

My Summer Vacation

A nonprofit organization allows teachers to bring the world back to their classrooms.

By Roy Deering

Mary Kathryn Moeller is an Oklahoman who considers London her “spiritual home.” After visiting the city full of history years ago, she vowed to someday return. This summer, thanks to the Fund for Teachers program and the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence, she’ll have her chance.

Moeller is one of dozens of Oklahoma teachers taking exotic Fund for Teachers trips this summer, spending four weeks in London attending the Sotheby’s Institute of Art. For Moeller, it’s a chance to revisit her favorite city in the world.

“I am thrilled to be going back,” says the AP art history teacher at Jenks High School.

Fund for Teachers is a nonprofit group that funds summer sabbaticals for thousands of teachers across the country every year. The program is set up to enrich the personal and professional growth of teachers by recognizing and supporting them as they identify and pursue opportunities around the globe that will have the greatest impact on their practice, the academic lives of their students and on their school communities.

“I never realized my inner passion for art and art history until I started teaching the class three years ago,” Moeller says. “Now, I have this burning desire to learn more, to experience it and to teach it to the best of my ability. This trip gives me the chance to do all of that.”

During her month-long stay at the Sotheby’s Institute, Moeller will study contemporary art at one of the premier facilities in the world. Taking part in the Sotheby’s Institute will provide her with knowledge that cannot be learned anywhere else in the world, allowing her to better pass along this knowledge



Jenks art history teacher Mary Kathryn Moeller will visit London this summer thanks to the nonprofit group Fund for Teachers.

and passion to her students back in Jenks.

Audrey Nelson, French and Spanish teacher at Shawnee High School, is also living her dream through the Fund for Teachers program. Nelson, along with good friend and fellow teacher Kim Earle of Ada, will travel on horseback across the Pyrenees Mountains between France and Spain during their two-week excursion.

“I’m still pinching myself because it doesn’t seem possible,” Nelson says. “It’s like a fantasy that I’ve dreamed about and it’s really hard to believe it’s actually going to take place.”

Nelson and Earle will arrive in France in early June, spend two days in Paris and take a

train to Bayonne where they will begin their week-long journey through the mountains. Riding five to seven hours per day, their tour group will cover hundreds of miles through some of the most incredible scenery on earth, following a pilgrimage route that has been used for thousands of years.

“This is the route that so many people throughout history have taken,” Nelson says. “This trip will not only allow us to see and experience the landscapes of this incredible region, but will help us to become engulfed in the culture and the language and allow us to be much more capable of teaching these cultures to our students when we return to Oklahoma.”