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Kalie Hall celebrates with a Future Farmers of Japan member who wants to be a dairy farmer one day. Hall toured a Japanese garden which the student members of the organization designed, planted, and maintained.

Former ABAC Student Travels the World with FFA

TIFTON—She poured fresh maple syrup on her pancakes in Vermont. She looked deep inside herself in the wilds of Wyoming, and she ate fish all day in Japan.
Former Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College student Kalie Hall knows her perspective on life will never be the same after a year traveling the country and the world as the National FFA Secretary.

“It was really special to see different cultures,” Hall said. “I had to get out of my comfort zone as a Southern girl. I really learned to appreciate the connections to agriculture we have in Georgia.”

Hall was one of six national officers selected in October of 2012 at the national FFA convention in Indianapolis, Ind. Each year, four vice presidents are selected from four different sections of the United States. The president and the secretary are selected at-large and can be from anywhere in America.

“Officially, I was an ambassador for agriculture and agricultural education,” the 21-year-old native of Carnesville said. “We worked with government agencies, agribusinesses, and served as facilitators for leadership development for students throughout the year at schools, camps, and conferences.

“Our goal was to build these students’ potential for leadership in agricultural positions. We traveled 100,000 miles and visited 28 states. During any given week, we could be in two or three states.”

A special part of the year was a 10-day trip to Japan where Hall stayed in a traditional Japanese hotel where she slept on a mat on the floor. She also spent a weekend with a Japanese student and her family.

“We had fish for breakfast and supper,” Hall said. “They grew cabbage. They enjoy some of the same American TV shows that we do.”

The adults in that particular household were not well versed in English.
“It was kind of a challenge,” Hall said. “But it showed me the importance of family, no matter if you live in Japan or the United States.”

Hall said her most memorable experience inside America was in the rugged back country of Wyoming.

“I spent a week there at a leadership camp that was a good hour away from civilization,” the 5-foot-3 Franklin County High School graduate said. “There were about 50 students there, and we had lots of time for personal reflection. They felt free to share their thoughts and struggles not only about FFA but about life.

“It was just beautiful there. I must say it was quite a bit cooler than our summers in Georgia.”

Hall brought home lots of maple syrup from a Vermont excursion and visited with the leadership of the Toyota Corporation in California. Michigan, Arizona, Missouri, and North Carolina were also a part of the year-long adventure which ended Nov. 2, 2013 at the FFA national convention in Louisville, Ky.

People skills she learned as an ABAC Ambassador kicked into high gear during her travels as a national officer.

“Being an Ambassador at ABAC taught me how to find common ground to connect with anyone,” the daughter of Kent and Jill Hall of Carnesville said. “I made some really good friends as an Ambassador. It was a ton of fun.

“I think the feeling of community is what I liked most about ABAC. It’s easy to feel liked there. The professors, the advisors, and the people in Tifton form a special combination of culture at ABAC.”
Hall, a 2012 ABAC graduate, believes she grew quite a bit emotionally and spiritually during her two years in Tifton on the ABAC campus.

“That was my home away from home,” Hall said. “I was president of Baptist Collegiate Ministries during my sophomore year, and the Lord showed me how to serve in ways that are not glamorous but in ways that really meet the needs of people. That year was an incredible blessing.”

After completing her ABAC education, Hall enrolled at the University of Georgia for the 2012 fall semester. She took an entire year off to fulfill her duties as a national FFA officer, and now she’s back in Athens aiming for a degree in agricultural education.

“I got to see a lot of talented teachers in action during the last year,” Hall said. “They really reinforced my plan to be an agricultural education teacher. I realize the Lord could have other plans but I look forward to being in a job like that. I think all my experiences from ABAC, Georgia, and the FFA have played a part in His plan.”

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