

Cheese Pizza: The Comfort Zone **by Leonie Tollefson**

It all started with a pizza, as every great story does. My family and I were taking a day trip to downtown Madison, WI, and we stopped into our favorite pizza pit, Ian's Pizza. Ian's is known for its creative pizza recipes, such as Mac n Cheese and Cheesy Ranch Potato. In a place so full of exploration and options, I chose plain cheese pizza. I played it safe and stayed right in my comfort zone, even with all of those options ready at my fingertips. Now, I don't mean to be pejorative towards cheese pizza, but my reason for choosing it was not honorable. I chose it because I was too scared to try anything else. Halfway through my slice, I realized that I had missed out on something good, possibly delicious. That day, I felt regret and came to the realization that I might be ordering plain old cheese forever if I was always too scared to risk it. If I never escaped the thing dearest to me, my comfort zone, then I might stay in the same place for my entire life, and never know what I was missing out on because I never took the chance to find out.

Believe it or not, this all relates to international travel. Traveling the world and going to places unknown to me is risky, and it sounds fantastic. I don't want to be ordering plain cheese pizza forever, I want to explore and immerse myself in cultures unknown to me, as risky and outside of my comfort zone as that is. I want to try everything, at least once, so that I can live with no regrets, and allow myself to have edification from my mistakes. Going to another country, especially to learn and volunteer, will allow me to have new insight into my life so that I can better understand myself. It would pluck me from my secure life and static existence and place me in terrifying situations that I, alone, would learn to handle. Forcing myself to face my fears and explore the unknown would not only provide me with unforgettable experiences, but it would give me the courage and determined *modus operandi* to continue exploring opportunities in my life long after the volunteer trip is over.

I want to live my life, not just for me, but for others too. If my existence and laborious volunteer projects can make the smallest sliver of a positive difference in someone else's world, then I have lived well. I want to live to be compassionate and honest, so that when I look back at my life I see that I had a purpose and I took the chances to display my courage, rather than languish in my comfort zone eternally. I hold a staunch belief that traveling around the globe would inspire me to become the person I dream of, and that this volunteer abroad opportunity could become the very essence of my life.