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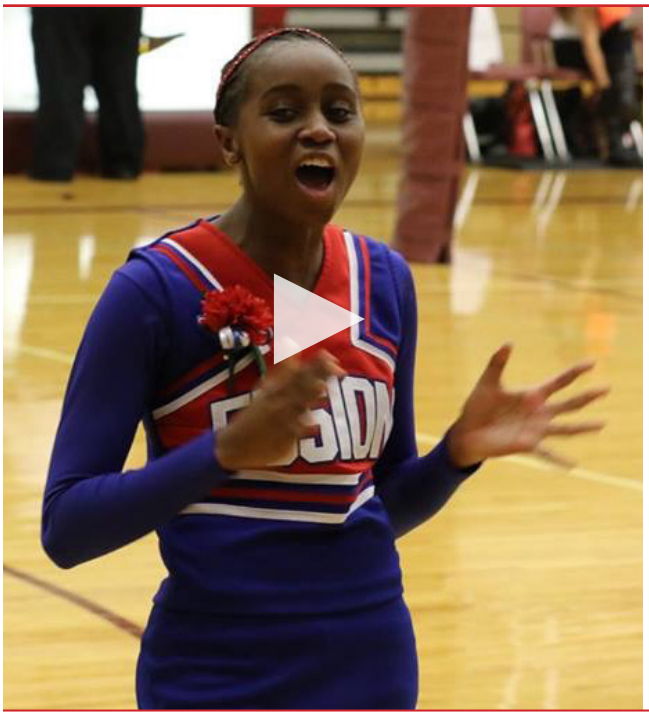
Pax academic exchange

PAXPRESS

The Newspaper for Exchange Students, Host Families, and Schools



Finding Her Voice

Fatuma came to us from Tanzania, quiet but not shy. Sometimes when we spoke, we were unsure if she even responded to inquiries about herself, her country, culture, likes, and dislikes. It took me a few weeks to recognize the look in her eye if she didn't care for a particular food that was served. We insisted that if she did not like something, she should speak up.

"Use your voice! How can you cheerlead if you don't use your voice?" But cheerleading was new to her. The crowd could barely hear her at the first football games, but she learned all the moves and did them as well as the seasoned cheerleaders. Seven weeks later, volleyball district tournaments fell the same week as the FFA national conference, which all cheerleaders except the two exchange students were attending. The cheer coach gave both Fatuma and Anna (FLEX, Ukraine) the option of cheering. Anna was unsure, but Fatuma enthusiastically replied, "Yep! We can do this!" And do it she did, leading the crowd at the games, and finding her voice in America!

—Necole Killick (MT), host mom of Fatuma (YES, Tanzania)

Fatuma raises everybody's spirits!

An Autumn to Remember

This fall, I was very active volunteering, participating in different activities, and spending a perfect time with my host family. Visiting Ferguson Orchard, picking pumpkins, and carving them were first-time things for me. I am so happy that I shared the excitement about these activities with them.

In addition to that, I gave presentations about my country to my classmates. I shared my culture, traditions, and the beauty of it with them, having the pleasure to get them to know me better and my home country, too. I am happy having this chance to be an exchange student in the USA. Each month is a surprise for me.

—Gabriela (FLEX, Moldova), hosted by the Rothering family (MN)

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From left to right, host sister Aleesha, Muhammad (YES, Pakistan), and Gabriela pose in a "gourd-geous" field!

Halloween

Despicable? No, They're Adorable!

Nadiya came up with the idea to make minion costumes, and Daniella jumped right in to help. The two of them constructed the frames for the heads, and then designed and sewed the entire costumes. It took about 20 hours to make these little yellow guys. We even wore them to the Halloween parade in Portsmouth, NH!

—Sue Dawson (MA), host mom of Daniella (YES, Palestine) and Nadiya (FLEX, Ukraine)

Daniella (left) and Nadiya (right) transformed themselves into minions, along with host mom Sue (center)!

A PAX-Style Carving Fest

A few PAX exchange students attended a pumpkin carving fest. We had snacks, a delicious dinner, and we finished with a traditional bonfire and s'mores. It was our first time carving pumpkins, and all of us did an excellent job.

—Paulina (Mexico), hosted by the Lee family (IN)

Left to right: Shuaiba (YES, Philippines), Ciel (Belgium), Else (Netherlands), Sandy (Thailand), Zewar (YES, Palestine), Tomi (FLEX, Kazakhstan), and Paulina

Urja (right, with host dad and siblings) knows she has nothing to fear by hanging with these characters!

Heroes and Hooligans

My host family and I had great fun when we went trick-or-treating. I am so glad to be a member of this family, and I am having a great time with my friends too!

—Urja (YES, India), hosted by the Dobrowolski family (AZ)

Mary doesn't look at all frightened by Maddie (YES, Pakistan)!

Winning Witch

Maddie won the costume contest at the Halloween party in Smithville, MS. Has there ever been a prettier witch?

—Mary Payne Hairald, area manager (MS)

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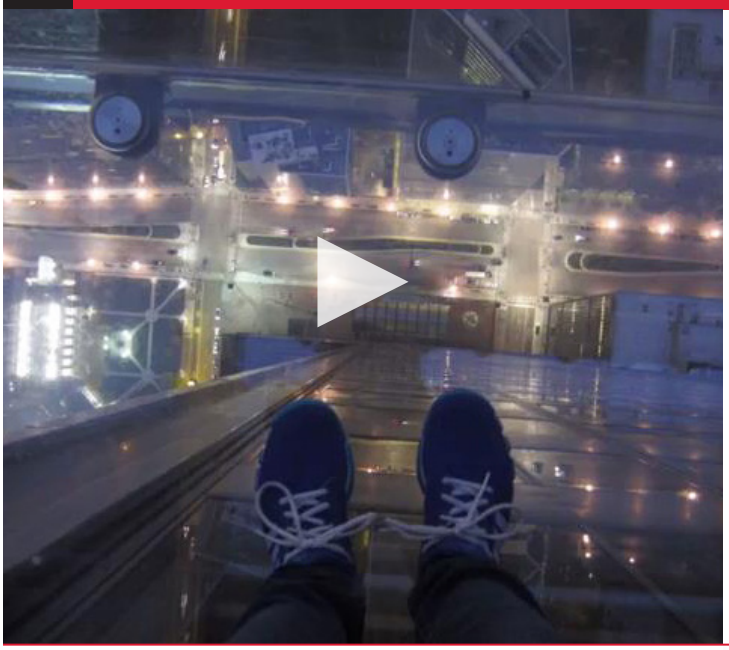

A Whirlwind Tour

My local coordinator, an exchange student from Sweden, and I went on a trip to Chicago for three days. It was awesome! We visited the famous "Bean," saw the beautiful city from the John Hancock Center and the Willis Tower, and went shopping.

I had seen pictures of Chicago, and my parents and brother had been there, but I always wanted to go too. I'll never forget this fantastic trip!

—Annika (Germany),
hosted by the Dowless family (IN)

The German puts her faith in American engineering at the Willis Tower Skydeck.

Does this Ring a Bell?

Paul got to experience his first Southeastern Conference American football game at Mississippi State University in Starkville. A tradition at the Davis Wade Stadium is ringing the cowbell, and Paul learned how to utilize his cowbell at this game!

—Joel Barron (MS),
host dad of Paul (Germany)

Host dad Joel, host mom Reianna, host brother Micah, and Paul, with cowbell at the ready!

Play Ball!

We went to a baseball game with many exchange students and their host parents. Although the day's weather wasn't good, the players did a good job! We had very good seats, and all the people were very excited.

We ate peanuts and burgers while we watched the wonderful game. All of us enjoyed our time so much. This was the first time I have seen a baseball game.

—Rongbing (China),
hosted by the Valdez family (TX)

Along with host sister Alyssa and her friend—and a crowd of thousands—Rongbing enjoys her first-ever professional baseball game.

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Celebrating Everything

I have hosted 20 exchange students, and I am so impressed with Daniel. There is never a time that he does not have a gigantic smile on his face!

Daniel has performed over 60 hours of community service thus far, and he wants to continue. He delivers meals once a week to elderly citizens and works every Thursday after school at the local thrift store. Daniel has also given presentations on his home country to his school classes and the Kiwanis Club.

When he tried out for the high school basketball team, he did not make it. I was concerned that this might disappoint him, but as one of the teachers said, Daniel's positive attitude is infectious. He says that now he has time for other activities!

—Mel Blunt (MO), host dad of Daniel (FLEX, Moldova)

Daniel takes a break from volunteering to celebrate the Kansas City Royals—World Series champions!

Finding Family

I couldn't imagine that I would have such a wonderful host family! Since my first day living with the Edges, I started feeling like a real member of the family, and every day we become closer and closer. We have a lot in common, especially with my host sister Emily. Because I'm only an only child in my natural family, I thought it would be difficult to have a sibling. But fortunately, I was mistaken. I enjoy every single day being with her, and now I can't imagine my life in Ukraine without my sister. Even now, as I write this, she is attending her acting class, and I haven't seen her almost all day—I miss her. But I know when she gets back, we will have a big group hug and a good family time.

I cannot describe how grateful I am to the Edge family! This is an invaluable experience for me. Thank you for this opportunity!

—Valentyna (FLEX, Ukraine) hosted by the Edge family (TX)

Host sister Emily (left) and Valentyna (right) dressed as fairies when they attended the Texas Renaissance Festival with Mom (Janelle) and Dad (Justice).

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Get Involved!

Flying High

I went to the Gwinett County Fair with my host mom, my roommate Jessy (YES, Egypt), and two more exchange students. I had an amazing day. The place was huge and full of things to do or see. It was a mix between vendor booths, an animal fair, and a fun fair.

The booths were run by different groups, like churches, political parties, and businesses selling honey, mobile phone plans, make-up, etc. At the animal area, there was an exhibition of farm animals. The fun fair area was the best part of all of these, full of things to do like little roller coasters and spinning rides. I liked it very much!

—Jiang (Spain),
hosted by the Lau family (GA)

Jessy and Jiang take in the joys of the traditional county fair.

Choosing to Face Obstacles

I was honored to be one of eight students from my school to go to the Future Famers of America (FFA) national convention. I got the chance to go to Kentucky for two days and met many other students from different states. I attended a leadership workshop, where I learned a lot of things.

One of the guest speakers said something that really touched me: "We all have different obstacles that are not our choice, but we have the choice how to handle them." It was a wonderful experience in my life, and I feel stronger and wiser to be able to make good decisions in the future. I am really inspired by FFA, and I would love to have a similar program in my country.

—Mehria (YES, Pakistan),
hosted by the Brunner family (IL)

Mehria offers her thoughts at the FFA national convention.

Diving Right in!

Panpailin ("Aimmy") from Thailand marched with the Dixie High School band as part of the flag corps for the Veterans Day Parade. Aimmy has just learned this skill and did a great job. She has also tried two other new sports in the three months she has been here—tennis and now swimming. Aimmy is willing to try new things even when they are hard—an important lesson for exchange students!

—Laural Paul,
community coordinator (UT)

Aimmy (right) in action at an earlier parade this year. Click on the image to watch her do her thing at the Veterans Day Parade!

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Time with Future Generation

For as long as I can remember, I have been passionate about helping children. From babysitting to community service, I enjoyed it all. Of the many goals I have for my life, among the most important is my desire to provide help to those in need through my commitment to service.

As an exchange student, I was able to gain experience in this by volunteering to work with children at a church in my community. I participate in this program every Wednesday and Sunday, playing games with the children. Seeing them happy makes me feel happy! What I regret is previously not knowing the importance of volunteering, so now I am ready for any role that lets me brighten people's lives, whether gathering around the Sabbath candles with family, helping a neighbor, or giving my all in front of a crowd.

I have more and more to tell about my impressions and days that I spend here. So many things happen to me every day. I confidently can say that to be an exchange student is not a year in my life; it is a life in a year.

—Hawa (YES, Sierra Leone), hosted by the Snell family (KS)

Hawa brings joy to children, who bring her joy in return.

Favorite Thing? Volunteering!

It has already been three months since I came to the USA, and my life here is of course completely different because of the culture, but also because of changes that have happened inside me.

My favorite part of American life is volunteering. I never thought that it would be as interesting and wonderful as it is! I have worked several times at a food pantry, nursing home, a daycare facility for mentally-challenged people of all ages, and Bigbee Baptist Church, where I participate in choir and drama.

I love spending time in Sunday school with little children. We made presents for children in different poor countries through a program called Samaritan Purse. It's wonderful that children have the possibility to feel magic and miracles made by others. I hope that when the girls or boys get the presents, they will feel happiness and my warm hugs, because children need it. It was a privilege for me, trying to make their life a little bit happier.

—Zhanna (FLEX, Kyrgyzstan), hosted by the Monaghan family (MS)

Zhanna is hooked on volunteering!

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The Adjustment Cycle

Muskan is right at home in the New Hampshire countryside!

Life on the Other Side of the World

Although being a city girl used to the bustling streets and noises, I easily got settled in New Hampshire. I think I always had an inner instinct of love for countryside and nature, and that's why I got hosted by a family who is surrounded by nature.

Some of my most memorable activities so far have been volunteering at a community fair and making Pakistani cuisine for my host mom. Since I got here, I've been discovering myself every day and see myself grow as a better person.

—Muskan (YES, Pakistan), hosted by the Siik family (NH)

Kamilla and her host dad celebrate at wedding reception.

A Beautiful "First"

Because I am a Muslim, I have never been to church. But now, I've seen the inside of a Roman Catholic church in Iowa—for a wedding! From the moment I entered, I discovered a tiny world full of happiness and kindness. It reminded me of a home, made of hopes, dreams, comfort, and love. My host sister Madison was singing a song accompanied by piano. The bride and groom looked happy as a new beginning was about to start for them.

As an exchange student, I am trying to visit as many fascinating places as I can, making every effort to break stereotypes of different religions and their influences. This is only the beginning of my journey.

—Kamilla (FLEX, Kyrgyzstan), hosted by the Ham family (OH)

Mariya teaches a child to draw a *viburnum*, the Ukrainian national symbol, while volunteering at an international festival.

Gaining Faith in Myself

Exchange students meet a lot of new people, and every one of them plays a role in their lives. My host mother always tells me to move on, participate in what I like, and believe in the power of thoughts. My host father has a great sense of humor, and I have lots in common with my host brother, with whom I can be myself. It all has been influencing my personality for two months, but I wouldn't be sharing my experience with the world if I hadn't spent several days with my PAX group.

Talking with my coordinator, I received support and motivation to gain faith in myself. My experience moves me to be more confident, to believe in the power of one person, to make good deals without expecting any benefits, and to speak to the world. I made friends and good memories, and explored a lot of things while doing community service. Now, I use every chance to help people and to make an improvement to the world.

—Mariya (FLEX, Ukraine), hosted by the Osadcii-Lee family (AL)

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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.) at paxpress@pax.org.

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