

## **Report prepared by Jakub Tłuczek describing his participation**

### **in the Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellows Summer Institute at Purdue University 2015**

300 million cubic kilometers of water in the Atlantic Ocean keeps Europe away from North America. There are also 300 million people in the USA. People, who are different from each other, build unparalleled cultures, which I discovered thanks to BFTF.

The size of Purdue University campus shocked me, because it's as big as my hometown. People working there were incredibly kind and always helpful, and the BFTF Staff treated us like a family. Despite summer vacations back in Poland, I had no problem waking up at 7 am because of classes. They were very interesting and I took back to Poland tons of experience thanks to them.

But BFTF program isn't only about classes. Evenings were amazing: the first evening we went on a Walmart Trip, and other times we went bowling, to a birthday party, or to an Ed Sheeran concert. For a month I completely forgot what the word 'boring' means.

This program allowed me to live like a real American during my stay with a host family that lived in the suburbs. I got to see what "big city life" looks like in Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington, and Indianapolis. Experiences, like watching the sunrise at Lincoln Memorial or eating moose chili prepared by an Alaskan fellow were unforgettable.

I'm also an American football fan, so the trip to the motherland of this sport was one of my biggest dreams. The opportunity to see NFL stadiums live, train in the same facility as professional players, and play football with fellows on Independence Day fulfilled this dream.

During my stay in the U.S., I talked to so many interesting people such as an Air Force officer, Mexican flags hawker in Chicago, random pedestrians, pool lifeguards, a Colombian TV journalist, and comrades from Firebrigade. These conversations gave me a real picture of American Society and now I see that people are the same on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

But the most important thing is that I met 45 amazing fellows from the U.S. and Europe, which ensured me that there are no borders between young people around the world, and now nobody is looking through the prism of nationality. We're in touch all the time thanks to social media, and I think that friendships established during BFTF were just a beginning to something bigger.

These 300 million cubic kilometers of water that I mentioned at the beginning are no longer impressive to me. Not because we can cross the Atlantic Ocean in 10 hours by plane - but because I realized that it isn't keeping away Europe from the U.S., because on both sides of the "Big Water," people just want to make the world better. This is the biggest lesson I learned at BFTF.

Jakub Tłuczek, August 22nd 2015