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Pax academic exchange

PAXPRESS

The Newspaper for Exchange Students, Host Families, and Schools

Rock on, Marzaan!

I was lucky enough to go to a Mexican Day of the Dead Festival. This is where families remember loved ones who passed away. I also got to see my host sister do a special performance there. **In the top photo, I am posing with *La Calavera Catrina***, but this is really only the tip of my many adventures...

From a girl who only imagined how the outside world might look to representing my country on the other side of it is truly exciting—yet terrifying. When you meet all these new people, all eyes are on you. Read the full article at www.pax.org.

—Marzaan (YES, Bangladesh), hosted by the Kittermans (AZ)

Bangladesh from head to toe: Marzaan and host sister Erin

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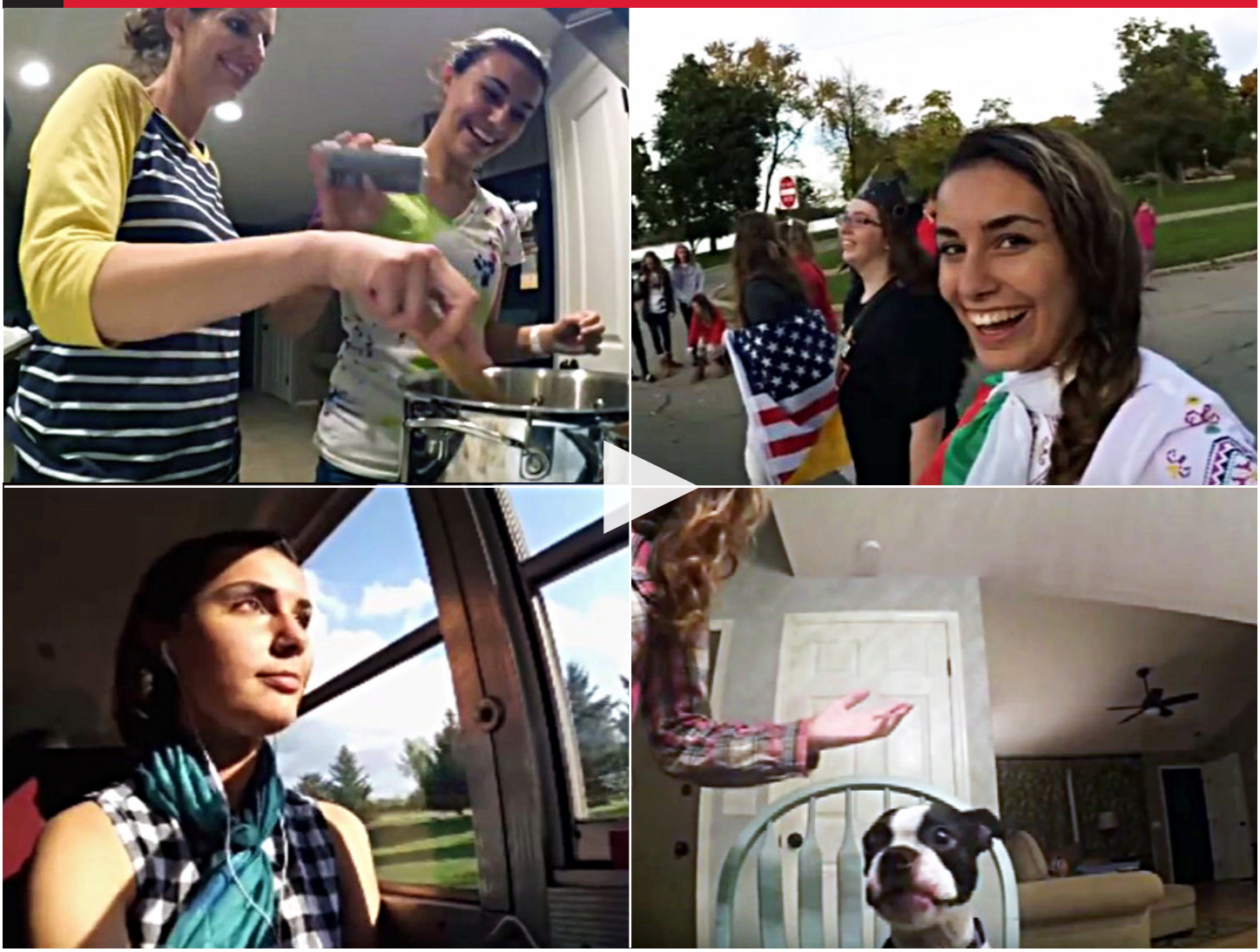
Contest



Bulgarian and Boston Terrier Tear up Student Contest #1

With one of the most creative and well-executed videos that the PAX judging committee has ever seen, YES student Rada Lazarova (hosted by the Zwaska family, WI) has been voted the overall winner of the first (of four) student contests this program year! With 817 combined Facebook "likes," "comments," and "shares" at the time of the deadline, Rada also received the award for the "most-liked" submission.

Students were asked to show the PAX community how they were "settlin' in." With hundreds of entries on the PAX Facebook page, the judging committee enjoyed seeing how so many students are getting along at school, in their host families, and in the wider community.

A big thank you to all of our participants, especially a few of our other standouts, including Anna and Anastasiia (FLEX, Ukraine) in addition to Iraj's (YES, Pakistan) wholesome family videos, photos, and succinct stories. We can't wait to see what our determined and inventive teens come up with for contest #2!

A bigger and fluffier friend than Java (Rada's Boston terrier) made an appearance in one of Iraj's standout posts.

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Get Involved!

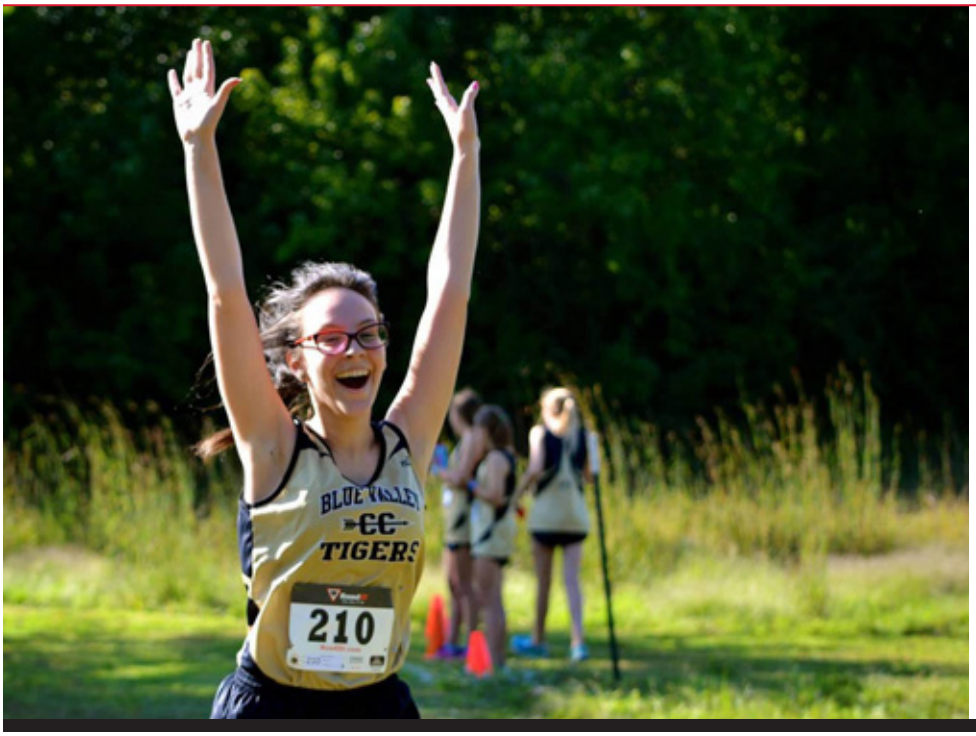
Agon looks right at home in his kayak on Lake Willoughby.

Busy American Teen!

Agon from Kosovo has quickly figured out how busy American teenagers can be! He is not nervous about anything and will try just about anything new.

He plays on the varsity soccer team, which is a familiar activity, but he has been doing a lot more hiking with our family, and he tried kayaking for the first time and loved it. Agon even auditioned for the school musical, *Grease*, and is now busy with rehearsals. And of course, he recently attended homecoming. Other new things include helping out with the dinner dishes!

—Carla Mayo (VT), host mom of Agon (YES, Kosovo)



The Full Experience

I am so happy to say that my life has completely changed, in a better way. I have never felt this happy and fulfilled. Every day I try my best to have a full experience, and so far I think I do it very successfully! I made good relationships with teachers, and I have lots of friends. I am in cross country and theatre. Also I enjoy yoga and taekwondo. I volunteer every minute I can and meet new people. My host family is the best! I am so thankful and blessed to have them in my life. They make this experience even more fantastic!

—Milica (FLEX, Montenegro), hosted by the Morbeck family (KS)

Milica triumphs in all her exchange experiences.

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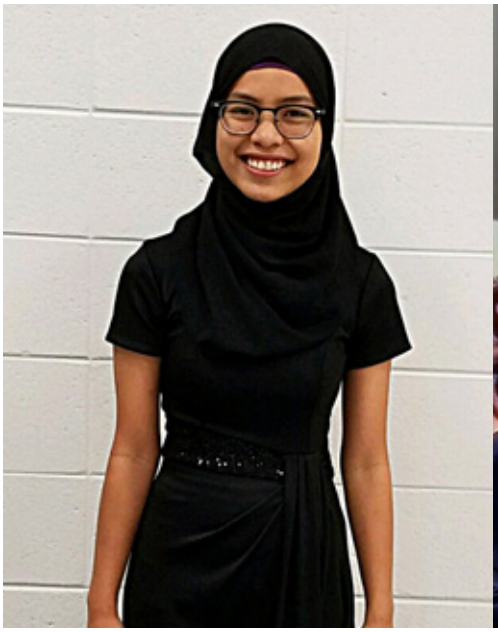
Get Involved!

Using Her Voice in Many Ways



(Left) Ainie looks poised ahead of her first concert and (right) for good reason!

Singing is one of my favorite things to do. I sometimes sing in my mind and hum with the music. If I'm upset, mad, tired, stressed, or homesick, music will lift me up. Back home, I actually sing pop songs but not with other people. I never tried being in a choir since we don't have that. But before coming to America, I always dreamed of joining a school choir.

At our first fall choir concert, I finally got to sing and show my voice in front of many people. I know it was not my first time to be on the stage, but it was my first time on an American stage. It felt really great, wearing a choir uniform and smiling to the people watching us. It is just so beautiful to see the people sitting and listening to us singing.

It is a great experience to be part of an American choir, and now I'm not going to hide the skill I have in singing. There is no reason we should hide our voices.

—Ainie (YES, Philippines), hosted by the Smith family (WI)

My American Volleyball Team

I never thought that volleyball would be a sport that I would play in the U.S. It is a new experience for me to be involved in a team, and it is such a blessing.

I used to play volleyball in elementary school, but I started from zero again. It was so confusing, because I didn't know how to play it anymore. I made so many mistakes, but the coaches and all my friends tried to understand and encourage me.

During senior night, which celebrates seniors on the team, I was honored even though I joined the team after the beginning of the season. I got a ball with everyone's signature, a big picture of me, and some balloons. Go Neenah Rockets!

—Try (YES, Indonesia) hosted by the Oestreich family (WI)

Game, set, and match to Try!

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Building Leadership Skills

I spent a weekend at a Kiwanis Key Leader Club camp. I learned a lot of important things that will definitely help me to be a future leader. I met a lot of new people, and I made some good friends, with whom I'll stay in touch.

There were six main themes about leadership and how to become a real leader. I had many conversations, in which I told about Ukraine and the culture there. We also had activities and team building activities, which helped me to understand how a team should work and how to express my thoughts in the right way. I think it was a great opportunity to learn something useful and have fun.

—Andriy (FLEX, Ukraine), hosted by the Blunt family (MO)

Andriy learns the ropes of leadership.

Always Something New!

It's difficult to sum up your feelings in few words. Every day we experience something new; it's hard to choose one and talk about it.

My seven hours of volunteering with Yavapai Anti-Tobacco Coalition of Youth in their booth for Verde River Day were among my most amazing moments. Not only did I get to learn how they pass laws, it felt awesome creating awareness. It was a good chance to learn about all the organizations working in my community and get to know people, especially a group of South Korean students.

This experience was a mixture of things: learning, fun, interaction, and exposure to the community. It added another golden page in the book of my exchange.

—Sabahat (YES, Pakistan), hosted by the Strobel family (AZ)

Sabahat puts the finishing touches on the anti-tobacco booth at Verde River Day.

Alessandra, Henry, and Chattarin look like they're having a "supreme" experience!

Having a Capital Time

The students' excitement when they begin to see some of the D.C. landmarks is always reward enough for me.

"Our trip to D.C. was awesome," said Alessandra from Italy. "The U.S. Capitol was amazing; it was very exciting seeing the places where important people made important decisions. Now I know more about the U.S., and I feel more American." Henry from Germany agreed. "I especially liked the tour through the Capitol, because I'm very interested in history," he said, adding, "It was very interesting to see all the pictures and statues." Chattarin from Thailand meanwhile thought it was great that he could travel and learn at the same time.

I love being part of making someone's dream come true!

—Jessica Boyd (WV), community coordinator

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Pumpkin Picking in Vegas

I was really excited to go pumpkin picking with my family, because I love fall. I was curious about how they had an orchard in the desert. Las Vegas is very dry and hot, so how do they grow apples and pumpkins? We arrived, and our first destination was the little store that sold apple cider donuts. I loved them, and I may or may not have eaten a few too many! After that we took a ride around the orchard, and it was crazy too see such a familiar picture—all those apple trees like in Germany, right next to the desert and the mountains of Las Vegas!

My host sister and I picked two nice pumpkins and some apples, and we bought some fresh apple cider. It reminded me a lot of the *Naturtrüber* apple juice that we drink in Germany. I had so much fun experiencing fall in Vegas.

—Anna (Germany), hosted by the Feigenson family (NV)

Anna and her host sister Rachel enjoy a pumpkin patch, desert style!

Road Trip!

It was high on our first-time exchange students' bucket list to visit Chicago, so during their fall break, we drove to Chicago for a quick two-day tour with our exchange students, Hugo and Fysal.

We saw the Hancock Tower and Willis Tower, took an architectural tour down the river, rode the huge Ferris Wheel at Navy Pier, visited The Bean, rode bicycles from Millennium Park to the Shedd Aquarium, took a couple of taxi rides, enjoyed the city's night lights, and tasted the fantastic Chicago food.

We covered a lot of territory in just two days. Above all, we laughed, joked, and enjoyed just being together.

—Ken and Sharlene Honegger (IN), host parents of Hugo (Belgium) and Fysal (YES, Bangladesh)

Fysal and Hugo, along with host parents Ken and Sharlene, pose in front of the iconic "Bean" in Chicago.

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So Many "Firsts"

We've had a lot of firsts for Shu from Japan and Aziz from Saudi Arabia! We had fantastic graffiti family pictures done in an artsy area of downtown Indianapolis. We also went to Apple Works in Trafalgar to pet the goats and learn how to make and taste test apple butter! Shu was introduced to his first "beach" at Starve Hollow State Park, and we all went camping at Versailles State Park. And of course, our family helped Shu and Aziz carve their first pumpkins, as this will be their very first Halloween!

—Sabrina Hickey (IN), community coordinator and host mom of Aziz (YES, Saudi Arabia) and Shu (Japan)

Host brother Aaron, Aziz, and Shu are all deeply engaged in their pumpkins!

Best Week of My Life

Last week was probably the best one of my life—it was homecoming week and included different dress-up days, including Friday, which was "Loyalty Day." It was awesome that everyone wore black and orange, the school colors. For this day, the cheerleaders have the tradition of wearing the football players' jerseys, so I wore the #36 jersey. During that morning, we had a pep rally, where the cheerleaders perform a routine. At the homecoming game, we wore the football jerseys too and performed cheers and dances.

—Marina (Argentina), hosted by the Spaulding family (ME)

Marina (right) and her friend Jade look buff in their football jerseys during homecoming week!

Cheering for My Cheerleaders!

This is our first year hosting students, and we took in two fabulous girls. They jumped right into every aspect of our lives, from meeting our large family to our circle of friends and church family.

We all go to church, where Mariana and Sbidag volunteer to care for the children in the nursery every Sunday, giving our regular workers a much-needed rest. They also go to the church's youth group activities. They have made friends, played new games, eaten their first S'mores, and even learned some ASL because we have a deaf boy in the group. They are truly fearless and adventurous!

Mariana had been involved in flag football in Mexico, but not having that option here, she decided to try something completely different—cheerleading! Sbidag has always preferred academics over sports, but in her endeavor to try new experiences, she also decided to join the cheerleading team. The whole squad welcomed them with open arms! I love seeing the girls work together and have so much fun. They are truly becoming sisters.

—Laura Martinez (ME), host mom of Mariana (Mexico) and Sbidag (YES, Lebanon)

Sbidag (left) and Mariana have a lot to cheer about!

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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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14 Willett Avenue, Port Chester, NY 10573
800.555.6211
www.pax.org

President & CEO
Bradley Smith

Marketing & Communications Director
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