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Program of Academic Exchange

PaxPress

A Hike for Humanity

A group of fifteen PAX students from southern Vermont and New Hampshire enjoyed a glorious fall hike up Mount Wantastiquet in early October. In addition to the fun and exercise, the hike was a fundraiser for the Morningside Homeless Shelter. Seated: Grace Willingham, Emma Reuter, Romain Geremi (Belgium), Tom Schuenemann (Germany), Miikka Sipila (Finland), Enrique Uscanga (Mexico), Hassan Obeidat (Jordan), PAX Area Manager for Vermont Ann Newsmith. Standing: Mfutila Nsoky (Belgium), Janne Yang (China), Sarah Tayeb (Belgium), Henry Herold, Chanick Somsupan (Thailand), Beatrice Bompani (Italy) and Soeren Siemens (Germany).

Bridging the Divides of Religion and Culture

I am interested in learning about different cultures, different people and new things. This exchange program helps me to achieve my goal. I have been to churches several times. Churches are totally different from our mosques. We do not have music and dance in our mosques, but in churches, many services do. I was surprised to see that.

When I went to a church for the first time, I introduced myself to the minister, and I asked the minister to let me speak a little bit to the people. Fortunately, I got this chance. I talked about my culture, Islam, and how we can contribute to bring nations and people closer together, as well as to remove the misunderstandings we have among different religions. With a rise in humanity, love and peace, this world can become a better place to live.

Syed Ali Larosh Zaid (Pakistan)
Hosted by the Minch family
Inwood, WV

PAX Students Found Institute to Enhance Chinese - American Friendships

Zi Wang and I are using our enthusiasm and knowledge of our homeland to enhance the friendship between China and the USA by founding the American Interstate Chinese Cultural & Educational Association.

We are making textbooks to teach American students about Chinese culture and language. Some of the lesson subjects are food, festivals, music, the educational system, Mandarin and Cantonese. We will provide opportunities for U.S. students to have online communication with students in China. This will help American students practice oral Chinese.

To start, there are two chapters. One is at my school, Urbana High School in Ohio, and the other is at Zi's school, Chatfield Senior High in Colorado. There will be quiz competitions between the two chapters.

We are also working on a financial aid program to cover the cost of the final exam winner's visit China.

Yidong Hou (China)
Hosted by the Mowrey family
Urbana, OH

Tapped to Translate Russian

Ukrainian FLEX student Alexander Shatskov said he had a wonderful and important experience serving as a translator for a Russian delegation who visited Maine. Alexander, on the right, is pictured with his host father, Mark Fisher, and Maine Governor Paul LePage.

Volunteering Connects Us to Our Community

We all do our best to adjust to our host community. That's why I'd like to share with you the experience that made me feel like a citizen of my host town.

In October, I took part in the CROP Hunger Walk. A huge number of people all over the world suffer from hunger. They live in places where there is no access to food and getting it requires a great effort everyday. The goal of CROP Walk is to raise funds to end hunger around the world. We walked four miles together and acted as one family. As a result, our community raised $4,800.

I advise students not to be passive. Taking action, volunteering and helping others makes you feel a part of your American community!

Yuliya Vavryshchuk (Ukraine)
Hosted by the Wycoff family
Mount Vernon, IA

Rubicon Photo

Gunay Karimova (Azerbaijan), Halima Chambo (Tanzania) and Yuliya Vavryshchuk (Ukraine) at the CROP Walk.

The Power of a Smile

One of the first things I noticed here is the fact that people smile at you immediately when you make eye contact with them. It is so amazing for me to smile back. It is very polite to do that, I admit.

Another interesting observation is that Americans are eager to learn more about foreign people. I came to this conclusion when I had to answer a series of questions from my host parents, classmates and other people in my community. The most common question is whether I speak more than one language. Most people in the United States speak only one language and they find it interesting to listen to someone say something in a foreign language. Sometimes I feel embarrassed when I am asked to say something in my "native tongue" or in French. But it turns out to be just fun.

Evangeline Safeh (Cameroon)
Hosted by the Gohl family
Bossier City, LA

Autumn Traditions

In eastern Iowa, Ama Owusu-Darko (Ghana), Gladhys Syahutari (Indonesia), Ilaria Cerutti (Italy) and Nursofia Sideh (Thailand) geared up for Halloween with a visit to a pumpkin patch and a corn maze.

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Yao Xin (China) with his fellow volunteers.

One Word: Awesome

Since I came to the U.S., I've experienced a lot of fun things. While I've gone to a lot of parties, activities and clubs, the most interesting experience for me is volunteering for "Arts in the Park", where people set up tents and sell their art. As a volunteer, my job is to sell the raffle tickets. I've made a lot of friends there and at school where I joined the Interact Club, choir and FBLA. I've become a volunteer at the hospital and the middle school. I went to the homecoming as a prince candidate!

I have a wonderful host family who has taught me so much since I came to America. They've taken me to Las Vegas and Henderson. We go to the movies every week. They make me feel really great.

That's my life. In one word, it is awesome!

Yao Xin (China)
Hosted by the Pearce family
Boulder City, NV

Sporting their creations are sibs Nicholas and Mariah with YES student Lidya Sophiani.

Groovy Times

Before school started, my host sister, Mariah, had a 15th birthday party where we made tie-dye shirts. She taught me how to tie the shirt to create different patterns and to mix the colors. Then we let the shirts dry for eight hours. I never thought making a tie-dye shirt would be so fun and interesting! I now have five tie-dye shirts that I made myself!

Lidya Sophiani (Indonesia)
Hosted by the Quintero family
Round Hill, VA

Learning the Ropes

At the Frontier Ranch in Colorado, Faryal Hasan participated in a weekend ropes course. The Pakistani YES student reflects, "Through tears and hugs, everyone shared and fought their deepest fears."

PAX–Program of Academic Exchange is a not-for-profit educational foundation. Established in 1990, PAX sponsors international high school students from over 40 nations on five and ten month academic homestay programs.

For more information, contact:
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Thank you for submitting letters to PAX Press. Because of space limitations, however, we are unable to print each letter in its entirety.

PAX Press is printed on recycled paper with soy based ink.

Few Similarities with Kyrgyzstan

I appreciate my new school, my teachers and my American classmates! I am finding "few" similarities with my native country. For example, the students are so free during the lessons, whereas students in my country stand up when a teacher enters a classroom or asks a question.

There are so many things that put me in a positive mood here, such as when Americans smile or wave at me! I also enjoy school lunchtime, going on a school bus and being on the cross-country team. Honestly, it is not that easy, but I'm getting a lot of pleasure from the cross-country meets where people support and shout for you!

Yes, I love my host family. My two host siblings are thrilled to play with me. My host parents are really approachable and so much fun. Just today they helped me with my hair and make-up for my senior picture at school.

Nuska Osmonova (Kyrgyzstan)
Hosted by the Gonzalez family
Berryville, VA

One of the World's Great Natural Wonders

Leyre Perez (Spain) and her hosts, the Nelson family of Enterprise, Utah, spent the weekend hiking in the Grand Canyon.

What is Love?

Love is a sweet song
Sung by dying swans.
Angels of heaven
Fighting for dreams
They cannot save.

Far is so near
When you're here
Many deaths tonight
Cannot save our sweet love.

Juho Uitto (Finland)
Hosted by the Walters family
Troy, OH

My Second Home

Now that I've been here for two months, I can tell everybody that this is an incredible experience. With my host mom, I am learning lots of new things and meeting many fabulous friends. I feel that this is my second home.

Costanza Riva (Italy)
Hosted by the Baghal family
Leavenworth, KS

Spurred to Action

It seems like everything is bigger than in Thailand. There is open thinking here. It makes me feel more comfortable. I've done new things here such as volunteering, Key Club and soccer. Some things are difficult to deal with, but it doesn't mean I shouldn't try, but it means I should try harder.

Sawasdee Charoenchang (Thailand)
Hosted by the Bertuat-Strange family
Purcellville, VA

Men in Black

In Oak Harbor, Washington, Ken Grisby snapped this shot of his host sons, Arnaud Valdes Gonzalez of Belgium and Francesco Bernardelli of Italy, before their prom.

Greetings from Utah

Students and families from Washington County, Utah spent the day reveling in the astounding beauty of Bryce Canyon National Park: Coordinator Laurel Paul, Johan Pekkari (Sweden), Iliana Ceballos (Argentina), Leyre Perez (Spain), Miquel Vilardell Rifa (Spain), Ines Claros Cendoya (Spain), Madiyar Dartayev (Kazakhstan), Aleksandra Shalimova (Kazakhstan), Natalia Cojuhari (Moldova), Rodrigo Amado (Brazil) and the Nelson, Hinton and Frieden host families.

Let Me Give You a Hand

In Guilford, Vermont, Vanessa Corvi joined some neighbors in a "barn-raising" to build a studio. She is shown planing a joist. The Burrell family is hosting the Italian student.

The Last Days of Summer

Taking a break from the Utah sun during a pool party are Sanne de Kleijn (Netherlands), James Tangkitsanguan (Thailand), Johan Pekkari (Sweden), Yok Tasawat (Thailand) and Megan Yost (Sanne's host sister).

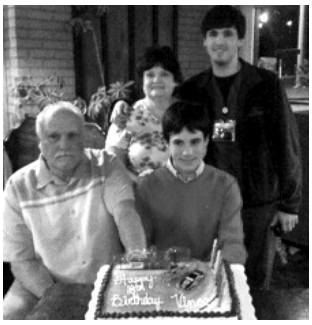
Stronger and Braver in North Carolina

I found myself growing up after I arrived in America. I began to think about other's feelings, not only my own. When I have difficulties, I try my best to solve them by myself instead of asking for help. I've become a stronger person, which helps me face the future bravely.

My host family is very nice and warm-hearted. My host mom wrote emails to my teachers, and she drove me to the mall many times to buy clothes since I didn't bring many from China.

The school here is physically larger than my Chinese high school but has fewer students. We only have seven minutes between every block to move from one building to another. In China, we have ten-minute breaks, and the students do not move classrooms. Here, I have eight subjects a year (four each term). We can choose the courses we like. In the first week if we don't like a course, we can talk to our counselor and change it. This is awesome and it doesn't happen in China!

Bingwen Ren (China)
Hosted by the Bott family
Charlotte, NC



Make a Wish

In Mississippi, the Lukas family surprised their student, Vincent Bussens (Belgium), with a birthday cake.

Fear Factor

One of my cross-country friends invited our team to her house for a spaghetti dinner. Then we decided to go to a horror maze. While we were waiting to enter, someone touched my shoulder. When I turned back, I saw a haunted man. I got scared and screamed. It was so much fun.

When it was our turn to enter, the instructor told us not to use any kind of light in the maze and told us that it would be dark. It was scary in the maze. We had to pass through different kinds of horror scenes. There were haunted people all over, and we had to go through a haunted bus. We got lost in the bus as it was so dark. Then a haunted man took off his mask and helped us. The horror lasted only for 45 minutes, and then we found our way out of the maze. It was great fun for the fall season.

Mah Noor Malik (Pakistan)
Hosted by the Carroll family
Bunker Hill, WV

The Buzz on Halloween

"Pirates, vampires, walking M&M's. I really didn't expect it would be so hard to choose a costume!" Natalia Cojuhari exclaims. The bumblebee outfit won. The Mendenhall family hosts the Moldovan FLEX student in St. George, Utah.

Halloween Hillbillies

In St. Augustine, Florida, German Ramona Bosek is having the time of her life between experiencing new holidays and new foods such as jellyfish and squid. She is pictured second from the left with her host family, the Fortneys. Her host mother says, "She just goes with the flow and fits right into our family. We just love her!"

Who's Spooked?

I enjoyed October because of Halloween. We carved pumpkin faces by first cutting off the top part of the pumpkin and then taking out the seeds inside. I carved a ghost face and put a vanilla candle inside the pumpkin.

One night, I went to a haunted house. It looked like an old factory and was creepy with scrap metal and vines on the walls. When I went inside, there were a lot of people dressed like zombies, mummies, Frankensteins, Draculas, etc. They tried to scare people by screaming in front of their faces, laughing like ghosts, crying, and making scary and loud voices. One of the keepers asked me if I got scared. I answered, "No, it is not scary at all," and he laughed.

Erlia Putri Imansari (Indonesia)
Hosted by the Harvey family
Trussville, AL

Time for Jack O'Lanterns

In Missouri, FLEX student Ekaterina Shanina (Russia) and Paola Bonini (Italy) took home pumpkins from their farm outing with the International Club.

A Rollicking Gathering

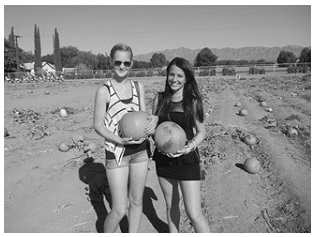
At their Halloween bash, Indiana PAX students went from a pumpkin carving contest to a hayride and then topped off the night with a bonfire, hotdogs and s'mores.

An Angel Turned Vampire Queen

Because we don't have Halloween in China, this was my first experience with it. The Wednesday before, my mom, sister and I went to find a costume. We found a super cool fallen angel costume in a supermarket. There were two, a medium and a large. My mom said that with the medium one I couldn't put any clothing under it, which meant I would be super cold on Halloween. Where I live in America, it is much colder than my home in China, so keeping warm is a problem. There was a girl looking at the large dress, too, and she took it before we decided to buy it. So we came back home four hours later without a dress.

On Thursday, we kept up our search. We found one really quickly. It was a vampire queen dress, which was really big and pretty. It was long and would keep me warm.

Fangzhou Zhu (China)
Hosted by the Herring family
Shelbyville, MI



Scored the Perfect Pumpkin

Since Halloween is not celebrated in Brazil, Fernanda Bernardes, right, savored every minute of the holiday. The Casillas host her in El Paso, Texas.

Masquerade Madness

At a Halloween party I hosted for my students and their host families, everyone had an awesome time playing games, which helped them get to know each other. In one game, each guest wrote three statements about themselves - two true, one false. When the card was read, the group had to guess which one was not true. They also had a great time in a game where they wrote an unusual statement about themselves. The cards were drawn and read, while the rest of the group had to guess who that person was!

We had some amazing costumes in our group, from funeral directors and Navy Seals, to plane crash survivors and shark encounters! Pizza, nachos, candied apples were served and the night was closed out by roasting marshmallows.

Susan James, Community Coordinator
St. Augustine, FL

Watch Out for Twilight

In Florida, the Magnells pose with their vampire son, Xabier Garcia of Spain.

Call Me Cleopatra

It was my first Halloween ever. I dressed up like Cleopatra since I like Egyptian dresses. I wore my costume to school, and I went trick or treating with my host sister. I wish that I could celebrate Halloween in my country, too.

Fatima Yamin (Pakistan)
Hosted by the Barrick family
Martinsburg, WV

A Trick for a Treat

In a traditional Halloween game, Jongwook Kim tries his best to catch a donut dangling on a ribbon. The Barron family hosts the South Korean student in Saltillo, Mississippi.

Ghost Busters

Coordinator Shari Osterude said her students weren't afraid to venture into St. Paul, Minnesota's famous haunted caves where bootleggers and gangsters once lived. Pictured are Laura Brase (France), Yuner Shau (China), Napassorn Ayudhya (Thailand), Alberto Brioschi (Italy), Wonjoon Kim (South Korea), Simone Scarafoni (Italy), Masa Drazic (Serbia) and Davide Ghersevich (Italy).

Students: You can win prizes for your environment-saving projects! Get information about the PAX Goes GREEN contest on the "What's New" page of the website www.pax.org. Don't delay! The first round of project entries is due January 30, 2012.

Reduce, Reuse & Recycle

At the Austin, Minnesota Re-Fest, these FLEX and YES students taught festival goers how to reduce their garbage footprint: Kseniya Kuryanova (Russia), Katya Zhuzha (Ukraine) Anna Rukavishikova (Turkmenistan) and Lintang Syuhada (Indonesia).

A Tribute to PAX's Mary Payne Hairald for Her Extraordinary Achievements

Longtime Mississippi PAX Coordinator Mary Payne Hairald received a thundering applause at the Nettleton High School (NHS) Homecoming game for her work on behalf of thousands of students. At half time, it was announced:

The Nettleton School Board has named a facility on the Nettleton School Campus in honor of a past educator whose outstanding contributions to the Nettleton School District we would like to recognize tonight. The Nettleton School District is honored to announce that the Nettleton High STEM Lab is now known as "The Mary Payne Hairald Vocational Lab."Mrs. Hairald taught in the public school system for 49 years with 46 of those being at Nettleton where she attended and graduated as valedictorian of her class with 12 years of perfect attendance. In l997, Mrs. Hairald was named the National Vocational Teacher of the Year before 10,000 attendees in Cincinnati, Ohio. Her many honors and awards have been so extensive, but just to name a few include three times Regional Vocational Teacher of the Year (seven states), four times Mississippi Vocational Teacher of the Year, four times Mississippi DECA Advisor of the Year, three times Outstanding Mississippi DECA Alumni Member of the Year, Honorary Member of Mississippi DECA, Honorary Member of Mississippi DECA Alumni, Honorary Member of DECA Foundation, four consecutive years of receiving the National Award for the State DECA Newsletter, State Officers Advisor for six years, and advisor of 18 State DECA Officers from the NHS DECA Chapter.

Congratulations Mary!

Homecoming in Vegas

As PAX students at the same school in Las Vegas, Nevada, Peilun Shi (China) and Marta Castello (Italy) were natural dates for the Homecoming Dance. Marta reported, "This was my first semi-formal dance. I had a lot of fun shopping for my dress and shoes with my family. James and I were a little nervous, but once there, we had a great time! We danced for three hours straight!" James expected slow, "gentle" music and was surprised to find everyone dancing in a pretty "wild way!"

Host sister Melissa Hins and Laura Paino (Spain) do the Sabercat snarl.

Showing Sabercat Spirit

School spirit is something every school should have. I never realized that until I saw it here. Every movie and T.V. series usually shows cheerleaders, bands or some kind of spirit. I wondered, is it real?

In Spain, as I'm sure in other countries, we don't have these activities. I have never seen pompom girls or a mascot dancing. Here I did. It is fun to see which pajamas people wear on Pajama Day and how many people wear a pink shirt for the fight against breast cancer. It's a way to have fun at school.

Laura Paino (Spain)
Hosted by the Hins family
Moore, OK

YES student Kadidia is in the center.

Confusing at First

CIVA Charter High School is a wonderful school. People are so friendly and always smiling. It's not a very big school, so everybody knows each other.

American school is very different from Malian school. Here we can choose our courses, but in my country everybody must do the same thing. We don't have lockers, so it was very hard for me to learn to open mine. In Mali, the students stay in the same classroom and only the teachers move. At first, I was always late because I was trying to find the classrooms.

Most exciting to me are the bowling club and the dance class, which we don't have in my country.

American schools give so much opportunity and power to students to do what they want and to help them for their future career.

Kadidia Samassékou (Mali)
Hosted by the Pearson family
Peyton, CO

Serbian Athlete Helps His Team Dominate

Michigan's Huron High School water polo team, the River Rats, couldn't believe their luck when teammate Kyp Papageorgiou brought his host brother, Aleksandar Petrovic, to the tryouts. The Serbian student is a standout water polo player. AnnArbor.com describes him as having "a staggering combination of size, speed, power and finesse."

School is Cool

I've made a lot of friends and developed a great understanding with my teachers. The main thing that was hard for me was the tardy system because we don't have that system in our schools. I have great fun in my algebra class and robotics class because the teachers are awesome and most of the students are my friends.

Muhammad Usman Ghani (Pakistan)
Hosted by the Fetter family
Cedar Rapids, IA

Making Commitments, Making Friends

"As a PAX student, my first goal is to *communicate* with other students," says Yasha Laila Ali, a Pakistani YES student living with the Whittaker family in Westerville, Ohio. To get to know her classmates, Yasha (third from the left) joined clubs and did volunteer work. After two weeks in the Key Club, she was selected as their Junior Representative!

More Than Classes

The most exciting thing at my school was Homecoming. It was my first time to go to a ball. When I saw that guys and girls wore full dress, I was shocked. How pretty they were! Most of them looked like movie stars or princes and princesses.

I take part in some interesting clubs. The ICE Club helps students share their culture with Americans. For example, we saw the film *Hua Mulan* in Chinese.

MESA Club is a science club. We will do the Science Olympiad next year as a group. From working with others on one project, I understand cooperation better and have improved my English.

Operation Smile helps children with harelips by raising money. The president showed us photos and a video about her experience in foreign countries with these kids. This activity helps me feel the responsibility American students feel. I realize that even small efforts can change the world.

Feiyu Lu (China)
Hosted by the Miller family
Albuquerque, NM

The Magic Flute

Our Andrea performed in the district audition and came in 2nd place out of 15 flutists! She will go on to represent Green Mountain Union High School at the District Festival Concert.

Andrea auditioned with minimal study time. She received her music piece on a Thursday and auditioned the following Monday. We are all so proud of her achievement and can't wait for the district concert.

She is also in the high school band along with my daughter, Sasha, and many other gifted children. They will be performing the annual Christmas concert, as well as a summer concert. These concerts are a great joy as the music program at Green Mountain is outstanding.

James Petrycki, host father for
Andrea Anderez (Spain)
Proctorsville, VT

Novice Runner is One of West Virginia's Best

Running was very hard at the beginning, because in Ukraine I did sport orienteering, which is very different. I tried to improve my results at every cross-country practice. I finally found myself listed as one of the "top 50 runners" for the West Virginia State 5k (out of 836). It is funny to see a weird Eastern European last name among the American names in the rankings listed in the tri-state area newspaper, The Journal.

We have a great team. For the first time in the history of my school, we got second place in the regional championship, and we're going to the state championship!

I love West Virginia and my host family! In my first two weeks, I traveled to nine states with them. I also experienced an earthquake and a hurricane. I'm not bored here!

Denys Andrushchenko (Ukraine)
Hosted by the Minch family
Inwood, WV

Seizing Opportunities

I like Steele High School very much. I'm on the Pep Squad which performs at football games. Our team won the state championship last year, so football is very popular. It's exciting to dance on the field.

In theatre arts we are rehearsing the play *Metamorphosis* for a festival in Houston. It is my favorite course because the students are cheerful, funny and helpful. After school we work on the play *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*.

Last week we had Open Mic Night. I sang a popular Russian song from a famous cartoon. The next day, lots of students and teachers said it was wonderful to hear the Russian song.

I also enjoy playing tennis. Matches are new for me. With the Key Club, I served food to the poor at the San Antonio Food Bank. It was great to hear their thanks.

Maria Gladysheva (Russia)
Hosted by the Weekes family
Cibolo, TX

Signing My Way

My school's American Sign Language group invited me to go with them to a nearby corn maze. Since it was an ASL group, they were told not to speak but use signs to communicate. I had never seen a corn maze. It was really confusing. It took almost two hours. I had loads of fun! I even learned to sign the alphabet!

Karan Shah (India)
Hosted by the Menefee family
Alden, KS

Guitar Hero

Eyerusalem Kifle (Ethiopia) found her rhythm in California. The Day-Brook family hosts her in San Luis Obispo.

What are the Odds?

In San Luis Obispo, California, Coordinator Jan Walters couldn't believe it when she saw two college-bound PAX alums from Serbia disembarking the plane with these Class of 2012 PAX students: Ethiopian Eyerusalem Kifle, Spaniard Ainhoa Ruiz, and Thais Chayanee Wongwatcharanon, Chutapat Suwansatiean and Jaranawan Kongchantuk. Once again, the phrase "it's a small world" rings true!

Butterfly or Bust

When I came here I decided to do sports to keep fit. My host sister was on the swim team so I joined it, too. I came to the first practice, and I was really scared. All the girls were perfect swimmers, but I had never done it before! I looked at the coach, who is strict but nice, and she told me to jump in the water. I jumped in and showed her how I swam. She said I was good for a beginner. That made me feel more confident. After the practice was over, I felt exhausted but happy!

After more than a month, I realize how much I get from this experience. I have wonderful friends who help me in difficult moments, who make my life here so bright and unforgettable, and who understand my feelings. Because of the swim team, I feel at home here.

Moreover, now I have an aim! I want to learn how to swim butterfly. When I watch my friends "flying" in the water, it inspires me so much. I am sure that one day I will be able to do it -- to fly like a butterfly.

Anastasia Burakova (Russia)
Hosted by the Livingstone family
San Antonio, TX

Strike Up the Band

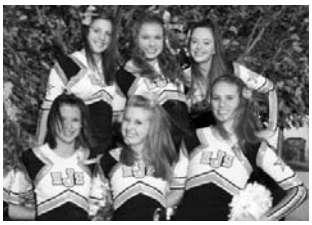
The crowds went wild when Eun Ji-Shin (South Korea) and her high school marching band performed at a parade. She says, "Our Michael Jackson Thriller dance was amazing." Eun lives with the Sharp family in Niles, Ohio.

A Passion for Clay

I am taking a wonderful class called ceramics. In class, I make beautiful things: pots, a set of cups, pinch pots and all kinds of items. My ceramics teacher, Liz Denoirde, is my favorite teacher. She is a great potter and painter. She lets me take the clay home and helps me with many things. Today she sent me to teach a class about how to make bowls for a charity.

Everything here is great. Vermont is beautiful. It is snowing now and I am so excited. It is really cold. I love it here!

Hin Akil Haidar (Lebanon)
Hosted by the Kinney-Landis family
Guilford, VT



Italian Ilaria Cerutti (front, far right) with her dance teammates.

Overcame Challenges

At first I felt alone because my English wasn't good and I couldn't express everything I felt. On the first day of school I was very nervous, and I felt the same for the next two weeks. Fortunately things changed for the better. I'm starting to have friends and my English is improving every day. I must admit that sometimes I feel a little homesick, but that is not completely wrong. In fact, one thing that I have learned from this experience is the value of the family. When I was in Italy, I never thought about this. Now I understand that family is the most important thing we have. I'm very lucky because now I have two awesome families that I love!

Ilaria Cerutti (Italy)
Hosted by the Homan family
Cedar Rapids, IA

Bend it Like Leon

German Leon Gatzemeier says the best thing about playing soccer was making friends. Not surprisingly, he said the worst thing was practicing in the desert heat of Las Vegas, Nevada. He thanks his hosts, the Hernandez family, for being staunch supporters at his games.

What an Education!

Indonesian Wins Big in
The Great Debate

On October 21, I joined the South Anchorage Lincoln Debate Tournament. I never learned the Lincoln Douglas debate procedure before because in Indonesia, the Asian, Australian and British parliament system is used. I studied hard to prepare my case for both sides.

There were many contestants from all the high schools in Alaska. From all the contestants, only four students would compete again in the semi-finalist round. I was very surprised when my name was listed for it. I was the only student from my school selected to compete again.

My opponent in this next round was Jasmine Shestakov from the best debate team in Anchorage. She spoke fluently and fast. I only could hear some of what she said, but I worked very hard to do a good rebuttal. Finally, I won 27-24.

In the final round, I battled with Dylan Lee. He was very smart because it wasn't the first debate for him like it was for me. The judges said, *"Muhammad, your debate is very awesome. You made many good philosophical arguments. Although your accent is quite different, I like your speaking style. Good job Indonesia!"*

In the tournament announcement, I got second position. I was very happy because it was my first U.S. debate competition.

Muhammad Arief Purnomo (Indonesia)
Hosted by the Seidler family
Anchorage, AK

New School, New Friends

In northern Virginia, Shafic Oman (Ghana) and Jon Ales Artaza (Spain) compare notes after their first day.

Rallying for My Team

I am a member of the Eastwood softball team. I had a hard time at first, but I soon adapted and now I push myself as hard as I can, just as the coach says. I enjoy the moments when my teammates call me "pushy-girl" and yell "go, go, Ziyi!" I really feel we are one team and one family. Everyone encourages each other in training. We promise each other not to have soda and junk food. We made a big "get-well-soon card" for the coach when he was in the hospital. We sold tickets to a steak dinner and served people during a football game to raise money for the team. The coaches care about everyone's health and tell us not to do anything stupid. I love my team!

Ziyi Sang (China)
Hosted by the Garcia family
El Paso, TX

It Was the Best of Times

In West Virginia, Egyptian YES student Farah Elaboudy, third from the left, had a magical Homecoming night with her friends. The Carter family hosts her in Charles Town.

Soccer: Going All Out

Recently I joined the school soccer team. While I was training, I couldn't help but notice the difference between American and Ukrainian school soccer.

American sports are much better organized. Team spirit is very high. We listen to the American anthem before every game. We travel to every game by school bus. Parents come to the games and support their teams. American schools also have their own colors. My team colors are red, blue and white. When it comes to the day of the game, we wear our soccer uniforms to school. At the end of the season, the players present flowers to their parents. I'm really glad that I joined the soccer team and gained these new experiences.

Alexander Shatskov (Ukraine)
Hosted by the Fisher family
Oakland, ME

Bravo to FLEX student Alexander Shatskov for his critical role in the state semifinal game win against the defending state champions.

Spaniard Blanca Barajas, on left.

Couches in Class?

Here, the teachers have their own classrooms that they can decorate and put furniture inside. In my American history class, my teacher has a couch!

There are a lot of people in my school and the teachers have to separate us into four periods for lunch. When the bell rings, the hallways are always crowded.

Also, we don't study many subjects. We only have to learn English, American history, science and math, and then you can choose whatever you want for other subjects. My school has many options for dancing, singing and acting. You can mix those all together and do a musical.

Blanca Barajas (Spain)
Hosted by the Rennhack family
Parrish, FL

A Lesson a Day

School here is different from school in my country, but this is a valuable lesson. I follow the classes very well. In my opinion, American school is fun and not boring. I am in the choir and the band here, and I marched in the parade at school. I have plans to join a wrestling club. Speaking English every day is very useful for improving the language. The experience here is also a good lesson in keeping an open mind and tolerating fellow human beings.

Lintang Syuhada (Indonesia)
Hosted by the Roberts family
Elkton, MN

Football, the American Way

These two months spent here are a total accomplishment for me. Living like an American is not always easy, but so exciting. As a good American, I joined the football team. What a crazy sport!

On the first day, they explained to me, "You see that guy in front of you. Well, you tackle him as hard as you can."

What! This guy is only fifteen, and he is a head taller and 30 pounds larger than me. So, I became the kicker for the team. It is safer but not especially easier.

What has impressed me here is the school spirit. Everybody is cohesive and proud of his school, which just doesn't exist in Belgium.

I am impressed with the American way: how the team stands together before each football game, how they remove their helmets to recite the national anthem and how people are silent and put their hands over their hearts. I see the respect and pride that the crowd has toward the nation, which gives me goose flesh each time I see it.

François De Baerdemaeker (Belgium)
Hosted by the Spencer family
Wisconsin Rapids, WI

Zeroing in on Local Life

Crazy Colorado:
Jumping Waterfalls and Camping with Bears

As we know, it is not easy to leave your country and go to a place where you don't know anyone, but with the Rhoades family it definitely was much easier. When I first arrived in Colorado, they organized a very busy welcome weekend! The first Saturday here was very exciting. My host brother John and I jumped the Cascade, which are a series of freezing waterfalls! After that we went camping in Silverton. It was an adventure because there are a lot of bears there. I thank my family for the amazing welcome weekend and for making me feel like part of their family.

Aitor Barrantes (Spain)
Hosted by the Rhoades family
Durango (CO)

German Carolin Dürr records her year.

South Dakota Rocks

This picture is from the day before my 16th birthday at my friend Darac Harry's house. We were getting ready for the football game. Everything had to be pink because the game was dedicated to breast cancer awareness.

The people in my school are very friendly to me and they help me with the challenges. The easy-going attitude of the people is something I really like. It makes different things easier.

There are so many possibilities for doing sports here. That's one of the things I like most about America. Being on a team helps you feel like a part of the group because you work together with people. I like cross-country running after school and dancing in Aberdeen every Thursday.

Carolin Dürr (Germany)
Hosted by the Wright Family
Houghton, SD

A Real Pow Wow

Lado Sirdadze (Georgia) was impressed by the Native Americans he met at a pow wow held at Haskell Native American University. The FLEX student is spending his year with the Blunt family in Lee's Summit, Missouri.

Michigan Group Takes on Monster Roller Coasters

Sixty-one students representing 21 countries had a day packed with thrills at Cedar Point, an amusement park on the Lake Erie shore in Ohio. The trip was led by Michigan Area Manager Anita Wilson and coordinators Pam Knaffle, Heidi Rocha and Linda Workman.

From Italy to Iowa

I think that the life here is totally different from my lifestyle in Italy, but I find it interesting. I came here to find something different. For example, guys and girls usually hang out at the mall or they ask you to go to their house even if they don't know you that well. In my town, you are usually supposed to know someone really well before you ask him or her to come to your house. There are some differences in the family, too. The curfew is different, some rules about guys are different, and so are some rules about cleaning the house.

The school that I attend, compared to my school in Italy, is a castle. It's new and huge. There is a big lunchroom with a lot of tables. There are a lot of classrooms and the students change rooms every block, whereas in Italy the teachers change the rooms. We are in the same classroom every year, every day, every block, with the same people. Here, there are five to ten minute breaks between every block because we have to change stuff in the lockers. In Italy we don't have lockers, so we just take our rucksacks with us in the classroom. In addition, in Italy people my age don't usually work because it's impossible to work in that society if you study. Guys and girls of my age here work a lot. This made me realize that you can't just ask for money from your parents, and it is better to try to provide for yourself on your own.

Since I came here I figured out that I'm really more interested in new cultures and travel than I thought. I've started to be more careful with my stuff, my clothes and my money.

Giulia Notaristefano (Italy)
Hosted by the Hildreth family
West Des Moines, IA

A Cultural Smorgasbord

I am very lucky to be in this place. The South is very different from the rest of America. People play sports I have never seen, for example, football and softball.

In my area there are a lot of exchange students. Everyday I learn something new about their culture and teach them about mine. So this program gives me a real cultural exchange experience!

My host family realized my dream to see Disneyland. It was the most unbelievable and incredible experience I have ever had!

Saikal Muartbek kyzy (Kyrgyzstan)
Hosted by the Willis family
Titus, AL

At Home in Indiana

My state Indiana is very cold and unlike my homeland, which is so hot that sometimes the temperature reaches 51 degrees Celsius (124 F). People here say that Indiana is not as cold as other states like Minnesota.

My host family is very loving. They treat me just like their own son. I am surprised to find how neighbors are so much closer and caring to each other.

Students here don't have many final exams. Most of your marks depend on your homework and class assignments. The most awesome thing is that you don't have to wear a boring uniform everyday.

I joined the boy scouts, a baseball team, student council, the speech and debate team and the Boys and Girls Club. Making a lot of friends has given me a chance to know more about American kids.

This experience has taught me a lot of things, especially about becoming responsible. Now I am more mature in making decisions.

Umar Farooq (Pakistan)
Hosted by the Holt family
Richmond, IN

The Rock and Roll Capital

Host sister Margaret Foley introduced Neele Menter (Germany) and Maria Mendez Guerra (Mexico) to Cleveland, Ohio.

Unplugged: A Visit to an Amish Farm

Coordinator Trudy Krintz's students were surprised to learn that some American communities eschew modern technology and conveniences. To understand how these communities operate, Krintz and chaperones Jim Krintz and Deborah Resnick brought their students to a working Amish farm in Shipshewana, Indiana. Pictured are David Pena Ortiz (Mexico), Charlotte Limborg (Belgium), Saadet Tas (Turkey), Nikita Smirnov (Russia), Galal Alawi (Yemen), Klara Gruesgen (Germany), Vio Muhammad (Indonesia), Melek El Fecaa (Tunisa) and Janica Diamalon (Philippines).

Smooth Waters in Utah

YES students Seema Yousaf (Pakistan) and Lamiaa Hadi (Morocco) had a splendid afternoon on one of the lakes near Salt Lake City, Utah.

Vermont Corn & Apples

On September 25th, Kelley Cartularo, the Chittenden County PAX Coordinator, greeted PAX students in the cornfields of Vermont. The program of the day was to first get lost in a corn maze and then to go pick apples in a local orchard—without getting lost. Eight PAX students came, accompanied by three host dads, a host brother and myself.

We didn't get so lost in the corn maze. Between following Luigi Burlando (Italy) and using Kelley's advice to always keep a row of corn on our right side, the group made it out safely after half an hour.

Then, it was time to go apple picking. It was funny to see how personalities came out when the boundaries to our spaces became a field full of apple trees! Everyone left happy with bags full of apples and the feeling of being part of a nice community transplanted in a new place.

Thank you, Kelley, for organizing this pleasant autumn catching-up afternoon. Next month, we are hiking up Mt. Philo to have a picnic on the top!

Alice Anton, Community Coordinator
Burlington, VT

Spaniards Irene Bagues Portillo, Silvia Elguero Tejera and Miranda Gonzales.

Honk and Wave

In Utah, these FLEX students in Coordinator Laurel Paul's cluster learned about American style campaigning during a "Honk and Wave" event for Jon Pike, a former PAX host parent and candidate for the St. George City Council. Pictured are Natalia Cojuhari from Moldova and Madiyar Dartayev and Sasha Shalimova, both from Kazakhstan.

Pumped with Pride

It was difficult to get used to school during the first week. It seemed so huge! One difference is that we study sixteen subjects in Russia, and now I have only eight. I was quite surprised that people usually don't care about what they wear to school, so the atmosphere is more informal than in Russian schools. But the main difference is that U.S. schools have spirit. It's so great that people are proud of their school. I saw it during Homecoming Week when everyone wore the school colors. During the Homecoming game, a lot of people had black and orange stripes on their faces! It would be great if we had such things in Russia.

Daria Eronteva (Russia)
Hosted by the Jewell family
Skowhegan, ME

Cheers for Volunteers

I participate in the Key Club and Interact Club. Those clubs give me the ability to explore American life through volunteering. We don't do this much in Russia, so I was pretty excited to do something useful for other people. My first volunteering experience was cleaning up after a pancake breakfast at the local Civic Center and making hot dogs for lunch!

Ekaterina Shanina (Russia)
Hosted by the Howerton family
Lebanon, MO

A Taste of Tanzania

My host mom asked me if I would like to cook something from Tanzania. Considering that I missed my hometown food, I said yes. So we went to the grocery store and bought chicken, rice and a couple of ingredients that are similar to the ones in Tanzania. It took me 90 minutes to get the food ready to be served, and the only question on my mind was "Will they like it?" Well, they LOVED it and they asked me to cook more often!

Jeremiah Mbuya (Tanzania)
Hosted by the Jones family
Lincoln, NE

Samurai Honor

When Manon Okabayashi (Japan) trick or treated as a historic warrior from her homeland, people remarked that they have never seen such a costume. She lives with the Bleeker family in Gig Harbor, Washington.

Connecting the World

This year, PAX is proud to coordinate 300 students from two U.S. State Department programs, the Youth Exchange and Study (YES) and the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX).

During their American home stay, YES and FLEX students attend town meetings, visit local newspapers, see small businesses in action and participate in community service projects and other enhancement activities. They meet community leaders and see America at work. Students also make presentations about their countries, especially during International Education Week, November 14-18, 2011.

The PAX Class of 2012 **YES** students come from Albania, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Gaza, India, Indonesia, Israel (Arab Communities), Jordan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kuwait, Lebanon, Liberia, Macedonia, Malaysia, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Suriname, Tanzania, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, West Bank and Yemen. The **FLEX** students hail from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Ukraine.

Media savy FLEX and YES students Mohammad Mahmoud (Jordan), Dema Issa (West Bank), Yegor Rudnytskyy (Ukraine), Kseniya Kurkova (Russia) and Arooj Ali (Pakistan).

Broadcast News

I was living with my wonderful PAX coordinator, Teresa Lambert, for my first two weeks when we went to a BBQ where the community of Ocean Shores was gathered. Everybody asked Dema and me about our countries, our first experiences in America and our future plans. I said that I wanted to be a journalist, and so the superintendent of local radio station KOSW proposed a Foreign Exchange Show!

I was so excited! We immediately decided that I would be responsible for the journalism staff, interviews, news and discussions, and Dema would be the DJ. We also wanted to play popular music from our countries. Our PAX coordinator is a DJ on KOSW, so she helped us and contributed to our ideas.

On the 16th of September we held our first broadcast! When the microphone fell into our hands, we could not tear ourselves away! It was then we realized that our show would be successful! We talked about school activities, friends, popular teenage music and having fun! An hour of broadcasting passed really quickly.

But that is not all! Teresa saw my photos and told me that some were interesting! She suggested that I become a member of the Ocean Shores Artist Gallery, so I can exhibit my pictures.

I will never forget the people who enabled this. Thank you, PAX and FLEX!

Kseniya Kurkova (Russia)
Hosted by the Morales family
Hoquiam, WA

Tune In with Dema

"Playing songs and talking about my beautiful country, Palestine, is a seriously great experience," says Dema Issa, the DJ of the Foreign Exchange Show. "I've been blessed to have this great opportunity."

The West Bank Meets the American West

Living in Utah is a whole new experience for me. It is so exciting to experience new things and be responsible. I've learned so much in school and with my new host family. I've played new sports like American football and made a lot of friends from school and from the YES program.

Gabi Awad (West Bank)
Hosted by the Kosmas family
Salt Lake City, UT

Living in a Movie

I live in a pretty small town that is less than an hour away from New York City. Living so close makes it really easy to go there. The most American thing I've done was the first day when we lit a fire and cooked a marshmallow over it! It's like living in a movie.

Ludovica Andrenacci (Italy)
Hosted by the Schaefer family
Wilton, CT

PAX Abroad: Living the Good Life in Spain

Gabby Perlewitz gives a shout-out from "Los Pirineos", the mountains that border France and Spain. The Wisconsin teen is pictured with her Spanish host sisters, Irati and Naroa Mugartegi.

Lessons in Democracy

How are bills created and passed? These questions and others were answered at a mock legislature session held at the Missouri State Capitol. Coordinator Liz Carver's cluster also heard one of President Abraham Lincoln's speeches by a look-alike speaker who challenged them to think about an important issue that nations face: How do we unite a divided nation? At the podium are Heinrich Dettmann (Germany), Lena Oberwetter (Germany), Lado Sirdadze (Georgia), Bogdan Prysyazhnyuk (Ukraine) and Anna Khoperia (Georgia).

Focus on Germany

In Portland, Oregon, Lynne Kuhnhenn prepares for her International Education Week presentation on her homeland.

A Guide to Government

The Hudzinski family has not only introduced YES student Amra Saric (Bosnia and Herzegovina) to American foods and customs, they've also been teaching her about American government. As part of her education, the Hudzinskis took Amra to the Pennsylvania State Capitol where she met with State Representative Todd Rock.

Stealing the Show at Comedy Central

Alabama Cluster Leader Rebecca Kinney and YES student Asaad Aman (Yemen) became the center of attention at a Comedy Central show featuring Muslim American comedians. Before the show, the Washington Post interviewed Kinney while Asaad worked the room. Kinney said he charmed everyone as the "perfect example of a student ambassador". At the end of the show, the main acts thanked Kinney for her work with exchange students and encouraged the crowd to talk to her about exchanges.

SHARE YOUR AMERICA

To learn about hosting, call PAX - Program of Academic Exchange at 800-555-6211 or visit www.pax.org.

PAX students speak English, and have personal spending money and insurance.

...with a foreign exchange student from one of more than 70 countries.

"Vasiliy is one exceptional exchange student," host father Gil Roy raves. "We are having a wonderful time."

My Second Father

I have a wonderful host father. I have never met such a person like Gil, who is so full of vitality.

It seems like I have two fathers because Gil takes care of me like a son. He calls me "Sonny". We have a lot in common. We are always laughing like two best friends. My plan in the future is to be an accountant, so Gil has taught me how to use the QuickBooks system.

We travel a lot. He has shown me beautiful places: Atlantic City with it's amazing boardwalk, Cadillac mountain and many states. During these trips we always have fun and never get bored. We are going to Florida this winter to visit Disney World. When I heard this, I was very happy because this has been my dream since childhood.

Thank you to my coordinator, Bunny Geisler, for this wonderful host parent.

Vasiliy Chernov (Russia)
Hosted by the Roy family
Oakland, ME

Thank You for Opening Your Heart and Home

This year is full of adventures and opportunities for me. I am really happy to have such a great host family who supports and cares about me. I am very thankful to them for opening their heart and door to me.

Nozanin Amonova (Tajikistan)
Hosted by the Barrick family
Martinsburg, WV

Bananas for Banana Bread

"Lea Hasbach has loved baking with our children," reports Patricia Gerke of New Jersey. The German teen now counts homemade banana bread as one of her new favorite foods.

My African Daughter

What can I tell you about my student, Eva? She is bright, funny and energetic. She is so bright that she is way ahead of most of the students in her classes. Eva helps the other students overcome their hurdles and has even shared a different way of solving math problems that her teacher supports.

She makes everyone around her laugh all of the time. Eva sees a fun side to everything, no matter how serious the subject. She laughs at herself when most people might feel embarrassed. Her energy is very positive and rubs off on everyone. No one can be down around Eva.

Her energy is insurmountable. Even on the weekends, she is up early taking care of her homework, her wash or whatever else she needs to take care of. She never procrastinates. She has taught me that I can get more done by getting up early. Since I am back in school, Eva is my role model for studying hard.

We have had a wonderful time learning about Eva's culture in Cameroon, Africa. Eva's family is part of a tribe there. They make beautiful pottery and instruments where she comes from. At a PAX event in September, Eva dressed in her native costume and shared the pottery she brought with her to the States. Eva showed a slide presentation about her culture, too.

Recently, Eva made a native dish of meat and potatoes that was enjoyed by all. We have been able to share the American culture with Eva by attending local fairs, museums, and churches. She is up for anything, and we are up to doing anything with Eva. We feel very fortunate to have been chosen as Eva's American parents.

Sherry Gohl, host mother for
Evangeline Safeh (Cameroon)
Bossier City, LA

FLEX student Madina Seytmuradova (Turkmenistan) and YES student Fatma Macog (Philippines) with their hosts.

A Dream Realized

At first, I thought being an exchange student would be hard since living without your natural family for an entire year can be so hard. But staying with an American family is a great experience, and my family helped me deal with the homesickness. It is a precious gift that I will treasure for my entire life. My hosts will always be my second family.

I hope people with kind hearts will never stop helping a dreamer make her dreams come true. I want to thank those people who helped me achieve one of my big dreams.

Fatma Macog (Philippines)
Hosted by the Rutherford family
Richmond, IN

Lost Our Student, Gained a Daughter

Have you seen our exchange student? We can't seem to find her! Our town, Cogan Station, really isn't very big. Certainly a student can't be that hard to find. She was a petite young woman that arrived in mid August. Her baggage is in the closet where she placed it on the day of her arrival. She was so quiet and guarded, yet we knew there was much more to her personality.

We could have lost our student during the trip to the farmers' market or on one of many paddling excursions on our local lake. It could have happened while on a visit to the grocery store or shopping at the mall. We remember discussing U.S. history, literature, math, religion and science during nightly board games. There was never any mention of her leaving.

We asked our daughter Olena Nesterenkova if she had seen the exchange student. She answered in English, with a slight Ukrainian accent, that she barely remembered that girl. It would seem our exchange student has actually become our fourth daughter, fully vested in our daily lives. This daughter is at ease discussing issues of the day, actively participating in debates at the supper table. Our daughter feels free to laugh, love and even be sad, openly within our family.

Occasionally losing something is a good thing. Finding a daughter with maturity, poise and a kind heart standing in the place of our exchange student is the Mynczywor family's reward for looking.

The Mynczywor family, hosts for
Olena Nesterenkova (Ukraine)
Cogan Station, PA

How Nice Folks Like Us Became Wedding Crashers in Serbia

Little did we know then what the future would bring when I contacted our local coordinator Joy Brumbaugh to begin the process for hosting a student.

On November 7, 2009, Tihon moved in. This tall young man from Serbia was very polite. Long story short, he quickly became one of the family!

Tihon extended an invitation to us to visit him and his mother Sasa in Serbia. For rural people from Missouri who have never been farther from home than Florida, this seemed impossible! The temptation proved irresistible, and in July 2011, we flew to Belgrade.

After eating a wonderful dinner on our second day there, we were walking along the Sava River and noticed a boat hosting a "party". That party was a wedding reception. Sasa talked to the groom's father, and we were invited inside and introduced to the bride and groom. The father told us that he knew the 1999 American led NATO bombing was determined by the government. He said that good people live everywhere, and he asked us to tell our friends and family that there are good people in Serbia. How very true, as everyone we encountered treated us with a very welcoming disposition.

Serbia is a very beautiful country, and we were able to see a good part of the country. We saw farmland, mountains, beautiful monasteries, art galleries, Roman ruins and even pre-historic artifacts. We had delicious food! We saw some farmers cutting, raking and staking hay, all by hand in the southern part, and "modern" farm equipment in the northern part. After seeing a church built in the 6th century, it made us realize how young our country is!

Our boys Justin and Cody were able to stay an extra week after my husband and I left. They experienced the nightlife in Belgrade. Given that there are not a lot of places to go in rural Missouri at midnight, it was an experience they loved!

We are hosting again this school year, and we are again enjoying getting to know our new son, Kijan from Germany. We are forever grateful to Joy for getting us involved with PAX.

Melody Pezold, host mother for
Kijan Khazeifi (Germany) and
2010 PAX Alum Tihon Tomic (Serbia)
Fulton, MO

Peak Experience

South Korean Kyungula Kang, or "KK" as they call her, and her host sister, Zoe Perra, celebrate reaching a mountain summit in Brattleboro, Vermont.

Where's the Chicken?

One day we were talking and Jia asked where our *chicken* was. I said, "Our *chicken*? What do you mean?"

Jia said, "You know the place where you cook the food and keep the food."

I replied, "Oh, our KITCHEN!!!"

Mariam Torres, host mother for
Jia Xi (China)
Lawton, OK

Our Brave Tajik Girl

Anisa came to live with us a couple of weeks ago. She is funny, smart and kind, but most of all, she is part of our family. I know that we have many cultural differences, and it makes me realize what brave children these exchange students are! I was most shocked when Anisa told me about her friend that had to wed a boy she didn't like because their parents already agreed to it. We are having an amazing experience having a student!

Suzi and Max Heath, host parents for
Anisa Ikromova (Tajikistan)
Sedona, AZ

Continuing the Exchange

"After hosting Seongjae Hong, we are happy to report we traveled to South Korea to visit him in his homeland!" John and Lori Candalino of Nevada tell us, "He did a great job of translating, but of course, a smile goes a long way. It was so great to meet his family and tour his country. After learning to make Korean food, it was great to try the real thing."

Lucky Me

Words are not enough to express how lucky I feel for having the opportunity to live with the Duffins. It was hard to come because I never traveled out of my country and I'm close to my parents. However, this family made it easy for me. I want to thank every member of my family and my coordinator, Vicky Wason, and everyone who makes my experience so beautiful.

Lamiaa Hadi (Morocco)
Hosted by the Duffin family
Salt Lake City, UT

Off to a Great Start

Host sibs Megan Shaw and Ted Rieniets welcome Gema del Pozo Villegas of Spain.