

She Is One of a Kind

by ASSE Area Representative Kristy Weller

My daughter and I have gotten extremely close to my ASSE FLEX Exchange Student Fidan from Azerbaijan this year due to us taking her on several field trips and many overnight visits to our home. When we discussed going to Austin, Fidan wanted to know if we could do it when Meagan (my daughter) had Special Olympics, so she could go hang out with them and cheer them on by volunteering with Special Olympics of Texas. Of course, my heart was warmed by this gesture and I said YES! I have hosted 10 students myself and none of them were this excited to ever go to Austin because normally it's boring for them as they don't always want to volunteer, but they want to see the town.

As we ventured out and hit the road to Austin, on the way, Fidan and Meagan were bonding and talking about what to expect and what Fidan was going to be doing while volunteering. Meagan wanted to make sure she was done volunteering in time to cheer her on in her event. When we made it to Austin we drove around the UT Austin Campus and talked about college life in Austin. We drove to the Capitol and spent a half day touring the welcome center to the Capitol which showed the History of Texas, how the Capitol was built and even an area for them to dress the part of how people lived in the "old days". We then toured the Capitol and saw both Chambers of the House and Senate and listened to a government official speaking to a group of school kids. After that, it was

off to the hotel and time to relax. Fidan never did relax though, she was too busy high-fiving and talking to the athletes that had come into the hotel from



Megan and Fidan

other teams that had competed that day in Special Olympics State Bowling Competition. The athletes loved her! She was cheering and clapping and telling them she was proud of them. Who does that these days?

Over the course of the next two days, Fidan volunteered with Special Olympics as a Lane Volunteer. This means that she helps make sure that the kids bowl when it is their turn and cheer them on and even tell them they are doing great even when the athletes are not doing well. She volunteered both days except for Saturday where she took

a break for a bit to watch Meagan bowl and cheer her on. Fidan also went above and beyond making sure that every athlete on Meagan's Special Olympics team knew she was there to support them no matter what time they bowled or what lane they were on by going over giving them a high-five and telling them "you got this". Most coaches don't do that but she did! Again, anytime we went anywhere, and she ran into an athlete that had their medal or ribbons on she always walked up and congratulated them. That speaks volumes to me! If that wasn't enough, you could find her in the hotel lobby with a group of special needs athletes talking to them about her country and how she wanted to get involved in Special Olympics now in her country.

Fast forward to the next week. I picked up Fidan to prepare for "Night to Shine" a special needs prom hosted by Tim Tebow. We had to make crowns, corsages, boutonnieres and help decorate the church and make the goodie bags for 107 guests. One of the best surprises was that we were called to attend a balloon launch to remember one of Meagan's dear friends that passed away and Tim Tebow himself showed up! Fidan got to meet him and talk for a brief second to him and then to his crew before he left. Later that evening, she got dressed and put on her dancing shoes as she was a volunteer buddy for Meagan and three of her friends at the dance. You might not think this is a big deal but it is. You have to make sure your buddy eats, dances, take lots of photos of them, and make sure they are having a blast because their parents are not allowed in the room.

The smile on Fidan's face, knowing *Continued on last page...*

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One of The Best Decisions

By ASSE Mexico Exchange Student Alix who enjoyed her exchange year in Japan

ASSE Mexico Exchange Student, Alix shared her experience of life in Japan. She told us the following, "The 10 months I was in Japan were the best months of my whole life. At first, I was a little scared thinking what if I couldn't make friends or get along with my family, but as time went by I saw there was nothing to worry about. Everyone was very kind to me and I made many friends.

I am very happy to be able to learn about the Japanese culture and their traditions. It is a wonderful country that made me fall in love! It was probably one of the best decisions I made. I would definitely repeat it again without hesitation."



Alix and her classmates

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.

Please send your best photograph and article to:
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Until next edition,
Cindy Keeney, ASSE News Editor

Sharing A Piece of My Experience

By ASSE Exchange Student Manon from France enjoying her exchange year in Nampa, Idaho

ASSE Exchange student Manon from France (PIE) is attending Liberty Charter School in Nampa, Idaho this year. She describes her exchange experience and



Manon (top row, second girl from the left) with her friends

shares her thoughts on expectations vs. reality. She first quoted a well-known saying, "I'd like to say that an exchange year is not a year in a life but a life in a year". She then continued, "I wanted to go on an exchange program to live the "American experience", to be a senior in a big high school, go support my football team and do all the fun stuff that we all see in the movies. When my association (PIE France) told me that I was going to be in a small charter school and not in a classic public school, I was a bit disappointed because I knew that it was going to be very different from what I was expecting.

After over 5 months in Idaho (so already half of my exchange year), I'm now realizing how helpful and enriching this experience is for me. I had to adapt myself to a whole new culture, way of living and thinking, make new friends, not to be afraid to

talk to new and different people every day, say "YES" to opportunities and challenges, be the most open-minded human ever, stop comparing myself to other people and accepting the fact that this was going to be both the hardest and the absolute best time of my life.

This is me with my friends skiing for the high school ski team. I live on the coast in France and if someone would have told me last year that I was going to ski on a weekly basis in the U.S., I would have laughed so hard, but here I am. Believe me, it's so much fun and I already know that I'm going to miss it a lot."

We are proud of seeing how much Manon has grown during the last 5 months and how committed she is to enjoying and making the most out of her exchange year. Thank you, Manon, for your positive attitude while on the exchange program, for

being a great ambassador to your home country and for sharing your experience with the community. Special thanks to the Earnest family for welcoming Manon into their home and hearts, to Liberty Charter School for accepting and offering her unique opportunities and a great academic environment, and to ASSE Area Representative Chelsea Maroe for helping make this experience happen for everyone involved.



Manon enjoying Idaho

This Is Where Studying Abroad Can Lead You to One Day!



Natalie and her ASSE Area representative Coralee Rogers

ASSE Area Representative Coralee Rogers, her daughter, and her FLEX Exchange Student Ula from Poland visited the University of North Carolina Wilmington recently. They received a personal tour from ASSE alumni Natalie, who is about to graduate this May with a double major in Marine Biology and French. Natalie was an outbound scholarship recipient in 2012-2013 to France.

What's next for Natalie? She accepted an invitation for a fully funded International Master's Degree in aquaculture, the environment, and society! With this program starting in September, she will travel every 6 months between Scotland, Greece, and France to learn about the international aquaculture industry. We would like to thank Coralee, for sharing the photo and story with us and for helping to start this journey for Natalie!

Saying YES to New Challenges

By ASSE Exchange Student Lea from France (PIE) enjoying her exchange year in Jourdanton, Texas.

Saying yes to new challenges is what being an exchange student means. ASSE (PIE France) Exchange Student Lea's favorite sport has always been tennis. However, since her high school in Jourdanton, Texas allowed her to try different sports, she gave basketball a shot. She is now loving it! Lea says, "My exchange experience is wonderful. My family is just amazing and my school is incredible." We thank ASSE Representative Audra Locke for making this opportunity happen for Lea and the Higginbotham host family for welcoming her into their home, for supporting her, and making her feel like a member of their family.



A Charming Young Lady from Taiwan

By World Heritage host mom Heidi Redepenning



Meet this wonderful and charming young lady from Taiwan. Her name is Ellie and she is full of many talents. Ellie is a success story on so many levels. She believes that trying your hardest is important.

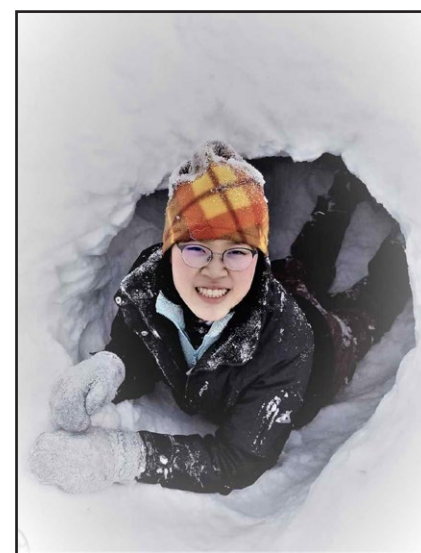
Ellie was a very shy young lady when she came to America to live with her host family in Atwater, Minnesota. She knew that in order to succeed she had to make the best of every situation, and she did. Ellie has been so much fun to have around. Her personality touches so many hearts around her. She has won student of the month in her current high school and has been nominated many times although you can only be the student of the month once in her school. Ellie has been chosen to represent her school in the Minnesota Arts contest. The school chose limited students

to participate in the contest.

Ellie participates in a local orchestra called the Willmar Area Symphonic Orchestra. In the orchestra, she plays the violin. In order to participate in the orchestra, you have to be very good at playing an instrument. The orchestra had a Young Artist Competition. Ellie had to learn "Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1" and compete among everyone else. Ellie won the Young Artist Competition. She will have a solo and will be playing, "Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1" at the next concert.

Ellie has enjoyed her time in America and feels she has gained a family. Ellie's positive attitude of ambition has created many paths for her future. Ellie is an outstanding student in school and wonderful at home. Thank you to the Marquardt-Redepenning family in

Atwater, Minnesota for hosting Ellie.



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!



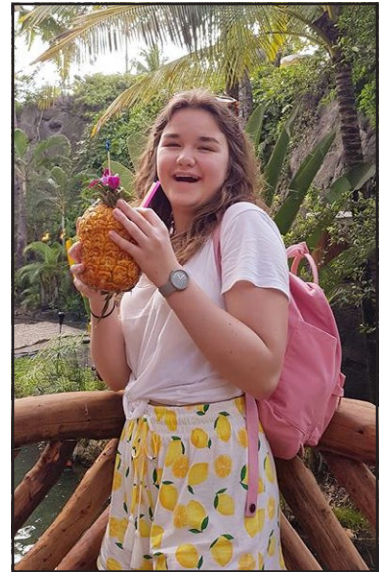
Congratulations to ASSE Spanish Scholarship Student Pablo (FAO Spain) who took home the gold in varsity boys singles for McMullen High School at the Jourdanton Tennis Tournament. Way to go Pablo! He is enjoying his exchange year with the Reed family in Pleasanton, Texas.



World Heritage Spanish Scholarship Exchange Student Claudia (FAO Spain) won gold for Level 8 at the royal Meet for Gymnastics in Vermont. She has been attending gymnastics, mentoring and inspiring other gymnasts at the Sunrise Gymnastics Club. Here she is pictured with her host sister Eva on the royal podium. We thank the Rossmasser/Moore family in Middlesex, Vermont for welcoming Claudia into their lives and hearts.



World Heritage Exchange Student Haruka from Japan (JFIE) had a wonderful time participating in the high school musical. She was part of the costume crew for their production of Shrek which everyone seemed to enjoy. It looks like Haruka did a great job and had a blast doing it! Thank you to the Kunkler family in Logan, Ohio for hosting Haruka, her representative Cathye Flory and Logan High School for welcoming her for the school year!



ASSE FLEX scholarship student Mija from Lithuania enjoyed her Adventures America field trip to Hawaii. She says, "I loved the Hawaiian culture, trying new food and meeting new people. It was truly an unforgettable trip." Mija is hosted by the Poli family in Alpena, Michigan.



ASSE Area Representative Marlena discovered that OSU Hockey games are more fun with these ASSE Exchange Students. Pictured are students: Mario from Spain (FAO Spain) hosted by the Ford family, host mom and Area Representative Marlena Barge with her exchange student Tayla from Australia (WEP), Miu from Japan (JFIE) hosted by the Owings family, and Naomi from Germany hosted by the Lees family.



ASSE Exchange Student Oscar from France (Calvin-Thomas) was invited to share all about his country and culture with a group of Scouts and help them to earn their International Badge. Oscar is wearing his scout uniform from back home. Thank you to his host family Weyer in Caledonia, Michigan for sharing this with us!



So proud of these two special people! Prom prince Victor (FAO Spain) and prom princess Aizere (FLEX Kazakhstan) are two of our ASSE Scholarship Students attending Terry High School. Victor is hosted by the Kinsey family in Terry, Montana and Aizere is hosted by Kinn/Frost family in Fallon, Montana.



We love to see strong mother-daughter relationships being built. ASSE FLEX scholarship student Olha from Ukraine says, "I have an amazing relationship with my host mom. She is the person who always helps me out and I really trust her. I can talk to her about different things, and I know she will listen to me, she will understand and support me. Kay, Marty (my host dad) and I traveled together to many different places, which I am also very thankful for. I've been blessed to have Kay as my host mother and I'm incredibly happy to be a part of this family because they are just awesome people, who made my life here joyful and gave a chance to deeply explore the culture of this country and live a life of a real American teenager."

Huge thanks to the Losey family in Haines City, Florida for welcoming Olha with open arms and hearts into their lives and for everything they do for her! Thank you, ASSE Area Representative Robin Shields Beal for helping make this happen for both the host family and the student.



ASSE Spanish scholarship winner Lucia (FAO Spain) is having an amazing time in the USA. One particular thing she loves here is being a part of the cheerleading team. She says this about cheerleading, "it was one of the best decisions in my life, it has changed my whole experience and has helped me so much to learn about discipline and school spirit. It makes me so happy and I have had great moments that I will always remember."

We thank the Blisset family in Virden, Illinois for welcoming Lucia to their home with open arms and North Mac High School for offering a great and opportunity-filled environment to our students!



ASSE Outbound Exchange Student Kendall from California is enjoying her exchange year in Spain. Here she is dressed in the Valencian regional costume to celebrate the upcoming event Las Fallas which is one of the most spectacular festivals in Spain. She is pictured here at the balcony of the Town Hall in Valencia, Spain.

For many, the main focus of Las Fallas is the creation and destruction of ninots, which are huge statues made of paper, cardboard, wood, or plaster. Many ninots are several stories tall, and cranes are needed to move them into their final locations in Valencia's parks, plazas, and intersections. Las Fallas festival goers enjoy an extensive roster of bullfights, music, parades, paella contests, flower offerings, and beauty pageants around the city.



CBYX Outbound Scholarship Student Mercedes from South Dakota is sharing her experience as an exchange student in Germany!

"I have been in Germany now for a few months and am having an absolutely splendid time! I joined the local fencing club in my town and have met many new people through it and am getting the opportunity to try a sport I would have otherwise never been able to do back in the states. By being an exchange student I have been able to participate in many different activities and traditions (and try a lot of different cakes!) I am having a wonderful time and can't wait to see what the next few months will bring."

*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

Our 2019-2020 Outbound Scholarship Winners!

We are very excited to announce the ASSE and World Heritage Outbound Scholarship Winners for the 2019-2020 Program Year!

A big thank you to everyone who helped our scholarship applicants put together and submit their application. We truly have amazing students applying to our programs.

- ASSE/WH Outbound Students get to choose their destination country – other programs tell the students where they can go!
- The ASSE/WH Outbound Program does not require foreign language proficiency – but our kids come home dreaming in their new language!
- The ASSE/WH Outbound Program has the lowest fees that are all-inclusive.

ASSE and World Heritage offer two types of scholarships...

The Walter Danielson Scholarship – named for the founding father of ASSE – pays for the complete program. It covers 100% of the program fee, domestic flight costs to and from the departure gateway, spending money for incidentals while on the program, comprehensive insurance, and one field trip in the host country. One scholarship is awarded each year throughout North America.

We offer multiple 90% Global Adventure Scholarships each year. Students only pay 10% of the program fee, domestic travel to and from the international gateway, and their monthly pocket money.

How do we choose the lucky winners? These scholarships are intended to provide program opportunity for students who otherwise would not be able to realize their dream for lack of financial resources. All of the applicants for these scholarships are amazing, well-qualified students who have also won because of their overall merit. Congratulations students!

Our Walter Danielson Scholarship Winner for 2019-20 is...



Kamaron from Dunkirk, NY

Kamaron is passionate about her faith, traveling, and poetry. She is looking forward to becoming an ambassador for her country and also to share what she will have learned during her high school year abroad with others upon her return. She is very active in her community through volunteering and fundraisings. Kamaron is also a talented poet and songwriter. At 16 years old, she has already self-published her first book of poems. Kamaron will be spending her exchange year in Italy!

Our Global Adventure Scholarship Winners for 2019-20 are...



Henry from Rochester, MN

Henry's passions in life are computers and music. He has been playing the piano for five years and the viola for two. This summer he will be getting the first taste of Europe while on a trip with the Honors Choirs of Southeast Minnesota. Outside of school and music, Henry also volunteers at his local church and participates in other volunteering in his community. He looks forward to fully immersing himself in a new culture and

live like a local in another country. Henry will be spending his exchange year in Sweden!



Enrique from Chula Vista, CA

Enrique comes from a very large family split between two countries. Having a multicultural background and already bilingual Spanish-English, it is no surprise that Enrique is eager to see more of the world. He is a very energetic person who loves to be outdoors and around people. A talented surfer, Enrique is proud to have been selected to represent Baja California in three national surfing competitions in Mexico.

He looks forward to following his brother's footsteps in becoming a high school exchange student. Enrique will be spending his exchange year in France!



Mikala from Dallas, WI

Having grown up in a small town, Mikala loves to meet new people! It all started when she was crowned Little Miss of her hometown and traveled to neighboring communities for parades, and making many new friends along the way. As she grew older, her thirst for new experiences grew with her and she is now ready to see life outside of the USA. Mikala has had the chance to meet many foreign exchange students and seeing

how much they have enjoyed their experience has motivated her to make the jump herself. Mikala will be spending her exchange year in France!



Tyler from LaGrange, KY

Like most teens, Tyler loves music. But unlike most teens, Tyler also enjoys composing music himself. On top of maintaining an A+ average in all his classes – including multiple AP classes – Tyler plays in his school marching band and takes music classes. In preparation for his exchange year, Tyler has also been diligently teaching himself Japanese in between his classes. Tyler is looking forward to taking his learning to the

next level during his exchange year, and to give back to his #1 supporter, his mom, by making sure he takes on all the opportunities that come his way. Tyler plans on spending his exchange year in Japan!

A Set of Goals

By ASSE FLEX Scholarship Student Sofiya (Ukraine) enjoying her exchange year in Big Stone City, South Dakota

One of FLEX Ukrainian Student Sofiya's main set of goals while on her exchange program was to immerse herself into the culture by participating in as many extracurricular activities as possible. She is sharing with us what she has chosen, what she learned, and how



she is enjoying the program so far.

"What is Business Professional of America for me? It is not only the opportunity to meet great people and have an amazing time, but to develop myself. When I heard about BPA, I understood it was the right place for me. I plan to have a career in business, so Business Professional of America sounded like the right community to join. I have learned so much about interviews, parliamentarians' procedures, my personal strengths and weaknesses and about America while preparing for regional competition."

In January, Sofiya won 1st place in "Interview Skills" in the Minnesota Region 8 Secondary Business Professionals of America competition and recently all her hard work paid off. She says, "Last week I competed at the Business Professionals of America (BPA) Minnesota State Leadership Conference. I got Statesman Torch Awards Status. Moreover, I qualified for State in two other contests. My events

were Parliamentary Procedure Team and my individual event - Interview Skills, which is very competitive. My goal was, of course, first place, but still I didn't know what to expect. I just followed this statement, 'Set a goal and work hard. Then, just compete and do your best, not thinking about the result.' And... I GOT FIRST PLACE AT STATE! FIRST! Furthermore, I qualified for the National Competition and will represent Minnesota there!"

Sofiya is convinced that BPA turned out to be the perfect context for her to better understand America, its culture, government and structure and that it opens opportunities for everyone involved. We are glad to see our students talking so passionately about their interests and we encourage them to explore and find the perfect place to help them grow in the directions they dream of.

Congratulations to Sofiya for having already found the right



organization to help her immerse into the American culture and make the first steps towards the career of her dreams.

Special thanks to the Cloos family in Big Stone City, South Dakota for welcoming Sofiya to the USA and into their home with open arms and to ASSE Area Representative Tara VanderWal for her continuous guidance and support.

This is Mei

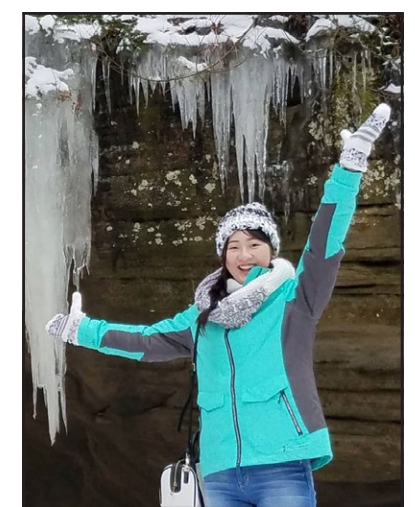
By ASSE host mom Regina Hayes

Host mom Regina says this about Mei, "She is my awesome exchange student from Japan! (JFIE) My husband and I have hosted for over 20 years. Some kids you never forget and Mei is one of those kids. She is so giving to all around her, she tries to put them at ease when she is uncomfortable. She is just amazing. She is always up to trying something new. She has had so many first since coming to us. Riding a roller coaster, going on a zip line, running from zombies in a locked room, eating things she had never even heard of before, or riding a horse. She is up to trying new things at least once.

It would be so scary to fly halfway around the world and live with strangers and do what they do yet Mei did this with a smile on her face and I'm sure

fear in her heart. It takes such bravery from all these wonderful kids and we have been very blessed to have her with us this year. I know we will see each other again after she leaves us to go back home. I don't know when but I know we will."

Thank you to the Hayes family in Reynoldsburg, Ohio for hosting Mei!



...Continued from front page

that maybe I have made a difference in her life was priceless. The conversation after we left saying "I want to do this for special needs in my country when I get home", confirms she is a one of a kind and will do great things in her life. I am beyond thankful to have her in my life and I know that once she leaves we will stay in contact as she has stated several times that Meagan is a "sister" to her.

Thank you to the Baker family in Dallas, Texas for hosting Fidan and sharing her with us.