October 2014 Vol. XX, No. 3

PAXPRESS

The Newspaper for Exchange Students, Host Families, and Schools

Student Contest 1 Winner: Naina from Pakistan!

Blueberry picking, pep rallies, pottery, and even a brief interview with her host dad—what wasn't there for the contest #1 selection committee to love about Naina's video? Look for "honorable mentions" on the PAX Facebook page and in this issue; don't miss the second contest announcement (end of this month); and enjoy Naina's feel-good film!

—Naina (YES, Pakistan), hosted by the Thurber-Kama family (VT)

Naina and her host parents on a "long and incredibly beautiful hike."

The Time is Right…Now

As a Franco-American couple, my husband and I understand the importance of international exchange and knew we'd eventually want to host an exchange student. But with four active children and busy work lives, the time was never right.

The phone call came on August 16: would we consider hosting? My initial reaction was that the time wasn't right. Yet the more I thought about it, I realized that we simply needed to change that mindset. So we moved forward…or tried to.

After reviewing applications, we requested Wadhah, a Yemeni student, but the American school was concerned about his English language abilities. Other applicants were proposed, but Wadhah had already captured our hearts, and we couldn't let him go. A Skype interview with the school confirmed his English was up to par, and the exchange was approved. We connected soon after via email and Facebook, and I found this August 12 status update (written in English) on his Facebook wall: "I am lonely. I have no host family for my own."

In that moment, I knew for certain that the time was indeed right. Before even meeting him, I felt Wadhah was part of our family. We initially chose him because at least on paper, he appeared to be a good match. Subsequent correspondence seemingly confirmed it. And at last, on September 11, we welcomed him home as our son and brother.

—Nancy Bonnaire, host mom of Wadhah (YES, Yemen)

Host sister Julia, perfectly happy atop Wadhah's shoulders.

Inside this Issue

Exchange Living 2-3
Get Involved! 4
PAX Plus 5
On the Home Front 6
The Adjustment Cycle 7
As Seen in Social Media 8

Everything is Awesome!

Sohaib and host brother Griffin hike in the beautiful Wyoming mountains.

School is going more than awesome! On my second day, I had a hiking and camping trip in the mountains. I spent four days in the wilderness with my class fellows, which helped me to make friends. I told them a lot about Pakistani culture and taught them some amazing Pakistani songs.

I have joined a robotics club, where I am working on really cool robots. This also helps me make new friends and spend more time with them. I have also joined the junior varsity soccer team.

My host family is probably the most awesome! It's my third week, and I'm already feeling at home. I have adjusted very well with them and have started participating in chores. I have cooked Pakistani food for them twice and also gifted them some Pakistani cultural cloths and handicrafts which were so loved by them. I'm going to the local church with my family on Sundays. I'm actually celebrating all the differences between the cultures!

I'm living in a really beautiful house with hills all around. Apart from its beauty, this area is known for its nice people. I'm already loving my community. Looking forward to a wonderful time ahead!

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

As American as Apple Pie

West Virginia PAX students spent the afternoon in the kitchen, trying out their baking skills on an American favorite: apple pie.

The students sampled several varieties, including Granny Smith, Gala, Red Delicious, and West Virginia's state fruit, the Golden Delicious apple—all while learning the importance of giving back to their communities, schools, and families.

The students then brought their pies home to share with their host families along with a heartfelt message of thanks for the opportunity to share 10 months with them.

—Jessica Boyd, community coordinator (WV)

From left to right: Michelle (Mexico), Timothee (France), Daniel (Spain), Kate (FLEX, Moldova), and Anna (FLEX, Ukraine) learn an important American tradition.

Back to Front Page

An Uplifting Spirit Week

Wearing pajamas to school? The New Year in September? And what about the time machine—are you sure that it's impossible?

Spirit Week is a thing that everybody should experience during their school years. But even if you're an adult, you can absorb that magical atmosphere of childhood. We had a parade of the seasons, built a bonfire, and played games which rallied and united us. The best game ever was to see which class could yell the loudest—so fun! What a pity that Spirit Week is just once a year.

—Mariya (FLEX, Russia), hosted by the Gallant family (ME)

Mariya (bottom row, far left) shouts as loudly as her classmates during Spirit Week.

Fall in Utah

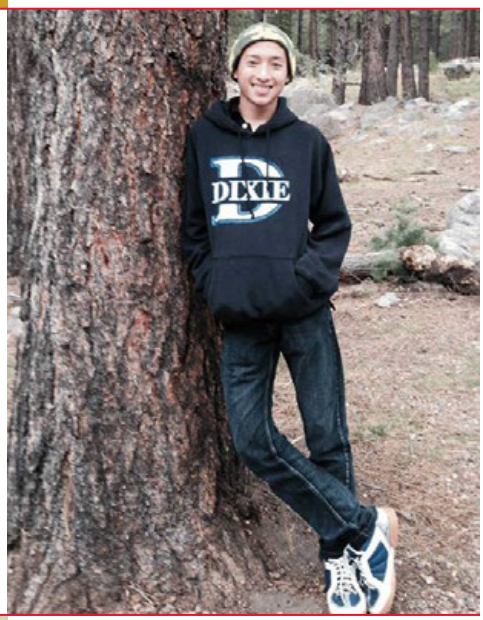
As the leaf goes red and falls to the ground, the morning weather gets colder than usual, which means, it's fall!

Hi, my name is Muhammad (Yadi), and I'm an exchange student from Indonesia. It's been a few days since the first day of fall, and everything is brown. Well, of course it is, it's the desert here, after all. But the weather surely turns from the burning hot to the mild, cold weather, and I enjoy it so much.

Although I've only been here for like six weeks, I have gone through a lot of activities. I have school, which I enjoy very much, a meeting of exchange students in Pine Valley, and I have the violin lesson I dreamed of so much! Yay! The family which I live with now is very awesome in a ridiculous way. Everyone, including me, is crazy, and that just makes me feel like I fit in right away!

—Yadi (YES, Indonesia), hosted by the Heaton family (UT)

Yadi bundles up for cool fall weather.



American Collage

I appreciate this opportunity to get to know different people, a new language, and a rich culture. I have already done many fun things, which I try to communicate in these three collages, which I prepared for the PAX student contest #1.

—Daria (FLEX, Ukraine), hosted by the Alger family (PA)

Showing their national pride are Aruzhan (FLEX, Kazakhstan), Daria, and Gulnaza (FLEX, Kyrgyzstan).

Back to Front Page

Get Involved!

A Natural Skyscraper

Students often want to wander in awe through city streets lined with skyscrapers. But if you want to see a REAL skyscraper, go to the mountains! We had a wonderful time hiking Mount Rainier and the surrounding trees and meadows. We learned about the volcanoes that built much of Washington State and saw glaciers. We also visited 1,000-year-old trees and a river churning through a crack in the rock 115 feet below a bridge. We all highly recommend a visit on a sunny day in early fall!

—Renee Kerr, PAX community coordinator (WA) and host mom to Alfin (YES, Indonesia) and Ishraq (YES, Bangladesh)

(Top row): Alfin, Mais (YES, Israel/Palestine), Behram (YES, Pakistan), and Ishraq, as well as (bottom row) Aya (YES, Egypt), Medo (PAX/YES alumnus, Yemen), and Renee with Mount Rainier in the distance

Serbian Sensation

Seventeen-year-old Vladimir from Serbia came to the Delphi Oracle tennis team with a goal to win it all! He has established himself as a force to be reckoned with, having started his career with an awesome 7-0 record on the varsity team as the #1 singles player! He has goals of not only making it to the state level, but winning there too. Being his proud host mom, I have to agree—this kid has some serious skills! We are also meeting up with a tennis pro for a lesson or two to see what else he can learn to progress in the game he is so passionate about.

Update: At press time, Vladimir's record had changed to 16-2, and he is heading to a regional competition!

—Lisa Ringer (IN), host mom of Vladimir

Vladimir is making a name for himself on the court!

World of Opportunities

The inner peace I am feeling in the US is something indescribable and overwhelming. At school, I run cross country, which has become my identity and is absolutely wonderful. I am running varsity for my school. Visiting different towns for meets is as fun as cross country itself. I am also a member of Students Against Destructive Decisions, which creates awareness among people against harmful deeds, and I am signed up for SkillsUSA.

Besides school, I am also involved in different activities with my host family. Visiting the apple orchard one weekend really made my day, and football games and cheese festivals have added their own charm and color to my happiness and experience.

—Ashfaq (YES, Pakistan), hosted by the Binford family (WI)

Ashfaq enjoys every moment that he can.

Back to Front Page

Building Community

A group of PAX students worked with United Way to help a homeowner make a rock fence. We had to pick up and move small and huge rocks from next to the house to the place where the fence would be built. We were having so much fun because we worked together, chatting, laughing, and joking around while we were picking up the rocks.

Yes, we were tired, but it was worth it. Community service hours: check! Enjoying time with new folks: check! Having a great time in United States? Absolutely!

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

(Front row) Mariano (Mexico) and Oche (YES, Nigeria); (Back row) Eduard (FLEX, Russia), Safirah, Naina (YES, Pakistan), Alicia (Spain), and community coordinator Ann Newsmith pose after a tiring but fun day.

Helping Others

I would like to tell you about my volunteering. I really love to do it, and my host mom always helps me to do it! I arrived a month ago, and I already have about 20 volunteer hours.

My first volunteer experience was in the church. It was very interesting. I spent time with children from 7 to 12 years old. I played with them or told them stories. Then one woman from church invited me to work with people who have disabilities, because they really need help. Now every Sunday morning I go to this group and work with these people. My second volunteering activity is with my neighbors, working on putting together a directory of local neighbors. We go to new neighbors' houses and ask if they want their names and numbers to be in the directory. I have met a lot of great people and made many friends.

I also volunteer in a food pantry, help guide a blind man, and work with people with disabilities. I want to do more volunteering because I like it!

—Vladelina (FLEX, Kyrgyzstan), hosted by Janet Keller (OH)

Vladelina enjoys helping people wherever she goes.

Taxing Yet Rewarding

Community service is like a tax you pay for living on the earth. I have been involved in a lot of community service since I got here. Community service gave me a chance to connect with people in a totally different manner. I stacked wood for the neighbors, helped feed people in church, and did lots of other things. I love doing community service. It is a great way to feel good about yourself; the smile you see on people's faces makes you forget all your worries.

—Syed (YES, Pakistan), hosted by the Hume family (MA)

Syed volunteering at the Key Club's spaghetti dinner

Back to Front Page

On the Home Front

Me and My Awesome Host Family

You'll never be bored in this house full of nicely crazy children, who are my host siblings. We enjoy doing after school activities and even doing homework together! Since one month, we traveled to Utah, visited a national park, and had a great time at both Zozobra Festival and Balloon Fiesta. I'm really happy to be part of their family—the fifth kid! Every day is full of new things for me, and I'm sure for my host family as well.

—Anastasiia (FLEX, Ukraine), hosted by the Wilson family (NM)

Magnolia State Welcomes You

Mississippi, Mississippi, what a hospitable state

People here are amusing, easy-going and so great!

They are really fine in football

Can cook you something awesome good

When you understand their humor

You will always have good mood!

They will show you how to play softball

Cheer for team and play in band

If you ever get in trouble

You'll receive a helping hand!

You will never be alone here

You will learn the Southern speech

In the famous Ole Miss land

All your goals can be reached!

—Yana (FLEX, Ukraine), hosted by the Armstrong family (MS)

What Really Matters

I am really enjoying my time here due to the great support of my host family and my local coordinator. They were all so happy to see me and immediately made me feel as a member of the family and community.

One of the traditions I like here is going to church on Sundays. It is just great to find something I did at home with my family here in the US, because I could have also lived with a family who does not go to church. Another tradition I like is "family night," where we are all present and watch a movie or play a board game together. It is just so beautiful, and I love it. I also love—I mean really love—cornbread, which is a type of traditional bread here.

What I also like about my family is that they want to know more about me and my traditions too. For example, they wanted me to cook something from my country. When I did, they liked it. Now, they are asking me to do that one more time!

I learned so many new things about my family, but what touched me the most, is the fact that they treat me not like an exchange student, but like a member of the family. It will show from time to time that I am not from here, but only the love matters. I really appreciate that from them—being as close to them as possible.

—Claude (YES, Cameroon), hosted by the Brady family (TN)

Claude's cooking: back by popular demand

Back to Front Page

The Adjustment Cycle

Cojan (FLEX, Moldova) and Devina take a bite!

My First Enormous Turkey Leg

The Deerfield Fair was so big and fun. I had my first huge turkey leg for lunch there. It was so delicious and enormous! I never ate such a huge thing like a turkey leg before, because turkey is not common in my country. However, I like it so much. I also saw the horse show at night at the fair. That was my first time seeing horses that jumped.

I have been here for two months. Sometimes, I find it difficult. Sometimes, things go wrong. And sometimes, loneliness comes. But, when the difficult times come, I always remember why I worked so hard to get here. Trying to smile when we think we can't anymore is painful. But that is how we get stronger. That is how we learn things. So, never give up, keep smiling, and enjoy some turkey legs!

—Devina (YES, Indonesia), hosted by the Moody family (NH)

That's the Stuff!

I really enjoy my host family. They are people I trust and to whom I can go with a problem. Before I arrived, it seemed weird to me that I was placed in a family without children, but when I arrived, I fell in love with my host parents right away. They seemed like very kind and careful people. I enjoy spending time with them. We usually go grocery shopping together.

They are always eager to play table games with me or listen to my favorite music. I'm going to teach them how to dance Armenian traditional dances. It's so much fun to know that they really like to know more and more about me and my culture. My host mom made some cookies for me too, and I'm going to ask her to teach me how. That's the kind of good stuff to take back with me.

I hope that I'll have the chance to take my host parents to Armenia with me to share more of my own culture with them some day.

—Nare (FLEX, Armenia), hosted by the Knutson family (WI)

Nare is cruising right through the adjustment cycle.

Sheena's host family and classmates made sure she had a very sweet 16!

Living with Your Dreams

Have you ever experienced dreaming and it became true? Have you ever experienced just watching an American movie, and now you are living a life being an American? That's what happens to exchange students.

In days of yore, I'm just a normal girl, normal student, normal member of the family, until an opportunity appeared for this to become real life.

When you say you are planning to apply to an international program, people underestimate you, mostly. People think that you can't do it, that you are just nothing. But when you make that your inspiration, everything will be perfectly fine according to your plans.

I came to the United States with an open mind, open heart, and ready to face the real world. Yes, I am still trying to help myself to process the information that I am now an exchange student, a young ambassador of goodwill, a foreigner living in a different country, and that I am now living with my dreams.

—Sheena (YES, Philippines), hosted by the Richens family (UT)

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 Director
Nicholas Burtscher

Editor
Nancy Griffin-Bonnaire

Art Director
Pajes Sterman

Back to Front Page