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Pax academic exchange

PAXPRESS

The Newspaper for Exchange Students, Host Families, and Schools

Jumping Right in!

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The adventurous trip to Orlando got Michael (Germany), Angela (Germany), Yizhe (China), Juana (Spain), Roxanne, Christina (S. Korea), Job (Thailand), and Michal (Poland) off to a great start—just read all of their individual accounts.

Although getting to Orlando was an adventure in itself, it was worth it in the end! After a much-delayed bus trip, seven students and I arrived at the Marriott Harbour Lakes Vacation Club. The kids enjoyed exploring the resort, taking advantage of miniature golf and a mini waterpark. On Sunday, the group split up to go to Sea World and Universal Studios, where they all enjoyed their experiences. Monday was another relaxing resort day, but the kids did make plans for the next day at Walt Disney World—there were no disappointments!

This is the first time I've planned a trip like this. It was a great group of kids, and they all seemed to really appreciate the opportunity—so I'll probably do it again!

—Roxanne Lau (GA), regional development manager

On the Home Front

Our Fourth Child

In June we decided to become a host family for the first time. My 15-year-old son, Antonio, would be sharing a room with our exchange student. He chose Oskar, because he seemed to have the most similarities (in more ways than we knew).

We are a family of five and live in a very small town in upstate New York. We were worried about culture shock, as Oskar comes from a city of 160,000. When we finally were able to communicate with him, we learned he and Antonio actually share the same birthday. To us, it was a sign that it was meant to be.

When Oskar arrived, our lives, family, school, and community were forever changed. We have all welcomed him with open arms. So far he has been boating and camping, and he fished for the first time as well.

He joined the soccer team and already has everyone cheering his name at games. One of the most exciting things was watching Oskar score his first goal on American soil. He is learning about American culture and in return, we are all learning about Germany. He has become our fourth kid, and we already love him like our own.

—Darlene Bornt (NY), host mom of Oskar (Germany)

Nice catch, Oskar!

Did Someone say "Cheese?"

Life is an adventure, and we have experienced many firsts in Wisconsin, including becoming cheeseheads and Packer backers!

Sarah and Margot tasted their first cheese curds at the Minnesota State Fair and chocolate cheese (yes—chocolate cheese!) at the Cady Cheese Factory—it was good!

The girls have also met Sharky at the Mall of America, laughed over unusual signs in the hospital parking lot, and tried on costumes to be in their first small-town parade. Lots of fun in the Midwest!

—Nancy Cleveland (WI) host mom of Sarah (Germany) and Margot (France)

Sarah and Margot don their official cheesehead hats!

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Get Involved!

Danish Bulldog

Our boy arrived from Denmark and has already contributed a great deal as a linebacker on Edmond Memorial's football team. The Miller family was dressed for the first game wearing our Bulldog T-shirts with #17 and his name on the back. Our defensive line pushed back Panca City, while Magnus forced the Wildcats to punt on two of their first four possessions, as we went on to a 42-6 win.

—June Miller (OK), field development director and host mom of Magnus (Denmark)

Talk about a bulldog! It was a long night for Panca City's quarterback.

Trust Yourself

I started my experience with a lot of thoughts in my mind that I wanted to realize. One of these was to practice a new sport, and I chose tennis. I dreamt about playing tennis since I was a child. Now, in America, my dream came true. I started to practice with the coach and with my host sister even though I have never played before. At the beginning, I wasn't good, but after four days of practice, the coach proposed me to play a game at a contest between schools. I accepted, even if I didn't feel myself prepared enough. I played a doubles match with another girl from my team. It was my first game, and we won; it was crazy! That experience gave me power and trust in myself, qualities that every leader must possess.

It was an amazing experience! Don't be afraid of something new; try everything because you are in America only once.

—Iana (FLEX, Moldova), hosted by the Flenz family (WI)

Game, set, and match to Iana!

A Star is Born

Our exchange student Mariana packs a pair of powerful musical punches. A violinist since she was seven years old, Mariana auditioned for membership in the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (UL-L) Symphony and was given a first violin seat. Not bad for a 15-year-old, *n'est-ce pas?* As if that wasn't enough, the young lady has a delightful alto voice that won her a position in the District Honor Choir and is also headed to the audition for the Louisiana All-State Honor Choir. Her first performance as a violinist will be given on October 29 at the orchestra's annual Halloween concert. The choir will perform on October 10 at UL-L's Angelle Hall. Today, Louisiana, tomorrow the Berlin Philharmonic!

—Ray Blum (LA), host father of Mariana (Germany)

The young German (foreground) practices with the University of Louisiana at Lafayette Symphony.

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Fly on By, Butterfly

I volunteered my time at a national park to help with a scientific study about Monarch Butterflies' migration. By tagging the butterflies, we can know (when they're caught) the path that they take to migrate, and keep track of the number of butterflies that migrate from here to Mexico in the winter.

My job was to look for Monarch Butterflies, catch them with my net, and call for someone to help me tag them. However, it wasn't as easy as it sounds. The butterflies were hard to see and even harder to catch, but it was so much fun that I would do it all over again. I caught two butterflies, one Monarch and one Queen. I tagged one butterfly, and I was so lucky to see a Monarch laying its eggs! I'm so happy I had the opportunity to have this unique experience and to learn about Monarch Butterflies and their migration.

—Zina (YES, Arab Communities of Israel), hosted by the Hussey family (AZ)

Catching butterflies is no simple task, as Zina is about to learn!

Taking the Plunge

Each year, I take my students on a hike up to a waterfall after our student orientation. Students get a chance to meet each other as I have them rotate partners during the walk. It's not an easy hike, but when they are done, we talk about how we can do hard things. Mehmet and Humza, along with my daughter, took full advantage of the waterfall at the top. That is what the exchange is about—stepping out of our comfort zones with full power to take on the year. Way to go, Mehmet and Humza!

—Jamie Paskins (UT), community coordinator

After a tough hike, Humza (YES, Pakistan), Kieran, and Mehmet (YES, Turkey) find the waterfall refreshing!

"Mile…Mile and a Half"

Our exchange student cluster took off for a hike over Labor Day weekend through Maine Huts & Trails. The path we selected through the organization's trail system was 3.3 miles to a nice hut. The hut is "off the grid," so my students learned what it was like to live off the grid, how they create their own power, and how they compost out human waste. It was very interesting.

Our route there was also *interesting*. Although the hike was supposed to be 3.3 miles, our group of 11 took a wrong trail, hiking 3.5 miles before we learned we were lost! After hiking the 3.5 miles back to the beginning of the trail, the organization was nice enough to let us all drive to the hut!

All in all, it was a long—but beautiful—day!

—Brandy Jewell (ME), community coordinator and host mom of Adelina (FLEX, Kyrgyzstan)

How much further? (From left to right) Mariana (Mexico), Aliya (FLEX, Kazakhstan), Adelina, and Sbidag (YES, Lebanon) take a break to document the adventure.

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Mold Yourself

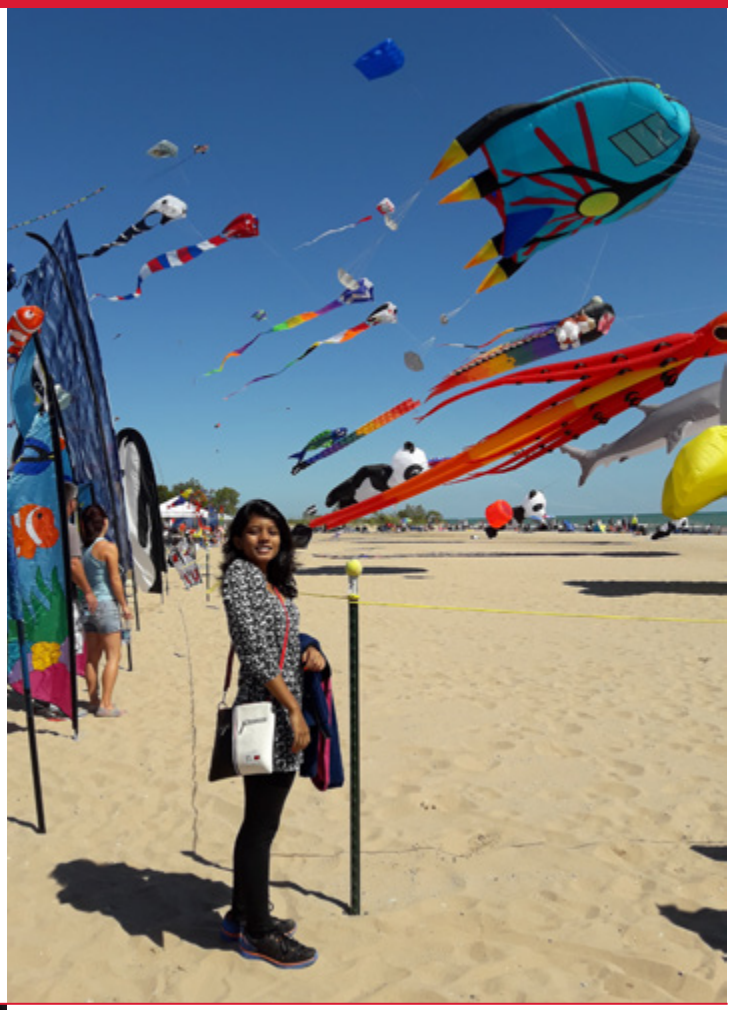
"The United States of America" has always had a ring to it for me. Ideas, opportunity, independence, change, and numerous other thoughts tend to fill my brain every time I hear the name of the country. For years, I have dreamt of visiting this country of diversity; and now that I am finally here, it is so different.

I could have never understood how big this world was if I had not stepped out of my house that day. I have already started to notice changes in me, good changes.

These have been the most memorable weeks of my life to date, engaging with and learning about the American lifestyle. The lessons learned and the moments truly are priceless. I have enjoyed my first baseball and American football games, went to a kite festival over Lake Michigan, and continue to discover more every day just because of this exchange program.

One will never know the benefits of this year unless he or she experiences it. Learn a little, teach a little. The opportunities an exchange year can beget in your life are truly commendable. Mold yourself, mold the future.

—Arony (YES, Bangladesh), hosted by the Krokosky family (WI)



So many experiences have Arony flying high!

The Journey

A journey of a thousand miles starts with a small step. My journey started the day I left my home country to come to this exciting new place, filled with adventure, where the people I meet are filled with love and affection for me. As soon as I landed at the Atlanta airport, my host family was waiting for me with their welcoming hearts. I felt their love for me through their loving hug.

They arranged a party on the weekend to welcome me. The next day, I went to my school and there, too, I felt the same welcoming atmosphere. My teachers are so welcoming and helpful. I have joined the FBLA club and became the president! To date, I have given three presentations on India and volunteered four hours at the Southern Bell Farm.

Each day in my life is thrilling: a day filled with excitement, learning, and lots of fun. Every day I meet new faces and learn a lot from them and with them. I am changing for the better. I push my limits and explore myself a bit more every day.

—Ishita (YES, India), hosted by the Farland family (GA)

Ishita and her host mom Cynthia share a happy moment.

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Rock On!

This past Labor Day weekend, we made a day trip to Cleveland and visited the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. Pim studies music at her school back in her native Thailand; she likes to play the guitar and is big fan of the Beatles. While in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, she took many pictures and enjoyed seeing all of the music memorabilia of musicians and bands that she has listened to in Thailand. There was also an air show going on in the area, so she was able to see the Blue Angels and other Air Force planes flying over Lake Erie.

—Jessica Morgan (IN), host mom of Pim (Thailand)

Pim posing postcard-esque

Time of My Life

It's just my second month of being in the United States, but I can already feel that I'm having the best year of my life. Experiencing new things and living an American life is a miracle. I have an amazing host family, and I go to one of the best schools—Parkway High School, which has great spirit and a successful football team. I knew Friday football nights would be a lot fun, but I couldn't imagine how astonishing it would be to cheer players from the field. Check out this video of my danceline!

—Gvantsa (FLEX, Georgia), hosted by the McGovern family (LA)

Gvantsa takes a break from her danceline duties to give a hug to her host sister Addison.

Southwestern Sizzle

My host family and I went to the Tlaquepaque Arts and Crafts Village, where my sisters had Spanish dance performances. It was truly a magnificent day. The village looked like a place straight out of artistic independent movies which usually took place in Spain or France, with small red buildings filled with boutiques and art galleries. My sisters and the dance crew danced in the center of the village showing off the Spanish heritage. It was truly magnificent.

After lunch, we went to Red Rock Crossing to swim in the creek. Even though the water was cold for me since I'm from a tropical country, I had a very fun time and a truly memorable day!

—Marzaan (YES, Bangladesh), hosted by the Kitterman family (AZ)

From left to right, Erin (Marzaan's host sister), Marzaan, and Amina (YES, Tunisia) "go jump in a creek" near Red Rock Crossing.

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The Adjustment Cycle

A Lot of Dreams

I am a boy who has a lot of dreams. I always wanted to do something for society to bring a change. When I first stepped on this land, I thought I would have a lot of opportunities to be involved in social activities. And it's true. I have already started doing community service.

I really appreciate the way my host family is treating me. I don't feel homesick. In fact, I feel like I am at my own home. I started to think of my host as my own ones. I also try my best to reflect the life of the people of my home country.

Everything seems like a dream to me. I want to continue my dreaming as long as possible. I want to acquire leadership skills, confidence, and unlimited experiences. I wish to be an ambassador of the world, and I believe that this exchange year is going to fulfill my wish, my dreams.

—Abir (YES, Bangladesh),
hosted by the Blackburn family (IN)

Abir and host brother Selim (FLEX, Turkey) help at a Grandparents' Day event.

Taste of America

I arrived in Las Vegas exactly a month ago. I live with an American family and with another exchange student from Germany. They are very nice, and I am learning a lot of new things about this culture.

I have started to live an "American life": I speak English all the day; I attend a high school, and I am tasting all the American dishes!

Last Saturday, I cooked my first American breakfast with my host mom. We made French toast with cranberries, cream cheese, and bacon. It was delicious! I am really enjoying my new life in the USA, and I love sharing this kind of moment with my host family!

— Eleonora (Italy),
hosted by the Knox family (NV)

Eleonora and host mom Aimee show admirable restraint in the presence of such a spread.

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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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