

Pax Press



PAX Tents Help Revive Afghan School

In lieu of sending Mother's Day cards this past May, PAX honored its host moms with a donation to the Shulani Girls School in Chaprahar, Afghanistan, which was partially destroyed during a Taliban attack in March. With the donation, the Shulani School purchased five tents large enough to provide classroom settings for their 1350 students. A painter was enlisted to draw the PAX logo on each tent and a banner was designed to carry the message, "A gift from PAX-Program of Academic Exchange in honor of PAX host mothers". In thanking PAX, the Shulani Girls School principal said, "This kind of support tells us that we are not alone. It gives us strength to fight those who push our generation towards the darkness of ignorance." Committed to the education of all young people worldwide, PAX holds especially high the value of educating young women who will become the mothers of tomorrow.

Accept Differences, Learning to Love

Since I arrived in August, I've had the most precious time of my entire life. Meeting new people and telling them about my country, culture, religion and beliefs and getting to know theirs, is absolutely priceless. Each exchange student, host family, school and community should be proud of participating in this program because it's helping build peace and tolerance in the world.

In addition, the exchange program is creating a new generation of citizens in every single country, a generation that can say "no" to discrimination, "no" to racism, "no" to war, "no" to hate and simply accept differences. I believe that if we are not different, there is no meaning for the word "world".

We might believe in different things, live in different places, speak different languages, but in the end, we share one common thing, and that is the love of happiness. Imagine if you were alone, you would not be happy. If I was alone, I would not be happy, but together we will be happy. And to be together, we have to accept differences, no matter what they are.

I want to thank the U.S. Department of State, PAX, my host family, my local coordinator and all of the exchange students that I've met for giving me the opportunity to learn how to love.

Yassine El Jed (YES, Qatar)
Hosted by the Garvis family
Berryville, VA

Spreading Smiles

Volunteering has become one of my favorite activities. I had never done it before coming here. I work in a nursing home in my city twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays for one to two hours a time. Delivering the mail and newspapers, serving food and drink, pushing wheel chairs and singing songs are some of my tasks.

One thing I learned from my volunteer experience is how to communicate with people. One day when I was talking with one of the grandmothers, she suddenly shouted at me and told me that she could not hear me. I was confused because some of the staff started looking at me. I tried several times to speak louder. Finally she could hear me! I was really happy.

Although I feel weird because I have to speak loudly when I'm talking with the residents, it does not matter to me because I



really enjoy it. Another reason I like to work there is because I have no reason not to smile. Whether I am tired or not, I always want to give my biggest smile to them. It's a pleasure when we can make other people smile.

Stella Monica (YES, Indonesia)
Hosted by the Gonzalez family
Berryville, VA

Halloween: Not Just for Kids

This year, I dressed up for my first Halloween. I was a gypsy for the night. I even went around to the neighborhood houses with my host family and friends. The candy that I received was a lot different than what we have in my country. I thought that I was too old for trick-or-treating, but this unforgettable event only happens once a year, so I didn't let myself miss it. Halloween is not about your age but about having fun.

Wahyuni Putri
(YES, Indonesia)
Hosted by the Paske family
Layton, UT



Tall and Small

We are loving our student, Natan Jurkovitz. He is polite, funny and very athletic. A perfect fit for our family! Last night at dinner, he said, "I've got the best family in the U.S.," which meant so much to us!

At school, he is the physical education department assistant, which he is loving. Soon, he will try out for the Lake Oswego High School basketball team. He's an offensive wizard on the basketball court. The coaches think he will have a huge impact on a team that finished second in the state last year.

He is 6'5" and our daughter is 5'0". Our daughter is a defensive specialist on the volleyball court, so they love texting each other on game day. Natan is the big brother our daughter has dreamed of.

Declan and Jen Bolger, host parents for
Natan Jurkovitz (Switzerland)
Lake Oswego, OR



Say It Again

I really like the American tradition of "smiling" all the time and I enjoy telling my friends about my country and traditions. It is the funniest thing that none of my friends can pronounce my name correctly! Once during a Diversity Club meeting, they made a contest about who could pronounce my name the best. I enjoy it when students ask me to say something in my own language and then try to repeat it.

Yrysgul Kerimbekova
(FLEX, Kyrgyzstan)
Hosted by the Thomas family
Hortonville, WI

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This fall, Kenyan YES student Oscar Ngombo mastered minigolf.

A "Hole" Lot of Adventures in Iowa

I have joined several clubs including the FCA (Fellowship for Christian Athletes) and the Math Club. I'm looking forward to joining the Debate Club and a soccer team, my favorite sport. I am involved in basketball and we just started conditioning.

I am also in a play named *Guys and Dolls*. In the various activities, I've been able to

make friends, lots of them, in fact.

We had a school cultural diversity workshop where I gave a presentation about my country. I did a great job and I am proud of it.

Oscar Ngombo (YES, Kenya)
Hosted by the Woods family
Cedar Rapids, IA

Anti-Bullying Program Inspires Young Leader

At my school there is a special program called "Breaking Down the Walls" that aims to reduce the number of bullying cases and victims. Only 350 students from the 1800 students in the school could do this program. Teachers, school staff, and parents chose the participants for their skills and leadership abilities. Surprisingly, I was chosen! I'm still asking myself who recommended me.

The program was really good. We learned how to work together. We learned about each other's backgrounds and personal secrets so that we could better understand the each other and deepen our relationships.

Through this program I learned that although some people in my school seem happy, that in reality, they face a lot of problems and obstacles. They always cover it with their smiles and cheerful acts. It taught me not to judge a person by their regular behavior but by their deepest true feelings.

Hafiz Fadillah (YES, Indonesia)
Hosted by the Foss family
Kent, WA



Another Time

Host mother Jennifer Walker and Indonesian YES student Josephine Mintardjo show off their homemade renaissance clothing at a festival in St. Paul, Minnesota.

PAX—Program of Academic Exchange is a not-for-profit educational foundation. Established in 1990, PAX sponsors international high school students from over 40 nations on five and ten month academic homestay programs.

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Thank you for submitting letters to PAX Press. Because of space limitations, however, we are unable to print each letter in its entirety.

PAX Press is printed on recycled paper with soy based ink.

Shedding a New Light

For the past two and a half months, I've spent twenty-four hours of every day with new people in the community. For me, it is like the adjustment my eyes do when I go between different levels of light. In the beginning, I was temporarily blind, and then I adjusted to be able to see again.

Thank you to PAX for finding a very good host family for me. They are very honest, open minded, warm and helpful. They make everything good just like my "own family".

I have had many amazing days riding my bike to school, meeting other Indonesians, going to Los Angeles, watching movies and cooking with my family. I even went to a Justin Bieber concert. I never imagined I would do these activities.

Being a student in a U.S. school with a multiracial student body, moving class system, no uniform (so you can express yourself more) and school activities is new. I've made friends, shared cultures and languages, enjoyed theme days and joined clubs (Woman Ignite, International Club, TV & Film Club, Health Club).

Kenty Regina (YES, Indonesia)
Hosted by the Javaheri family
San Leandro, CA



Keep on Rockin'

On the 27th of September my host dad and I went to Denver to the Red Hot Chili Peppers concert. Honestly, I've never been to a concert before! The RHCP is my favorite band, so you can imagine how excited I was! The concert took place in the Pepsi Center, the biggest arena I've ever seen. The Red Hot Chili Peppers were really "HOT"! The audience was crazy, and so was I. Thank you, dad, for making my dreams come true!

Kristina Savchuk (FLEX, Russia)
Hosted by Davidson family
Fort Collins, CO

Pulling Out All the Stops

Being part of a different country starts with joining in on the things around you. That's why I have already joined some clubs and activities. The most enjoyable one is Art Club. We're creating some monuments for the school and making greeting cards for kids. I also work on the "foreign exchange students page" for the school yearbook. I have joined the Future Farmers of America. In that club, we do activities and have meetings about American farming. We will be selling some fruit and food to get money for club activities. For a forestry competition, we are learning to recognize and measure the trees and find our way with a compass. Something that I wanted to do for a long time is Theater Club. We are preparing a play and competing with other schools.

Besides all of these activities, I am volunteering, which makes me feel good because I am doing something to help people. My last job was at a football game where I helped sell food for the school. Then I prepared the Sunday lunch at church. When I have time, I also volunteer at a Salvation Army second hand clothes shop.

These things keep me busy, help me get to know more people, and give me the chance to represent my country.

Eltaj Hasanova (FLEX, Azerbaijan)
Hosted by the Dearmin family
Lyle, MN



There's No Stumping Us

In Clearwater, Florida, Yunfan Jiang (China), Onjira Kiatchalermkhun (Thailand) and Yixin Li (China) solve a UNICEF puzzle.

Opportunity Knocked

I have been learning English for ten years. It is one of my life goals to speak two foreign languages fluently. I was looking for a way to make my dream come true when I learned about FLEX. It has three rounds of competition. It sounds very easy, doesn't it? But it is really difficult to wait more than six months for the results.

Last year I couldn't imagine that I would live in Minneapolis and that I would have the best host family ever, and that I would know all of the awesome people at Southwest High School. Now I can't imagine how I will go back to Ukraine because these people are really important to me! I'm the happiest person that they are my friends.

Yelyzaveta Petrova (FLEX, Ukraine)
Hosted by the Haines family
Minneapolis, MN

Starring Kristina

Everything is different here. I feel like I'm in an American movie and I am the main character.

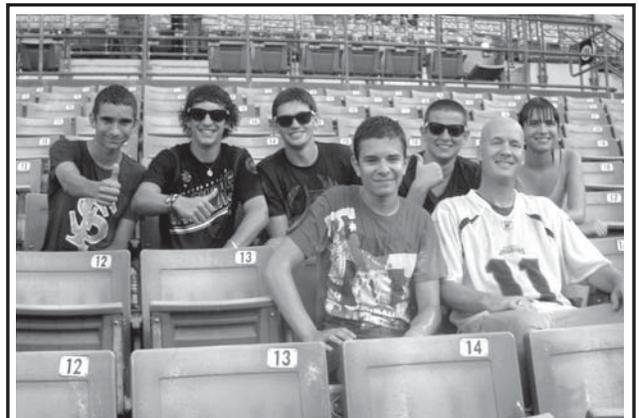
My host family is perfect. I used to live in a large city with only my mother and grandmother. Here I live in a small town with a big family and lots of relatives. I really appreciate their help and kindness.

One thing I definitely love is my school. I want to be a journalist and now I have the opportunity to study journalism. My first class is Media Arts, where we make a newspaper every day. The second class is choir, where I found out that I love singing. The last class is English with writing and reading, my favorite activity during free time! I am also busy with volleyball, dance and play practices for the musical *Cinderella*.

Kristina Makarenko (FLEX, Russia)
Hosted by the O'Connor family
Blooming Prairie, MN



Russian FLEX student Kristina Makarenko with her host sister, Megan



Swedish student Luke Oxhammar, Chris Magnell, and in the back, Michael Hard, and Spaniards Pedro Arroyo, Ales Ugarteburu, Inigo Barrietaba and June Errasti

You Can't Chase Away These Diehard Fans

With the help of my son, Michael Hard, host father Chris Magnell and his son, Wesley, we took my students to the Jacksonville Jaguar - Cincinnati game. The group enjoyed a tailgate party of hot dogs, hamburgers and chips, and they had a great time throwing the football around.

Despite a losing game and the threat of black clouds and heavy rain, the students decided to stay with nine minutes left in the game. The stands quickly emptied out except for our diehard fans!

Susan James, Community Coordinator
St. Augustine, FL

Small Town Yields Big Opportunities

Coming from a city to a small town with open fields and cattle has definitely been quite a change, but it's been the best change I've ever had in my life.

School is different and so are the courses. I'm taking forensic science, which I would not have been able to take as a high school class back home in India. I've also been volunteering at a ReUse center where we recycle hardware and sell it at a lower price. Playing volleyball and being part of the Scholar's Bowl are some of my other activities.

Kansas is keeping me busy with so much to see and millions of pictures to take, so that I can remember this year as one of best in my life.

Mallika David (India)
Hosted by the Miller family
Little River, KS



Granting Wishes

In Lehi, Utah, Ghada Jerfel dressed up to hand out Halloween candy with the City Youth Council. The Tunisian YES student lives with the Malone family.



The Making of a Great Jack O'Lantern

Aisarina Zhibek picked out this whopper of a pumpkin for her jack o'lantern. The FLEX student from Kazakhstan said, "After carving pumpkins, trick-or-treating and having fun with my family and friends, I can totally say that Halloween is one of my favorite celebrations!" The Williams family hosts Aisarina in Dallas, Georgia.

Many Differences

School is so different than in Finland. There are longer classes and the breaks are only five minutes. Here in my school, there are two lunchtimes and the food is very different. In Finland, we don't have hamburgers or pizza in school. The teachers are very serious about your being on time, but then if you are not in school one day, you can just come in and say why. Here, we need to show the reasons in a notebook and have a parent's signature. Also here, students are eating in almost every class. We can't do that in Finland.

In the community, everything is very different. People are so friendly and talkative. This is the biggest thing that surprised me.

I played basketball in the school's open gym in October. It was a very good



Host mother Eva Olsen and Karoliina Koivuisto (Finland)



Dina Shamisheva (FLEX, Kazakhstan), Lilit Khghatyan (FLEX, Armenia), host mother Cecelia Parker, Artem Kornev (FLEX, Russia), Antoan Peev (YES, Bulgaria) and Sea Leau Pyaeporn (Thailand)

First Halloween: So Fun, It's Scary

We don't have Halloween in our countries, so it was very interesting and exciting to carve our first Halloween pumpkins. We went to a pumpkin field to choose our pumpkins and then to my house to carve them. We had a great time together doing this work. I like to spend time with

the other exchange students, so it was a good opportunity to do so. Thank you to my host mom, Sandra Wingert, for this great idea.

Dina Shamisheva (FLEX, Kazakhstan)
Hosted by Wingert family
Greencastle, PA

Not Too Old for Free Candy

As we don't celebrate Halloween in Russia, my first Halloween was the best day of my American life. I went to many parties with family and friends before the 31st of October, but it was nothing compared to the evening of the 31st when my friends invited me to go trick-or-treating. At 7 p.m. our big group in costumes went house to house for candies. As my friend Rachael says, "You're never too old for free candy!" I wore a supergirl costume. People were friendly and gave us candy or juice. Afterward we went to a haunted house in Blooming Prairie that was decorated for Halloween. Everything was scary in there: people in real looking costumes, graveyards and strange sounds. I was scared to go in! My friends went through and then came back, grabbed my hand and ran into this dark place with me. It was so scary, but now we all laugh about it.

Kristina Makarenko (FLEX, Russia)
Hosted by O'Connor family
Blooming Prairie, MN

experience to play even though I didn't make the team in the November try-outs. I met lots of new people. Now I have time for my hobby, figure skating. I have skating club on Tuesdays and Fridays, and I can go other days if I want. I also do yoga.

My life here is so busy, which is good because then I can't be homesick. I have less free time here than in Finland, but I still have time for family, hobbies, friends and so on. Here we do more things with family, which is good because family is the most important part of the experience. We go out more often to restaurants. I don't go to church in Finland with my family, but I find it is a good experience here.

People do things in different ways than in my home country. The idea is to learn about these. It is not a holiday year. You need to go to school and do homework and housework. That's normal life.

The nicest thing my wonderful host family has done is give me this experience. This year with them is something that I can never forget.

After this year I think I will be more like an adult, able to think in different ways with more points of view and possessing a respect for life and different people.

Karoliina Koivuisto (Finland)
Hosted by the Olsen family
Taylorsville, UT



Pumpkin Patch Kid

I went to a pumpkin patch for Halloween. I was very surprised by the size of the pumpkins. Some were bigger than my face. They were so heavy that I couldn't carry them by myself. In Japan, we don't celebrate Halloween so this is the first time that I went to a pumpkin patch. It was so fun to pick the pumpkins. We got twenty pumpkins for free. I'm looking forward to carving them.

Kaede Miyata (Japan)
Hosted by the Lewis family
Scottsbluff, NE



Fall Festivities

On October 14th, Coordinator Jeff Schmatt brought his PAX students to Bloomsbury Farms in Atkins, Iowa. After seeing seventeen acres of pumpkin fields, the students went in the corn maze, through the haunted barns and launched the pumpkin cannon. In the front are Marco Marco (YES, Tanzania), Cristina Itarte (Spain), Oscar Ngombo (YES, Kenya) and Guillermo Vega (Spain). Standing are Jeanine Kaemper (Germany), Menna-Tallah Mohamed Sherif Abozied (YES, Egypt), Kuralay Talgat (FLEX, Kazakhstan), Arthur Piret (Belgium), Jasmine Deng (China), Tim Schwarzwald (Germany), Madelen Kittelsen (Norway) and Nathalie Blasin (Belgium).



Condiments Rule

Miss Mustard (Chanhwi Park from South Korea) and Lady Ketchup (Thunchanok Rusmeerkset from Thailand) are well loved in Florida. Host father Eric Quinones tells us that Thunchanok is sure that ketchup is a food group. She puts it on everything, so the family now buys it by the gallon!



Gone Haunting

Halloween is the time for horror stories, movies and, of course, haunted experiences! On October 20 my coordinator, Shari Osterude, organized a wonderful trip to Cottage Grove with the other exchange students. It was a dark night and we were scared and excited. First, we walked through three haunted houses, all while holding each other's hands. The funniest part was when somebody started to scream, everybody would scream even if there wasn't something scary. Then we went on a hayride, which we enjoyed a lot. Finally, we gathered near a fire to take pictures and talk about the experience we just had. It was scary, fun, and creepy but cool all at once. It was an epic night!

Yuliya Dudnitska (FLEX, Ukraine)
Hosted by the Rother family
Apple Valley, MN



Monster Pumpkins

YES student Omar Al-Rabi from Gaza picked out his favorite pumpkin at a contest in San Luis Obispo, California. He is hosted by the Wolff family.

Traditions: Pioneer Times to Present Day

On October 6, the central Kansas PAX group learned about American history and culture through two activities. The first was a visit to the Maxwell Wildlife Refuge. They saw buffalo up close on a tram tour, and then they visited with actors at a Rendezvous Mountain Men event that recreated different aspects of 1800's pioneer life. Afterward, the students headed to my house for an early taste of Halloween. There were costumes on hand, which the students used for a costume contest. They also consumed a variety of Halloween treats and participated in a pumpkin-carving contest.

Nancy Perrin, Community Coordinator
McPherson, KS



Back to the Colonial Era

I went to a colonial fair in Mercersburg. At that event everything was set in the 1700's. I learned about the French and Indian War, traditional clothes, food and daily life in that time. There was a reenactment of a skirmish with muskets. I took this picture with French soldiers from 1755.

Rosmalin Hama (YES, Thailand)
Hosted by the Martin family
Mercersburg, PA



First Pitch

In Ohio, Emilio Bordona Fernandez didn't just go to a minor league baseball game. The Spaniard threw the ceremonial first pitch! His coordinator, Darryl Anderson, arranged Emilio's exhilarating experience.



A Baker is Born

Pattarintorn Ongphaitoon loves cookies! Because she doesn't have an oven in her house in Thailand, she had never baked cookies before coming to her host home in Northfield, Massachusetts. Despite this, the Gorzocski family said that she seemed very much at ease during her first baking experience. And the results were delicious and quickly devoured.



Sharing Food, Bringing Hope

In Columbia, Missouri, FLEX students Mihaela Petrov from Moldova, Firuza Alieva from Tajikistan and Alisa Sungatulina from Russia volunteered at the Central Missouri Food Bank where they packaged free produce for use in food pantries and soup kitchens. FLEX Cluster Director Joy Brumbaugh organized the service activity.

Flavors of the World

It is our tradition to combine the new student orientation with a family potluck where the students make a dish from their country. For example, Pauline DiCocco from Belgium made a chocolate mousse. The recipe was created by her sister and was absolutely divine! There were also reviews of the traditional gazpacho that Shio-Mhara Roldan Andrade from Spain made, as well as for the other student dishes.

Kathleen Cassidy
PAX / A-SMYLE Coordinator
North Idaho

Sampling the international cuisine at the Bonners Ferry dinner are Elisabeth Sougne (Belgium), Sandra Brkanovic (A-SMYLE, Montenegro) and Elena Gomez de Salazar (Spain) and their hosts.



Hurricane Isaac

My first month in New Orleans was really exciting! I experienced my first hurricane. It was really crazy wind. We stayed home for nearly five days.

There are only 400 students in my school. They are really kind and helpful. The teachers there are also very good. They asked me if I understood them and gave me a lot of help.

My host family must be the best one! There are six people. It is a big family. My mom always gives me things I need. My dad and the sitter pick me up after school. I play basketball with my brother and his friends. Every Sunday, we go to church. Every Wednesday and Friday, there is a youth service, so sometimes I go with my sister and brother.

Everything here is interesting and full of love.

Ge Cheng (China)
Hosted by the Edwards family
New Orleans, LA

Strike!

I learned a lot of new things in the first week. My host family took me bowling. My country has bowling, but it was the first time I played because my village does not have a place for it. I had only done bowling on the computer. My host sister and I bowled together. It was so fun. We wore special shoes to play. Finally I could touch a real bowling ball, which has three holes for holding it. The nine pins were the target. I took a breath, got started and wham! I lost, but I was good enough for my first time playing.

Anis Wulandari (YES, Indonesia)
Hosted by the Graf family
Appleton, WI



Going the Extra Mile

Karim likes to go the extra mile.

He picks up little jobs for pocket money. He pulls weeds, brings in summer furniture, mulches plants and helps clients get ready for winter.

At school, Karim has a full academic load and plays American football. He is good at football even though he never played before! He is also in clubs. With the Key Club, he just put on a spaghetti supper to raise scholarship money. Another club he belongs to is the International Club. This morning he made tea for his part in a Spanish class project.

Already Karim has done about 40 hours of community service. Last weekend he went to a former "client" and worked for four hours. When it came time to get paid, Karim said that he would prefer not to get paid because he'd rather have the hours count as community service.

Cliff Fournier, host father for
Karim Adel Miart (YES, Lebanon)
Orange, MA



Big Apple Adventure

Before heading to their host communities, these Japanese students got to know New York City during a three-day PAX orientation. Along with visiting major sites like the United Nations, the teens attended workshops on cultural adjustment, personal safety and problem solving.

Unveiling Hidden Skills

Last month I had a strange and funny situation when I missed my bus after school. I was very scared but even then I did not lose hope. I stopped another bus and requested them to inform my bus. When they could not contact my bus, they requested another bus that was resting at a garage to take me to my bus. Finally I was able to get on my bus.

I also did lots of new activities this past month, including going to the wedding of our neighbor's son. This was my first time attending a Christian wedding like that.

During homecoming week, I volunteered to help with the hallway decorations. My group won the decorating competition! I enjoyed the homecoming parade, games and dance, which were something new and different.

Also this fall, I did some volunteer activities like helping at church, working at a food pantry, helping in the library, setting up tents, selling raffle tickets at the Family Parish Picnic and folding newspapers and bulletins for Sunday prayer services.

In school I joined the Future Business Leaders of America. I even went to the FBLA conference in Appleton and met the national champion. I joined Bear Facts, the school article-writing club. These are new and different things and I am enjoying them.

My new adventure in the United States has taught me lots of things. It has taught me how to become strong and not to give up. It has turned me into a new person and introduced me to my hidden skills.

Tabassum Shahjahan (YES, Bangladesh)
Hosted by the Pennings family
Bonduel, WI



Moldova Meets Missouri

My host family is very inspiring! Last weekend we went to a corn maze at night. It was so exciting to run through it and look for the checkpoints. Even though we found just three of the eight checkpoints, it didn't matter because we had fun.

There are many people who share with me the real American culture: card games, movies and popcorn, Friday night football games and Sunday lunch with my host grandparents. Like a good exchange student, I try to share my culture by making *borscht*, our national soup, by showing pictures of Moldova and by teaching some words in Romanian. It's amazing when you find people who are ready to be part of your world and let you be a part of theirs.

Mihaela Petrov (FLEX, Moldova)
Hosted by the Peters family
Moberly, MO



Hey, I Know You!

On the first day of school, Yaofang Zhang (China), Mathilde Junger (Belgium) and Pauline Schriech (Germany) saw a familiar face. It was their PAX coordinator, Debbie Evans, who teaches at the Connecticut school.



Sound the Trumpets

In Mississippi, Rebecca Gasperini (Italy) takes a break from marching band with her host mother, Maria Coleman.

Busting Stereotypes

Before I came here, I thought most American students didn't study very much, but I was wrong. High school in America is very different from back home and it is a lot more fun than home, too. Here, I see most students have a job and still go to school. It is interesting living with American students. Sometimes I miss home. I overcome this by doing a lot of activities like American football, soccer, cross-country and track, which are sports I did not do back home. I love my host family and friends.

Marco Thomas Marco (YES, Tanzania)
Hosted by the Jacobmeyer family
Cedar Rapids, IA



Powderpuff Dilemma

When Kathleen Edzard's cross-country running coach requested that she and her teammates *not* play in the homecoming powderpuff football game, the German student needed advice. The coach feared that the runners might get hurt, even though there is no tackling in girl's football. After consulting with her North Dakota hosts and coordinator, Kathleen decided to play. With the MacGregor family supporting her in the stands, Kathleen carried the ball a few times, suffered no injuries, and helped the Juniors win!



Friday Night Lights

Host father Joe Lukas said, "I am very proud, indeed!" when Georgian FLEX student Giorgo Rostomashvili joined his Mississippi high school football team.

Expanded My Thinking

What surprised me about my school and community are their traditions. Without my family I could not understand anything around me because it's really different here: the way people eat, the food, how they deal with each other, what you say if somebody does something to you, and how you solve problems. All of these things and many others are not the same. It was a little hard to learn everything so fast, but thanks to my family, I did.

I like my school so much. Everything is perfect. I joined many clubs like the Key Club and the International Club, and I'm a

varsity soccer player.

My family has done so many nice things. They took me to many places where I had so much fun. They are trying hard to make it a great year for me.

This experience is making my way of thinking so much better than before. I now realize that life doesn't stop at one place or one period. It's so complicated. The more you live and try different things, the much better you will live your life. That's what I think I'm gaining from this experience.

Ibrahim Abu Khiran (YES, West Bank)
Hosted by the Chapman family
Orange, MA



Hup, Two, Three, Four

Shaurya Lenka is number 21 for the Frontier Falcons! The Byrd family hosts the YES student from India in Brookston, Indiana.

SCHOOL SPIRIT



Victory for Victor

Yaofang (Victor) Zhang helped his cross-country team beat his school rivals. The Chinese student is hosted by the Walsh family in Ledyard, Connecticut.

A Quick Start

Within the first hours of my arrival in Vermont, I went to practice with the school soccer team. I met the coaches and most of the players on the team. That's what gave me the chance to make a lot of friends before my school started.

I came to teach people about my great, small country, Palestine, and to learn from people here. My job this year is not easy but when you have a good family to live with, a good community to communicate with, and good friends, your experience can be fantastic as it is for me so far.

Ahmad Ladadweh (YES, West Bank)
Hosted by the Durfee family
Shaftsbury, VT



Mjellma Vula is the third player.

A Rookie Finds Success

I joined the tennis team this fall. I had never played before but I saw it as a new fun thing to try. The coaches were so nice and they worked with me a lot. I started to really like the tennis part of it. The girls on the team made me feel part of the big family we created. Before I knew it, I was playing my first game! I lost the first one, but I won other ones. Going to other cities to play was so much fun even though at the end of the day we would be exhausted from playing three or four games. The coach was there with his jokes to make us feel relaxed.

Being part of that team helped me grow and gain a better understanding of the American sports culture. And, it definitely made me step out of my comfort zone! I can't wait for our tennis team party to celebrate a successful season.

Mjellma Vula (YES, Kosovo)
Hosted by the Everingham family
Valley Center, KS



Junior Homecoming Maid

In Mississippi, Shane McCown escorted his South Korean host daughter, Suh Eun Lee, onto the football field where she was crowned the Junior Homecoming Maid for Kosciusko High School.

New Team, New Friends

I joined the cross-country team at my high school. I had never run cross-country, so I was anxious about practice. But it was not too hard, and I adapted to it sooner than I thought I would. Of course, I had a hard time understanding what the coach and my teammates were saying at first, but as we ran together, I made a lot of friends on the team. My favorite memory was fundraising at a local pizzeria. I had a great time with them. Although I've run six meets and received four ribbons, the greatest thing I've gained through running cross-country are friends.

Kotaro Imai (Japan)
Hosted by the Schroeder family
Hanover, IN



Our Favorite Violinist

It was a great honor for South Korean Chanwi Park to be selected for the prestigious Pinellas Youth Symphony in Clearwater, Florida. Chanwi's very proud hosts, the Gorecki family, pose with her after her first concert.

If Only the Alarm Didn't Ring So Early

Among the differences between the U.S. and Georgia, the biggest one is school. First of all, most high schools here are huge with thousands of students. In my home country we don't change classrooms and we don't have marching bands, nor so many buses, developed sport teams and school spirit.

Because of these huge changes, the first couple of days were confusing. I could not find classes easily. I could not open my locker. I had no friends. I needed to translate to understand better and I was tired. But after one week, everything changed. I solved all the problems.

There's only one problem that I will never solve — having to wake up at 6:00 am!

Bakar Khachidze (FLEX, Georgia)
Hosted by the Stang family
Hilliard, OH



March On

After a quick break with Norwegian Solvaer Espeland, German Mira Harmeier is ready to perform again with her band. The two girls live in the Tampa, Florida area.



Psyched for the Game

Lukas Herfort proudly wears number 31 for his high school football team. The Ballmer family hosts the German student in Hillsdale, Michigan.



Kickin' It

Pedro Arroyo of Spain made the football team as a kicker and played his first game on October 18. He is hosted by the McLeod family in St. Augustine, Florida.

Proud to Be a Wisconsin Girl

Many denote the United States to be a fast paced society, however, I have slowly become acquainted with the simplicity of life in Wisconsin. Appleton is home to over 72,000 people and is surrounded by vast open cornfields and a cocktail of rich vegetation.

Welcomed by colossal trucks and hunting fanatics, I could only imagine what the next few months would be like. My host family gradually introduced me to a new manner of thinking. As I became soaked in their lifestyle, a sense of belonging was established. My involvement in their lives was valued, so I realized the true foundations of a family. Things like siding a shed, improving at school and advancing in karate training evoked my sense of accomplishment and made my American parents proud. Mutual understanding and respect initiated the growing love I have for them.

Above all, they nurture my independence. I am urged to make decisions and leap beyond my boundaries. Parachuting into uncharted land truly awakens ones personality. I am eager to uncover the adventures I am to travel and unlock the hidden treasures of America, county life and family.

Leigh-Anne Bosch (YES, South Africa)
Hosted by the Frelich family
Appleton, WI



On Top in Utah

My family and I've gone on many trips. I've checked off six states in one and a half months! We enjoyed Yellowstone, Flaming Gorge, dinosaur museums, countless hikes and events. I am the first Bahraini ever to visit so many national parks!

The phrase "I thought I was athletic back home and now I know for sure that I'm not" became a usual one for my new family as we hiked. The highest point in my country is Smoke Mountain, Jabal Al-Dukhan, which is 440 feet high, so hiking 6730 feet to the Timpanogos Cave was astounding for me!

I am fortunate to be with an active family. I have experienced things that I would never have thought of and things that I used to think were impossible. I am so thankful to the Phillips family!

Noor Husain (YES, Bahrain)
Hosted by the Phillips family
Lehi, UT

Revolutionary Vermont

Abdul Fatawu Sumaila (YES, Ghana) and Shazeen Sherzad (YES, Pakistan) posed with actors depicting American Revolutionary War life at the Shaftsbury Colonial Day celebration. The two even signed a scroll that was put in a time capsule to be opened in 2062.



Georgia: This is Braves Country

"I went to the second baseball game of my life. We had really good seats so we were able to see the Atlanta Braves in great detail," Priscille Guichon (France) writes. She is pictured with her host sister, Solange Lord.

Life Across America

Minnesota Magic

I have an awesome host family. My lovely host mom is a multitasking woman who works with special education students. She is an amazing cook and a hard working landscaper as well. My host brother is kind and humble. He is in college and helps with the landscape work. My exchange brother is from South Korea and is my same age. He is a very good soccer player.

Slowly people have begun to know me and I have made a lot of friends. In fact, I have become popular in school as I am the first ever exchange student from India at Thomas Edison High School.

This year I was elected to the student council and I am part of the Asian Cultural Club. I will also be playing basketball for the school team.

Studies are totally different here. My school in India is stricter compared to what I see here. They are tougher, too. We never have enough



Sumit is on the left.

time to complete our work. Using an electronic gadget other than a watch is not allowed in Indian schools. Here, we don't have a lot of homework, but we have a lot of reading. I have time to chill out after my homework is done, which seems good to me.

It is very exciting to live in such a wonderful surrounding.

Sumit Mitra (YES, India)
Hosted by the Nygren family
Minneapolis, MN

Cherishing Family In Wisconsin

The past two months have helped me break the stereotype of seeing Americans as self-centered. It has really taught me how loving and caring they are and how they value the opinion of others, even though they have their reservations and opinions. They have taught me the importance of family values and the importance of being there for everyone in your family. I admire my host mom for this. Even though she has a stressful job, she makes sure that she is always there for her family, especially for us, the children. My mother attends most, if not all, of our activities. We have family time when we come together to play games and talk.

Precious Augustine (YES, Nigeria)
Hosted by the Strutz family
Bonduel, WI



PAX on Parade in Portland, Oregon

Soon after they arrived, YES students Genting Sya (Indonesia), Widya Mashita (Indonesia), Marah Mohammed (Bahrain) and Majed Al Fawal (Lebanon) marched in the Multnomah Days parade in their national costumes. They helped their host families throw candies and gave out PAX flyers to the watchers. They also volunteered with these children at the non-profit Willowbrook arts camp. Coordinators Maranee Sanders and Janet Trygstad made the arrangements for the PAX students to participate in this event that attracted 1000 local participants and families.

Ramadan in Pennsylvania

My first Islamic feast abroad was a unique experience because the religious culture is different from what we do in Indonesia. Early in the morning I went to the mosque near my house. I became acquainted with two girls whom I had met previously at a mini market. We prayed together. In their culture, they do not use *mukenah*, the special clothing that our Muslim women use when praying. After the *ied* prayer, I went to the house of a friend from the mosque. They asked about the differences, and I told them about the Indonesian Muslim cultures and foods: the special *Idul Fitri* meal,

Louisiana Rocks

I'm proud that my school is very popular in Shreveport! At first, I found it difficult to study because my English was not so good, but then, step-by-step, it got better. My favorite classes are English and French III. I'm teaching my fellow classmates Russian.



Tygran is on the left.

In English class we do different tasks and games. French is a language for your soul, it seems to me. The students are very friendly and so is my French teacher, Mr. Aillet.

Shreveport is a rather big city, and there are a lot of places to visit. I used to run every morning to enjoy the views. There are more opportunities than in my town in Ukraine.

I love my host family. They are pretty good people. On my birthday, they gave me a party with all of their relatives.

This experience has really helped me to be more self-sufficient and realize that I'm already an adult.

Tygran Daniyelyan (FLEX, Ukraine)
Hosted by the Odom family
Shreveport, LA

New York

Sleepovers and Road Trips

It is so wonderful here, I love my host family and I feel so comfortable. The Maddens are kind and it is a lot of fun with them. They are older people. I have no host sisters and brothers but that is fine with me. Last week they took me to Washington, D.C. and I had such a great time. This weekend I had my first American sleepover at a friend's house. We played *Just Dance* on the Wii. Moreover, we went to a haunted house. It was my first time and it was scary, but I had a great time.

Lena Klöse (Germany)
Hosted by the Madden family
Elmira, NY

Isnu Arini (YES, Indonesia)
Hosted by the Leiby family
Williamsport, PA



Introducing Serbia

"I did not wait very long to give a presentation on my home country, Serbia. Here I am speaking to the Lee's Summit Missouri Kiwanis Club," A-SYMLE scholar Aleksa Vujanovic told us. "They had a lot of questions and the president gave me a gift after the program."



Ghada Jerfel says Tunisian bread goes best with *ijet merguez*, the dish she prepared.

Tunisian Spice

I am proud to be Tunisia's ambassador in Lehi, Utah. I get to tell people about the culture I come from: a complete blend of various civilizations from the Romans to Arabs, French, etc. Sharing this enriches my host community and helps me appreciate the background I was brought up in and the value of family.

Getting to live with a Mormon family is definitely a good part of my experience. Before I came here, I didn't know what Mormonism was, but now I do and it is interesting.

I am grateful to be here and to my parents who made it easy for me to live this dream.

Ghada Jerfel (YES, Tunisia)
Hosted by the Malone family
Lehi, UT



Funnel Cake Fundraiser

In my new city, I did community service by making and selling funnel cakes (yum!) for the Kiwanis Club at the annual Oktoberfest. The Kiwanis Club uses the money to do many good things in the community, like offer college scholarships, sponsor baseball teams, and help the poor and homeless. While I was having fun working, I discovered what a small world we live in. I met two people from Serbia who now live in Lee's Summit!

Aleksa Vujanovic (ASYMLE, Serbia)
Hosted by the Blunt family
Lee's Summit, MO



Hoppy Days in Ohio

Stephanie Sippli (Germany) loved the kangaroos at the Columbus Zoo, which she visited with her hosts, Liz and Jim Stitzel.

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

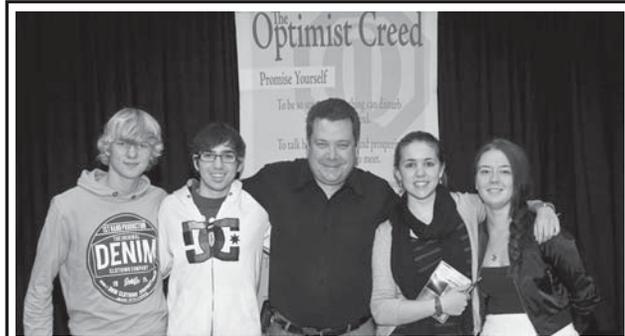
Sharing the Kyrgyz Cuisine

Ash is our Kyrgyz traditional meal. The main ingredient is rice. On August 31st, the Independence Day of my country, I decided to cook *ash* for my host family. This meal includes ingredients that can be found in every American grocery store.

At the beginning of my cooking process everything seemed good. After a while, I checked the pot and realized that the brown rice was not cooked yet. I said to myself, "It probably needs more time to cook." And it did! It took two hours for this meal to finally be done. I didn't know that it would take that much time to cook brown rice. In Kyrgyzstan it takes just a half an hour. It tasted pretty good. I served the *ash* with tomato salad, and I decorated the table with national things and my country's flag.

It was great to share something from my motherland with my host family.

Aida Oktombekova (FLEX, Kyrgyzstan)
Hosted by the Moe family
Hayfield, MN



International Education Week Enlivens Youth

This group was aglow after making International Education Week presentations about their homelands to the Cedar Rapids Optimist Club. Pictured are Tim Schwarzwald (Germany), Guillermo Vega (Spain), Coordinator Jeff Schmitt, his host daughter Nathalie Blasin (Belgium) and Madelen Kittelsen (Norway). All of the students attend Mount Vernon High School in Iowa.

Rubicon Photo

Unmasking a New Generation

I'd like to tell you about the Youth Leadership Initiative. In this program the participants learn to better understand other cultures. During fall break, the first of three retreats took place. There were lots of training sessions and fun activities.

In one exercise, participants painted their masks to show how they saw their partner. Later on the same mask, the partners drew how they imagined themselves. It showed us that people usually do not see us the same way we see ourselves.

We typically meet twice a week throughout the school year to take action, learn something new and teach others. Some other exchange students joined, too, as well as teens of different nations, races, cultures and religions. The diversity of the group helps us reach our goal: a generation of strong leaders!

Evgeny Lapin (FLEX, Russia)
Hosted by the Johnson family
St. Paul, MN



World Food Day

Classmates at Ahmad Ladadweh's high school in Shaftsbury, Vermont, went wild for the Palestinian sweet, *awamah*, brought in by the West Bank YES student.

Wings of Freedom

Last September 18th, my civics class went on the Wings of Freedom Tour, a WWII living history event at the Orange Municipal Airport. There were three vintage WWII aircraft: Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress, Consolidated B-24 Liberator, and the North American P-51 Mustang. We had the chance to explore the aircraft inside and out! We also learned about the treasures of aviation history. I feel so grateful for this opportunity.

Decky Novianoor (YES, Indonesia)
Hosted by Chapman family
Orange, MA



Go GREEN and Win Prizes

The PAX Class of 2012 helped to make the world a greener place to live. You can, too! Every PAX Goes GREEN contest entry receives a "thank you" gift and a chance to win 1st or 2nd prize. For contest info, go to www.pax.org/whats_new.php.



Fostering Understanding

After YES student Adan Daibes spoke to the Soroptimist International group in San Luis Obispo, California, the vice president, Barbara Farber raved, "She was really interesting and a good ambassador for Israel. We all enjoyed learning from her, such as whom you can hug and when. We are all so different and yet the same."

Attention American High School Students:

You Can Study Abroad Next Year with a Full Scholarship
Awarded by the U.S. Department of State!

Kennedy-Lugar YES Abroad finalists study in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Egypt, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mali (semester), Morocco, Oman, South Africa, Thailand, Tunisia, or Turkey. To find out more about this post 9/11 program focused on increasing understanding between people in the U.S. and countries with significant Muslim populations, go to www.yesprograms.org/yesabroad. The deadline for the 2013-14 school year is January 10, 2013.

The Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Program (CBYX) has programs for high school students and young adults (18-24) to study in Germany. Prior German language skills are not required. Application deadlines vary. For more information, visit <http://exchanges.state.gov/youth/programs/cbyx.html>.

The American Youth Leadership Program offers opportunities for American high students and educators to travel abroad on a 3 to 4 week long exchange program to gain firsthand knowledge of foreign cultures and to collaborate on solving global issues. In 2013, more than 140 selected participants will be able to travel to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Malaysia and Singapore, Peru, Paraguay, Samoa and Uganda. Deadlines vary, so check <http://exchanges.state.gov/youth/programs/ylp/current-youth-leaderships-programs.html>.



Our German Son

At the Bismarck, North Dakota airport, the Carlson family welcomed with their new addition, Julian Wilhelm from Germany.



Sister Act

In Schenectady, New York, Miriam Camara (Spain) and her host sister Kylene DiStefano became fast friends.



No Problemo

Italian Pierpaolo Regnoni Macera had no trouble finding the Westwood-Pignatello at the airport in Minnesota.

Recipe for Happiness

Jana, our German exchange student, celebrated her 16th birthday one month after her arrival. I emailed her mom for a favorite cake recipe. This is the recipe I got: 1 pound flour, 1 baking powder, 6 ounces sugar, 1 vanilla sugar, 375 ml milk, half pound butter, 4 eggs all mixed, and at the end, take one bar baking chocolate, grated, and mix it into the dough.

I wasn't worried about converting the metric, but I had hoped to get some measurements for the baking powder and the vanilla sugar (a mystery ingredient) so I emailed her mom again and was told "One of each. It is very simple." I finally asked Jana about this and she told me that in Germany these items come prepackaged in individual units. I was about to give up when I found a German food section at another local grocery and actually found these packets!

My practice cake didn't turn out so well, but I made a second attempt using cocoa powder instead of grated chocolate, totally guessing the amounts and using a Bundt pan according to Jana's feedback. This time I got pretty close! We topped the cake with candles sent from home and celebrated her sweet sixteen!

Alex Pieper, host mother for
Jana Duering (Germany)
Belgium, WI



Spaniard Georgina Moya, second, with her host sisters and parents before a dance.

Loved Her from the Start

Being host parents is a new experience for us. Georgina arrived from Barcelona, Spain less than eight weeks ago, yet it feels like she has lived with us forever. It is almost like birth...we loved her from the moment we met her and she has fit right into our family. Having our children in the same school and one of them in the same grade has helped Georgina adjust.

Georgina has been very involved at school and is getting used to "homework" which she doesn't normally have much of at home. She played volleyball this fall and is marching with the band. She plays the piano and is in the percussion section of the band. The cymbals are her favorite.

It is hard to believe anyone could have a better experience with an exchange student and we would recommend it to anyone thinking about inviting a student into their home.

Celeste Neumann Zurfluh, host mother for
Georgina Moya (Spain)
Wisconsin Rapids, WI



Nigerian YES student Precious Augustine is front and center.

Truly Precious

This year, we are the proud host family of Precious from Bauchi, Nigeria. Precious came to our family at the end of August. When we picked her up from the airport, we were captivated by her warm smile and bubbly personality. It didn't take long for her to find her way into our hearts.

Precious is a diligent young lady with a great sense of humor. Every day, she makes us laugh with her animated storytelling. She has made a great effort to get involved in school here and is spending

two hours a day to get up to speed on computer skills. Some of the things Precious has tried since coming to America are kayaking, volleyball, bike riding, nature hikes and Spanish Club!

We have enjoyed sharing each other's cultures and growing as a family. We are looking forward to sharing many more traditions as the holidays approach and making many more memories with our newest family member, Precious.

The Strutz family, hosts for
Precious Augustine (YES, Nigeria)
Bonduel, WI

A Passion for Facon

(also known as Turkey Bacon)

We've had a lot of fun experiences and adventures with Ghada, but one of my favorite anecdotes concerns food. A love of food and trying new recipes is something we all share. We decided before Ghada arrived that we would avoid bringing pork products into the home as a show of solidarity. My husband bought turkey bacon one day, and Ghada fell in love with it. Ever since that day, turkey bacon has been a regular staple in our home. We try to remember to call it "facon" just to clarify, because we wouldn't want to be accused of corrupting a good Muslim girl.

The Malone family, hosts for
Ghada Jerfel (YES, Tunisia)
Lehi, UT



Follow the Balloons

At a Florida airport, Netherlands teen Arkady Naus, right, connected with his American hosts, the Rivera family.

My New Big Sis

I want to thank Yuliya for what she has done for me and my family. She helps us with the small things like our 1500 piece puzzle and washing dishes. She also has been a big help on the book that I am writing and hope to publish while she is here. She is a great help and I'm glad that she is here.

Nick Rother, host brother to
Yuliya Dudnitska (FLEX, Ukraine)
Apple Valley, MN



Cooking with a Kick

When we met Husnain, we liked him right away! Husnain has been with us for a month now, and we are still getting to know what he likes and enjoys doing. Most of all, we have a lot of fun cooking. I have learned about spices and cooking with a kick! We call the meal in the photo "his great dish". He is getting used to the way we cook, too. Our food is different to him, so we make dishes from both worlds. He likes to be involved and we like that.

The Kaply family, hosts for
Husnain Fazal (YES, Pakistan)
North Judson, IN



Swing Your Partner

Belgian student Nathalie Blasin, on the left, quickly picked up the dosado step at a square dance in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

A French Girl Rounds Out the Family

Priscille Guichon (France) and Georgia hosts Sharon and Solange Lord tell all.

Priscille: There were many steps to getting to the U.S. I wanted to learn English perfectly and discover the typical American way of living. So far, it's amazing!

Solange: I am a seventeen-year-old American girl. I was excited to be part of PAX because I knew I would gain a cultural perspective, form a friendship, and learn French, all in the comfort of my home. I wanted Priscille to come because I wanted to have a sibling. Though I have half-sisters whom I love very much, they never lived with me and they are much older than me.

Priscille: I was invited to do a presentation about France at a local 4-H meeting. The students were very excited to learn more about France.

Solange: It was great to have Priscille meet some of my 4H friends. 4H is a community building

organization for young people.

Priscille: During fall break, my host family brought me to Hilton Head, South Carolina. I stayed in the best hotel of my life, and it was an amazing week and so much fun!

Sharon: It has been a pleasure for us to host Priscille! We know we have started a lifelong deep connection. We've had lots of funny moments over the simplest differences such as "to-go boxes" and the size of American products. I strongly encourage families to consider hosting a student. It's an invaluable opportunity not only for our children, but ourselves. We are fortunate to have connected with Priscille through PAX.



Flexibility is Key

Living in my homeland is way different from living in the States. The clothes we wear, the food we eat, the language we speak and the way we live is totally the opposite of what is done here. During the first week, I didn't like the food because we eat spicy and hot food in Pakistan. But, being an exchange student requires flexibility. It's not always easy, but with the passage of time, things got better. And from better they went to best. And now, I feel like I'm at home.

Husnain Fazal (YES, Pakistan)
Hosted by the Kaply family
North Judson, IN



What a Feast!

After greeting Constance Maree (Belgium) and Louise Hemvik (Sweden) at the airport, host mother Peninnah Jones and her daughter whisked the two exchange students back to their home in Hudson, New York, where they had prepared a special celebratory dinner based on the traditions of Jones's native country, Kenya.

got culture?



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