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Pax academic exchange

PAXPRESS

The Newspaper for Exchange Students, Host Families, and Schools

Dreams Take Shape

Charmed: newly-arrived Spanish students (gray t-shirts) near Bethesda Fountain in NYC's Central Park late last week

The excitement was palpable—both among the first cohort of 2016/17 students as well as PAX staff. Hosted at Adelphi University on Long Island for roughly the last 20 years, the first orientation reminds us why we do what we do. Some things have changed; some remain the same. Selfie sticks and duck facing: new. Love at first glimpse of the Manhattan skyline: same. Students staring at smartphones during breaks: new. Students' mouths betraying them by emitting the native tongue: same.

Once they get off those planes, even the least excitable among us is no match for the nervous smiles and excited chatter. In the end, every group is a bit different. Last week's group of about 120 from China, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Poland, Spain, and Thailand were many things: eager, anxious, engaged (though slightly jet-lagged), respectful, rambunctious… We could go on. Instead, we'd like to let them introduce themselves! Look for clickable video interviews throughout the issue that are sure to get you aflutter about another great year!

We can hardly wait to get to know the other 900 students and share all the firsts and feats of the class of 2016/17 each month!

Allow Me to Introduce Myself!

Kon'nichiwa! Guten Tag! "Hello" seems like a good place to start. After a traditional greeting in their native language, students introduce themselves in English. (*Wai* not watch the Thai greeting twice? It's our favorite!)

"Howdy!" from Xiaoyuan and Queeniy (China).

Off to a Great Start

From cultural adjustment to problem-solving scenarios, there are no shortage of interesting and important topics to cover at an exchange student arrival orientation. Breaking up the lessons are jaunts into Manhattan—not bad!

Naturally, all of the students adore the NYC tours, but many were pleasantly surprised by the workshops last week. "It was a very inspiring message," Nanako from Japan reflected. In addition to enjoying the opportunity to make new friends from all over the world, the young woman was happy to play the role of "Mrs. Smith" in the performance of PAX's classic *The Ostrich and Giraffe* fable. (Never seen it? Check out this standout 2014 performance.)

Importantly, every student speaks in front of the group, in English, and in a classroom setting before heading to their host community. That doesn't mean they won't be nervous when they get called on in first period math class, but as Tianran from China noted, "It's a great start." We couldn't agree with the young lady more—or with Nicole from Germany for that matter. Her favorite part was "candies."

The candy spilled out of an opaque bag. After speculating in small groups about the bag's contents, Nicole and others were surprised to see candy, plastic spiders, and everything in between. The exercise was the final of several analogies used to drive home a lesson about expectations for the program ahead.

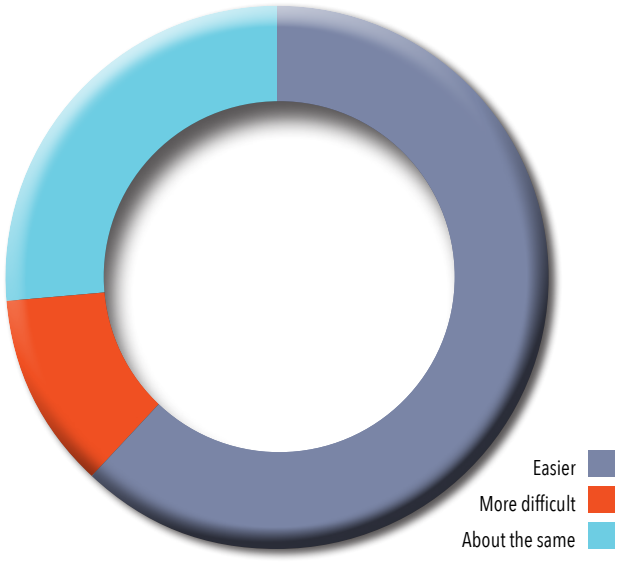
Like most things in life, the experience is not going to quite be what students envision. There will be plenty of sweet moments, but there will certainly be challenges along the way as well.

(Continued on next page.)

Left to right: Tanako (Japan) moves confidently to the next question, while "Piano" and "Mint" (Thailand) discuss whether the referenced situation is a right, rule, or privilege for PAX exchange students.

Josu from the Basque Country of Spain and the others talk about what they'd like to share about their cultures this year.

Do you expect classes in the U.S. to be easier or more difficult than school in your home country?



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Student Orientation NYC

Eneko's (Spain) interest is piqued by his fellow exchange student's insights.

(Continued from previous page.)

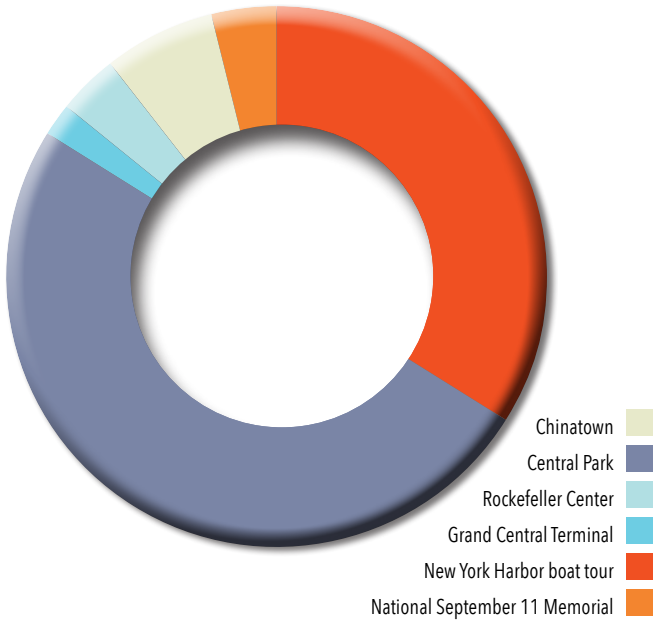
One lesson about expectations serves as a springboard to the next, as the groups discuss what the expectations of their host families may be. This was the most important point that Tanakrit (aka "Guy") from Thailand took away from Adelphi, commenting that he could see potential conflicts if expectations did not align or if the lines of communication were not open.

Imagine our satisfaction when one young lady from Germany wrote that the instructors were "Very warm-hearted." Before the contentment could set in however, she continued, "Even so, the rooms were much too cold." Alas, it is simply building to an American air conditioning joke…

We're looking forward to another great year and couldn't imagine having gotten off to a better start. Thanks so much to all of the students and staff who contributed to this special issue of *PAX Press*—whether with jokes, interviews, or smiling faces. Last but not least, a big thanks goes out to all of our gracious host families and schools!

Sofia (Mexico) and her peers share what they admire about the U.S.

Besides Times Square, which part of New York City was your favorite to visit?



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As Seen in Social Media

Click on any image to view full post or watch video

Families Still Sought for 2016/17

While the students in this issue represent part of our cohorts from select countries, equally excited PAXers from these and more than 65 other countries are still on their way—many still excited to hear whether they'll be headed to Alaska, Alabama, or Albuquerque.

So, if you or a great family you know is interested in sharing a slice of Americana with a courageous exchange student like those featured in this issue, give us a call at 800.555.6211 or learn more at www.pax.org/families.

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