Once Upon a Time in Chandler, Arizona
By World Heritage Host Mom Rajani Rastogi Slevira host family

This is the story of a family welcoming two exchange daughters in their life. The Rastogi family is welcoming all our readers ‘to enter’ their international home and find out more about their experience hosting two World Heritage exchange students - FLEX scholarship winners Andreea from Moldova and Jana from Serbia.

Host mother Rajani Rastogi shares with all future host parents, their student selection process and what made them welcome these two girls, out of all the available students at that time. ‘We never imagined that we would be hosting a foreign exchange student, but when we were traveling to Spain last year and visited a local school, we decided we wanted to create an opportunity for an international student and change their world! In April of last year, we selected Jana, our daughter from Serbia and then decided to host another student, Andreea from Moldova. Little did we know that these girls would change our lives. We initially read their stories on handwritten letters and each one of their stories melted our hearts. Jana is from a small town in Serbia and her letter stated, ‘My town is too small for my dreams.’ Andreea talked about her ‘dreams of becoming a scientist and her love for her younger sisters.’ Both girl’s stories really touched us and we knew they were the girls we wanted to host. From the first day till today, our bond has become stronger and we do not think of these girls as FLEX exchange students, but as our daughters. They are truly a gift and we are so fortunate to have this lifelong connection with them.

We are all so fortunate to be immersed in learning about each other’s culture along with teaching our exchange daughters about the American culture. The girls are also making progress with speaking the English language, their English writing skills and we are learning so much from them about Serbia and Moldova. We have made some of the local cookies and breakfast dishes from their countries and they are learning to make some Indian dishes Continued on bottom of page 2...

I Am Grateful
By ASSE FLEX scholarship student Lejla from Montenegro who enjoyed her exchange year in Texarkana, Texas.

“It’s always hard to accept that life sometimes doesn’t go as planned. That’s what’s happening to me right now,” says FLEX scholarship student Lejla from Montenegro. “Due to situation with COVID-19 my exchange year is ending earlier than expected, but I believe a valid reason hides behind everything that happens. The last eight months were full of emotions, important lessons and amazing people. I am very grateful for everyone who made my time in the U.S. so special. I think everybody knows how much I enjoyed my stay in Texas. Being away for eight months and living in a completely different world has taught me a lot of things. I have grown and my perspective has changed in ways I never would have imagined. It was the best time of my life so far and I will always remember how choosing to go out and discover new things was life-changing and will be something I will always cherish. Now I don’t have just one, but two amazing families who I know will always be there by my side. You can just imagine how hard is leaving home to go back home, but Texas will always have a special place in my heart and I will definitely be back soon. Thank you everyone once again. Stay safe and I love and will miss y’all so much!”

Thank you to the Williams family in Texarkana Texas for hosting these two exchange daughters and for changing their lives forever.

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:
ASSE News, 615 South 5th Avenue, Kelso, WA 98626 USA
Tel: 360-429-0053 • E-mail: cindy@asse.com

Until next edition,
Cindy Keeney, ASSE News Editor

ASSE News is published three times a year. It is provided free of charge to ASSE participating host families, representatives and other friends of ASSE. Any copyright material is published with written permission of the published and is so indicated. Any other material may be used for publication without permission of ASSE.
A Perfect Exchange Year

By World Heritage FLEX Scholarship Student Ivan from Ukraine
who enjoyed his exchange year in Warrenton, Missouri.

A Perfect Exchange Year

My name is Ivan, and I’m an exchange student from Ukraine through ASSE World Heritage exchange program. Last year I received a scholarship to come to the U.S. and study here for a year. This was truly life changing! I made a lot of friends here and improved my English, especially writing. Also, during my exchange year, I got to visit a lot of American cities and states and even met Missouri Governor Mike Parson.

At first, I would like to say thank you to FLEX and ASSE/World Heritage Exchange Programs for providing me such a wonderful chance to come to America and study here. This was my dream for a long time, and I’m still ecstatic that it came true. Secondly, I want to say thank you to Warren County and especially the City of Warrenton, Missouri, and its people. This place has become my second home because I feel very comfortable and welcomed here. The people of Warrenton are really friendly and helpful, and the city itself is full of beautiful places.

Also, my biggest appreciation goes to Warrenton High School, its teachers and of course students. I really love studying and spending my time there. All the teachers are very qualified, friendly and helpful. This kind of healthy environment helped me study immensely, which led to me becoming a Warren County School District VIP. I was so happy about it because this meant that I was truly accepted by the community. The students in Warrenton High School are very nice and helpful too. I don’t even know how I would get around school the first week if it wasn’t for their help.

I want to finish this letter by talking about my host family, because they are the best people I have ever met. My host-dad is very nice and helpful too. I don’t even know how I would get around school the first week if it wasn’t for their help.

I want to finish this letter by talking about my host family. Aaron and Cara Jones are wonderful and loving people who accepted me into their family and made this exchange year perfect for me. I never got homesick while being in America because we always had something to do. We travelled, played games, watched TV together. I’m also thankful to my two host sisters. I have always been an only child, so this experience was new to me too. We hung out and talked a lot together, which made our bond even stronger.

Overall, this year was probably the best one for me, and that’s why I’m thankful to everyone, who was part of it!

We would also like to thank the Jones family in Warrenton, Missouri for hosting Ivan and his host sister Ana from Italy (Mondo) and giving them the perfect year.
What a great way to celebrate these special graduates! ASSE exchange student Roberto from Italy (Mondo) showcased her beautiful painting at the Visual Arts Scholastic Event in her host community back in February. Thank you to ASSE Area Representative Kristina Weller for helping make this experience happen for both the student and the host family.

Thank you to the Baker family in Dallas, Texas for warmly welcoming Anna into their home and community. We want to show off our artistically talented ASSE FLEX scholarship student Anna from Ukraine, who has kept herself very busy by volunteering at the local shelter, joining the volleyball team and learning how to ride horses! Her smile, her laugh, and just her in general, are a wonderful surprise on the front door to their home! Huge thanks to the Boone family in Mason City, Iowa for everything they did for her, especially for making the best of an unexpected shortened end to her exchange journey abroad! Thank you to ASSE Area Representative Emily Hallock as well for helping make such connections happen.

Thank you to ASSE Area Representative Luckie Lockie. We know it’s hard to see a year cut short but we are happy for all of the memories you’ll have and the relationship you have made. Thank you for adding an international son to your family!

Thank you to our partner in France (PIE) for giving Danae such a wonderful year. ASSE Mexico exchange student Danae spent her exchange year in France. She shares, “It has been an unforgettable and unique experience I can count with pride! Being in another country, new school, family, different friends, drastically changes your life and makes you value even more your family and the things you have. It is no doubt an experience I will never forget in my whole life. I’m lucky to have an amazing family with which I feel part of it as if I were one of them. I recommend this experience.”

Thank you to our partner in France (PIE) for giving Danae such a wonderful year.

What a great way to celebrate these special graduates! ASSE exchange students Roberto from Italy (Mondo) and Damir from Kazakhstan (FLEX) had a wonderful surprise on the front door to their home! Thank you to their host family and friends in Brownstown, Michigan for arranging this awesome decoration to honor their hard work! Huge thanks to the Call family for welcoming both Roberto and Damir into your home and for making their dreams of exchange come true with the help of Area Representative Heather Ross. Thank you Carlson High School for hosting our students and supporting cultural exchange!

The Boone family took pictures with their ASSE exchange daughter, Sitora from Kazakhstan (FLEX) had a wonderful surprise on the front door to their home! Thank you to the Boone family for welcoming both Roberto and Damir into your home and for making their dreams of exchange come true with the help of Area Representative Heather Ross. Thank you Carlson High School for hosting our students and supporting cultural exchange!

FLEX scholarship student Sitora from Kazakhstan is pictured with her advisor. Sitora and her team won 1st place in the construction of the Rube Goldberg machine at Crowder College Engineering day. “It took a lot of our efforts, perseverance and practice. At the beginning of the construction, we weren’t sure about success of our project, but we kept believing and eventually won the 1st place. I’m really proud of our school representation. I think we did amazing. Special thank you to our team leader, supporter and advisor, Mrs. Friend. Without her helping us and raising our spirits, we wouldn’t get what we received today,” shared Sitora. Congratulations to you and your team for your achievements!

Huge thanks to the Kriek family in Webb City, Missouri for welcoming Sitora into their home as well as Area Representative Heather Ross for helping make this connection happen.

Thank you to their host family and friends in Brownstown, Michigan for arranging this awesome decoration to honor their hard work! Huge thanks to the Call family for welcoming both Roberto and Damir into your home and for making their dreams of exchange come true with the help of Area Representative Heather Ross. Thank you Carlson High School for hosting our students and supporting cultural exchange!

Huge thanks to the Boone family in Mason City, Iowa for everything they did for her, especially for making the best of an unexpected shortened end to her exchange journey abroad! Thank you to ASSE Area Representative Emily Hallock as well for helping make such connections happen.

Thank you to the Peeters family in Jourdanton, Texas and to ASSE Area Representative Audra Locke. There he goes. Two months too early, lots of memories to cherish and lots of would-be memories that got taken away by Covid-19. Have a safe trip Lukas back to Germany (ASSE). We’ll see you again soon. You’ll be forever part of our family,” says ASSE host dad Pat Peeters. Thank you to the Boone family in Mason City, Iowa for everything they did for her, especially for making the best of an unexpected shortened end to her exchange journey abroad! Thank you to ASSE Area Representative Emily Hallock as well for helping make such connections happen.

Thank you to the Rzucidlo family in Trenton, Michigan for welcoming Miguel into their home, as well as Area Representative Heather Ross for helping make this connection happen. Huge thanks to the Rzucidlo family in Trenton, Michigan for welcoming Miguel into their home, as well as Area Representative Heather Ross for helping make this connection happen. Huge thanks to the Rzucidlo family in Trenton, Michigan for welcoming Miguel into their home, as well as Area Representative Heather Ross for helping make this connection happen.

Huge thanks to the Baker family in Dallas, Texas for warmly welcoming Anna into their home and community. We want to show-off our artistically talented ASSE FLEX scholarship student Anna from Ukraine, who has kept herself very busy by volunteering at the local shelter, joining the volleyball team and learning how to ride horses! Her smile, her laugh, and just her in general, are a wonderful surprise on the front door to their home! Huge thanks to the Boone family in Mason City, Iowa for everything they did for her, especially for making the best of an unexpected shortened end to her exchange journey abroad! Thank you to ASSE Area Representative Emily Hallock as well for helping make such connections happen.

Huge thanks to the Boone family in Mason City, Iowa for everything they did for her, especially for making the best of an unexpected shortened end to her exchange journey abroad! Thank you to ASSE Area Representative Emily Hallock as well for helping make such connections happen.

Thank you to ASSE Area Representative Kristina Weller for helping make this experience happen for both the student and the host family.

Thank you to ASSE Area Representative Audra Locke. There he goes. Two months too early, lots of memories to cherish and lots of would-be memories that got taken away by Covid-19. Have a safe trip Lukas back to Germany (ASSE). We’ll see you again soon. You’ll be forever part of our family,” says ASSE host dad Pat Peeters.

Thank you to our partner in France (PIE) for giving Danae such a wonderful year.

Thank you to our partner in France (PIE) for giving Danae such a wonderful year.

Thank you to our partner in France (PIE) for giving Danae such a wonderful year.

Thank you to our partner in France (PIE) for giving Danae such a wonderful year.

Thank you to our partner in France (PIE) for giving Danae such a wonderful year.

Thank you to our partner in France (PIE) for giving Danae such a wonderful year.

Thank you to our partner in France (PIE) for giving Danae such a wonderful year.

Thank you to our partner in France (PIE) for giving Danae such a wonderful year.

Thank you to our partner in France (PIE) for giving Danae such a wonderful year.

Thank you to our partner in France (PIE) for giving Danae such a wonderful year.

Thank you to our partner in France (PIE) for giving Danae such a wonderful year.

Thank you to our partner in France (PIE) for giving Danae such a wonderful year.

Thank you to our partner in France (PIE) for giving Danae such a wonderful year.

Thank you to our partner in France (PIE) for giving Danae such a wonderful year.

Thank you to our partner in France (PIE) for giving Danae such a wonderful year.

Thank you to our partner in France (PIE) for giving Danae such a wonderful year.

Thank you to our partner in France (PIE) for giving Danae such a wonderful year.
With A Smile On Her Face
By ASSE Area Representative Tiffany Wilson

Spanish scholarship student Nerea (FAO Spain) embraced the triumphs and challenges of being an exchange student in Redmond, Oregon with a smile on her face at all times. Nerea said she tried more new things in one month in the U.S. than in her entire life.

Host mom Laura says, “Nerea was a ball of sunshine. Always happy and ready to help at any time. She offered to help without needing to be asked. Nerea is an intelligent, compassionate and talented kid.” Nerea willingly experienced many “firsts” while in America. From cross-country skiing to trying sushi and paddle boarding and Nordic skiing. She made friends quickly and performed as a “mer-sister”. Nerea was a great student. She received all As her first semester.

She volunteered with the children’s program at the host family’s church and also attended youth group activities including a winter camp. She helped with wrapping gifts during the holidays for foster children and packed food boxes at a local food pantry.

Nerea’s host sister Leah has developmental challenges. Host mom Laura said, “Because of Nerea, Leah had the courage to ride the regular school bus and do things that normally developing kids do. She encouraged Leah and helped her fit in!”

Nerea really dove headfirst into the exchange experience and is a wonderful example for other students to embrace this once in a lifetime opportunity. Thank you to the Thullemi/Plant family in Redmond, Oregon and to ASSE Area representative Tiffany Wilson for sharing her story. A big thank you to Ridgeview High School for accepting our student and showing her the American high school experience.

A Box of Chocolate
By ASSE Area Representative Audra Locke

ASSE Congress-Bundestag Scholarship Student Ali from Germany was one of eight students invited to ASSE’s annual training conference for Area Representatives in Savannah, Georgia. Ali was an excellent ambassador for his country and culture. He also spent time with ASSE Area Representative Audra Locke from Texas, recreating an iconic movie scene during their free time. How fun! “Foreign exchange is like a box of chocolates... you never know what kind of kids you’ll meet,” shared Audra.

Huge thanks to Ali for being a great ambassador to his home country, as well as the Carey-Schrecengost family in Lewes, Delaware for warmly welcoming him into their home. None of this would have been possible without the help of Area Representative Veronica Carrow. Thank You!

My Canadian Experience
By ASSE Mexico scholarship student Betsy who is spending her exchange year in Rouyn-Noranda, Quebec, Canada.

I spent my first week in a camp with all the other exchange students that came to Quebec. It was the best way to start my exchange year. After I got to know my host family, we became more than just that. They treated me like a real daughter and I really appreciate them for that. I was in a double placement with a girl from Australia that became my best friend.

Going to a French school was a real challenge at the beginning. I didn’t know the language, but after a while with the help of my teachers and my classmates, things became easier. Everybody was nice and they asked me lots of questions about Mexico.

Skiing was my favorite activity. I had never done it before I came here but I took some lessons and after a while, I was pretty good at it. My family and I went for a ride with their ski couch on a frozen lake. It was fun. There was a skating rink close to the house so we enjoyed going there often. I also got to go ice fishing, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in the snow. We became fans of the local hockey team and we go to lots of games. I expected the holidays to be the time there I would have had the feeling of homesickness and of course I did but being with my host family helped me a lot. We had a such a nice time at Christmas and New Years. We even went to Quebec City. I was able to visit Toronto and the amazing Niagara Falls on my March break.

My exchange year is almost done and the time has passed too fast. I am just grateful for the opportunity that ASSE has given me, for my host family, and for the people I have met in Canada. This experience has made me change and grow as a person in a way that I could never have imagined. I have learned two new languages, I got to know the Canadian culture and of course, I had the opportunity to share my Mexican culture. I am really happy about that. Thank you, Betsy for sharing your story and thank you to the Simard-Lauder family for hosting Betsy and her host sister from Australia and for giving them a wonderful experience.