

Every Moment Counts

By 2018-19 ASSE Outbound Exchange Student Hayleigh from Harrodsburg, Kentucky who enjoyed her year in Finland

My exchange year was full of wonderful trips and amazing people. I am so glad that I decided to do this because if I didn't then I wouldn't have had all these experiences.

I learned patience and acceptance and I have grown as a person because of this. This exchange year was full of ups and downs but nothing is perfect and that's the best thing. As you go through the hard times you realize how the smaller things shouldn't matter as much and you'll also realize that not everything in life is going to be perfect. I met one of my best friends on this exchange year as well! Her name is Jasmin and she's the best. We were always seen together and hanging out. I also got to make friends from around the

world! This is just the beginning for me and this trip was just the start of something big in my life.

I chose Finland for the great education but it's so much more than that. Finland has insane weather. It snowed in May! Finland is full of



Hayleigh (right) and her friends in Finland

forests and the people here love it. I remember the first day I landed there and the air was so fresh! I couldn't believe how clean it was! I have to thank Veikko Tervo and Anni-Leena Myllylä-Tervo for accepting me into their home and becoming a part of their family. They have two small children, Solja and Sulevi. I have grown to love them all and I will miss them so much! They have become like a second family to me. I recommend that people do an exchange year in Finland or at least, visit because there is so much to see and do there. Whether it is visiting the Santa Claus Village in Lapland or eating Fazer chocolate especially Susu Pala (My favorite)! If I had to give any advice to a future exchange student it would be, don't focus on the small things. Every moment counts and make the most of the time you have.

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Ten Months Makes All the Difference in the World

By 2018-19 World Heritage Exchange Student Anna from Italy (BEC) who enjoyed her exchange year in Gilbertsville, Pennsylvania

We are delighted to share this letter from World Heritage exchange student Anna from Italy (BEC). True life transformation happens during an exchange student's 10 months in the USA. Not just for the exchange student, but for everyone she meets, especially her host family.

This is it. This is where the chapter ends. I knew this had to come, but I never realized it would be so soon. A year has passed and I'm standing here, waiting to return to a whole other world than the one I've lived in for the past ten months.

I will soon fight the tears and give hugs and goodbyes to the people who have meant the most to me lately. The people who at one point didn't know anything about me, and yet they agreed to open their home and hearts to me. The people I was randomly put in classes with and who later became my new best friends. The ones who have shown me cultures and religions and parts of



Anna and her host siblings

the world I've never seen before. The friends and family who helped me find myself.

In a few days, I will go back home and see the familiar roads and buildings and it will seem only like yesterday. I will see the people I had to fight the tears with and give hugs and goodbyes to a year ago. I will slowly go back to the life I used to live. I will soon start to realize how many things have changed; how much I have changed. A few days from now, I will leave. I will take down my pictures and pack my clothes. I will see the town one last time before I get on the flight back to my home country. No more spontaneous trips, no more sleepovers with my new best friends, no more speaking my second language every day, and no more people making fun of my accent. It is time to leave and get back to where I grew up and where I became the person I am today.

This year has changed me a lot, Continued on bottom of page 2...

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Editor's Box

Many thanks to all of you who have contributed your wonderful articles and photographs. Without you, there would not be any ASSE News! Tell us about yourself and you may possibly find yourself highlighted in the next newsletter or posted on the ASSE or World Heritage Facebook page. Pictures are encouraged to be sent by email. Let us know the fun things you are doing as a student, host family or Area Representative.

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Until next edition,
Cindy Keeney, ASSE News Editor

An Experience That Has No Comparison

By 2018-19 ASSE Mexico Exchange Student Kenya Cristina who enjoyed her exchange year in St. Martin, Quebec, Canada



Kenya Christina enjoying the snow

It is true that studying in another country is an experience that has no comparison. The first time I saw the snow, I fell in love with the beautiful landscapes of Canada. For me, it was difficult to adapt to the climate as I come from a place with hot weather, but it was not impossible. As far as being away from my family, it was not a problem. Thanks to technology I could talk to them. I was sure that when I decided to make a trip like this, my life was going to change completely.

My experience as an exchange

student was amazing. I met people from other countries that I never imagined knowing. I have many friends who invited me to be part of their team of volleyball and basketball. The teachers were super kind to me they helped me a lot to learn the languages and even invited me to participate in an activity called Forum for Young Canadians / Forum pour jeunes Canadiens where only 12 students from all over the school get to know how the Canadian government works. I toured all the facilities and I even gave a little speech

from my city in the Common House in Ottawa.

Thanks to this experience, I learned both English and French languages. With a lot of work and effort today I can say that I speak 3 languages, which is something very important to my future. Of course, I couldn't achieve this without the support of my parents, my brother, and ASSE Mexico.

Thank you ASSE French Canada, host family Dalliere/Quirion, and Area Representative Chantele Poulin for making her experience special.

Family, Friends and Youth Group

By 2018-19 ASSE Exchange Student Shu from Japan (JFIE) who enjoyed her exchange year in Virginia

My exchange year was absolutely amazing. I had so much fun and I would like to share the happy times in America! First of all, I was really blessed with my host family. I cannot explain how amazing they are nor imagine my exchange year without them. Long story short, they always took care of me, talked to me a lot, even when my English was not as good, took me to many places such as Florida, Pennsylvania and historical places because I told them I love history. They taught me about Christianity and were curious about my Japanese culture and family. Literally, they are

just amazing people.

Secondly, I am also blessed with my Area Representative. She is the greatest person I've ever met, and she eventually became my third mom. I want to say I love and appreciate her very much.



Shu on the right with her host family

Finally, I am really thankful for Church. I was able to make good friends who know about Christ, they have their opinion, and they ask and listen to my story. Going to Church every Sunday was one of my favorite parts. Everyone was kind, calm and nice. Every Sunday morning and night, we had youth group. That was really cool because everything they talked about was mostly new to me. And we played volleyball, basketball or other fun

games. It was fun and helped us get to know each other.

I also learned that there are many kinds of different people in America. That is absolutely amazing. It's hard to find differences between people who come from different places back in my home country, because our culture does not encourage us having different opinions, different looks or to just be different. I still have stories I really want to share that are about school, friends, teachers, and events, but I am going to stop here. These stories are just a little part of my exchange year experience.

Thank you to ASSE organization, for giving me such a great opportunity to experience the American high school. Of course, I am really thankful to my family and friends. Thank you for reading!

A big 'Thank You' to the Campbell family for everything you did for Shu and for offering her an amazing exchange experience. Huge thanks to ASSE Area Representative Terry Cross as well, for helping make such connections happen!

You Never Know How High You Can Fly

By 2018-19 ASSE FLEX Scholarship Student Aisha from Kyrgyzstan who enjoyed her exchange year in Nebraska

ASSE FLEX Scholarship student Aisha was living with the Shafer family in Arapahoe, Nebraska this past year.

We can control two things: hard work and the right attitude. Before coming to America I thought I was an athletic girl but now I see the true athletes and how they get to this point. I doubtlessly can say that it has turned my life upside down.

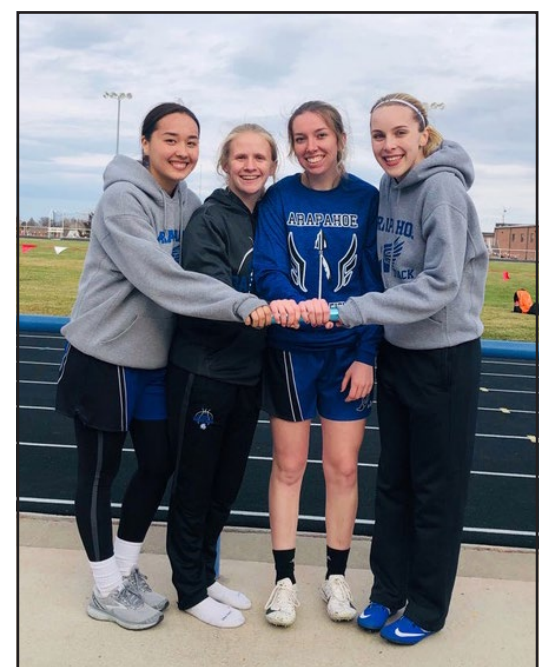
I decided to join the track team right on my birthday February 9th, when my host dad had presented beautiful, pink, NIKE shoes with spikes. He said, "Now you are ready for track." I did not know what I had to do because I had no idea what it was going to be like. I was afraid because I had never run before and I did not believe in myself. Fortunately, my host dad was a P.E teacher, and he helped me a lot to be prepared mentally. Sport is not only about physical strength, it is mostly

about what is in your mind and what is your attitude towards it.

At my first track meet I was crying, felt nervous and wanted to quit. At that moment I talked about my problem to my coordinator, host family, friends and fellow athletes. Now looking back, I am so glad that I spoke up and expressed my feelings because those people supported me. They said quitting is not a decision and that only hard work, sticking to the team, winning yourself, and doing your best is the only right attitude. My coach said that American kids have done track since they were very little and that I might not get a first place all the time, but what I can do is finish strong every race, keep working hard on practices, and do my best. It is all I have to do. Now when I was mentally prepared, I had a right attitude towards track. I started

to do whatever it took and then my coach let me run team race relays. I ran a 4 by 4 and I got first place! I ran the 4 by 8 and came in second place. Everybody was congratulating me and I did not understand what was going on because I could not believe that I did it. I got gold and silver medals. I took them and realized that everything is possible. It is just hard work and the right attitude. I would advise the future FLEX students to talk about their problems and try to solve them. Never stay alone with your own thoughts because you never know how high you can fly until you get out of your comfort zone.

Thank you to the Shafer family in Arapahoe, Nebraska for hosting Aisha this past school year, her Area Representative Marcia Foley and Area Coordinator Heather Chmielecki for giving Aisha some great advice.



Aisha (left) and her teammates

...Continued from front page

and I will have to dig deep inside to find the strength to adjust to the big changes in my life again. I will unpack my things and I will have dinner with my family. How long will it take me before I miss my host country? Missing someone isn't about how long it has been since you've seen them or the amount of time since you have talked. It's about that very moment when you are doing something and wishing they

were right here with you. Even though it's going to be hard, how lucky am I to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard? But is definitely not a "goodbye". This is an I will see you later. Distance means nothing when people mean so much. Somehow I will find a way to adjust between the two different worlds I now live in.

Huge thanks to Anna for sharing what this exchange experience has meant to her. It helps everyone get a very real

glimpse into what a big role a family can play in someone's life by simply deciding to host an exchange student. We thank the Hamu family in Gilbertsville, Pennsylvania for everything they did for Anna and World Heritage Representative Johannah Timbario for helping make this life transforming experience happen.

Anna and her host parents at her graduation celebration



ASSE Photo Gallery

ASSE is very grateful to receive so many photos from around the ASSE and World Heritage world! Enjoy the following examples of all the fun!



It is homecoming season in Texas! ASSE Spanish Scholarship (FAO Spain) student Lucia (middle left) enjoyed the dance with her host cousin and some friends. Beautiful girls and beautiful mums all around! Lucia is living with the Warner family in College Station, Texas.



These ASSE French Canadian students had their first area meeting in Hebertville, Quebec. Looks like they had a great time!

Pictured are Beatrice from Italy (BEC), Keno from Germany (ASSE Germany), Torben from Germany (ASSE Germany), Marianna from Italy (Mondo), Valeria from Italy (Mondo) and Emiliano from Mexico.



We always say it's not goodbye, but see you later, when it comes to a strong bond between our students and their host families. Same goes for the Thayer family who are reunited again with their 2017-18 ASSE Exchange Student Andrea. This time in it is in Andrea's home country of Italy.

A big thank you to Curtis and Josie Thayer from Anchorage, Alaska for welcoming Andrea with open arms into their home and family and for making his exchange dream come true! Thank you to ASSE Area Representative Crystal Nygard for helping make such connections happen!



ASSE students placed in Colorado had a great time connecting and learning to play corn hole at their student orientation!

Pictured from left are Jossua from France (PIE), Marling from Taiwan (BFE), Simon from Germany (IST), Stella from Spain (FAO Spain), Sophia and Jordyn from Australia (WEP), Suki from China (ASSE China), Isabella from Italy (Mondo), and Neal and Barry from China (ASSE China).

Thank you ASSE Area Representative Tracy Mendez in Parker Colorado for showing these students a great time.



Jasmine (middle) with her friends, "I am loving Australia so far. I went to the Sydney Harbor Bridge, went swimming in the ocean, and saw Sydney. I tried Vegemite and it was okay. School is going good so far, I am trying to play softball somewhere and I'm involved in Music. Everyone is nice at school and makes me feel included.

My host family is amazing! My host sister and I are so alike it's crazy and we get along so well. My host family makes me feel like I'm truly part of their family. I made them tater tot hot dish. It's a well-known dish from where I live and they liked the meal. I am so excited for the rest of the experience!" exclaims ASSE Outbound Exchange Student Jasmine from Minnesota enjoying her exchange year in Australia.



ASSE YES Scholarship student Mariem from Tunisia has shared one of her favorite photos from her exchange experience so far and it is of her and her little host sisters.

"Since I came to the US, my life completely changed. I started trying new things, eating differently, and seeing many new places. A lot of people are influencing my stay in so many positive ways. My host family is making so much effort to make me feel happy and like home and the new friends with whom I am starting to share memories are amazing!"

What a lovely experience! Huge thanks to the Chicko family in Grosse Ile, Michigan for everything you do to make Mariem's year an amazing one and to Area Representative Heather Rossi for helping make this happen!



ASSE Spanish Scholarship Alumni student Miguel (center) from 2015/16, met up with his host brothers Teig (left) and Liam (right) in Madrid this summer. Teig's soccer team from Wisconsin was training with the Real Madrid professional team, and they all met up for a brother's reunion!

ASSE host family McNellan/O'Kelly in Hudson, Wisconsin are making connections all over the world. That is what high school student exchange is all about.



World Heritage FLEX Scholarship student Oryna from Ukraine is loving her time in Ohio! Enjoying everything from homecoming dress shopping with her host sister exchange student Eileen from Taiwan (BFI), to delicious fair food and even cheering on her high school football team!

Thank you to the Sharp family of Zanesville, Ohio for giving the girls this amazing opportunity of being in America and to Nexus Chapman, World Heritage Representative for helping make this happen.



ASSE FLEX Scholarship student Artiom has prepared some delicious Georgian food for his host family.

"I made dinner for my host family, Imereti Khachapuri (a filled bread stuffed with melting cheese. It is justifiably considered to be one of Georgia's most famous national dishes) and I made eggplant salad. They really enjoyed it. It was a good exchange," he shared.

Huge thanks to the Seymour family in New England, North Dakota for welcoming Arti into their home and hearts and Area Representative Amanda Jo Koch-Johnson for helping make this experience happen.



World Heritage exchange student Phillip from Germany (ASSE Germany) is having an outstanding time in Ohio so far. He joined his host dad in a fishing tournament and they came in 2nd place! Check out those fish. Did we mention that Phillip had never fished before arriving to his host family's home?

Thank you to the Crabtree family for welcoming Phillip to Bellville, Ohio and World Heritage Area Representative Reida Frazee for helping to make it all happen.



ASSE Flex scholarship student Valentyn from Ukraine is the kicker/punter for the Jr. Varsity Football team for Paradise High School. He has earned a game ball for each game his team has won and the season isn't over yet. Way to go Valentyn!

Thank you to the Cardwell family in Paradise, California and Area Representative, Peg Fair for making moments like this possible.



ASSE New York Area Representative Julie Ernst introduced ASSE FLEX Scholarship student Oleksandr from Ukraine to fun on the farm. It looks like he picked a great pumpkin!

Oleksandr is enjoying his exchange year with the Broady family in Fort Plain, New York.



A part of the YES and FLEX scholarship program is volunteering. Each student completes at least 50 hours during their exchange year.

World Heritage FLEX scholarship students Elma from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Anjela from Bulgaria, Tamara from Armenia, Joly from Egypt, Zarema from Kyrgyzstan and Area Representative Kimberly Ann Kelch volunteered at the Salute to the Arts.

We thank everyone involved in helping make all these girls' dreams of exchange become reality!

*FAO – Foundation Amancio Ortega Scholarship

*FLEX – Future Leaders Exchange, U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs sponsored Exchange Student

*CBYX – Congress Bundestag Youth Exchange, U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs sponsored Exchange Student

*YES – Kennedy Lugar Youth Exchange and Study, U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs sponsored Exchange Student

My Advice for Future Students

By 2018-19 ASSE Outbound Exchange Student
Kama from Kiowa, Colorado who enjoyed
her exchange year in Spain

I decided about two years ago that I was going to go to Spain my junior year of high school. Although it was scary and I had doubts I am so grateful I had the opportunity to come to Spain. I wouldn't trade it for anything. I remember first leaving the United States and thinking 10 months, that's forever! Now looking back, I say to myself, that went fast. Though my exchange was amazing, I did have a rough patch when I had to change host families. This was a hard part in my exchange but honestly it was for the better and I look at it as two exchanges.

The first part of my exchange with my first family was absolutely amazing. I lived in a small town called Malpartida de Cáceres. I traveled across Europe and saw so many incredible places with this family. The family that I was with spoke four languages so by being around these languages and going to the countries I learned not only Spanish but I began to learn Portuguese and French unexpectedly. During this time, I found the most incredible friends an American could ever ask for. They are absolutely amazing and would always help me if I messed up on a word or didn't quite understand something. They were also the ones by my side while I was switching families. Although it was hard to change it was nice to have a good support around me when I would go to a school.

The second part of my exchange I was with another incredible family in the heart of Cáceres. This family only spoke Spanish so it allowed me to get extremely good at Spanish (which is the main reason I came). I wasn't traveling as much so it made me even more close with my friends at school than I was originally. Both families had their pros but each family was perfect in their own way.

I met some of the most welcoming and kind people in Spain and I loved each and every one of them. Although the road was hard at first, trying to navigate the way around a language and communicating with people who didn't speak your language, I got to a point where I could joke and have a good conversation with people. It made all the hard work worth it. I learned a new way of thinking just by the way words in Spanish were being spoken. It brought a whole new way of looking at the world to my sight. At the end of the day, you realize that people are the same, and we all have the same problems just with a different language. I was so sad that I had to say goodbye to all the people I loved so dearly but I know it isn't goodbye forever.

My advice for future exchange students:

1. Bloom where you are planted. This is a quote I revived from a student in the past and it really stuck with me. No matter where you are placed and what problems you may encounter, just keep being you and make the most out of every day because it does go fast.
2. You have to learn the language before you are perfect at it. Instead of jumping right in at school, ask your teachers if you are allowed to study the language during class the first couple weeks. I did this and it is honestly the best thing that I could have done. I would go to class every day and bring a notebook and a Spanish book and study. It was better for me the first four weeks to study Spanish while at school than to waste my time looking at what the teachers were writing on the board and have no idea what was going on. After about four weeks I could understand pretty much everything that was going on and could ask questions.
3. Be patient. You aren't going to be perfect at the language instantly. You are actually going to be HORRIBLE (if you haven't studied it for many years). Just keep going and try to speak to anyone and everyone about anything and everything.
4. Have fun! You have a year to have the most fun that you have ever had and to experience something that only a handful of teens will ever get to experience so make the most of it."



Kama and her host parents at a sporting event

Jumping into His Exchange Year

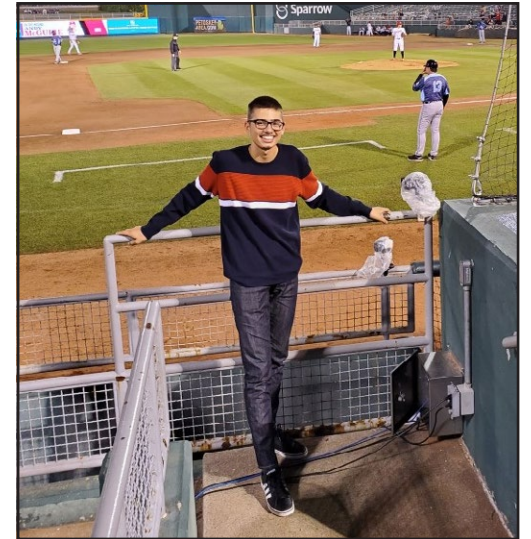
By 2019-20 ASSE Area Representative Stephanie Hein and
ASSE Area Coordinator Teresa Weyer

Jose, ASSE Spanish Scholarship exchange student (FAO Spain) has started his exchange year with much enthusiasm and community pride. He lives with the Yuhasz family in Dewitt, Michigan. He adores his little host sister and spends many hours playing with her and attempting to calm her when she is upset. He lends a helping hand at home with anything he is asked to do and is often asking what he can do to help his host family. He fits in perfectly with his host family and he has really made a difference in his community and family life. He is eager to help out at home with chores and help his host siblings. His host mom had surgery on her ankle and Jose is first out the door and grabbing the groceries as soon as she pulls up into the drive.

Jose has assisted his host brother Jordan, who has high-functioning autism, with curbing inappropriate behavior and boosting good behavior. He also aids curbing Jordan's ticks, which is improving Jordan's self-esteem. This in turn makes Jordan want to be more social at home, school, and community. Jose has been able to distract Jordan in the awkward moments at school and Jordan is finally making friends at his school. Jose is even waiting to volunteer at the local Humane Society until after Jordan turns 16 in March, so they can do it together.

At school, Jose has been elevated from his 11th grade seminar into 12th grade and performs well above his grade level. He is even attending an AP class. He has volunteered to tutor students during seminar with their Spanish speaking and

class homework. He has two country presentations already scheduled at the high school and another at an elementary school to further spread knowledge of Spain and their culture. He is involved in the club varsity swim team and has made friends quickly, even before he arrived here.



Jose enjoying a baseball game

In the exchange community, he is participating in a group chat with several students in other states. He is collaborating to mentor the other students to communicate problems with their host families and to their Area Representatives instead of giving up and returning home. He is trying to remind them of the reason they wanted to come to America and study, and he is encouraging them to continue trying.

As you can see, Jose is not sitting idle at home. He has jumped into his exchange year with much enthusiasm.

Making New Friends

By 2019-20 ASSE YES Scholarship Student Debbie from Ghana
enjoying her exchange year in Wake Forest, North Carolina

ASSE YES Scholarship student Debbie from Ghana has spent some time volunteering with horses recently and she looks like a natural!

Debbie says, "Volunteering with Planet Peace has been such an amazing experience. I never thought I would enjoy spending time with horses. I heard of this wonderful opportunity from my exchange student friend. She told me about the volunteer work around horses and even getting the opportunity to learn how to ride. I was really excited since I've always dreamt of working with horses and riding a horse. Being at the farm, I got to learn how

to make horse food, brush horses, clean the stables and even learn how to ride. I have been there several times and it's been amazing and am learning so much. I felt scared the first time I met the horses, since it was my first time being with a horse. I tried going near them and to my surprise they were the best. I plan on doing most of my volunteering hours with Planet Peace since I enjoy being with the horses." Planet Peace is a non-profit dedicated to helping youth become active peacemakers

A big Thank You to the Selna family and ASSE Area Representative Coralee Rogers for helping Debbie realize her dream.



Debbie and one of her new friends