



Summer Search Expands Horizons for CCPA Junior

Part of Coliseum College Prep Academy 11th-grader Antonio's ancestry lies in Italy, but until last summer, he hadn't much explored those roots. "I never really knew too much about the language or any of that," he says, "but recently I started thinking a lot about that side of my background and culture."

This past summer – in Minnesota, uniquely enough – he got his chance to explore it. Thanks to the Summer Search program, Antonio spent an entire month immersed in Italian language instruction while living in cabins with other students from around the country.

"I felt really proud once I got there because it seemed like I was starting to understand more about my family and where they came from," reflects Antonio. "I always think about my great-grandfather [who lived in Italy], because my mom always told me we have similar characteristics. On this trip I felt like I was giving him back some life."

Antonio took quickly to the language and the way it was taught. "Their learning strategy is amazing," he says. "Right away, they only speak to you in Italian. So you just learn by speaking it and speaking it. I was lost at first, but after three weeks I pretty much understood most of what

they were saying, and I now know how to read and write in Italian."

In other words, Antonio, already fluent in Spanish and English, is trilingual at age 16.

The trip's other benefits were less scholastic, but just as formative. "I didn't know anybody, so it was a new world to me," Antonio reflects. "Oakland is very city-like, but there it was all peace and quiet, with two lakes surrounding us."

Of all the Summer Searchers, Antonio had traveled the farthest, and for him the experience was filled with firsts. "This was my first time on a plane, my first time leaving the state, my first time being away from my family for that long."

All of this led to another first: an emotional bout of homesickness that peaked when he received a letter from his younger brother. "He sent me a picture of me and him and it said, 'I love you, Brother,'" recalls Antonio. "I felt really sad because it was really hard for me to be without him. I love my little brother so much and I'm going to look out for him for the rest of my life."

The month also offered Antonio the unique experience of making fast friends in a short period of time. "When you get

there you're all strangers, but then on the last day everyone's crying about leaving each other." He says he keeps up with the other kids on Facebook, and hopes to visit a few of them up in Seattle.

Antonio thanks the CCPA staff for connecting him with the memorable opportunity. "They've helped me a lot," he says. "I'm really learning a lot of leadership at the school, and I was on the design team when CCPA was first founded. They see me doing hard work and participating a lot, which is why they recommended me for Summer Search. They see that I'm trying to be somebody."

The Summer Search program is three years long, so Antonio is already plotting his next adventure. "Next summer, I'm thinking about going to another country," he says. "I think I want to use what I learned last summer, and go to Italy to do community service around my ancestors' town, because there's a lot of poverty over there. My mentor and I are planning that all out now."

Last summer's experience also has Antonio thinking about college. "It was a great life skill for me to start to learn to be independent," says Antonio. "Like I told my mom before I left, this is just a little warm-up for when I go to college."

College Prep in the Truest Sense

Fellow 11th-grader Jesus is warming up for college too – *in* college. He's among 15 juniors traveling to Laney College two days a week to take courses, bringing to life the latest piece of CCPA's college-prep vision.

"So far, for me it's been a great overall experience," says Jesus. "I'm taking a general psychology class, an overview of all the topics. We're getting a good feel for how it will be when we're actually in college."

Taking his first college midterm – as an 11th-grader – Jesus scored a 103 out of 107. "I see myself in college with older people, and I know they're smarter than me in many ways, but then I see how I'm getting excellent grades in the class and that makes me feel so good and confident," he reflects. "It does give us somewhat of an edge, I think. I'm already getting the experience of going to college so that way I already know how it's going to be and how it will feel."

His growing self-confidence and glimpse of this new world also have him more focused in the classroom at CCPA. "It's making me work harder here, too." Part of that work is seeking out an internship – yet another key aspect of CCPA's approach to preparing kids for the real world. "We're starting to get deep into searching for internships,"



he says. "I'm hoping to do mine at a hospital, to get a feel for the medical experience."

Jesus also looks forward to taking a new class at Laney next semester, and to enrolling, full-time, at college in 2012. "I know I don't want to slack off and 'take a break' after graduation – I've heard too many stories of that happening," he says. "I've got quite a few colleges in

mind: Berkeley, Stanford, USC, UCLA. I'll apply to them all and hope for the best."

"[Taking college classes in high school] is a very good opportunity," Jesus says. "We're probably one of the few schools that do this, and CCPA giving us the chance to do that, it's just a real privilege, that's how I think of it. And I truly respect that privilege."

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