

# Pax Press



## Perfect Harmony

In Fredericksburg, Virginia, the Powell household has been alive with music. Their German exchange student, Anna Prothmann, is an accomplished piano player. The talented teen was recently chosen as a finalist in their city's Young Artist competition. Host mother Tricia Powell says, "We are going to miss her as well as the music."

## More Than Skyscrapers

This year, by far, is one of the best years of my life. It has been full of fun, thanks to my host family and friends here. The main thing I've learnt from this experience is that the world is not always how the media portrays it. I always thought this country was what I saw on television and in movies with tall buildings and flashy cars everywhere. However, I have realized that it's not exactly like that. Nevertheless, I've enjoyed living here in Vermont, and I'll definitely miss it when I go back home.

What will I miss the most when I leave? My answer is Thanksgiving! I just loved the holiday with the food and the happy people. It was awesome!

Abdul-Fatawu Sumaila (YES, Ghana)  
Hosted by the Winslow family  
Bennington, VT



## Discovering Baseball

"I love this game" is what I said after the first baseball practice. This is my first time playing the game. Since the beginning of the year I wanted to play baseball even though I didn't know anything about it. The game is new but not hard to learn. Thanks to the coaches and my teammates, I am learning a lot. Their help and support is the reason why I am working hard to improve. I get excited at every practice and every game. Baseball makes me feel so relaxed and happy. There is something about this game that makes it special. I don't know if we have a baseball team in my country, but I anticipate starting one so I can introduce the game to my friends.

Mizouni Ben Amor (YES, Tunisia)  
Hosted by the Devore family  
Lyons, KS



Abdul-Fatawu Sumaila from Ghana.

## My Metamorphosis

This year changed my life from being an ordinary one to an extraordinary one. I gained a whole lot of confidence in myself as I overcame my fear of public speaking and I conducted various presentations at my high



YES student Md Harun Ur Rashid, center, introduced the traditions of Bangladesh.

school and in public places. Moreover, it helped me change my negative view of the U.S. It showered me with love and respect that I had never imagined to receive from people I didn't know. I had the opportunity to share my country, Bangladesh, with the people in my community here in Cheboygan. I learned a lot serving in the community and I gained leadership and volunteer skills from attending a lot of conferences. These enriched my knowledge so I can further work with the alumni group and other organizations back in my country. I got to visit a lot of places and learned how it is to live in the United States. Overall, I achieved a pack-full of success in America.

Md Harun Ur Rashid (YES, Bangladesh)  
Hosted by the Workman family  
Cheboygan, MI

## All in the Family

FLEX student Inna Tsoi from Kyrgyzstan loves living with the Novy family in Neenah, Wisconsin.



## No Higher Honor

This year Russian FLEX student Anastasia Khlopina met one of the most influential women in America when former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice spoke to the Birmingham Business Alliance in Alabama. Anastasia recounts, "Dr. Rice made a significant impact on me with her speech on American society, democracy and current problems. But most of all, I was inspired by who she is. She is an excellent example of great achievements through diligence, education and faith. This encounter made my stay in America even more exciting than I could imagine." Dr. Rice is pictured above with host father Keith Hyche and Anastasia Khlopina.

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## Above and Beyond

Once you're in New England, you'd better get in good shape and get ready to go hiking. Hiking is fun to do with a friend or a bunch of them. It needs a lot of strength, patience and determination.

I did a lot of hiking with my host father. He is like an encyclopedia and is a good environmentalist, too. He loves to hike mountains, especially when there is someone with him. He explains a lot about nature. We usually leave really early on Sunday and get back home at dinnertime.

In the beginning I thought it was a crazy idea and I wouldn't do it because I'm not an

athletic guy. I really struggled with every step I took. I counted the seconds to get to the top so I could head back. But, when I got to the top of the mountain after four hours of hiking, I was amazed by the view. I was completely speechless. I thought, "It's totally worth it!"

The day after, when I posted a picture on Facebook, my friends back home were so jealous because the Gaza Strip is known for its flat terrain and beaches.

Said Alhouseini (YES, Palestine)  
Hosted by the Rohdin-Swanberg family  
Sharon, VT

## One Wheel, One World

Our student from Germany is a world-class unicyclist. She was matched with our family because our daughter also rides a unicycle.



Last night Fenna rode her unicycle in the Plymouth High School variety show. When we came into the school, I overheard someone say "that's the girl from Germany who rides a unicycle". I felt so proud that we are her host parents! The crowd loved her performance! She does not simply ride; she stuns the crowds with her amazing tricks.

Fenna has been a blessing to our family. She is the most wonderful teenager and has been a complete joy to host. We hope to meet up with her and her family next summer, 2014, in Montreal, Canada for the World Unicycling Convention and Championships.

Joy Wolf, host mother for  
Fenna Eichel (Germany)  
Plymouth, MI

**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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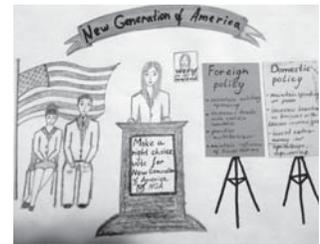
## The Story Never Ends

"You are a FLEX finalist- a year in the U.S. Do you agree to go?" Of course, I said "YES!" Then started dreaming, I was so excited. Fast food and parties, that was expected. Got a host family, googling now, Neenah, Wisconsin, so IT'S a FARM! Reading carefully family info, They don't have cows, that is a pro. The night of departure, a bit of a fear: Is it all worth it? Saying a prayer. I'm in the local airport here they stand Three little kids, I'll be your friend! So tall host parents; they seem to be nice. It'd work out, I could see from their eyes.

First day at school, everything's new; People are nice to me, why? Have no clue. Got used to America, Novys are great, Skyping my family on Saturday nights. School, practices, activities are vast, Sleepovers and shopping, time passes fast! Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter is tomorrow, Hey, slow down, I'm somewhat in a sorrow. Soumaya, Urooj, Anis and Ani, They are so awesome, all smart and funny. My great American friends and L.C. I just want to take you to Kyrgyzstan with me. Amelia, Lydia, Bennett, I love you, Sometimes you are nuts; life with you is never boring. Host dad is hilarious; host mom is so sweet, My U.S. experience was extremely neat. Still, I'm elated to be back home, To share my experience; I have ideas, a ton! I'm writing this poem as a letter of appreciation, Program staff, family, and friends you are wonderful creations.

I'm grateful to those who are not here, Being an exchange student does not make us superior. You are great competitors and you did not lose. Will you make a change? You get to choose! This awesome year is a way to begin; To be continued; you know what I mean!

Inna Tsoi (FLEX, Kyrgyzstan)  
Hosted by the Novy family  
Neenah, WI



## Mock Election Brings the Process to Life

During election time I participated in a mock election held in my civics class at my high school. It was an amazing experience to go through all the processes one does to be eligible to participate in an election. My partners and I went through every step from creating our own political party to making a campaign with foreign, domestic and other policies, to debates and voting, to finally participating in an election. Our party's name was "New Generation of America" or NGA and our campaign was based on independent (moderate) ideology. I was chosen as the leader of our political party and was racing with the other candidates to become the president of Zagarland, our mock country. I am glad to have such awesome memories and experiences from that project. It helped me to understand more about the whole election process.

Aiana Alieva (FLEX, Kyrgyzstan)  
Hosted by the Perez family  
Tacoma, WA



Pakistani YES student Faiz and his friends

## All Smiles

From my experiences I gained confidence and learned a lot about the U.S. culture that will definitely help me in the future. I learned to be myself, always feel confident and never give up. When I leave, I will miss pretty much everything from my host family to school. I like the people here.

Going to school was a really good experience for me. I liked the choice of subjects and the friends I made.

One day when my school soccer team was getting our picture taken, the photographer said not to smile for one of the pictures. We didn't smile but when we got the picture back, I was smiling in it. A friend said, "Faiz always smiles!" That was funny to me.

Muhammad Faiz Usmani (YES, Pakistan)  
Hosted by the Hartoin family  
Wimberley, TX

## Crowned in Alabama

Norwegian Janne Stensas was a bit surprised, but very honored, to be voted the Junior Homecoming Queen. With her is Bill Thigpen, husband of Coordinator Cindy Thigpen.



## Smoke Alarms: A Sound You Can Live With

Tim and Dannette Moench of Bossier City, Louisiana, suggest a lifesaving gift. "Here in the USA, we assume most homes have a smoke detector. This is not true for many of our students' homes back in their countries. A wonderful idea is to send a smoke detector with your student as a departure gift. Make sure it is battery powered." The Moenches are the host parents of Ogulgu Kutieva, a FLEX student from Turkmenistan.

## Priceless Support During a Tender Time

So far I've had an awesome year. My host family is the best family it could be. But sometimes life gives us difficulties to go through. That happened to me.

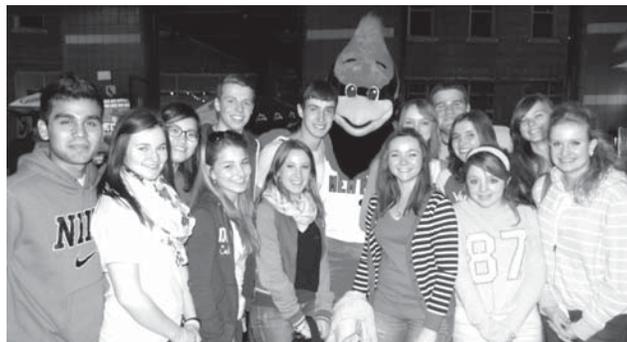
I received an email from my natural parents who said that my grandmother passed away. I thought that the world had ended and I wanted to leave everything and go home. Right away my coordinator started finding out the options for me to go home. It was a very hard time for me, but my host family was there to support me.

On the same day that I had to make a decision to stay or go home, my host mother and her friends invited me to go hiking. I said I wasn't able to go, but then my mom with her brightest smile said, "You should go hiking with us, not an option!" And you know, we had a good time! A little bit of a fresh air is always good for you.

My host mom let me know that no matter what I decided, they would support me. I decided to stay because I wouldn't be home in time for the funeral and I wouldn't be able to change anything by going home. My natural family supported me in that decision, too.

Thank you to my host family and my coordinator, Marcia Goebel, who were a great support during the year and especially during my grief. Thank you for your priceless support and understanding.

Darya Nevrayeva (FLEX, Kazakhstan)  
Hosted by the Ledbetter family  
Cottonwood, AZ



## Rocky the Redbird

The Memphis Redbirds mascot was on hand to welcome these Mississippi PAX students and their friends to a minor league baseball game: Carlota Delise (Spain), Hye Han (South Korea), Katharina Astala (Finland), Anastasia Nikiforova (FLEX, Russia), Anastasiya Alekseyenko (FLEX, Ukraine), Giorgi Rostomashvili (FLEX, Georgia) and Pauline Schult, Marie Alexandrov, Vanessa Schulz, Johanas Zerfass and Julian Wesselbawn, all from Germany.

## Go Green by Keeping Our Community Clean

During a tour of the McPherson Food Bank with a group of other exchange students, I realized that I could help them because they were running short of plastic bags. So for my first PAX Goes GREEN project, I spread the word that I am collecting used plastic shopping bags, the ones people use to bring home their groceries. I collected and reused 450 plastic bags that I stacked flat so they'd be easy for the food bank volunteers to use.

As I am living in this community, it is my responsibility as a member of the community to keep my community clean. So for my second project, my host father and I cleaned four miles of ditches in the countryside where trash had collected. It took us six hours. The people in vehicles who passed gave us a thumbs ups. Some even stopped and said encouraging words.

Sualeha Mustafa (YES, Pakistan)  
Hosted by the Carlson family  
Lincolnton, KS



Repurposed plastic bags help a food bank.



## National Meeting Attendees Celebrate FLEX and YES Milestones

In February, PAX community coordinators and the national office staff met for their annual conference on the outskirts of New York City. Guest speakers at the meeting were former U.S. Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Judith McHale, who delivered the keynote address; Imam Mohamad Bashir Arafat, the founder of the Civilizations Exchange and Cooperation Foundation, who presented on Islam; Katja David-Fox, Program Officer from Youth Programs Division at the State Department's Bureau for Cultural Affairs and Valerie Frank, FLEX Program Manager from American Councils, based in Washington, D.C., each of whom lead workshops on the FLEX and YES programs sponsored by the Department of State.

This year, to mark the 20th anniversary of the FLEX Program and the 10th anniversary of the YES program, attendees celebrated with a cake made for the occasion. Joining Katja and Valerie (far right) are veteran PAX coordinators (L to R) Donna Ryan and Bunny Geisler who were two of the first PAX coordinators to work with FLEX, and Mimi Sanders and Laura Puckett who have worked with the YES program since the beginning. All four are still placing FLEX and YES students.



Judith McHale

**Pax**  
goes green

This year's PAX Goes GREEN contest winner will soon be announced on the What's New page of [www.pax.org](http://www.pax.org).



## It's in the Bag

Aikanysh Sydykova was shocked to learn that only 3% of plastic bags are recycled. So she sought to raise community awareness with a slide show, poster and a demonstration that it is both fun and functional to reuse materials. Aikanysh displays some of the useful items she made out of newspapers and plastic bags. The Hoover family hosts the FLEX student from Kyrgyzstan in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania.



## Bookmarked

For her PAX Goes GREEN project, Anis Wulandari combined her desire to encourage global thinking with a strategy to reuse the cardboard from cereal boxes. The end result was a hundred bookmarks with quotes on the backside. The Indonesian YES student is hosted by the Graf family in Appleton, Wisconsin.

## Dear Friends,

At the PAX national office here on the east coast, spring has finally arrived along with all the associations it carries of birth, growth and renewal. We see the early flowers in bloom, the new growth on trees and feel the promise of warmer weather. As we celebrate and take joy in this breath of new life, I am reminded again that our world is enriched by diverse perspectives.

For those living in the Southern Hemisphere, this too is a time of significant seasonal change, but for them it is the end, not the beginning, of their growing season. Their "world" will be getting cooler, not warmer. For those who live closer to the equator, these seasonal differences give rise to very different expressions. Depending upon where on this Earth one is, this "season" might be a time of more or less rain, greater or lesser storms, or may even mean the difference between a time of lean instead of plenty. This time of year and how we mark it is very much influenced by our experience with it, just as our impressions of other countries, cultures, and peoples are affected by our experiences with them.

PAX was founded on the premise that through direct, personal experience, we can affect attitudes and change perspectives to help ensure greater understanding of one another. Every year PAX brings to bear the power of American hospitality in our effort to bring the world a little closer together. Each year, generous and open-minded American families, in an act of grace, open their doors to students from around the world, engage the cultures they represent and embrace them as family members. While living in the United States, these students will experience the real America first-hand which we hope will provide them with a greater perspective on and understanding of our way of life, while we, in turn, grow in knowledge and appreciation of their cultures.

From this mutual understanding springs the hope of a better world. This is why we do what we do. It breathes life into our work and is why PAX means Peace.

May it be also with you,

Bradley  
PAX President



Bradley Smith



## My Spanish Sister

Blair Roussos, pictured giving a smooch, is grateful to her host sister, Leyre, for teaching her about Basque culture. The Park City, Utah teen is in Pamplona this semester.



PAX is now accepting applications for the 2014-2015 PAX Abroad programs. American students can choose from an academic year or semester program to France, Germany or Spain, or a summer program to Australia, France, or Spain. The deadlines to apply are April 1st for the academic year or fall semester, September 15th for spring semester, and April 15th for summer programs. Info and applications can be found on the PAX Abroad tab at [www.pax.org](http://www.pax.org). If you would like more information, please contact [patricias@pax.org](mailto:patricias@pax.org).



## Living the Life

Sarah Caron is charmed by the daily life in Lodosa, Spain. The Royalton, Virginia student, third, is pictured with her host mother and host sisters, Nuria and Idoia.



"I always wanted to perform on stage," says Kuralay Talgat. She sends a big thank you to her host mom for signing her up for acting classes and driving her to theater rehearsals.

### Student of the Month

I just became student of the month at Davenport Central High School. Being student of the month is an honor here. They announce it every month and congratulate you. I was really happy when I heard my name.

I like my school. They welcome all of the exchange students and do what they can to make our life a pleasure here. It is not hard compared to my school back home. You have the freedom of choice to create your own schedule. Also there are more electives than in my country. You have more opportunities to develop skills. There are different clubs and you can study more about art, music and theatre!

I'm so happy that I was part of the Hixon family! They welcomed me from the first day. I've learned so much from them. They inspired me to do new things, such as acting, that I've never done before. I overcame my fear of cats and learned more about animals from my little sister. They have two cats, a dog, a lizard, a fish and an axolotl, which is a Mexican salamander. We traveled all over. Seeing Disney World in Florida was my childhood dream. And it came true! They also taught me how to help in the community. I did a lot of volunteering. Knowing that you can do something to make the world a better place to live makes me incredibly happy.

Kuralay Talgat (FLEX, Kazakhstan)  
Hosted by the Hixon family  
Davenport, IA

### Danced the Night Away

One of my best moments here was the school prom. I went to prom with a group of friends and we rented a limousine! That was a pretty awesome night. After the prom, we went to my friend's house and cooked breakfast at midnight. We watched movies all night long until all of us fell asleep. It was one of the best nights I've ever had! I felt infinite that night.

I live with the Bird family on an air force base because my host dad is in the Air Force. I love living on a base and being part

of a military family. Another one of my most memorable moments here is when my host family and I went to South Dakota to visit Mount Rushmore. I was amazed that someone could make beautiful giant art like that. I've seen Mount Rushmore in a lot of movies, but it was a really wonderful feeling when finally I saw it with my own eyes.

Ade Mansoor (YES, Indonesia)  
Hosted by the Bird family  
Great Falls, MT



Indonesian YES student Ade Monsoer is the fourth teen among the bevy of prom goers.

### Mastered Change

I was very confused when I first experienced American high school life. Almost everything was different from school in Japan: the size of the textbooks, the lack of uniforms, the relationships between teachers and students, the atmosphere in the classes, and even how to open lockers. But as soon as I got used to it, I liked the differences. There's more freedom in school. I will miss my high school when I go back to Japan. There are some school events such as spirit week and prom that I'd never experienced before. I love everything at my school.

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

# The Best

### An Important Year

It feels like just yesterday that I was in the airport ready to meet my host family. And now, my year in Massachusetts is almost over. Orange is a small town, also called "Friendly Town", with only 7,000 people. I'm from Tenggarong, Indonesia with a population of 96,000. Living in a small town is new for me. People know almost everyone, it is not so crowded, and I can walk to school.

I enjoy doing a bunch of volunteer activities in my community such as working at a food pantry and community meal every Monday and Thursday evening. It has changed my stereotype that all Americans are wealthy.

I've had tons of new experiences and I've been able to explore new things and improve my English. I've met many people and shared my culture with them. I've even taught some words in my language. We laugh together when they make pronunciation mistakes.

Most importantly, I've been able to break stereotypes that people hold so that there can be a better understanding between Indonesia and the United States. Thank you, YES and PAX, for the opportunity to have this precious, diamond experience.

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



### Top Witch

When asked about her favorite moments in Sedona, Arizona, Samira Ali ranks having her Halloween costume designated as one of the best by her school newspaper. The YES student credits her host mother, Pat Buckley, for designing it. Samira adds, "It was fun getting free sweets on Halloween, too."



### Kabuki Cat

March was my most busy month, beginning with my musical *Anything Goes* and ending with a sprout play, *Puss in Boots* and *Another Cats Tail*.

My funny story is from the sprout play for the town community theater. It was fun because the cast was 7 to 18 years in age. I love kids so I became close to everybody.

We did the play for three nights. At the cast party one of the members said, "Isnu, you did good job! You're an exchange student? I think you're 13 years old." Confused, I said, "I am 17, but I know I'm tiny. It'd be hard to be on exchange when you're 13!" We laughed. He said, "You're not only tiny, Isnu, your face looks young, too!" I answered, "I'm staying young long!" I will always remember this story and playing a Chinese Kabuki cat.

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



### The 40° Below Zero Club

These five crazy PAX students were right in there with the Alaskans at the University of Fairbanks: Mattridi Ramansiriwong (YES Thailand), Dusan Stanojevic (ASMYLE, Serbia), Tania Voytshchuck (FLEX, Ukraine), Hou Yunhan (China) and Manon Grimault (France).



### Quantum Leaps

Superstar scientist Anrui Jiang won first place in the chemistry division at the Math and Science Competition held at Blue Mountain College! In addition, her four-person team, pictured with Anrui on the left, won second place in their competition. The George family hosts the Chinese student in Golden, Mississippi.



### Music in the Mountains

Frederike Kröpelin and her choir sang in the Red Rocks Amphitheater in Colorado. "We not only rehearsed with famous directors, we also went hiking and skiing and saw amazing places like the Garden of Gods and Pikes Peak!" She adds, "Even the 18 hour bus ride there was great!" The Murphys host the German student in Minnesota.



### Doing Good

FLEX students Andrii Kucher from Ukraine, Yuliya Akentyeva from Kazakhstan, and Valentine Buciu from Moldova, prepared personal care relief kits at the Latter-day Saint Humanitarian Center in Salt Lake City, Utah. The kits are shipped all over the world to the people that need it the most.



### Black History Month

Arman Vardanyan celebrated the achievements and contributions of African Americans during Black History Month which took place in February. Check out his amazing video on YouTube by searching "Arman and Black History". The Armenian FLEX student is hosted by the Syverson family in Harmony, Indiana.

## Brand New Chess Player Turns Tournament Champ

When I came to the U.S. I was really interested in Chess Club but was afraid that I wouldn't master the game. I thought that if I lost a game it would be very embarrassing. After I mentioned the club to my host dad, I had no choice but to join just to prove to him that I am capable of defeating my internal fear. So I went to the Chess Club. The first few days were not really good.

Chess is a natural meritocracy. Each player uses tactics and his mind to overcome the player on the other side. Although I was not very successful at the start, I strived for the best and kept playing games.

Then the official announced that we could play in a chess competition. I thought that I should give it a try. I won the tournament (undefeated) and my teacher encouraged me to play in the state tournament in April.

I am very thankful to YES, PAX and every respective official who gave us the chance to overcome our internal fears by mingling in American society.

Muhammad Khattak (YES, Pakistan)  
Hosted by the Fournier family  
Orange, MA



Kenyan YES student Doris Lillian, host sister Begum Casillas and Brazilian PAX alum Fernanda Bernardes are energized by spring.

## Jumping for Joy

My year in Texas has given me more courage, patience and a love for people. I even got much better at soccer! Since we don't get snow in my country, I got the chance to have fun with it. Besides snow, I'll

miss the fun I had with my friends and the Mexican culture. Above all, I learned to act ethically and function successfully in order to live fully in the global community.

Doris Lillian (YES, Kenya)  
Hosted by the Casillas family  
El Paso, TX

## Radio Team Tops the Chart

Across the state of Iowa, some 40,000 students from more than 400 schools compete in competition speech. The Benton Community speech program is proud to have one of their groups selected this year for all-state recognition. The radio team included our foreign exchange student Sofia Garcia (Spain) and four other girls. They performed their six-minute radio broadcast KYUM at the All-State Festival in Ames on Saturday, February 16th. During the broadcast Sofia did the commercial for a new Spanish restaurant in town. She earned enough points in Speech to receive a Fine Arts Letter.

Debie Towe, host mother for Sofia Garcia (Spain)  
Norway, IA



Sofia Garcia, far right, and her team

# of Times

## Tool Time

Since I arrived, I have been in a woodshop class where students use many machines to make wood projects. I have made eight projects. I gifted some of them and will take the rest to my family and special people back home. This class was the best class I have ever taken, and the teacher made me like it even more.

Karim El Miari (YES, Lebanon)  
Hosted by the Fournier family  
Orange, MA

## Speed Racer

Even though Jannik Giebel just learned to ski this winter, he was soon skiing fast enough to do a relay leg for the Stowe High School Nordic team who honored him with the "most improved" award. The German exchange student then moved on to the cross-country team for the spring season. In April, the local newspaper, StoweToday.com, featured this photo of Jannik running a relay. The Lazaro-Levine family hosts him in Stowe, Vermont.



## Kicking It

"Alright, forty five jumping jacks...go!" exclaimed the enthusiastic instructor. I glance at my host sister as the entire class frantically pops up and down like popcorn. Next we find ourselves up against the wall stretching our legs as if we were related to Mr. Elastic.

At first, I was hesitant to participate in karate and ju jitsu. I do not consider myself to be a "fighter" nor "athletic". Furthermore, I just did not have the necessary belief that I could do it.

After realizing what an amazing opportunity this is, I began learning a whole lot more than just punching, kicking and various body forms. Going to class is like walking into a community filled with familiar faces. I love how much support and motivation my classmates give me. In addition, I am learning a great deal about punctuality, determination, zeal and self-control. The best aspect of class is spending time with my host sister. Through karate we have found a mutual platform to build our relationship.

Despite all the "blood, sweat, and tears" (literally!), I can really see how trying something new enhances personal growth.

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

## A Perfect Fit

Just like any other kid who signed up to be an exchange student, I was nervous about my life in America. What made me worried the most was the host family experience. I prayed for the right host family for me.

When I got an email from my host family, I was both thrilled and worried. People said, "You worry too much. Relax. They will be perfect for you." They were right!

The moment I saw my new family, they greeted me with a warm welcome. Avery, my host sister, held a sign that she had

drawn at the airport. They welcomed me as a part of the Thompson family, giving me a very cute room that they had decorated themselves.

The daily life I had with the Thompsons was just like being with my family back in Korea – very normal. We went to concerts together, participated in church activities and went to parties. They joyfully introduced me to the others as a part of their family. The Thompsons were the perfect family for me.

Hee Hwang (South Korea)  
Hosted by the Thompson family  
Boyce, VA



## My Serbian Sister

My family hosted another girl who is from Serbia. We are totally different people from different parts of the world. But after this time we spent together, Anda Paunovic (ASMYLE, Serbia) became the sister I never

had. She is a friend who helps me through difficult times. She is sweet as chocolate, smooth as fudge. She is a partner who fills my life with laughter and smiles.

Aikanysh Sydykova (FLEX, Kyrgyzstan)  
Hosted by the Hoover family  
Chamberburg, PA



## Robot Whiz is First in State

Darshan Sampangi, second from the left, and his Hedgesville science team rocketed to first place during the SuGO robot engineering competition at the West Virginia Science Bowl. "This is one of my great achievements here!" exclaims the Indian YES student. The Boyd family hosts him in Falling Waters, West Virginia.



## A Seat in the Senate

This winter Alex Vujanovic (ASMYLE, Serbia) and his host father, Mel Blunt, got a lesson in politics when they toured the Missouri State Capitol, the Governor's Mansion and the Missouri Supreme Court during District 8 Day. They also met with State Senator Will Kraus and sat in on a senate debate concerning identity issues.



## PAX Means Peace

During a hike, the Berryville, Virginia PAX group left a temporary message with charcoal found at a campsite. Pictured are Yassine El Jed (YES, Tunisia), Giulia Invernizzi (Italy), Akmaaral Kamaliyeva (FLEX, Kazakhstan), Aly Wazir (YES, Yemen), David Oliver (Spain) and Alejandro Franco Leal (Mexico).



## Making a Dent in Hunger

Torben Rische received rave reviews from the Frederickburg Area Food Bank where he worked over spring break. Volunteer Coordinator Julie Kishpaugh said, "He was a wonderful, hardworking volunteer. We learned a lot about each other's ways of living." The Pauley family hosts the German student in Virginia.



### Atlanta or Bust

This Alabama crew smiled for the camera before their trek to Atlanta to visit CNN, Olympic Park and a medieval fair. Pictured are Anastasia Khlopina (FLEX, Russia), Sarah Brantley, Selina Rachor (Germany), Larissa Prager (Austria), Patrick Dengg (Austria), Coordinator Cindy Thipgen and Kajo Krummenacher (Switzerland).



### Cincinnati Past and Present

Columbus based Coordinator Fariba Kazemi took her students to the Cincinnati Museum Center to learn about the history of southern Ohio.

### Being the Teacher

Whether it is a lesson on how to apply henna, how to play *cham cham* or cook savory dishes, Tayyaba Rehman has proven to be an engaging teacher. To see her video on YouTube, search *sharing culture and rehman*. The Taylor family hosts the Pakistani YES student in Santa Fe, New Mexico.



### Beachin' It

German student Mira Hartmeier, second on the left, celebrated her sixteenth birthday on Anna Maria Island in Bradenton, Florida with her exchange friends and host mother, Carol Lambert. Pictured are Coordinator Dana Lawson, Mira, Solvar Espeland (Norway), Michele Moret (Italy), Chanhwi Park (South Korea), Marcus Jabina (Denmark), Emmanuelle Couilliet (France), Heather Greendonner, Thunchanok Rusmeerkset (Thailand), Preedit Sukontachard (Thailand), Coordinator Karen Rose and Craig Jones.



Adan with her friend, Zayra Cambry, who supported her every step

### People are the Same

"I lived a life in a year, not a year in my life." This is the perfect saying for my exchange year. I will miss the "melting pot" feature of the United States that brings everybody together. The big lesson I have learned is that people are the same everywhere. I learned to take care of my own responsibilities. And the most important lesson is that "nothing is impossible".

Adan Daibes (YES, Israel)  
Hosted by the Abdul Cader family  
San Luis Obispo, CA

### Election 2012

This past fall, Kanan Mammadli did a video survey of how the American people make voting decisions for presidential elections. Do the televised debates sway opinions? Do Americans pay attention to the flyers that arrive in the mail? Check out the video he put together on YouTube. Search "election in the USA" and "Mammadli". The Dewitt family hosts the Azerbaijani FLEX student in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



In gratitude for a tour of the police station, Zhamilia Klycheva presented Chief Sullivan with the traditional Kyrgyz hat, a *kalpak*.

### Law and Order

One of the most interesting experiences I've had was a tour of the local police department, an opportunity I got because of my volunteer work for the Rotary International Club. There I met the president of the club who is also the Goffstown Chief of Police, Patrick Sullivan. He was very pleased to meet me and thanked me for the work I have done for this club. He invited me to visit the Goffstown Police Department and offered to give me a tour. I was introduced to every officer working there and was shown and explained the work they do. I witnessed the process of fingerprinting and photographing an arrested person. The most exciting part for me was meeting a real police dog! I got to see a trained German shepherd in action. Another part of my tour was a ride-along. I rode in the police car and saw the daily work of a policeman. I felt like I was a part of a movie.

Zhamilia Klycheva (FLEX, Kyrgyzstan)  
Hosted by Chaffee family  
Goffstown, NH

## Congrats to Febry Utami, the "Share Your American Pride" Video Contest Winner

To see the winning video, go to YouTube and search "PAX Project 3".

YES student Febry Utami titled her video Welcome to Hollywood because she says living in the United States is like living in a movie. In a reference to the film *Narnia*, the montage of video and photographs reveal magical forests laden with fresh snow, a new experience for the Indonesian student. With her camera, Febry caught the spirit of basketball fans at Harbor Springs High School and the warmth of American students when her physics class threw her a surprise party. Another sweet moment was when Febry blew out her birthday cake candles during a celebration with the Rambo family, her Michigan hosts.

The "Share Your America" grand prize winners will be posted on the What's New page on the PAX website, [www.pax.org](http://www.pax.org), in late May.



### On the Job at the Mississippi Legislature

Anastasiia Alekseienco (Ukraine) and Gao Rostomashvili (Georgia) couldn't believe it when they were chosen to serve as pages for a week at the Mississippi State Capitol. Representative Steve Holland sponsored the two FLEX students for this program where the teens gain first-hand experience in government by helping out in the legislative offices. Pictured with the students are Representative Holland, host parents Sissy and Joe Lukas, and PAX Area Manager Mary Payne Hairald.

### Catch Me if You Can

Vanessa Schulz shows her track ribbons, including one first place! The German student is hosted by the Jones family in Mantachie, Mississippi.



### The Windy City Beckons

Minnesota Coordinator Shari Osterude brought all eighteen of her PAX students to Chicago for the weekend. Pictured with the skyline are Sumit Mitra (YES, India), Agin Erden (YES, Turkey), Suparat Jimmutchim (Thailand), Pierpaolo Regnoui Macera (Italy), Yelyzaveta Petrova (FLEX, Ukraine), Yuliia Khakimova (FLEX, Ukraine), Yuliya Dudnitska (FLEX, Ukraine), Alexandre Sametzy (France), Evgeny Lapin (FLEX, Russia), Alisa Buchstab (Germany), Leonard Beiderwieden (Germany), Bakhmal Odibekova (FLEX, Tajikistan), Sara Fratoni (Italy), Matilde Quintieri (Italy), Cristina Nucleanu (Italy), Jeannette Mintardjo (YES, Indonesia), John Friberg (Sweden) and Caroline Gregersen (Denmark).

## Twice the Life

I think that I will come back to Russia as a completely different person. I learned a lot about American culture and about myself. I will never regret that I made this choice. Now I have two amazing families and I love them equally. I have many friends from different countries, twice the number of people who are important to me and twice the teachers who help me learn new things. With two homes on two sides of the planet, I am always "at home in the world".

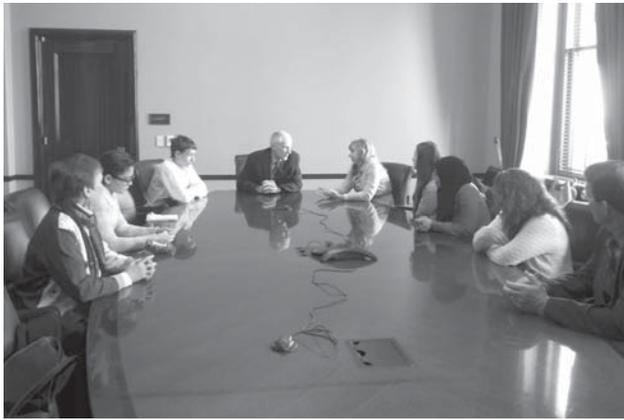
Kristina Makarenko (FLEX, Russia)  
Hosted by the O'Connor family  
Blooming Prairie, MN



## Kazak Kinship Bread

More please! Friends and neighbors loved the special bread Dana Kussain prepared. The Bachmann family hosts the FLEX student in Worthington, Ohio.

# Young Ambassadors



## The Art of Government

Utah Lieutenant Governor Greg Bell met with FLEX and YES students to discuss the issues Utah faces as one of the fastest growing states in the U.S. Participating were Noor Husain from Bahrain, Bengunur Pamuk from Turkey, Andrii Kucher from Ukraine, Yuliya Akentyeva from Kazakhstan, and Valentine Buciu from Moldova.



Ghada Jerfel (YES, Tunisia), left, represented Tunisia at Disney World.

## Opportunity Rocks

What I liked most about being here was that so many opportunities were offered to me. I was able to grasp most of them.

I loved being a member of my city youth council. I represented my host city at a conference held at the Utah state legislature. For my volunteer hours, I got a presidential gold medal award!

I also loved being part of my school dance team and Model United Nations team, with whom I participated in some university conferences. This year, I enjoyed learning about cameras and how to film. Thanks to those skills, I am now part of my school television crew for Pride TV. Not to mention that I enjoyed giving presentations about Tunisia, and being its ambassador at my school and community.

However, the most amazing part of my experience was attending the "Better Understanding for a Better World" conference organized by the Civilizations Exchange and Cooperation Foundation in Orlando, Florida at Walt Disney World.

This conference gathered over 75 students from 72 countries under one roof called "tolerance". Through this conference I realized how important it is to have mutual understanding and respect in a pluralistic community and how we can achieve that.

Thanks to PAX, my placement organization, and to CECF for giving us this chance to learn more.

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

## Energized by the Civic Education Workshop

The third week of March was the most inspirational week of my life. I went to Washington, D.C. to participate in the Civic Education Workshop. The whole week was filled with visits to government centers such as Capitol Hill, the White House and the Supreme Court. Apart from the places we saw, we had informational seminars that taught us about the most important issues all over the world. The scholars that presented the seminars supported the fact that knowing the issue is the first step to solving it. This trip inspired me because I met other exchange students who are ready to change the world and alumni who have already started to change it. We had the best teachers who helped us organize our dreams and transform them into reality. It was magical to meet and talk to these amazing people. I know that all of them are going to have a bright and successful future.

Olga Gustiuc (FLEX, Moldova)  
Hosted by the Burkholder family  
Lee's Summit, MO



A hundred students participated in the weeklong workshop led by American Councils and the American Civics Center.



Georgian FLEX student Sopiko Beriashvili and senate aide Alexandra Mackenzie

## We, the Future Generation, Can Change the World

Words are not enough to describe what we experienced at the Civic Education Workshop. The primary focus was to study American government, civic education and to develop leadership skills. I met 99 talented and smart FLEX exchange students from all over the world.

During this week I was reborn as a new person. We realized the idea of the workshop's slogan and our goal, *e pluribus unum*, or "out of many, one". A great team was created out of the one hundred students. In one week we were taught how to put our ideas into practice in order to help our communities.

I met with Alexandra Mackenzie, an aide to Tennessee Senator Lamar Alexander. The following advice from Alexandra had a huge impact on my life: *When the door closes, the window opens.* She believes that we, the future generation, can "CHANGE THE WORLD."

Sopiko Beriashvili (FLEX, Georgia)  
Hosted by the Brooks family  
Nashville, TN

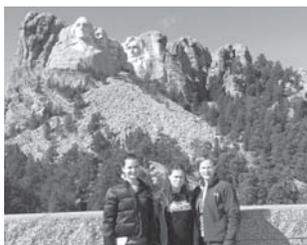
## Five PAX Students Selected as Semifinalists for US-CAEF Enterprise Scholarships

PAX wishes the best to these FLEX students as they enter the final selection round for the U.S. funded fellowships at select Central Asian universities: Inna Tsoi, Zhamilia Klycheva, Aigerim Mamadzhanova and Benazir Kabaeva, all from Kyrgyzstan; and Dana Kusain from Kazakhstan. The scholarships provide funding for undergraduate study in business administration and economics, as well as for internships so the students can gain valuable work experience following their second year.



## Kyrgyzstan Came to Us

One community didn't have to travel halfway around the world to get an education on Kyrgyzstan. FLEX student Aikanysh Sydykova brought her culture and customs to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, with a series of presentations and delectable meals. She explains, "During this year I am looked upon by others as an ambassador of my country. I gained a greater appreciation for both Kyrgyzstan and America." Aikanysh is hosted by the Hoover family.



## Monumental Moment

This March, German student Kathrin Klein, Letitia Smith and Sheryl Erickson visited the historic presidential carvings at Mount Rushmore in South Dakota.

## Building Houses, Building Hope

My Russian exchange student loves to volunteer! Our family and Sveta Koroleva spent a Saturday helping build and renovate houses with Habitat for Humanity. The tasks included installing insulation in an older house and putting some finishing touches on some new construction.



FLEX student Sveta Koroleva with her host sister, Eliza Downey, at the worksite.

Our family often participates in volunteer activities and is excited to have Sveta join in on the fun. Like many Habitat volunteers, Sveta didn't have any previous construction experience, but she was able to contribute in a significant way. She found it only takes a willing heart to make a difference.

Sveta had so much fun that she's now looking forward to joining the Habitat for Humanity team for another work day soon!

Deborah Downey, host mother for Svetlana Koroleva (FLEX, Russia)  
Prattville, AL



## Bringing the International to International Night

Coordinator Karen Rose was proud of her students who spoke at a First Unity Church event in St. Petersburg, Florida. Pictured: Rev. Temple Hays with Solvar Espeland from Norway, Yixin Li and Yunfan Jiang from China, Chanhwi Park from South Korea and Onjira Kiatchalermkhun, Preedit Sukontachard and Thunchanok Rusmeerkert, all from Thailand.



Russian FLEX student Rostik Baklavov with his hosts, Justin and Den Justice

### From Russia with Love

We never dreamed we would ever be able to host a child from another country, but we got a shot!

Rostik is a high-spirited, happy go lucky and very funny young man. He has become good friends with our son Justin, and he has made many other friends in school.

Rostik definitely has a love for people! He loves to make people smile, help wherever and whenever it is needed and he loves little children. We think of Rostik not as our foreign exchange student, but as our son from another country.

We are so very grateful that Rostik's natural parents supported him and gave him the chance to come to our country! But more so that he came to our home! Thank you, PAX, for your program and to my sister Cheri, who introduced our PAX coordinator, Trudy Krintz, to us! Without all of them, we would never have been able to have Rostik.

We have been so very blessed to have Rostik in our home and to call him our son. He has truly been a gift from God in our lives.

The Justice family, hosts for Rostislav Baklavov (FLEX, Russia) Monticello, IN



### The Ties that Bind

Sarah and Joshua Welch had a wonderful reunion with their 2008-09 Brazilian exchange student, Teia Sterque, and her parents. "We have developed such an amazing relationship with Teia and her family over the years," wrote the Ohio host parents. "The goodbyes are always so difficult, but we always pick right up where we left off whenever we are together again. Thank you to PAX and Coordinator Darryl Anderson for bringing Teia and her family into our lives."



Explosions of colored powder peppered Spaniard Izaro Bedialauneta, third, and the Pugh family during the 5 K "Color Run".

### The Family that Runs Together

I did the "Color Run" with my family in April in Knoxville. Before the race, we were very clean with our white t-shirts and our cool sunglasses. When we finished the five kilometer race, we didn't have white anywhere. Many different colors covered us everywhere: in our hair, arms, shoes... I had





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Indonesian YES student Anis Wulandari became an expert at making grilled cheese sandwiches.

### A Taste of Wisconsin

This year has been a lovely year. It is important to be grateful for every second we have. I have learned the true meaning of love and forgiveness because there are many differences in this world.

I will miss when my host family says "good night", my discussions with them and my friends about TV shows, the many volunteer activities, and the cute birthday, Christmas and Valentine's Day cards. I will miss cupcakes and chips at parties and sleepovers. And cookies, hot cocoa and the traditional American foods at Thanksgiving, Easter and Christmas.

My learning will continue. Although I will miss school, especially cooking American foods with my friends in culinary art class, studying U.S. history and literature, and learning about myself in psychology class, I will bring these lessons back home to share with others.

This journey is about you, me and "we".  
Anis Wulandari (YES, Indonesia)  
Hosted by the Graf family  
Appleton, WI

### A Magical Year in Minnesota

This year has been the most exciting experience of my whole life! I've seen new things and learned a lot, made new friends, talked about my country, the traditions we have and how we live. It is interesting how people can have wrong ideas about foreigners, but then you realize there is more to see than what is on television and the Internet. These months have made me become more mature. If I was proud to be Mexican, now I am more.

I was part of a musical at Mayo High School, took some really interesting classes there, celebrated Christmas, Easter and my birthday, experienced my first Halloween and pumpkin carving, but the most amazing new experience was snow!

I just joined the lacrosse team and we have our first game tomorrow. The girls are really nice and I'm enjoying this new sport.

The Kraus family has been so kind to me. I am blessed. I am enjoying the privileges of being a senior, playing the guitar while my sister Abby sings, dancing with my sister Maria and laughing with my sister Kate. And yes, I miss my family and friends in Chiapas (my state), but I can also say now that I have a home here in Rochester, Minnesota.

Valeria Espinosa (Mexico)  
Hosted by the Kraus family  
Rochester, MN



Host sister Maria Kraus and Valeria Espinosa make tamales for Thanksgiving.

### Came as a Stranger, Leaving as a Son

We have been hosting Zaid, our new son from Jordan, this past year. We've really enjoyed getting to know him and what makes him excited in life. He has filled our house with much laughter, joy and excitement! Everyday he makes us feel special by giving us hugs and telling us how much he loves us.

As for what we have learned, he has taught us so much about the Muslim culture that I'd never heard before. I feel much more at ease about what he is praying and what he believes in. I was also able to ease his mind on what Christianity is all about as well. We feel like the walls have come down. Our house is a place where we can freely share our religions without judgmental attitudes getting in the way. I have learned that so many things are the same between the Muslim and Christian faiths.

The best part of getting to know Zaid is his love for life. The positive energy he brings to our home is incredible. I know our love for him will continue to grow long after

the exchange year is over. You can't help but love this guy!

He came as a stranger but is leaving in June as our son.

One more thing I have learned is that there really is green grass growing in Jordan! It's not all sand and desert lands!

Myna Horst, host mother for Zaid Shawabkeh (YES, Jordan)  
Chambersburg, PA



Seth, Myna, Brian and Alayna Horst with Zaid, second from the right.