Identification Number (PIN) is required to purchase gasoline using credit cards. Therefore, my parents called their credit card companies and obtained PIN numbers for their credit cards prior to our trip. Also I learned that groceries are expensive and a pound of chicken with bone and skin on will be around \$10. Therefore, we were continually saving up money for daily expenditures and also planning and thinking of convenient food items that we could take from here such as ramen noodles, freeze dried fruits, instant coffee, tea, hot chocolate and canned chicken. Before we left the apartment, I presented to our host a box of tree from my mother's home country, Sri Lanka. My sister and I had a good conversation with our host and we learned about each other's lives. Also, my sister and I made it a point to leave things just the way we had found it, so we took out the trash, made our beds, and cleaned. The host was so impressed with our behavior that she commented on our manners and gave us five stars on airbnb.com reviews and recommended as good customers.

- 2) **How was this activity unique and unlike anything you have ever done before? How were you immersed in a different culture or environment? If you travel or camp a lot, how was this trip or activity different? How did you expand your horizons and learn about a unique culture or environment? How did this put you**

EXPEDITION / EXPLORATION

outside of your comfort zone? An Expedition/Exploration is about exploring a unique culture or environment - how did you accomplish this?

Going to Iceland was particularly challenging. Typically when we travel to other states or countries, we make sure we know either friends or family who live there and know their way around the specific area we are traveling at. However, in Iceland, We do not know anyone at all so immediately there is no one for us to contact in case of emergencies. The largest concern for me was the fact that the Icelandic language is one of the five most difficult languages to learn in the world. This fact made it especially hard for us to pronounce the names of sites, street names, towns, and cities. Not to mention, the majority of signs in grocery stores, restaurant menus, and street names were in Icelandic. It made it more difficult to communicate with native Icelanders as we do not pronounce things right in order for them to understand. Another deep factor was the sudden weather changes which is common in Iceland. At one point, there was freezing rain with harsh winds, and the next minute it was warm and sunny. I would also be unable to keep in contact with my parents in case I got lost as we would not have cellular service. Another barrier was the expenses. Reykjavik is one of the top 20 most expensive cities in the world so prices are soaring all across the country. The prices on simple grocery items were much higher than one might find in America. Most things prove to be extremely expensive. For example, my sister bought a small, palm sized stuffed animal, and she paid nearly 25 US dollars for it! We found it especially challenging when it came to the 24 hour sunlight which takes over the country in June. Usually, I use the darkness of the night as an indicator that it is time to sleep.

3) How were you challenged? Include examples of thinking on your feet.

Before and during your trip, what obstacles did you encounter and how did you handle them? This portion of the program is about taking initiative and rising to challenges that come up while exploring an unfamiliar environment. If you got lost on a foreign subway, did you wait for your parents to direct you or did you take the lead? If a venue was closed unexpectedly, did you make other plans or just go back to a hotel? Show us how you were able to adapt to the real world in a different environment or in planning for your trip. If you worked with a group, how did you show leadership in implementing your trip?

When we were trying to reserve tickets, one travel company charged our credit card and reserved the tickets that were not the price they said at the initial negotiations. The tickets were expensive and departure city was Chicago which is 10 hours' drive from where we live. We had never used this airline search company before. When we tried to call the company back they did not answer the phone. If we didn't cancel that tickets within 24 hours there will not be any refund and we would have lost few thousand dollars. We called the company from a different phone number and managed to get hold of someone from the company and made a formal complaint. It took two weeks before we were able to get our charges cancelled. We continuously monitored our credit card balances and call them back regularly until they

EXPEDITION / EXPLORATION

gave our money. It was stressful few days but we did not give into them.

When we attempted to go to Snaefellsnes Peninsula, I had plugged in the address on Google Maps, however it led us to a dead end with nowhere else to go but back the narrow gravel road we had come from. The road was so narrow that we had no room to turn around. My mother, sister and I got out of the car while my dad reversed. We informed him of any mud pits, holes, or big, sharp rocks that were in the way. Eventually we made it out, but it was difficult since we were still lost even after we got back onto the main road.

- 4) **Outline a detailed itinerary of what you plan to do.**
Detail your planned trip from start to finish. Make sure you can show at least 6-8 hours of immersion activities each day. Include where you are planning on going and why, how you plan to explore the unique culture or environment (through food, sightseeing, etc.), and how you are going to learn about this new environment. If using public transportation is a large component of your trip and write up, make sure to include your overall plan and method for using it.

June 28

- Get up at 3am to XNA airport
- Take flight to Denver at 6am
- Arrive in Denver at 7:15am
- Take the flight at 10:35am to Canada
- Arrive in Montreal at 4:35pm
- Go outside the airport and take a taxi to the replica of Norte Dame
- Have dinner in Montreal
- Arrive back at the airport at 9pm, in time for our flight to Iceland at 11:30pm

June 29

- Arrive in Reykjavik, Iceland at 8:42am
- Get the rental car from ACE family rentals then go get groceries
- Proceed to the house we rented in Kopavogur, Iceland, just outside of Reykjavik
- Unpack our suitcases and take a nap
- Go out to explore downtown and have dinner outside

June 30

- Visit the Grotta Island Lighthouse
- Go to see downtown Icelandic attractions such as Hallgrimskirkja church and Einar Jonsson Sculpture Park
- Explore the museums at Perlan
- Visit the Ellidaar waterfall

July 1

- Travel along some spots on the 'Golden Circle'

EXPEDITION / EXPLORATION

- Kerid Crater
- Eat lunch at Mika family restaurant
- Secret Lagoon
- Gullfoss Waterfall
- Geysir
- Thingvellir National Park

July 2

Travel eight hours to and from the Snaefellsnes Peninsula and spend all day there

- Kirkjufellsfoss and Mt. Kirkjufell
- Snaefellsjokull Glacier
- Try Icelandic food for lunch

July 3

- Try to take a midnight walk and view a 24 hour sunset
- Grocery shopping
- Cooking and Laundry
- Go horseback riding in the afternoon and learn about Icelandic horses

July 4

- Buy Reykjavik City passes
- The National Maritime Museum
- The Settlement Exhibition Museum
- The Culture House
- Lunch
- The National Museum of Iceland
- Harpa Music Hall

July 5

- Drive four hours to the city of Vik
- On the way, stop by Selfoss Waterfall and Seljalandsfoss
- A Black Sand Beach
 - Solheimasandur Plane Wreck
- Drive four hours home

July 6

- Go to the Blue Lagoon from 7am to 2pm for my sister's 13 Birthday.
- Have lunch at the Lava Restaurant after purchasing tickets online and getting reservations
- Go for a walk afterwards
- Go shopping

July 7

- Clean up the rented apartment
 - Pack up belongings
-

EXPEDITION / EXPLORATION

- Leave the house at 11am
- Explore the Reykjanes Peninsula
- Visit the Bridge between two Continents
- Explore the town of Grindavik, have lunch and get ice cream
- Drop off our rental car
- Shuttle to the airport

July 8

- Take flight to Vienna, Austria at 1:10am
- Arrive in Vienna at 7am
- Arrive in Chicago at 11am
- Then take the final flight to Bentonville, Arkansas at 3:35pm.
- Arrive back home in Arkansas at 5pm

- 5) Provide a detailed write up of your actual trip (a day-to-day account). Tell us what you did! This should be the most detailed portion of your write up, including how your plans came to fruition. Include details about what you learned, what you saw, and what you took in. Did all of your plans go smoothly or were there bumps along the road? How did you handle any hiccups? How did you explore the environment or culture for at least 6-8 hours? This should not read like a class assignment or paper, arguing for the validity of your trip and how you found real-world immersion.

June 28

We got up at 3am and went to the XNA airport in Bentonville Arkansas. We took our flight to Denver, CO at 6am, and then arrived in Denver at 7:15am. We had breakfast at McDonalds, and then proceeded to wait for our next flight at 10:35am to Montreal, Canada. We were delayed for 3 hours on the flight to Montreal due to overweight and fuel issues. We ended up leaving at 1:45pm. During our 3 hour wait to leave Denver, we watched them take 3 of our check-in bags off of our flight in order to fix the weight problem. We arrived in Montreal at 7:35pm. Originally, we were to arrive at 4:19pm, so because we arrived later, it ruined my plan to see Montreal. We stayed in the airport until our next flight at 11:30pm. We killed time by walking around and having dinner at the Archibald Microbrasserie in the airport. My family and I shared 'fish n' chips' and a burger.

June 29

We arrived in Reykjavik, Iceland at 8:42am. When we went to pick up our bags, we were notified that our bags were 'lost' and that Air Canada only comes to Iceland every two days, meaning we would be without bags for at least 48 hours. Fortunately, each member of my family had packed an extra set of clothes in their carry-ons. We took a shuttle to the car rental place, ACE Family Rentals. The process for renting the car was quite different from that of the US. My parents had to get insurance for gravel, wind, sand, and ash damage. The car rental people took pictures of the car as a part of the

EXPEDITION / EXPLORATION

rental process. We were also told that the doors of our car could easily come unhinged if we ever left it open. The wind is powerful in Iceland and, at the moment, it scared me. Then we went grocery shopping at Kronan's.

We went to the house we rented in Kopavogur, Iceland, just outside of Reykjavik. After speaking with our host, we unpacked what we had then called Air Canada in order to find the three bags they took off of our flight. There were some stressful conversations. They could not locate our bags yet. I suggested my family to visit downtown Iceland as a way to calm ourselves. We visited the Hallgrimskirkja, the largest church in Iceland, and the Leifr Eiricsson statue in front of the church. We learned about the history and structures of the church. Inside the church were gigantic pipe organs which took up almost an entire wall of the huge church. The church had some purple flowers outside its humongous walls that peaked my interest because of how beautiful they were. It was a cold and rainy day, so the purple flowers stood out among the gloominess. We explored streets of the downtown area despite the freezing, wet rain. We went to Perlan, a museum with artificial ice caves and other exhibits about Iceland's nature. I learned a lot about "The Land of Fire and Ice" and how the forces of nature are at work in Iceland. Even though it was our very first day in Iceland, I learned a lot about history of Reykjavik city. We went home, but we got lost for a little bit and ended up at the Grotta lighthouse. We were not allowed in it because of tide levels, so we glanced at it from afar, but the scenery inspired us to come back the next day.

June 30

I took a long walk by the beach at Grotta nature reserve and actually spotted a seal on a rock out far in the distance. There was a golf course by the walkway. When we spotted signs that told us to watch out for golf balls overhead, we laughed about having to watch for white bombs in general, since there were also a lot of seagulls. Looking at the ocean waves over the beach was so relaxing to me. After our hour long walk, we went to the church service at the Hallgrimskirkja Church. Luckily, it was the one Sunday a month where the services were conducted in English. We were able to hear the lovely sounds of the pipe organ. There were refreshments after the service including different types of teas, coffees, and pastries. It was there that I was first introduced to the Kleina, and absolutely delicious and mouthwatering pastry that I will never forget. This is something I would definitely go back for. While enjoying our refreshments, we met a fun-loving couple from New Zealand and a pastor, who is an Icelandic native. After church, we walked around the streets downtown, similar to the day before. This time, we went farther and found souvenir shops. We were eager to start visiting waterfalls, so we found one in a secluded park in Reykjavik named Ellidaar Waterfall. It was a good start on our journey to exploring Icelandic arts, food and music.

July 1

At 12:30am, we went outside and walked around the neighborhood of Kopavogur. We wanted to explore the 24 hour sunlight. It threw us for a loop to see the sun out still shining in the late hours of the night. Honestly, it made

EXPEDITION / EXPLORATION

it especially difficult to sleep, especially since I was experiencing "jetlag" at the same time. I had to wear eye masks when I went to sleep. After we got some rest, we left the house around 9am to go explore some famous spots along the 'Golden Circle' route. First we went to Kerid Crater. The view was gorgeous; I have never before seen a lake in a large crater. Everything was good, except for the flies. When we hiked down to the lake in the crater, we had to cover my mouth to prevent me from accidentally swallowing them. There were so many flies buzzing around that, unfortunately, all four members of my family, including myself, accidentally ate some flies. Despite the many hundreds of flies, there were still a great number of tourists. We ran to get back into our car, careful not to let any flies in. After the Crater, we ate lunch at a family owned restaurant called Mika. I split an Icelandic pizza with meat and raspberry chili sauce with my dad. The pizza was so large - 16 inches in diameter in fact- that it lasted my family three meals. The pizza cost 60 US dollars. It was interesting to see how everyone else in the restaurant was eating their pizzas with a fork and a knife, quite opposite of the American way.

After lunch we visited the Secret Lagoon and saw geothermal activity in that area. There was a lot of smoke from geysers and the air was filled with the smell of hydrogen sulfide – rotten eggs. We had to stick to the walking path as the temperature of the water surrounding us was 212 degrees Fahrenheit. Then, we went to Gullfoss Waterfall. It was by far the most beautiful waterfall I visited in Iceland. It had two large layers and one or two tinier ones. There was so much mist created by the waterfall that a rainbow could be seen. It seemed as though it came straight out of a fairy tale. Our next stop along the Golden Circle was the Geysir Hot Springs Area. I saw boiling mud pits and the Strokkur, a geyser which erupts every 10 minutes. When it erupted, it was spectacular. The water shot up 100 feet into the air! Some people actually got sprayed with the aftermath of the eruption. We made a stop at Fontana Geothermal Parks and ate some Blueberry Skyr cheesecake while sipping hot chocolate. I also tasted samples of Rye bread cooked in their geothermal bakery. On our way back home, we accidentally found our way into Thingvellir National Park, so we jumped on the opportunity to explore it. I walked around river and visited a gigantic rock that made humans look like ants. The moss growing on the young volcanic rocks lying around us in countless fields, added to the beauty of the land.

July 2

We left early in the morning so we could travel to the Snaefellsnes Peninsula. When I had previously researched "Snaefellsnes Peninsula," I only got images of Mt. Kirkjufell and Kirkjufellsfoss Waterfall, but at the time, I was unaware that there was so much more to the Peninsula than this. I had tried to put in the Peninsula as a location on Google Maps, but we ended up driving on a gravel road leading to a dead end. My dad had to reverse the car the entire way we had driven since the gravel road was too narrow and no place to turn around. It was difficult since there were mud pits and holes on the road, not to mention sharp rocks. There was not any civilization to assist us, except for a couple of houses. Truth be told, we were completely and

EXPEDITION / EXPLORATION

utterly lost. After getting on to the main road again, we found some cars and people on the side of the road. We noticed that they were all stopped for a certain reason – there was a faucet coming from below ground. It was mineral water spewing out of the faucet into people's water bottles. I tried it but greatly disliked it. It had a tangy, metallic taste that I did not enjoy. Fortunately, there was a native Icelander giving a tour. She told us the way to the waterfall we were looking for. We explored as much as we could. There was an information center where we took a pit stop at first. I had an Icelandic hotdog for lunch at the hotdog stand in the parking lot. Icelandic hotdogs are unique in taste, especially since they are made of organic, hormone free pork, beef, and lamb and are served on steamed buns. Condiments such as raw onions and remoulade, a sauce made with mayo, also made it special. When we started traveling once again, we saw the Snaefellsjokull Glacier from a distance and the large mountain range which lay ahead of it. We also stopped by the ancient fishing village, Hellnar. Later, after searching for half a day, we found the famous Mt. Kirkjufell and Kirkjufellsfoss. The highlight of the day was experiencing an underwater tunnel for the first time in my life. It is 5,770 meters (18,930 ft) long and reaches a depth of 165 meters (541 ft) below sea level. It made the trip to and from the Peninsula much faster. It was terrifying to be in a tunnel that was 28 miles long and 541 feet below the sea level. It was a nice surprise to come home to our baggage.

July 3

We relaxed in the morning after having a busy agenda the last few days. We decided to make this a calm and relaxing day because it was raining outside. In the afternoon, I went horseback riding in Hafnarfjörður in Reykjavík. I explored the lava fields on Icelandic horses for close to 3 hours and learned how Icelandic horses are more unique than other horses. Almost everyone in Iceland has their own horse. For every three people, there is one horse. Because Iceland banned the import of new breeds 900 years ago, Icelandic horses are one of the purest breeds in the world. Compared to other horses, they are smaller and more tightly built to thrive in the rocky and cold climate of Iceland all year round. Icelanders think highly of their small horses as they are a prevalent symbol of the country's uniqueness.

July 4

We spent the day in Reykjavík downtown. It was another cold and rainy day. In the morning, we made sure to get our city passes at The National Maritime Museum. After purchasing them, we explored the museum itself and learned much about the harbors, ships, and fish of Iceland. Then we walked to the library and got ourselves a map of the city and its key attractions. We made our way to the Settlement Exhibition Museum, where I learned about how the Vikings first settled in Iceland and built houses. Then we walked to the Culture House and saw a lot of artwork. We had lunch at a local grocery store with a café inside. After lunch, we had to find shelter in the Reykjavík City Hall because it was pouring rain. We ended up staying in the City Hall for about an hour until the rain died down. We made our way to the National Museum of Iceland while it was still raining. There was a lot to learn about

EXPEDITION / EXPLORATION

the history of Iceland ranging from a vase to a chair. When we went home from the day, it had stopped raining, and it was still pretty early, so we decided to go to a neighborhood pool. The water in the pool was also thermal, so it felt so good.

July 5

We drove two hours to go to the Solheimasandur Plane Wreck. On the way we stopped to see Dyrholaey, a huge rock structure that has what seems to be a perfectly carved semi-circle in the middle. It was beautiful to see how waves crashed against its side, almost as though the water was trying to climb it. There was also a Black Sand Beach nearby that we visited. It was very close to the Reykjanes Peninsula, although we did not visit as we hear it was extremely dangerous. It was interesting to see black sand for the first time. Usually the sand I see is a near opposite color, so it was strange. We went to the Solheimasandur Plane Wreck - an American Navy plane wreck which occurred in 1973. Thankfully all 7 plane passengers survived. They left the crash there. The path to get to the plane wreck was a total of 3 miles. While there was a bus available, it cost \$120 to ride to and from the site. We decided against this and walked instead, but it was not easy due to the wind and dust. It took an hour to walk to the site of the plane wreck, so we took the bus back in an attempt to save time. We stopped by the tall waterfall, Skogafoss, and also Seljalandsfoss, a waterfall which you can walk behind. I was soaking from head to toe after walking near both waterfalls. The water running over the cliff at Skogafoss crashed to the earth with a mighty force, causing a lot of mist to emerge. Seljalandsfoss was such a unique experience as I was able to hike a full 360 degrees around the waterfall. I was able to fulfill all my goals for today other than going to Vik, a remote sea front village in south Iceland.

July 6

We went to the Blue Lagoon and enjoyed its natural soothing thermal water from 7am to 2:30pm. I experienced its natural, calming minerals, two free, exfoliating face masks, relaxation, and a fancy, delicious lunch at the Lava Restaurant. They let us wear our bathrobes and slippers to the restaurant! My parents were saving up money for this lunch since they knew it was going to be expensive, so they let me get some juicy, delicious Gaucho Sirloin steak. Because it was my sister's 13th birthday, they also gave her a special treat.

July 7

We cleaned the house we rented and packed up our belongings. We left the house around 11am. I explored the Reykjanes Peninsula and saw the 'Bridge Between Two Continents,' which connects the tectonic plates of Eurasia and North America. Also, I explored the fishing town of Grindavik, went shopping for souvenirs, and had a picnic lunch with the deli lamb sandwiches we bought from the grocery store. We stopped by a local ice cream shop for dessert. I had a delicious soft ice cream with toppings. We visited a Viking Museum. Inside there was a huge replica of a Viking ship that

EXPEDITION / EXPLORATION

would could actually walk on. It was interesting to learn about Vikings and demolish the stereotype of their ugly, vicious attitudes. Then, we said a final goodbye to Iceland and went to drop off our rental car. We took our shuttle to the airport and then waited until our flight.

July 8

We took our flight to Vienna, Austria at 1:10 in the early morning. Hints of a sunset could be seen through the window even at this time. We arrived in Vienna at 7:18am. We had a 3 hour layover in Vienna before our flight at 10:45am for Chicago. Then we made it to Chicago at 2pm. Our flight to Bentonville, Arkansas was set for 3:35pm, so we were extremely pressed for time. We had to go through customs and security, all while trying to find our gate and track our baggage. We rushed and ran to the gate after we found it, and arrived just in time for boarding. We got back home in Arkansas at 5:25pm – again without some of our baggage.

- 6) **Is there anything else you think would highlight your accomplishments on your trip?**

What did you take away from your trip? Are you now planning on returning to the location for future adventures or experiences? Did you learn you could do something that you never would have expected? Did you try a food for the first time and now can't get enough? Did you communicate in languages and now you want to learn more? Did you learn a new skill that you will employ on future travels?

My most major accomplishment was being able to survive in Iceland for a few days without my baggage. I only had two pairs of clothes to survive off of, but luckily I had a washer and dryer in the airbnb apartment we were staying in. We had packed food in our suitcases for lunch on road trips, but during the time without our luggage we had to eat sandwiches from local gas stations and grocery stores. The sandwiches were made with an "Iceberg Sauce" on each sandwich, similar to how cheeseburgers have cheese on them, and they were absolutely delicious. If I ever went back, I would definitely invest in more. Aside from buying sandwiches, we also bought fruits, vegetables, desserts, and meats available in the grocery store. It was extremely challenging to buy food as everything was labeled in a different language which was completely unfamiliar to us. We were able to identify items such as apples and bananas, but meats and cheeses could not be identified by appearance, so we had to ask cashiers what words meant. One time, we almost bought horse meat - we thought it was beef. By far my favorite cuisine in Iceland was their unique twist on pizza. After exploring for the first half of the day on July 1, we had lunch at a family owned restaurant called Mika. They had humongous pizzas, two of which sustained my family for three meals. My father and I shared a "Meat Lovers" pizza with Raspberry Chili sauce. I was skeptical at first when I read the ingredients on the menu. I had never imagined the thought of putting a sweet, delicious fruit, with a spicy pepper, but I found it was absolute finger-licking goodness. We always paid caution to the wind as well, as we were told by the car rental people

EXPEDITION / EXPLORATION

that it was powerful enough to rip off the door from the car. We successfully kept all doors on the car. Also, if I were to go back, I would go during the winter so I could see the Northern Lights. When we were in Canada on the way to Iceland, I wanted to go outside of the airport and explore Montreal, especially the replica of the Notre Dame. However, after our flight from Colorado to Canada was delayed for three hours, we arrived much later than we had hoped, which ruined our plans for the evening. While in Iceland, I got to do almost everything I had planned on, even more. Even so, I missed a couple of opportunities to see things that I had researched, such as the town of Vik, Reynisfjara Beach, and Selfoss Waterfall. We were extremely close to Vik, unfortunately it was a detour to our ultimate destinations.

While write-ups at each level require detailed explanations of your planning and your actual trip, Gold Medal Record Books are scrutinized even further as the submission passes through a review committee. If you are planning on submitting an Expedition/Exploration that was approved at a lower level for the Gold Medal, be as detailed as possible at your first submission.
