Alumni Testimonial by Kim Manlick—St. Brieuc 1982
“I grew up in the small community of Batesville and participated in IU Honors in 1982. In those days, people did not travel abroad like they do today, at least not in my community. The local high school did not offer French nor does it today. But, I was fortunate enough to go to a then all girls academy that did. I fell in love with the French language but never dreamed I would ever speak it well or visit France. Thanks to the IU Honors Program, I did get the chance to visit St Brieuc which was the only site at the time. This summer of 1982 was life-changing for me. Not only did it solidify for me what my future jobs would involve for I had truly found my passion, but it also gave me, a not so confident 16 year old, a true belief that she could do anything.

So, I set off to France, my parents both crying. It was my first time away from home and my first time in a plane. My mother had never flown. I would spend seven weeks in France speaking only in French and living with a French family. I remember arriving in France and being mortified that I did not understand one single word. My French family served a grand meal that first night at around 11 pm as that is when we arrived. They served a specialty of the region...camembert cheese...I was so nervous and exhausted, that I became physically ill after eating this cheese. Sadly, I did not know how to ask where the bathroom was and so I stayed at the table and used my napkin. There was never camembert served in my presence again and my French father to this day tells this story.

Still, I had a magical time getting to know my family and going to class with other students every day. It was such a different world for me. Even the clouds seemed different. My French definitely improved during that summer. When I returned for Senior year, my teacher didn’t know quite what to do with us as our French has surpassed even hers. Using the language unconditionally and in a completely immersed situation is really the best way to internalize a new language. This is one of the key features in the IU Honors program and, I think, one of the main reasons it has stayed so well respected.

I went to IU where I did a Bachelor’s and Master’s in French. I taught as an AI and then walked into a high school classroom. I had truly found my “raison d’etre”. The first school in which I taught had never participated in IU Honors. I introduced it and sent four students the first year. It was a proud teacher moment as I know how hard those students worked to get up to third year level. The cost was a barrier for most, but I remember the school supporting car washes, bake sales and dances so that these students could be funded.

I have also taught for IU Honors. We piloted a program in Lisieux at a time when more sites were needed. I believe this was in the late 80’s. Then, I went on the teach for several years for IU Honors in Brest until marriage and children took me away. This would have been in the early 90’s. I also changed jobs and became the facilitator at Park Tudor. So, when I say that IU Honors shaped the path of my life, I really mean it.

IUHFPFL—111 S Jordan Ave—Bloomington, IN 47405—iuhpfl@iu.edu—iuhonorsprogram.org
Not all participants will go on to teach or even pursue French, but the experiences and growth from participation in this program cannot be measured.

So, I have become quite a cheerleader for this program. A former student of mine will be teaching in France this summer and I have steered several teachers in the direction of this program. I have sent many students and have kept in very close contact with my “French family”. I did a one year study in Strasbourg and spent every holiday with my family. Recently, my family relocated to England with my husband’s job and my children and I went to France on every possible occasion. At the end of our stay abroad, I moved with my children for three months to St Brieuc where we lived and where they attended school in the same little Catholic elementary as my French sisters had. Also during my stay I was able to visit Brest where several of my former students were studying. IU Honors, it seems, hadn’t changed that much over the years still attracting bright and mature juniors in high school.

I would end by saying that I will encourage all of my children to participate in this program. While it is hard for any parent to say good-bye to a child for seven weeks, what your child will take from this program in life experiences will make all of your sacrifices worth it. It is not just a wonderful way to learn a language which is really helped by the “no English” rule, but also a wonderful way to make contacts and friends abroad.” —Kim Manlick