Celebrating Diversity
By Kathy Cross, ASSE Area Representative in Glendive, Montana, USA

For a year, I and a friend had been planning an International Community Dinner to recognize and celebrate cultures of the world. It was held October 1, 2015 in Glendive, Montana and the turnout was staggering!

Over 150 people attended including 17 exchange students placed in area communities from 14 different countries! Countries represented included Germany, Spain, Moldova, Italy, Thailand, France, Brazil, Armenia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Taiwan, Georgia, Norway, and Tajikistan. Students made dishes from their countries, and over 20 additional dishes were brought from the community highlighting their culture and family origins! Some of the tasty student dishes included tortilla de patata, arroz con leche and gazpacho saying, “I really liked the different cultures and everyone was interested and willing to try new things!”

Andriana Malko, ASSE Exchange Student (FLEX Ukraine) said, “I really loved the idea of the dinner. I was so happy to see people who wanted to know more about us and our countries! It was a great opportunity to share our experience with others and to let them know about our culture. It was really successful and people were so excited and asked for more recipes!”

The students also gave short presentations about their countries and many dressed in their national dress. The students mingled spending the evening visiting with many, many people!

All who were privileged to attend the gathering said it was a very fun, entertaining, and educational experience!

[Editor’s Note: New families have asked Kathy for information about hosting for the future and Kathy is planning for a Spring Tea giving students and the community a second opportunity to learn from each other! Kuddos to Kathy for such a creative way to bring the world’s diversity to Eastern Montana and Western North Dakota, USA.]

Kathy Cross, ASSE Area Representative and Leyli (Lily) Tadevosyan, ASSE Exchange Student (FLEX Armenia) celebrate diversity!

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,
Mary Loving ASSE News Editor

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I am Giulia Rossi and I am an ASSE Italian Exchange Student. I am living in Hurst, Texas, USA with the Weller family. Before I arrived, my host family and I discussed their special needs daughter, Meagan who has an IQ of 70. I have never been disturbed by this fact but of course I did not know what to expect. Since I have arrived in Texas, I have had the opportunity to take part in volunteer programs, watch Rangers games and assist in all the practices Meagan is doing. It is amazing to see how much energy is spent to involve people with special needs in different and several things, to make them feel equal and useful in this world.

I am building a strong relationship with Meagan and I feel blessed to take part in her life. She is giving me the opportunity to find out how awesome it is when people work hard just to make special needs kids happy and feel successful. I had fun raising money for her Special Olympics team and felt part of a very big family. We worked hard for the same goal and we reached that goal together.

My exchange experience would never be the same without Meagan, her life is part of mine and I thank her for all the things I am learning from her.

Feeling So Lucky!

By Giulia Rossi, ASSE Exchange Student (Italy) spending her exchange year in Hurst, Texas, USA
I am a teacher, and have been teaching for over 30 years. Much of that time I have taught teenagers. I have known and cared about so many young people over the years. Many of these students have overcome difficult situations and learned to cope and even thrive in our world.

Rosalinda Manata is a young woman from France whom I have been blessed to get to know and love. She had barely turned thirteen when she set her sights on coming to the United States as an exchange student with ASSE. At this same time she began taking the subway from her school in Paris each day to her home. She loves to sing and run and she is very good at both of these activities. When she plays the piano, people stop to listen. She loves watching movies with me and going to new, beautiful places, commenting on how pretty it is in these Minnesota locations. Rosalinda is already so accomplished and independent and she is only fifteen. She is also blind. She lost her eyesight before she became a toddler.

Rosalinda is amazing, not because she is blind, but because of her adventurous, fun loving spirit that is infectious to all who are lucky enough to get to know her. She continually demonstrates an insight that goes way beyond her years. Rosalinda pushes herself to learn and know so many things. Her English is excellent and it is her third language! She uses her electronic devices with ease and she almost begged me to show her how to clean the floor in her bedroom because she had never done that before. Now that is unusual behavior for a teenager!

I am so grateful that I get to be her American mother, to help guide her and to assist her in becoming the wonderful woman she is already destined to be. She is now a member of my family adding joy and a new perspective to me and to the lives of my family.

Thank you to all who helped make this experience happen for Rosalinda and myself. Our lives are forever changed as we live and learn together this school year.

Living the Dream
By Enver Kejeradze, ASSE FLEX Exchange Student (Georgia)
spending his exchange year in Ellsworth, Wisconsin, USA

Seven years ago, my parents Lynne and Yves Aubin did something which forever changed my life for the better. My parents told me that I was getting a sister, though my sister would be 17 years old, and come from another country; Italy to be precise. They told me that taking in a foreign exchange student would only be temporary, but we would try it out since I would be precise. They told me that taking in a foreign exchange student and they wished me to be an only child, and we would try it out since I

Before I came to the USA, I investigated what other exchange students did during their exchange year and always liked how they played music at the football games. So when I arrived, I joined Ellsworth High School concert band. Because I have played piano for 9 years, they quickly involved me in the group of percussionists.

First, I tried Bass Drum. That was great experience, because I had never even touched drums before. I learned how to read sheet music for drum. Then I tried the Marimba, which is closer to piano. We played at 4 volleyball and football matches. We played almost 10 compositions at every match and we sounded better and better each try.

I am in both concert band and jazz band. In concert band I play bass drums and marimba. In jazz band I play piano (keyboard): I enjoy it so much.

Besides music, I am a member of the stage crew moving the props between acts for the school drama club performing the musical "Grease" in November.

I have been volunteering at the Pierce County History Association, where I helped as a guide for a very old cabin and sorted old letters. I also volunteered for "Clean and Sweep" event, which was organized by Pierce County Recycling Center and helped to hand out pamphlets, collected boxes of medications from cars and gave it to other volunteers to sort.

I like the school spirit here and I like how people cheer the band at football and volleyball games. So far being in the band is the best experience I’ve ever had.

I have learned and experienced a ton already! The saying "the best way to learn a language is by fully immersing yourself" is 100% true.

I am living in a small town in the south east, not far from the border of Italy. I can even see Mont Blanc from my window on a clear day! One thing that is great about France is that the food never disappoints.

Some of the highlights of my exchange experience so far are going to visit different castles, hiking the Chartreuse mountain range, and visiting Grenoble. My favorite part about visiting all of these different places is thinking about how much history has been made there. It’s so crazy that I have stood in the same place as many historical figures, such as Napoleon or Rousseau once stood!

I am so glad I decided to take this opportunity and I am already thinking about my next trip to France! :)
On August 31, 2014 (Ked) Metakarn Raksanawes entered our lives. My wife and I knew as soon as we met Ked she wasn’t just an exchange student, we instead just met our new daughter. Throughout Ked’s stay with us there were many wonderful times and a lot of love shared, she accepted us as her 2nd family and we always introduced her as our daughter. To be honest there were times our cultures clashed but we always worked it out. My wife and I learned as much from Ked as she did from us. At the end of Ked’s stay my wife and I were invited to Thailand by Ked’s parents. We jumped at the offer. My wife and I had only flown once before, but we had never been out of the country. June 13, 2015 we arrived in Bangkok, Thailand.

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We still e-mail and ‘skype’. Ked we miss and love you so much. Thank you ASSE. Without you we wouldn’t have a daughter from Thailand, and this year a daughter from China, whom we love as well.

Above all, the language which was something clicked and his language took off. By the end of the year, he sat for the French Bacalaureate.

Besides becoming fluent in French, an interest in global affairs and foreign language was ignited. John went on to receive a National Security Language Initiative for Youth Scholarship (NSLY-I) to study Hindi in India for the summer of 2013, the summer after he graduated from high school.

His sophomore year at McDaniel College in Maryland, he was awarded a Critical Language Scholarship to study in Malang, Indonesia summer of 2015. He lived with a local family, engaged in intensive language study for five hours each weekday and studied Gamalan two afternoons a week. He then enrolled at the University of Indonesia outside Jakarta as an independent student in their BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia for non-native speakers) Program to continue his language study for the 2015/2016 academic year.

As a parent, we’re extremely proud of all he has accomplished and have no doubt that that first step to France through ASSE has led in all his other adventures and accomplishments.

Best,
Laura Bussey