

A. While a University of Delaware education ensures that intellectual curiosity and a passion for learning become habits of the mind, our long tradition of public service also produces graduates who have a positive impact on their communities. Have you discovered your passion for a particular subject or a cause? Tell us about it. *with requirements?*

*Patpatpat andddd ROTATE! Patpatpat andddd ROTATE!*

I am determined not to look up from the sad little piece of dough sitting in my hand until it can at least pass for circular, but it seems to be having other ideas. Any last hopes I have had for my hands to suddenly receive a burst of tortilla-making enlightenment have been lost umpteen pieces of ruined dough ago. At this point I have to try my hardest to merely avoid looking in the direction of the small tortilla powerhouse two inches away from me in the form of a five foot tall Mayan woman, who at the moment was too busy cranking out perfect tortilla after perfect tortilla at lightning speed to pay me much attention.

The night had quickly made a turn for the worse when I offered to help my host mother make dinner for the family. Half an hour and a bowl of dough later, I have only produced one tortilla that has been allowed to make it to the stovetop, and even then only grudgingly in what I guess to be an attempt to get me to stop trying. When that proved an unsuccessful effort, she had apparently decided that she might as well use me for entertainment and showcase my sad tortillas to all of her neighbors...and friends...and relatives...and their friends. So for the last half of our cooking "lesson" I have not only been fumbling with corn mush over a hot stove, but have also been trying to avoid bumping elbows with the astonishing number of people that fit into her 4 by 4 makeshift kitchen while also tuning out the giggles at my every mistake.

I had gone into this trip thinking it would be a cinch. Mission trip to Guatemala? No problem! Supposedly, this was my "thing" - it was certainly what I loved doing. I had always had a passion for learning about new cultures and their languages. With six years of Spanish and what I considered to be "a lot of travel experience" under my belt, this trip was supposed to be a walk in the park, albeit a walk in the park to help people. Once we got there, though, we found out that we'd be staying with families in one of the poorest rural Mayan villages that spoke one of the twenty-three Mayan languages in Guatemala, known as Mam. So much for my Spanish helping me. It was hard for me to grasp how I would be able to help these people if I couldn't even communicate with them. And in times such as these, what with my current tortilla predicament, it sure would be nice to be able to eavesdrop on what they were saying about the clueless American.

Years later, it seems, the bowl of dough has finally run out and I lift my head for the first time to meet the questioning gaze of dozens of pairs of dark, brown eyes. Their expressions are curious to me, as I had been expecting looks of smugness or judgment. I mean, come on - the girl can't even make a tortilla! The smiles on their faces, however, are ones of brilliant pride and happiness. I have spent almost a week with the Mayans in this village, and it didn't register until this moment how much my time there means not only to me, but also to them. I am able to help them just by being there and letting them know that I care enough to spend time with them, even if all I am doing is scratching "tortilla extraordinaire" off of my list of possible career options. I had always thought of

helping people as more of a "do." In order to help someone I had to be *doing* something, whether it be building a house or working in the fields. Now, I'm not saying that these aren't great things to do, and we certainly spent time doing those as well, but that alone is not enough. The first step of helping is not to *do* but rather to *be*. That's what it's all about. Sixteen years of family, friends, mentors, and role models, and within a week my tiny little Mayan mother had altered my world perspective more than any other person. And I couldn't even understand 99% of what she said the entire time I was there.

It's wet, and cold, and muddy, but when bullets are flying over your head, whipping air in your face, you don't really think about the weather that much. Okay, so maybe they weren't bullets, maybe they were polymer capsules filled with paint, but when the welts leave bruises the size of bullet wounds, you don't really distinguish the difference. Everyone's senses are sharper when there is pain involved.

Crack! I wonder if that's just a stray shot, or if I'm the next target in enemy crosshairs. Crack, crack, crack! "That pretty much settles it," I think, <sup>possible to myself.</sup> ~~the answer to my silent question.~~ My wingman, Travis, is on my left, same bunker, his back to the brushpile, head tucked. Faint yells from the right give us a hint where the shots are coming from. As I pull myself to my knees, my heart starts pounding. Keeping the war-rhythm in my head. In barely a whisper, I point to a brushpile on the right flank and say "cover me." I know he can't hear me, but my gesture implies the meaning. On the count of three, I sprint towards the brushpile, leaving a multi-colored trail in my wake. As I dive behind cover, all is a whirlwind. I reorient myself as quickly as possible, looking back at Travis. It's my duty now, since he risked being shot for me, to draw as much aggro from the enemy as possible. Travis is pinned down hard, now that he's lost his only backup. I know I have to think quickly, to ensure the survival of the man who sacrificed his position for me. I took a deep breath, steeling myself for what was going to happen! I'm taking the fight to them. I'm storming them on their home turf, because they'll never expect it. Sometimes even illogical moves shock enough to work.