March 2015 Vol. XX, No. 8

PAXPRESS

The Newspaper for Exchange Students, Host Families, and Schools

Getting Famous

"Hey! Are you the guy from Pakistan? I saw you on the paper!" This is something that I have been hearing a lot lately. Since the start of the year, I made an effort to connect to as many people as I can. Volunteering at different places, doing sports, and giving presentations at local organizations made me connect to a lot of people, including people from a local radio station and newspaper.

I was invited to the radio station to speak about my experiences and play some Pakistani music. In addition to this, I also got to know how things work at a radio station. Wednesday, February 25 was a big day for me—a local newspaper published a four-page article on my experiences in Jackson, WY, and my impact on the community.

—Sohaib (YES, Pakistan), hosted by the Reichert family (WY)

Sohaib tests his DJ skills.

Inside this Issue

Exchange Living 2

Get Involved! 3

The Adjustment Cycle.....4

On the Home Front 5

PAX PLUS..... 6-7

As Seen in Social Media 8

Exchange Students Climb Mountainous Obstacles

Yuliya came to America from Russia to share her culture and learn about ours. Like all exchange students, she has experienced highs and lows in her months away from home. She offers up a preview in this inventive video with the imposing Utah Rockies as her backdrop (and possibly a metaphor for the scale of the challenge).

—Yuliya (FLEX, Russia), hosted by the Miller family (UT)

Can I Have S'more?

One of my favorite American desserts would definitely be S'mores. I tried it for the first time last month when all the family sat beside the fire to get warm while it was snowing outside. What could be a better dessert than S'mores on such a cold day? That night was unforgettable. I can't explain how much I love this; I could eat this thing forever!

—Zahraa (YES, Bahrain), hosted by the Petre family (PA)

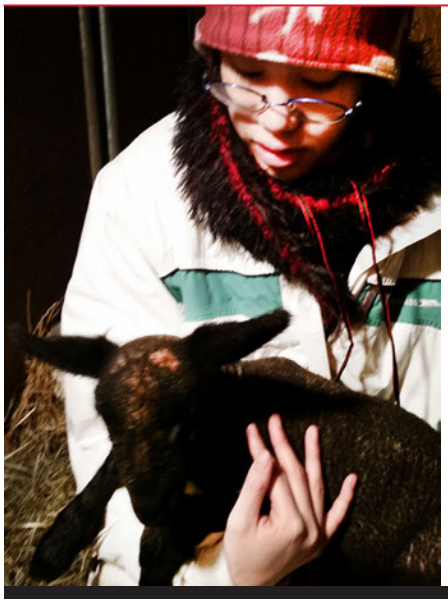
Zahraa and her host siblings toast marshmallows for the best dessert ever!

Long Live the Queen!

Fatmah from Kuwait, hosted by the LaCroix family, was chosen as a princess of the Winter Ball and later voted Queen by the Newport High School student body. Fatmah was a member of the high school girls' soccer team last fall, participated in the Equestrian Club, and is a member of the International Club. She has made many friends on the Oregon coast, and it will be difficult to return home because of the relationships made. She plans to attend college on the West Coast in order to stay in touch with her host family and friends. Congratulations, Fatmah!

—Janet Elizabeth Johnson, community coordinator (OR)

Hail the king and queen!
(Original photo: Cohen & Park 2015)



Welcome to the Year of the Sheep!

Haruko is from Japan and has become a part of our family here in Priest River, Idaho. Her dream was to live in rural America, and she is living out her dream on our farm, where she enjoys helping care for the animals. Throughout the year, she has helped feed the sheep and watch over them. As lambing time approached, Haruko helped build lambing pens and check on the expecting mothers every 2-3 hours.

The first lamb appeared on the Lunar New Year. Haruko says it's lucky to be born on the first day of the Year of the Sheep.

—Lisa Cook (ID), host mom of Haruko (Japan)

Haruko welcomes a new lamb on the first day of the Lunar New Year.

Back to Front Page

Get Involved!

Swimming Abroad

The first half highlight to Mazen's American high school experience was being on the Flagstaff High School swim team. Mazen, who is from Egypt, decided early on to get involved in his new high school via participation in team sports, where he figured swimming was his best bet. After all, his home city of Cairo is bordered by the Red and Mediterranean Seas, as well as the Nile River, so swimming was not new to him, right? Wrong! He didn't realize how different swimming as a competitive sport really is. He had to learn each of the required swim strokes, flip turns, diving, etc. right from the start, and his first time on the 50-meter freestyle was 2:33.

Mazen didn't give up and continued to work hard so that he could compete with his teammates in swim meets with other schools. In the end, not only did Mazen make new friends, he also reduced his 50-meter freestyle time to 26 seconds, earning him the "Most Improved Swimmer of the Year" award and the opportunity to compete as an alternate in the state championship meet. When asked about this experience, Mazen summed it up by saying, "It's not a year in your life, it's a life in a year!"

—Allison Eckert (AZ), host mom of Mazen (YES, Egypt)

Mazen makes some serious waves when he races!

A Play to Remember

I was a cast member of the school musical production *Little Shop of Horrors*. The four months with our school musical cast became one of the best memories in my exchange year. I still remember the first rehearsal. I made many friends in this musical. Everyone helped me a lot with repeating important information and fixing my pronunciation. Thank you for everything!

The last show was perfect. Everyone is amazing and awesome! I love this show and every single person in it. I'm so sad I cannot be here as a cast member next year. Thank you for being a part of my exchange year.

—Nanako (Japan), hosted by the Keeling family (TX)

Nanako (center) being taken in by the giant Venus flytrap!

Taking the Stage

Anton of Germany, who is being hosted by the Girod family of Moyie Springs, ID, loves drama! Before coming to North Idaho to live for a school year, he also performed back home. Last fall he was one of the cast members of the play *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown,* at his school in Bonners Ferry, and here he is performing a solo in *Legally Blonde,* in which he played the part of Emmett.

—Kathleen Cassidy, community coordinator (ID)

Anton brings down the house!

Back to Front Page

The Adjustment Cycle

Reflections on Half a Year

Safirah talks about her experiences as an exchange student in general and specifically as a Muslim adjusting to her new surroundings. She gives credit to her host family and friends for helping her to settle in. "It's like having a second family," she says.

—Safirah (YES, Indonesia), hosted by the Chaudhri family (VT)

"Finding a place to pray when not at home was very difficult when I first arrived."

Someone to Lean On

I've been here for seven months now, and everything has been extraordinarily fascinating for me. But no doubt, life is based upon ups and downs, and that's where you recognize the people who really care for you.

My grandfather back home passed away on February 24. I was agonized, of course. I had never experienced a situation like this before, but my host family helped me get through it. They told me I could take the day off and be online all day in case I needed to talk to anyone back in Pakistan. Then my host dad took me to an Indian restaurant to cheer me up! We also prayed for him before dinner, and I really felt better! I feel so blessed to have a family like this on the other side of the globe!

—Ghanwa (YES, Pakistan), hosted by the Shields family (PA)

After a difficult day, Ghanwa cheers up.

Hjalte and his host family supporting the high school team

PAX Alum Back in U.S.

Hjalte from Denmark spent a memorable exchange year (2012-2013) in northeast Ohio, where he lived with the Welke family. Hjalte attended Warren G. Harding High School and played football for the high school team, and after returning to Denmark, he played on the Danish national football team. Hjalte has since returned to the U.S., where he attended IMG Academy in Florida. He played on ESPN during his senior year and garnered offers from Ohio State, Alabama, Florida State, Michigan, Florida, and Auburn before choosing the University of Arkansas as his future college home. Congrats, Hjalte!

—Darryl Anderson, community coordinator (OH)

Back to Front Page

On the Home Front

Texas-Style Fun!

We all participated in the ConocoPhillips 5K/10K Rodeo Run on February 28. All registration fees from the event are contributed to the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo Educational Fund to provide college scholarships for Texas students. It was a super cold morning with temps in the low 40s. The Rodeo Run uses the same route as the Houston Livestock and Rodeo Parade. We had a unique view of downtown Houston and of the trail riders that started off the parade. Our son John ran the 10K, and the rest of us did the 5K (walk, that is).

—Khristi Ward (TX),
host mom of Alex (FLEX, Ukraine)

From right to left, host brother John, host parents Khristi and John, and Alex having fun after the Rodeo Run—and that's no bull!

Embracing a Different Lifestyle

Dasha joined our family in mid-August, arriving after our academic school year had already started. We are a very active, athletic family and anticipated an adjustment period for our mostly "non-athletic" new exchange student.

In Dasha's home country of Russia, she lives in a city of about 580,000. We live in a rural area, so we were sure Dasha would also find our lifestyle a little more than different from her usual activities. She has adjusted to our spin on the "American lifestyle" very well, and she has embraced the opportunities available to her. Last fall, Dasha played volleyball at our high school and is currently a manager for the girls' varsity and junior varsity basketball teams. Dedicating many hours to help at practice and games, Dasha is really enjoying participation in athletics.

Recently, she joined the varsity girls' basketball team at the 1A semi-state game in Jeffersonville, IN. Jac-Cen-Del has a rich tradition in basketball, and it was very enjoyable to see Dasha experience the camaraderie and fun as a part of this year's team.

—Lori Pilz (IN),
host mom of Dasha (FLEX, Russia)

Where's Dasha? (Center, with red headband)

Back to Front Page

A Break from Snow Days!

February had been dull because of the tremendous amount of snow days. Before then, I used to love playing with snow and enjoying a day off from school, but once it got frequent, it wasn't fun anymore.

Even before coming to America, it was my dream to go to New York City. Thank you to PAX and my local coordinators, Martha Mitchell and Hilary Haagen, for my making my dream come true. On February 20, it was time to go to NYC with exchange students from 16 different countries. On our first day we went to the United Nations building, Central Park, Times Square, and Rockefeller Center. The second day we went to Grand Central Station, the Brooklyn Bridge, Chinatown, the Museum of Modern Art, and the 9/11 Memorial.

—Danish (YES, Pakistan), hosted by the Butler family (VA)

Danish in front of the 9/11 Memorial in New York City

Up, Up and Away!

Pie from Germany recently took advantage of Belo, a group travel program which partners with PAX for exchange students to get together and see other parts of the U.S. She traveled from Texas to California, where she visited Los Angeles and Hollywood and the many sites there—including Madame Tussauds Wax Museum, and then took a bus south to spend time in San Francisco. She had a wonderful time!

—Sondra McPoland, community coordinator (TX) and host mom of Pie

Pie gets into the spirit while in Hollywood!

Back to Front Page

What an Honor!

February was one of the exciting months in my life. I had the honor to be inducted as a member of the National Honor Society at Homewood High School, according to my GPA and extracurricular activities. I was so proud when I was standing on a stage with the other 69 students and taking an oath of loyalty. On February 24, I was standing there in the presence of my family, teachers, and friends, and my pulse was beating so fast. The only thing I could think was that I was one of them, one of the blessed people at school, one of the members of the Homewood High School family.

—Izabela (FLEX, Georgia), hosted by the Murray family (AL)

Izabela, one of the newest members of NHS

Two Teens Contribute to Key Club

"Volunteering loses its value when we do not know how serviceable and kind we are being to society through our actions," says Natalie from Ghana. The Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) student joined the Key Club at her Wisconsin high school and has since "experienced a much greater joy in assisting to put smiles on the faces of people."

The most impactful project in Natalie's eyes has been "raising $200 and collecting presents to support the homeless in collaboration with the Angel Tree Program." Within the scope of this project, she helped to wrap "tons of gifts" to raise funds and donations at the local Walmart. She notes that, "It was really fun singing on live radio with my friends, who were also there to give a helping hand with Berlin's Wisconsin Radio, which gave full radio coverage of the program."

Further north, Ion, a Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program student from Moldova who is being hosted in Alaska, has also become a Key Clubber. His favorite activity so far was preparing blankets for the local animal shelter. While not an official motto of the club, his message is, "Let's help our four-legged friends too!"

Both students have learned a great deal about the value (and fun) of giving back and eagerly await the next big project!

— Ion (FLEX, Moldova), hosted by the Basham family (AK), and Natalie (YES, Ghana), hosted by the Marks family (WI)

Ion provides a rough approximation of where he volunteers, while Natalie (center) takes a break from her volunteer work to pose with her host sisters Megan (left) and Allison (right).

Back to Front Page

As Seen in Social Media

Click on any image to view full post or watch video

We Want to Hear from You!

Whether you have considered hosting a high school exchange student, sending your teen abroad, having an exchange student at your school, working locally to support an international student, or you simply want to learn more about what it is we do, feel free to give us a call at **800.555.6211**.

Already involved and have something to share for a future issue? Regardless of your relationship to PAX, we are always accepting interesting content (stories, photos, videos, etc.) for next month's issue at paxpress@pax.org. **Click here for full details**.

PAX Press is published monthly by
PAX – Program of Academic Exchange.
14 Willett Avenue, Port Chester, NY 10573
800.555.6211
www.pax.org

President
Bradley Smith

Chief Operating Officer
Michelle Lampher

Marketing & Communications Director
Nicholas Burtscher

Editor
Nancy Griffin-Bonnaire

Art Director
Pajes Sterman

Back to Front Page