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SARS detour opens student's eyes to a new world vision in Germany

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A Baptist General Convention of Texas student summer missionary learned to live intentionally for Christ by traveling the long way to serve him.

Melissa Forehand, a senior business major at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, was supposed to serve in Southeast Asia this summer. Her plans changed, however, when she was reassigned to Berlin due to the threat of the SARS virus.

"It was really hard," she said. "It had been such a difficult decision to go to Vietnam, but now I know he used that to get us to Berlin."

Melissa Forehand plays with a child in Germany during her tenure as a summer missionary.

Forehand built relationships through which she shared the gospel.

Forehand and her team of fellow summer missionaries immediately noticed a spiritual “darkness” in Germany, she said. The people they encountered never smiled and rarely talked to each other.

The team of student missionaries sought to bring light to German lives by meeting people in parks and floral shops and sharing the gospel when possible.

On one occasion, Forehand said, God led her to exercise with a Muslim woman. To the surprise of the rest of the team, Forehand took off running with the woman. The missionary and the woman became friends, and the student later shared her faith in the woman's home.

“God really does prepare you and organize circumstances the way he wants them,” she said. “Things would happen and you would see him working.”

Although the team did not see any professions of faith, Forehand said she believes the missionaries “moved a lot of rocks” that will pave the way for future conversions. An International Mission Board missionary will follow up on their work.

The summer experience taught Forehand she can share her faith no matter what she is doing at home or abroad. She can witness to others consistently if she remains focused on Jesus, she said.

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