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PAXPRESS

The Newspaper for Exchange Students, Host Families, and Schools

Heaven on Earth

I have been having a lot of great experiences lately. My PAX group went to southern Utah to see two magnificent places: Zion National Park and Bryce Canyon. For me, Bryce Canyon is heaven on earth—such a beautiful and a unique place!

I have also had a number of fun firsts with my host family—like visiting a pumpkin patch. My host sister, friends from church, and I also went to a haunted corn maze. I was so scared I lost my voice!

—Marwa (YES, Arab community in Israel), hosted by the Oertle family (UT)

The Oertle crew minus mom at the pumpkin patch: left to right are Savannah (host sister), Gabby (host sister), Marwa, Levi (host brother), Virgil (host dad), and Emeline (host sister)

Catching a New England Tradition

Before coming to the US, Zhiwei (Jonathan) had never been fishing. He quickly became eager to explore the intricacies of trout fishing, including learning about the water, fish, and flies while fishing the ponds of upstate Connecticut. On his first trip, he caught nothing. On the second trip he caught a few small trout. Finally, on trip number three, he caught several larger fish, including a very rare tiger trout.

As for his pole, Jonathan's host grandfather helped him make a bamboo rod. He looks forward to learning how to make one from the ground up, which will take about 60 hours from start to finish!

—Deb Evans, community coordinator (CT)

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Zhiwei (Jonathan) caught this 17-inch brown trout with a bamboo fishing rod that he made with his host grandfather.

Spectacular Change of View

This year in America is time to try new things, so my new experience was a camping trip to Moab City with my host family and friends. I was a little bit worried about camping—sleeping in the tent, cold nights, cooking food on a fire, staying far away from the city—I had never done it before. But everything turned out to be just great!

We went hiking at different rock valleys. At first, I was a little bit scared of climbing rocks and hills, but after a couple of times, my cousin and I climbed up every place we could. In the evening, our group played different games like Kick the Can and Laser Tag Guns Battle. My team won all the time! After a long day, we had dinner near the fire, talking and joking around. That was also the first time I tried s'mores—yummy! We went to Arches National Park, and we were lucky to see the Delicate Arch at sunset. That was one of the most incredible things I have ever seen. This trip helped me to feel like I had become part of a new family.

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

Grace (friend), Yuliya, host sister Tara, Morgan (friend), and host cousins Steffany and Paden at the Delicate Arch in Arches National Park

Treats for All

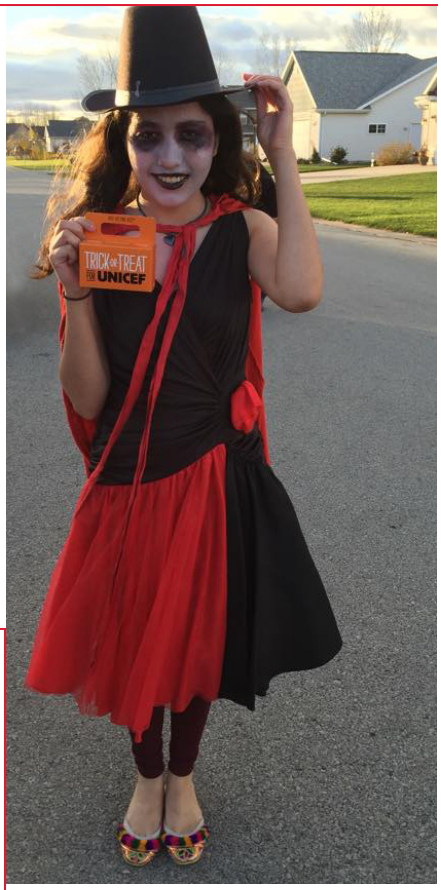
Trick-or-treating is one of the most exciting parts about Halloween that I looked forward to long before the holiday even arrived. I decided to be a vampire for Halloween and told my host parents that I wanted to go trick-or-treating.

At first they looked at me as if I was joking. They told me that I was too old for trick-or-treating, and it is usually the kids who do it. I insisted on going, because I really wanted to get the experience.

Trick-or-treating is usually done to get candy, but my goal was to trick-or-treat for UNICEF as part of one of their fundraising campaigns in order to help children who come from underprivileged families. I went door to door to ask people if they would like to donate for needy children instead of giving me candy.

The response was amazing as everyone was eager to give both candy and funds. Trick-or-treating was so fun since I not only got a lot of candy but also money for UNICEF used to help needy kids around the world..

—Anosha (YES, Pakistan), hosted by the Campana family (WI)



Anosha collected donations for UNICEF and still got lots of sweet treats herself.

Birthday Performance

A cluster of students and families was given a very special treat when Akshara mesmerized her birthday party guests with traditional dance.

—Akshara (YES, India), hosted by the O'Neil family (AZ)

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Get Involved!

Goal: Winning!

If you watched the World Cup last summer, you know how important soccer is in many countries, including Spain. When Martin arrived from Spain to attend Prospect Mountain High School in New Hampshire, he brought a sense of competition with him, helping the Prospect Mountain Timber Wolves achieve their very first State Championship title in the school's history.

Martin played a key role all season long in the team's undefeated season. The Prospect Mountain boys' soccer team closed out in style, with a 20-0 season that included just seven goals against them. Not only did his entire American community watch the final game, Martin's family in Spain was able to tune in via live feed!

—Jennifer Jones, community coordinator (NH)

Martin (#14) deftly passes the ball past two defenders.

A Month of Fun

October has been a super busy month for me. I performed 15 hours of community service, which included walking twice a week to a local orchard to collect apples for a soup kitchen and volunteering at the Air & Space Museum in Chantilly for a Halloween event.

The month started with celebrating Eid, my religious holiday. Then I gave two presentations at school during spirit week and went to homecoming. The thing I liked the most was Halloween, in which I dressed up like Captain Jack Sparrow and went trick-or-treating in my community coordinator's neighborhood. Trick-or-treating with other exchange students was amazing! And while I didn't get to carve a pumpkin before Halloween, I did carve it a day after. Another successful thing was arranging a party for 50 people. Chesron (my host brother from Suriname) and I proved that we could organize a party, which was for exchange students and their host families.

Looking forward to International Education Week and giving more presentations.

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

"Arrr!" says Danish as Captain Jack Sparrow on Halloween.

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Little-Known Slice of History

The Feast of the Hunters' Moon is an historical reenactment of the annual fall gathering of the French and Native Americans, which took place throughout the mid-1700s at Fort Ouiatenon, a fur-trading outpost. The fort is located on the Wabash River, four miles southwest of West Lafayette, Indiana. Thousands of participants create a feast for the senses. There is the familiar smell of burning wood, the report of the firing rifles, the savory taste of the old-fashioned cuisine, and of course, the period costumes. Our students helped children (and adults) make necklaces and bracelets.

—Lisa Ringer (IN), host mom of Robin (Netherlands) and Vladimir (Serbia)

Historical re-enactment all-stars Khrystyna (FLEX, Ukraine), Robin (Holland), Vladimir (Serbia) and Anastasia (FLEX, Russia)

Not Just Tacos and Sombreros

I presented to my classmates on the topic of Mexican culture. In addition to bringing small cultural artifacts, I was showing and talking about some beautiful places and traditions.

My friend helped me by dressing like a taco and wearing a sombrero (very funny to the class)! The pictures in my presentation helped me to explain that Mexico is not only the American stereotype (which my "taco friend" represented).

At the end, I played music that we listen to on Independence Day. I also handed out very traditional bread; everyone liked it a lot!

—Paola (Mexico), hosted by the Likens family (AL)

Paola with a special treat for her classmates

Windy City Wonders

For a small exchange student group in northwest Indiana, October was an educational, exciting, and totally fun-filled month: They learned how to roller skate, spent a day at Great America riding their first roller coasters, saw the sights and learned the history of Chicago, and spent a humbling day in Amish country in northern Indiana. We are looking forward to the months ahead to learn and enjoy all that our area has to offer!

—Chris Barnes (IN), community coordinator and host mom of Tolkynay (FLEX, Kazakhstan)

Feruza (FLEX, Kazakhstan), Cholponai (FLEX, Kyrgyzstan), and Tolkynay pause in front of the famous Chicago Bean.

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Meeting the Main(e) Man!

I took four students to have lunch with the Governor of Maine, Paul LePage, and his wife Ann. They are good friends of mine who were very interested to hear about the students' respective homelands. It was an afternoon the students are not likely to forget any time soon!

—Gil Roy (ME), community coordinator and host father of Ilya (FLEX, Russia)

First Lady Ann LePage, Jana (Germany), Felix (Germany), Ilya (FLEX, Russia), and Renaud (Belgium) on the steps of The Blaine House, home of Maine's Governor

What a Treat!

Silvia volunteered to pass out treats to youngsters at the Safe Trick-or-Treat event in front of the Dancing Bird Art Gallery and Music Store in Cumberland, WI, on October 25. Meeting hundreds of youngsters at the event, along with carving pumpkins, going to a pumpkin patch, and Halloween night festivities, will be treasured memories of Silvia's first American Halloween.

—Chris Hopkins-Hile (WI), host dad of Silvia (Italy)

Silvia's treat was the smile she got from handing out sweets.

Culture Exchange

The last few weeks have been so fun! Our precious community coordinator Rebecca Kinney took us to the United Nations Association banquet, where we performed traditional national dances. We also met the mayor of Birmingham in addition to lots of college professors and other interesting people. Then, we had a great opportunity to visit the Birmingham Museum of Art. There were many formal pictures of both US Presidents and Native Americans.

Last weekend, my host mom (thanks!), Olga (FLEX, Moldova), and I were participating in the Heritage Festival, where we presented our countries. The best thing is that Americans are really interested!

—Khapiya (FLEX, Kazakhstan), hosted by the Osadcii-Lee family (AL)

Khapiya has quite the set-up on the porch of a log cabin at the Heritage Festival.

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A Thai Champion

Natchaya (Yui) came into our home and right into our hearts. We discovered the second day she was here that she is a good tennis player though she had only played as a young girl in Thailand. When we suggested she join the Manti High School tennis team, she was willing. As procedure goes, she had to be approved to play by the UHSAA. When she was finally able to begin playing, it was already a couple weeks into the season, but we soon found out that Yui is not just a good tennis player, she is an incredible tennis player!

Yui was put on the varsity team and began winning every match she played. She won the love and respect of her teammates, and they came up with nicknames and cheers for her. The coach appreciated the depth that Yui added to the team. As state playoffs approached, we didn't know what to expect but just hoped she would have fun and do her best. Yui played stronger than we had ever seen her play. We were all very excited that she won all three matches at the state tournament. Because of her win, Manti High School was able to earn the second place trophy.

—Amy and Evan Bingham (UT), host parents of Yui (Thailand)

Yui's teammates are exultant after another win for Manti High School.

Toughening Up for Winter

Soccer has been a big part of our exchange student's (Fred) time here so far. The team had an undefeated season, losing only in the state championships. Fred played through the changing colors of the leaves surrounding the school's mountaintop field, and on the last day of the season, he saw his first snow on the way to the game. His soccer kit soon became accompanied by long underwear and gloves. He has since been forced to abandon his simple, light jacket in order to "toughen up" for the upcoming real winter.

—Lara Ronan (VT), host mom of Fred (YES, Kenya)

Even early fall days feel cold to Fred, who is used to Kenya's warmer weather!

Keeping Busy!

It has been a month of true cultural exchange for Sohaib. From sharing the Eid holiday and crafting native Pakistani food to jumping into all the joys of Halloween, working with Boy Scouts, and more, this video highlights some of his favorite activities from October.

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

Sohaib walks us through the many varied and interesting aspects of his new American life.

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The Adjustment Cycle

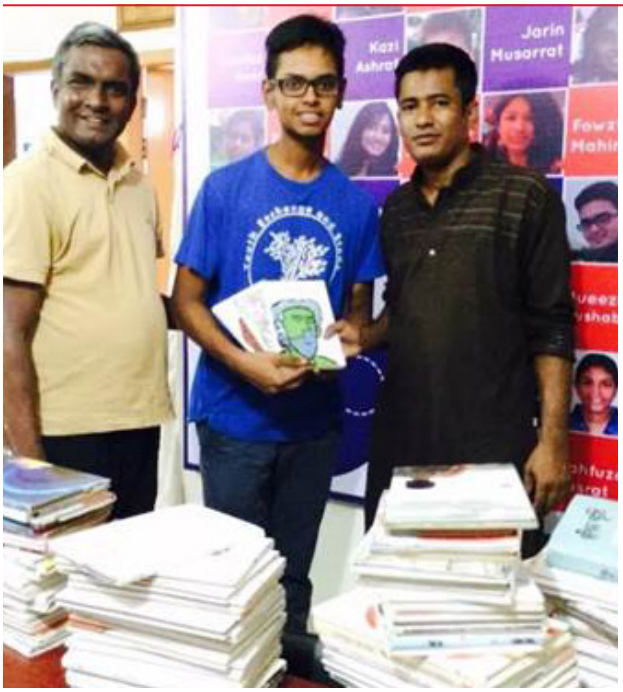
Ishraq (YES, Bangladesh), Behram, Renee Kerr (community coordinator), Aya (YES, Egypt), and Alfin (YES, Indonesia) promote peace.

Always Welcome

Where am I going? Who am I going to live with? Will I be able to live with them? Will they care about me? Will I manage to live without my family? Will they let me practice my religion? These were things I worried about before coming to America. Starting from the busy and populated city of Peshawar, I landed in the calm and peaceful city of Pasco, WA, on September 11, 2014. Things were different than I expected. Lifestyle, point of view, and many other things were different.

Living with a Muslim family, attending a Catholic school, and going to a Mormon Church with my community coordinator added more fun and interest to my experience. Activities like homecoming, football games, community service, family gatherings, and presentations have kept me busy, but still it feels like a blessing to be a part of it. In just two months, it feels like home. All my worries proved wrong, and above all I have been freely practicing my religion. This is all because the people are really loving, caring, and welcoming, and this is truly something that made me love this country.

—Behram (YES, Pakistan), hosted by the Khan family (WA)



Abrar (center) shows several of the books collected during a volunteer project.

Forever Changed

Being an exchange student can change your perspective, and it surely has changed mine. Living in a small town in which I was offered many opportunities, I tried to make as much use of those as I could.

I absolutely fell in love with volunteering. Although I was busy with sports after school, I volunteered on weekends at the local library and also at a nursing home, where I organized activities for people suffering from dementia. I loved interacting with them and bringing a smile to their faces. The thought of doing good for others and the community provided a natural sense of accomplishment and happiness which I never felt before.

After returning home following the exchange year, I worked with two friends to collect about 300 books and donate them to a poor governmental school in Tangail, Bangladesh. We went to the school and presented the books to the principal during an event. Students were also encouraged to read more since their library now has a wider collection. The objective was to grow the children's interest in reading and expand their knowledge.

Volunteering in the USA improved my leadership skills and self-confidence. Trying to make a change has now become a hobby.

—Abrar (YES Alumnus, Bangladesh), hosted in 2013/14 by the Lamp family (SC)

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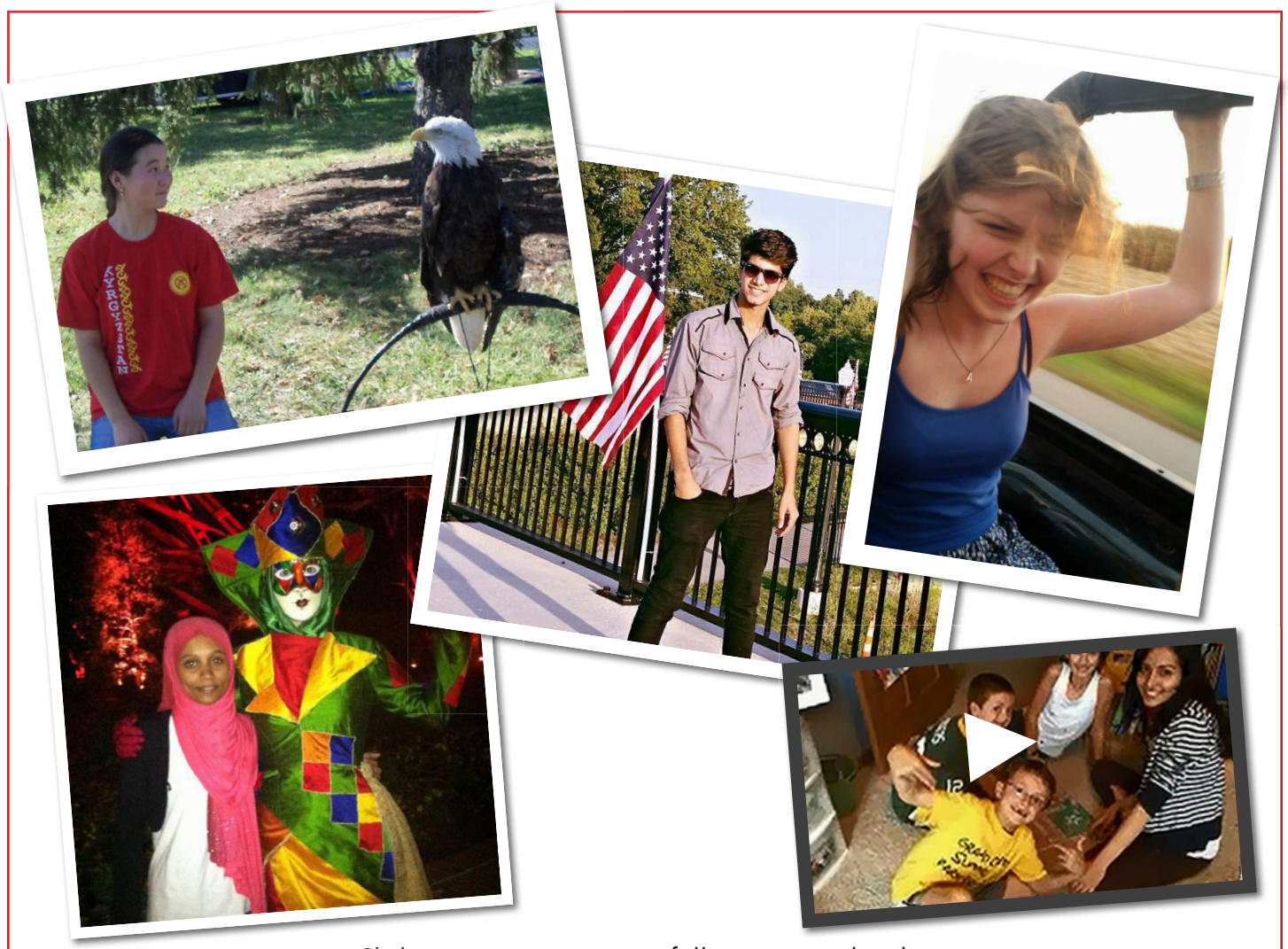
As Seen in Social Media



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**.

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