The Girl with the Magic Bag
She arrived with a magic bag. Just a single, medium sized bag to last her ten months. Out of the bag she pulled not only clothes, but a komuz (Kyrgyz string instrument), presents for the entire family including grandparents, historic and contemporary news from Kyrgyzstan, cameras, and (she claims), a bicycle.


I tell my friends that everyone should have a teenager “parachute in” with great grades, good manners, a helpful nature and a smiling personality eager to join in. She has melded into our family with smiles, love, and energy. She is our daughter, and this is one package we will be very sad to return at the end of the year.

Tobi Moriarty, host mother for Aiperi Iusupova (Kyrgyzstan)
Round Hill, VA

Sharing Traditions: Muslim and Mormon

In Indonesia, I knew six religions: Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. I had no idea at all about the Mormon religion. Since my host family is Mormon, I figured I would learn about Mormonism.

At home, we share a lot about our religions. I showed them my scriptures, explained about my hijab, my holidays and what Muslims believe in. They also explained to me about Mormonism. They invited me to their church and took me to visit the Salt Lake Temple, which is so beautiful. We’ve discussed a lot of things and found some similarities in our religions.

Some of my concerns before I came here were about with whom I would celebrate Eid al-Fitr, the end of Muslim Ramadan. Since it was summer, the time to fast was longer than what I was used to doing in my country. The first couple days, I got sick and wasn’t able to fast. But then, I did it! It was a surprise to me that I could fast even though there is no one to care if I’m fasting or not.

On the last day of fasting, my host mom took me to her friend’s house. It is a miracle

Indonesian YES scholar Azka NafriHasna, left, with her host mother’s friend, centered, that my host mom’s best friend is Indonesian! I slept over at her house for two days. She took care of me like her own child and I called her “Ibu”, which means “Mom” in Indonesian language. We went downtown to pray and I found out that there are a lot of Muslims in America! After, we had Indonesian food. I never imagined this scenario. Now, I know that I have another Mom here. Ibu’s house is just like a piece of Indonesia for me.

Azka NafriHasna (Indonesia)
Hosted by the Rubio family
West Valley City, UT

Breaking Through Stereotypes
When I got here, my main fear was about the first day of school because of the American movies where students are mean to newcomers. But things did not turn out that way. I started making friends fifteen minutes after I arrived. That was when I realized that what I saw in the movies was just a stereotype of Americans.

Teachers here are very friendly and have the needs of the students in their hearts. For example, whenever a student doesn’t have a pencil, my math teacher gives one, but asks the student to do push ups, which the teacher does too. That has never happened in Ghana. Here, the students are allowed to eat and drink in class, but not in Ghana. The teachers in Ghana are very strict.

The schools here create a comfortable learning environment. For example, we sometimes go out and sit in a circle in the grass with the teacher. It gives the students a break from learning in the classroom, which is sometimes boring for all.

There are a lot of activities here, but my main interest is sports. I didn’t know how to play kickball and softball before. I will teach these sports at my school in Ghana. Since my school in Colorado is very small, I will play soccer at a bigger school in the spring. I can hardly wait since soccer is my life.

There are great differences in the lifestyles, too. First of all, Ghanaians like spicy foods, but most Americans do not. In Ghana, most men don’t take care of babies, but I found out that here the daddies also take care of the babies and even cook.

In Colorado, you barely see trash around. Ghanaians hardly recycle. I plan to work on this when I get back.

Kids in Ghana are not allowed to date until they are eighteen years old, but that law is not in effect here. Kids in Ghana date secretly nowadays, but I still find it surprising when I see fourteen year old American kids dating. Also, the legal age for a Ghanaian to learn how to drive is eighteen, but here, sixteen year olds drive to school.

The greatest thing of all is that, when I came to America, I actually forgot that I am black. The only time I remember is when I look in the mirror. Even if some Americans don’t like black people, I have not met those Americans. My coming to the States has broadened my thinking. I am proud to be in America.

Abhia Mumuni (Ghana)
Hosted by the Poole family
Fort Collins, CO

A Circle of Friends
Students in FLEX/YES Cluster Leader Tanya Barton’s Virginia group are developing bonds that will last a lifetime. In this circle are Atakan Güngördü (Turkey), Pier Paolo Rauco (Italy), Anastasiya Nevmerzhytska (Ukraine), Dinara Dauletbayeva (Kazakhstan), Aiperi Iusupova (Kyrgyzstan), Nadine Voelker (Germany), Aygul Shakirova (Russia), Rana Mansour (Egypt), Julia Fuchs (Germany) and Khabeer Gihouri (India).
Dressed to Thrill

Congratulations to Eleonora Visentin (Italy) who transformed herself into a butterfly and won the “Best Costume Award” at a Halloween party for Michigan Coordinator Candy Crick’s students. Pictured are Illyada Edali (Turkey), Susanna Tavella (Italy), Eleonora, Caroline Lefèvre (Brazil), Naanthanut Apiwatanaphan (Thailand), Eveline Van Loock (Belgium) and Fabian Rutz (Germany).

Beware of the Jack O’Lanterns

Halloween is not celebrated in Europe, so Veronika has never carved a pumpkin! We decided to host a pumpkin carving party for her friends and several other exchange students. Watching these kids dive into their pumpkins and create a variety of faces was quite entertaining! Dad even brought out the Dremel tool and the pumpkin flew everywhere! Other firsts were caramel corn, hot apple cider, roasted seeds and pumpkin-chocolate chip muffins. Every single one of them gave me a strange look when I told them what was in the muffins. After trying them rather cautiously, they all loved the new treat and ate several muffins.

In our photo you can’t tell who is American and who is international, which is exactly the way it was at the party - just fun and mmmm... delicious! However, we are unable to print each letter in its entirety.

Get Spooked

In Buckey, Michigan, Thai student Naanthanut “Jasmine” Apiwatanaphan, left, dove right into apple bobbing and won the “Master Bobber Award” at a party given by her host, the Bott family.

Scare Fare

In Bulgaria, we don’t really celebrate Halloween, so it is completely new to me. When a group of friends and me decided to go to a haunted house, I realized that the scary haunted house is like the US, full of surprises at every turn. While I waited in the PAX line to be placed, I was nervous about what state I would be going to and if I would have host siblings. Having these fears is like waiting in line for the haunted house. When you are waiting outside, you have no idea what is on the inside. It can be kind of scary not knowing what to expect, but it is too late when you are already in “the house”.

You take a step inside, and in that instant, you are terrified. That is why you go with friends to haunted houses, not by yourself. It is the same here. You have a host family that is there for you, and they enlighten you in many subjects, for example, how to write a check for a lunch account, how to lock the house door, or how to do yard work.

When you go out of the haunted house all you want is to do is go again. I am sure that the same thing will happen with my experience in the United States. It was new and scary in the beginning, but as the days passed by, America became my home and now I feel like I actually belong here.

Gabrilla Veleva (Bulgaria) Hosted by the Schmatt family Mount Vernon, IA

Do-De-Mi

Indonesian YES student Nadia Hardiani and her host sister, Zoe Nardone, adored their parts as a nun and Louisa Von Trapp in a Vermont production of The Sound of Music.

Do the King Tut

In Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, Jeff and Tina Hoover ham it up with their student, Enie Duric (Bosnia and Herzegovina), at a birthday party for him.

Smooth Going in Rough Waters

Mykola Krasnykov, a Ukrainian FLEX scholar, is a natural in the water, despite being blind and never having gone kayaking before. “It was real choppy and rough but nothing was going to stop this kid,” says Coordinator Susan James of St. Augustine, Florida.

A Weeklong Birthday

On my exact birthday, I had a dinner with American foods, went to a movie and had a nice birthday cake with my family. On the next day, my French class had a celebration. One of my friends made a cake and they sang a birthday song in French. My friends on the school bus and at school said happy birthday to me not only on my exact birthday, but also for almost a week.

On the weekend, I had a surprise from my PAX family. After a delicious pizza, they brought out a cake and sang. I got some cool presents. Afterward, we went to the pumpkin festival in Keene, New Hampshire. It was my first time at a pumpkin festival and I saw 22,049 cool pumpkins. We played hide and seek in the crowds while we watched the fireworks. It was so much fun.

But the best surprise was everybody around me. Nobody knows how happy and

Southern Hospitality

What has impressed me the most here are the attitudes toward me. Everybody in my school and family are so nice and friendly! My host mom and sisters treat me like a real member of their family. When I first came to our house, I even noticed they had inserted my photo in frames and put them on the walls near theirs!

What is more, when I came to school, everybody wanted to get to know me and help me to get used to my new school. They invited me to hang out with them and tried to show me “American” life. Now I have a lot of friends to spend time with, and they all are really excited to know something new about my culture. They help me enjoy this great opportunity and prevent me from being homesick.

Anastasiya Gunko (Russia) Hosted by the Jones family Chattanooga, TN
Princess to a Day
Congrats to Nathapat Wongcharoenyong, the Morro Bay High Homecoming prince. The Magids host the Thai teen in California.

Michigan Schools Rock
The experiences I am having here are helping me to grow and improve myself. I was amazed by how much fun school can be. I love art and drawing, so I go to Art Club. I also volunteer at the youth center. Activities help you meet new friends, improve your language skills and have fun.

Lili Valcheva (Bulgaria)
Hosted by the Ackerman family
Cheboygan, MI

Six Friends, Six Flags
As the sun rose, the warmth of the rays penetrated deeply in my soul. In the next moment I was surrounded by angels called friends. We all headed toward Six Flags Amusement Park. Thailand, Indonesia, Ghana, China, Macedonia and America yielded into one road. Excitement dominated our faces. None of us had been in such a park or ridden on a roller coaster before. We shared our fears and happiness. We held strong to one another, as we were one big family. This was an experience I will never forget. Even though we were from different sides of the world, we felt as if we had grown together. We felt that this experience built a really strong connection.

Arjeta Rushiti (Macedonia)
Hosted by the Martin family
Brattleboro, VT

Part of the Team
In Chevy Chase, Maryland, host mother Terri Salus reports that Egyptian Ahmed Youssf (center) was on the soccer team and had his first Boy Scout camping trip where he was “literally learning the ropes from his host brothers who are Eagle Scouts.”

Another Way of Life
“The life here is very different because I’m from a big city and here it is a small town,” says Eugenio “Keno” Guerra (Mexico), who is spending the year with Roger Dennis and Ruth Rouse in Gardnerville, Nevada. “This experience is helping me to grow up. I’m gaining independence, and my English is getting better.”

Keeping America Beautiful
This crew couldn’t believe how much garbage they collected in Newport, Oregon. The FLEX and YES students cleaned the beach after they saw an art sculpture (behind them) made of pink bottle lids and trash that had washed up on the beach. Once they learned that some fish are found with two pounds of plastic in their stomachs, the teens hit the beach to rid it of debris. Pictured are Ditra Ambarani (Indonesia), Emilia Pereska (Macedonia), Fleurjon Sodikav (Tajikistan), Irvan Fathurohman (Indonesia), Nici Ribas (Moldova), Lela Okromelidze (Georgia), Olga Magnerueva (Russia), Sheena Seth (India), Malikhaiz Khvedeldzhe (Georgia), Michelle Gyasi (Ghana), Onuq Demirici (Turkey) and Mariusa Gica (Albania).

Standing in front of a mountain of trash are John and Lori Candalino with South Korean Seongjae Hong and his friends.

Restoring the Land
Our foreign exchange student chose to volunteer on September 25 for National Public Lands Day. To start, Kathy August from the Bureau of Land Management gave us a brief talk about the area in which we were standing. Lucky Strike Canyon, a place that many people are not aware of. Unfortunately, those that do know about it use it for target practice leaving behind endless trash. It was our goal to clean-up the area, restoring it to its natural beauty. We were provided with gloves, trash bags, water and snacks to complete this project. In appreciation of our efforts, we were given a “National Public Lands Day 2010” t-shirt and a free day pass to any National Park.

The Candalino family, hosts for Seongjae Hong (South Korea)
Las Vegas, NV

Fix a Home, Fix a Life
I thought it would be a good idea to help the community that is hosting me during my exchange year so I joined the Service Club at Jefferson High School. One of our projects is helping the families who lost their homes in the flood of 2008 by painting and fixing their homes.

Since I am from Saudi Arabia and we only get rain one or two days a year, it seemed unusual to see pictures and hear stories of how much water flooded the Cedar Rapids area. Even though the work was challenging, we had fun working together and helping another family get back into a home.

Mohammed Al Jabr (Saudi Arabia)
Hosted by the Watson family
Cedar Rapids, IA

Food for All
YES students Blagoja Srbov (Macedonia), Rizki Muhammad (Indonesia) and Musaraf Ali (India) distributed food and other needed items from a Seventh Day Adventist food bank in Washington State.

Committed to Caring
PAX Students Make a Difference

Gained by Giving
I just want to share my first American volunteering experience. My host dad and I raised Kiwanis Club funds on Saturday during Oktoberfest. Kiwanis is a service organization. It was fun and it gave me experience in communicating and helping people. Besides, I learned one valuable thing: that through doing community service you can learn something that you never expected to discover about the American culture. We came back home satisfied, knowing that the money we earned will go to help kids who need it. That day I really enjoyed the feeling of being useful to society.

Roman Koubat (Ukraine)
Hosted by the Blunt family
Lees Summit, MO

Interact Club: Helping Stop Polio
October 21 was the beginning of my friends and I being officially involved in the Interact Club, a youth volunteering group that is part of Rotary International. That night I was invited to come for an Interact meeting in Columbus Center in Salt Lake, Utah. I thought we would just talk about our next projects, but I was wrong. There was an official ceremony for new members, including me. We got rotary pins, a t-shirt and another pin as a part of a campaign to fight polio. It was so special.

I feel like I am really lucky being a member of this amazing club that does projects to make people around us know we care about them. The polio project benefits not only local people, but also people outside America because it is a partner of Rotary International of Hispano-Latinos. Every dollar that we get donated now will be sent to provide vaccines and other stuff. I hope I can do my best for this club.

Duan Fahdihla Lesari (Indonesia)
Hosted by the Kergaye family
Salt Lake City, UT

Pedal Power
In Richmond, Indiana, Filipino YES student Janeen Hassan and the Stosberg family conserve energy using a cargo bike to get to their activities. Janeen has also helped test monitors at a computer re-use/recycle center that her host father started.

PAX Goes GREEN
Get involved in the PAX Goes GREEN campaign by organizing a project to reduce your carbon footprint. You can submit it to PAX to win a prize. Check out past projects and find contest information at the bottom of the What’s New Page on the website www.pax.org. The first deadline is January 30, 2011.
On Top of the World

Taking in a breathtaking view of the Grand Canyon are hikers from Washington County, Utah: FLEX Cluster Director Shandai Eufield, Hayuki Harutuyunyan (Armenia), Madeleine Bergman (Sweden), Jannik Klemme (Germany), Community Coordinator Laurel Paul, Jakob Traxler (Germany), Thita Tumladechamont (Thailand), Baktybek usho (Kyrgyzstan), Elena Molina Lledo (Spain), Jon Ostoian (Spain) and Manuela Flores (Spain).

The Adventures of a Modern Day Explorer

Being an exchange student is comparable to being one of the pilgrims who settled in the United States. You get on the plane with a lot of expectations, like the settlers when they entered the principal flower in 1602. As an exchange student, you don’t hope you will have it better there, because you have a home in your country with your loving family, but you still have a lot of expectations. My expectations were having a really nice family and finding new friends. What can I say, both became real.

After spending just one day with my family, I knew that I couldn’t have wished for a better family. Two days later I joined the swim team, making one of my biggest dreams coming true. Now the swim team is like another little family for me. I travel and spend a lot of time with them.

Apart from the sport, the school is like a big family, too. The school spirit is amazing, and everyone knows everyone. I like how you do every class very intensely, five hours a week, and you choose what to study. There are big events like football games, spirit week, prom, and others, which every student looks forward to for months. I started planning with my friends in August for our Homecoming in October.

But even if you are busy and loving it here, you will have days where you start crying during class because you are homesick. You wish you could talk to your mother just to hear her voice, to feel like she’s next to you. It comes and goes away. You can’t control it.

When I came here, I felt homesick after a couple of weeks. Everything was so different to me, especially the lifestyle. In Germany I had my bike and I was a lot more independent, but now I can’t really ride the bike because it is very dangerous. I always have to look for someone who can drive me somewhere.

Now, I’m nearly three months here, and I love it more and more, day by day. It was definitely the best decision to come here and I will never miss a single second of my exchange year, both the good ones as well as the bad ones.

Julia Hahn (Germany)
Hosted by the Gerard family
Bay City, MI

Fired Up

Reveling at a lakeside picnic and bonfire in Central Michigan are Coordinator Heidi Rocha’s students: Estefania Velasco De la Torre (Spain), Malitane Lujina (Spain), Nikolauci Chaciu (Georgia), Davila Carvajal Ramos (Mexico), Anastasia Jovanovic (Germany), JaeYeon Shin (South Korea), Isabel Nienhoff (Germany), Soejin Lee (South Korea).

My First Autumn

This is my first fall because my country has just two seasons: the wet season and the dry season. Fall is really beautiful. Although the weather is getting cold, the scenery is so pretty because the leaves change colors. A lot of places have decorations for fall and Halloween. I can find pumpkins in many places. My host family and I went to some of fall festivals where we saw some crafts and ate a lot of food. I had an apple dumpling for the first time. It was really good.

Maufida Herradiyanti (Indonesia)
Hosted by the Leiby family
Williamsport, PA

Loving Oreos & Utah

This is a completely new experience for me because I’ve never had siblings before (now four). I’ve learned to share everything and there’s a lot more action going on here. I used to. Just a few streets away are the Rocky Mountains. We can go hiking or camping there whenever we want.

I love school, especially theater class. The teachers are all about 20 to 30 years old and they’re awesome. Some of them are like real friends. I’ve always wanted to be a cheerleader and now I’m even a cheer captain leading a squad. Doing well at school is not too hard. I even got an award for knowledge today, which was very moving, standing in front of so many people in an assembly with a big orchestra and the principal shaking my hand. I also like my ballroom class, which is very professional. In two weeks I will be in a serious dance competition with my class at BYU, a big university here in Utah.

Something I’m famous for in the whole school is my love for Oreos. People keep giving me huge packages because they know I’m addicted to them. Another great passion is going to Wal-Mart. It fascinates me how I can go there again and again, but still discover something new. When it’s Sunday night, 3 a.m., and you feel like buying a fish, just go to Wal-Mart!

I love being here and am thankful to my hosts for letting me be part of their family. They treat me like their own daughter.

Lsa Wegling (Germany)
Hosted by the Volk family
Springville, UT

The Key to Success

One thing I suggest to new students is to be yourself, be positive and keep busy. Be flexible. Life here is different but amazing. I am so happy to be here, especially with my new family. My host family is big. It consists of nine members. They support me in everything and help me have experiences.

The nature in Utah and Armenia is similar. Both are surrounded with a lot of mountains. The weather is mostly the same, but it is going to get cold very soon. Utah has many trees and flowers, and it is almost all green. It is very beautiful.

I am going to the Salt Lake School for the Performing Arts. It is huge. Besides academic classes, I am taking acting and dancing. I’ve started to audition for plays, which is a new and a good experience for me.

Syzrama Hovsepson (Armenia)
Hosted by the Mortensen family
West Valley City, UT

The Music Man

Shantana More (India) plays the baritone sax with the marching band. The Hodt family hosts the YES student in Dexter, Minnesota.

Pleased to Meet You

FLEX Cluster Leader Beth Haddleston introduces her students at an Arkansas street fair: Ajla Omerbasic (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Olena Tsvitok (Ukraine) and Kateryna Averchenko (Ukraine).

Showtime

On October 16, PAX students from Las Vegas traveled to St. George, Utah to camp, hike and attend a musical theater production with the Southern Utah PAX group. Pictured after the show with the performers are Coordinator Margaret Hoppes’s students and Coordinator Laurel Paul’s students: Jakob Traxler (Germany), Morgana Signorini (Italy), Anne Husmann (Germany), Madeleine Bergman (Sweden), Thita Tumladechamont (Thailand), Seoung Hye (South Korea), Rachata Sakpuaram (Thailand), Manuela Flores (Spain) and Nattaya Tasawat (Thailand).

History Comes Alive

This group told us it was fascinating to visit President Truman’s home in Independence, Missouri: Coordinator Liz Carver with Anya Shilbayeva (Russia), Flavio Cabas (Italy), Masha Vorotilina (Ukraine) and Roman Koubt (Ukraine).

You Go Girl

The most entertaining thing that I have done is something I had never done before. I attended a Red Hat Lady’s Tea with my host mother. The “Red Hat Society” is a fun nationwide organization for women of all ages. The meeting took place in an elegant hotel restaurant, and each lady wore purple clothing and a red hat except me. I wore lavender with a pink hat, as I was the only person under the age of 50 there. We had a great time shopping, finding clothes and hats, and we even had a nice meal. We ate a delicious, perfectly served meal, and very talented women sang for us. I felt like a true lady, and my mom and I had an unforgettable time there.

Irina Klimova (Russia)
Hosted by the Eklund family
Orange, MA

A YouTube Hit

The words of Miley Cyrus’s hit song “Party in the USA” rang true for Petchnammanpong Yimsoonchoompath. Like Miley, the Thai student overcame her nervousness in a new land by taking inspiration from her favorite songs. See this creative YouTube video by searching “OEG#17 - my first time”.

USA with OEG#17 - my first time on vimeo.

Careful with the Critter

Kosuke Suetsugu (Japan) was quick enough to avoid a nip. Kosuke, who lives with the Leong family in Old Tappan, New Jersey, says he is letting the wildlife stay wild now.
From Confusion to Clarity
“...It was not a big deal because my teachers and friends helped me. Day by day, I started to like my school days. I study subjects that I like. In my country we don’t have photography class, so I’m taking that now. It is really fun.” The Weezorak family hosts the YES student in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Another Hogwarts?
The first question that came to my mind when I saw East High School was “Is this like Hogwarts in the Harry Potter movie?” The school is enormous with 2000 students. There are lots of students from abroad: Mexican, German, Senegalese and Hmong students. There are some things that I still can’t get used to. When a teacher comes into the class, nobody says “Good Morning” or “Hello”. Nobody stands up! In my mind it’s impolite, but the students are really friendly and they try to help each other.

This school has a lot of after school clubs that you can join. That’s a great difference between the US and Russian schools. Here I can choose subjects that I’m interested in, while in Russia we have a program that all students must pass. I like my high school and the students.

Yuliya Korovitskaya (Russia)
Hosted by the Bergerson-Auner family
Madison, WI

Friday Night Lights
These two didn’t let the football rivalry of their schools hold them back from getting together for the first game of the season! Amara Orhie (Spain) lives with the Treteld family in Avon and Carlos Druzian (Brazil) is with the Koski family in Avon Lake, Ohio.

Far from Asia
The most surprising experience for me so far was the Homecoming Dance. It’s way different from the Philippines because here the girls and boys are really close to each other when dancing. That night, I was shocked. But in the end, I had fun because there were other girls who approached me and asked if I wanted to be with them so that I wasn’t alone.

I am enjoying my school. Everyone is friendly. I have twice a week training for table tennis. I am so lucky because my trainer, Jeff Savage, gave me this training for free for the rest of my stay. I really appreciate it because it helps me improve. Although I sometimes feel homesick, every day here is worth keeping, whether it’s good or bad.

I realize that this exchange program is not just about experiencing American culture, but also realizing who you really are. Here, you should stand on your own and be independent. I know this will be a life changing experience.

Kasharel Ayra Mayo (Philippines)
Hosted by the Salazar family
Greencastle, PA

The Scoop on School

Just Do It
Sports are very important for most Americans, no matter if it’s football, soccer, cross-country or basketball. I decided to join the high school volleyball team right after my arrival in the USA. Even though I’ve never played volleyball before, my teammates and coach helped me get better. Practice is always fun and teams are a great way to find friends. Unfortunately, the volleyball season is over soon, but in the spring I’m going to play soccer. One thing I’ve already learned from my team: Don’t worry if you make a mistake. Push yourself and try your best to do it better next time!
Sarah Botterbrodt (Germany)
Hosted by the Jaeger family
Hillsdale, MI

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Sarah Botterbrodt (Germany)
Hosted by the Jaeger family
Hillsdale, MI

First Day
Diego Gladig from Switzerland was psyched for his first day at Morro Bay High School. The Fosee family hosts him in Cayucos, California.

Ringing in the Awards
Bravo to Floriana Ayumurti, left, for her outstanding xylophone performances and for winning “best in percussion/best in class” in two band competitions. The Clay County High School Marching Band wishes she could stay with them forever! The Indonesian YES student is spending this year in Ashland, Alabama with the Ariail family.

Float that Boat
Columbus Signature Academy is very different from other high schools in the USA because it is a project-based-learning school. We do many fun projects in class. I am very happy that I am in this nice school. It has given me the opportunity to do a lot of things that I have never thought to do.

For example, in physics, we had to build a boat out of cardboard. We were in teams of two people. It was a tough project and it took a long time to build. We brought the boat to North High School for a race where we had to maneuver the boat for three lengths of a swimming pool. It was a lot of fun and a great experience.

I really appreciate my school and my host family. Without them I would never have had the chance to do these great projects.

Sebastian Sydow (Germany)
Hosted by the Waddle family
Elizabethtown, IN

Congratulations to YES student Azka Maulida Bastaman, center, for being selected for the all county choral festival.

Singing Praises
During the first week of school, my chorus teacher asked me to lead the singing warm-up using my language, then asked my classmates to follow me.

After we finished, she asked the whole class, “Was it hard? Were you confused?” They said yes. Then she continued, “That’s what Azka feels everyday, every time. That’s why you have to help her, because you understand that it’s not easy to live alone far from her family and adjust to everything that is new and different.”

It was only a simple thing that my teacher did, but it remains in my memory. On that day, I learned how showing care can have a big effect on others. I really love my choral class.

Azka Maulida Bastaman (Indonesia)
Hosted by the Elawson family
Gastonia, NC
A Potluck with Pizzazz

airport in Bismarck, North Dakota.

Off to a Great Start

can do some sledding!

to the next get together, which is being

A Peak Moment in Colorado

Colorado is known for its national parks

that is called Horsetooth. The feeling at this

that my first time in real mountains. In Ukraine I

are situated. The journey was

is known for its national parks

mountains are situated. The journey was

A Potluck with Pizzazz

since the beginning of my “career” with

is very interesting as well as delicious food. The

or something else. Maybe

potential. For Chen Xi and her host family, it was

sprouted some yummy Belgium

thought “Umm, I believe that crap means

something else. Maybe
crave) is what

grilled some German sausages. Brecht

for some sledding!

by PAX 2005. I have combined orientation

is very good. I was an active participant in Spirit

found it tasty to drink. That is why exchange

A Potluck with Pizzazz

After coming to the US, they told us in

friends. We have visited different interesting

We Are Family

that I said something wrong and thought “Umm, I believe that crap means something else. Maybe

crate) is what

We Are Family

A Potluck with Pizzazz

California Dreams

host mother Kylee, gave her a hug and
told her that the “crap”

his new friends. We had

One full year of steps to apply for

An Armenian Addition

there are eight of us in our family. We

many extracurricular activities.

were located in Bismarck, North Dakota.

A Potluck with Pizzazz

hosted by the Horton family.

A Potluck with Pizzazz

since the beginning of my “career” with

since the beginning of my “career” with

A Potluck with Pizzazz

since the beginning of my “career” with

A Potluck with Pizzazz

since the beginning of my “career” with

A Potluck with Pizzazz

An Armenian Addition

An Armenian Addition

a dream into a reality.

A Potluck with Pizzazz

An Armenian Addition

An Armenian Addition

An Armenian Addition

An Armenian Addition

An Armenian Addition
Humanity Unites Us

On September 11th, I went to the Greek Festival with my family and the other Indonesian exchange student, Arka. As usual, I wore my veil/hijab. When I arrived, everyone was praying for 9/11 victims. The prayer was led by the Charlotte, North Carolina Mayor Foxx. I thought people would treat me bad that day because it was a 9/11 memorial and I appeared with a Moslem’s cloth. But actually I had fun that day! Moreover, I took a picture with the mayor! He was so casual and friendly. I’m happy that I was praying, too. I could show that my religion doesn’t agree with the events of 9/11 either.

Ayeshadira Putri (Indonesia)
Hosted by Wessonak family
Charlotte, NC

A Little Bit of Georgia

The nicest day I had in my life so far was my first day in Portland, Oregon when I met my host mother, father, and my lovely sister. At the airport, they were holding a big poster with my name written with big letters and a balloon. They greeted me like I was already a member of the family.

After that, they took me home and showed me my room. The room was full of surprises! They had hung photos from my country on the walls. One of them was a picture of the camp where I had been this summer and another was a picture of Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park which is located not far from my city. The third photo was of the capital of the Republic of Georgia, Tbilisi. The thing that fascinated me most was that my new mom had prepared one of my favorite Georgian dishes, chashkhabili, and bought Georgian sparkling water, Borjomi, for me! I found out that she had even bought an Albanian dish.

About 50 people watched as many of the girls performed the folk dances of their countries, some in elaborate costumes. Lela Okromelidze performed a Georgian dance aided by Malkhazi Khvedelidze. Olga Magneyeva did a Russian Kalmykian dance. While Dita Ambarani showed a traditional Indonesian dance. Emilija Pereska performed a Macedonian dance, and Ozge Demirci showed some Turkish Black Sea dances, and then Sheena Seth demonstrated Indian Kathak steps. Michelle Gyasi from Ghana sang a lively song about being a strong woman.

All of the students gave a brief talk about their countries with some wearing their national costumes like Irvan Fathurohman from Indonesia and Finurjon Sodikov from Tajikistan. The students hope they can share their dances at the high schools this year.

A World Class Feast

Seventeen families attended a potluck dinner at my home, which is in a former church that has a big space. Each PAX student brought food from their country and introduced their dish. Misato Kurihara brought Japanese sushi she had prepared. Nicu Ribas showed his host mom how to make a dish from Moldova and Marisa Gicla brought a yummy Albanian dish.

Think Global

During International Education Week, PAX students made presentations about their homelands as part of an initiative that encourages exchange students to help build global understanding. For IEW news, see the “What’s New Page” on www.pax.org.

Octoberfest Comes to the South

On October 16, Ralph and Geri Saxton brought Bavarian style to Aberdeen, Mississippi during their Oktoberfest celebration. Pictured are PAX area Manager Mary Payne Hairald, Mercedes Arcilla Rodriguez (Mexico), Laura Neudecker (Germany), Juan Alvo Prieto (Spain), Nadine Heinze (Germany), Paula Arena (Italy), Pierre Koerner (Germany), Duhyang Kang (South Korea), Juneyong Park (South Korea) and PAX alum Jean Russo (Argentina).

From Across the Ocean

The Nishijima family is thrilled to have Hikaru Mochizuki (Japan) spend the year with them in Los Osos, California.
Scaling New Heights

Vermont students in Tracey McFadden’s cluster tested their fears and cemented their relationships during a high ropes course at the Hubbel Outdoor Center. Ready for action are Daniel Sesma (Spain), Qian Fang (China), Aleksandra Gorcezycza (Poland), Hannah McFadden (Vermont), Fitia Riziki (Indonesia) and Maia Villarino (Brazil).

From Russia with Love

We have been hosting foreign exchange students since 2001. Some have stayed with us long term, others not so long, but we reserve a special place in our hearts for each one of them. When people ask us if we are paid to host students, we tell them, “No, but we find the experience enriching in so many wonderful ways!”

This year we have the privilege of hosting a lovely young lady from Russia, Irina Klimova, and she is a delight to have in our lives. Since we have hosted more boys than girls, we love having a girl this school year. She fits into our family just perfectly, and we have made her our own special “daughter.” As a matter of fact, when we were at a restaurant for dinner recently, the waitress asked if she was our daughter!

Scalp VT with Love

We have had the pleasure of showing her Massachusetts, as well as some of the other New England states. We recently took Irina for a ride along the Mohawk Trail. This is a scenic highway across Massachusetts. Irina became a “leaf peeper” for the first time. We walked on the French King Bridge that spans the Connecticut River and took pictures of the beautiful fall foliage. Then we drove further up the trail to Shelburne Falls where we ate homemade ice cream and walked across the Bridge of Flowers. Of course she takes pictures of everything she sees! We can’t wait for our trip to New York City this weekend.

Clint and Sandi Eklund, hosts for Irina Klimova (Russia)
Orange, MA

Top Chef in Idaho

We hear that German student Anna-Katharina Felgentreu has been whipping up wonderful dishes for Marty Stökel and Krista Evere.

Roadside Honor

System Wows Teen

One weekend we picked out pumpkins from a roadside stand. It had an “honor system”, which means you put money in a little deposit box and you take what you want. Roman said, “Never could you have one in Russia. All the pumpkins would be gone and there would be no money.” I think he was shocked and amused at our American trustworthiness. His first Halloween will be exciting. With an exchange student, all the things we take for granted are new and exciting again!

Edwin Shareman; host father for Roman Turkin (Russia)
Harrisburg, PA