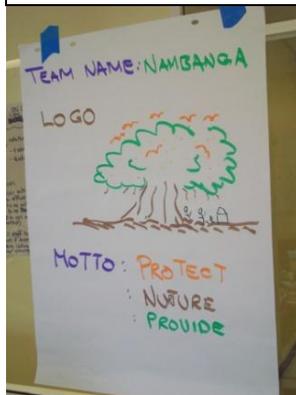


Charlea Johnston never thought of herself as a world traveler, in fact, was very comfortable staying close to home. However, that all changed when she got the chance of a lifetime. In September, she traveled with three others more than 12 hours to Vanuatu (Vah noo ah too) to instruct local emergency managers the basics of the Incident Command System. This training was offered through the U.S. Agency for International Development.

One of the team logos



Vanuatu is a chain of islands in the South Pacific Ocean east of Australia. This was the first type of incident management training that the community had ever experienced. Charlea said the trip was life-changing, "It was a wonderful opportunity to experience a different culture. It was amazing to watch the students transition through the week from inexperienced and reticent at the beginning to gaining confidence throughout the week and realizing during the final scenario that they had the skills to manage an emergency situation."

Charlea was raised in Alturas in a family of self-employed business owners. The path to traveling to a faraway island began for Charlea when she accepted a firefighter job at Buck Creek just three days after she graduated from high school. She worked at Buck Creek two seasons and entered the Apprenticeship program in 2004. Charlea got a permanent job on an engine at Lava Beds in 2006. She took a brief respite from the Forest Service and then came back as a volunteer in Dispatch in 2008. She missed the camaraderie of working on the Modoc and enjoyed the challenges she found in the Modoc Interagency Communications Center. She became the Assistant Center Manager in 2011.

Throughout her career Charlea has found ways to become more involved in workforce development by becoming an instructor. She has helped with Dispatch training and fire refreshers. In addition she has had various assignments, from New Mexico to the Shuttle Recovery in Texas. It was during these assignments that she made connections that led to her trip to Vanuatu.

Charlea says anybody can experience what she did in Vanuatu, "It really doesn't matter your position or title to be able to help others gain the skills we use every day on the Modoc." After her experience in Vanuatu, she admits she has a better appreciation for the training we receive in the Forest Service.

Charlea doesn't know exactly where her career will lead, but she knows she wants to stay involved with training and workforce development. Charlea's next trip will be to help instruct several wildland fire courses in Saipan in April.



Students work on exercises

She is married to Joe Johnston and in her spare time she and Joe take their fishing kayaks to lakes all across the forest. Charlea also enjoys photography and gardening. She admits she gets a little crazy growing way too many tomato plants.

We are pleased Charlea took that job as a firefighter 12 years ago and that she is the Assistant Center Manager today on the Modoc team.

For more information on the US Agency for International Development, visit <http://www.usaid.gov/> International Opportunities Application Form, <http://fsweb.fire.r5.fs.fed.us/training/opportunity/index.shtml>