

Unforgettable Experience!

Shuqi (Nikki) Zhao, ASSE Exchange Student (China) describes her unforgettable experience as an ASSE Exchange Student.

The most important thing I have learned these past months is to appreciate. This opportunity of being here, living with my amazing host family, making lifelong friends...this whole experience makes me feel thankful, to everybody, every day.

I remember the first day I got here, after that endless flight; I received two huge hugs from my host mum and sister. 'Life is such a saint' is what I was thinking at that time.

I played volleyball and lettered in it and now I am playing basketball. Being part of a sports team is a brand new experience for me. We do everything as a team, we win as a team, we lose as a team, and we fight as a team. The day of my mum's birthday, the whole team sang happy birthday to her. I made it as a video and sent it



Shuqi (Nikki) Zhao, ASSE Exchange Student (China) second from the right with her host family Darcel & Randy Miles, Inman, Kansas USA.

back to China, "That's the most special birthday gift I have ever received," my mom told me.

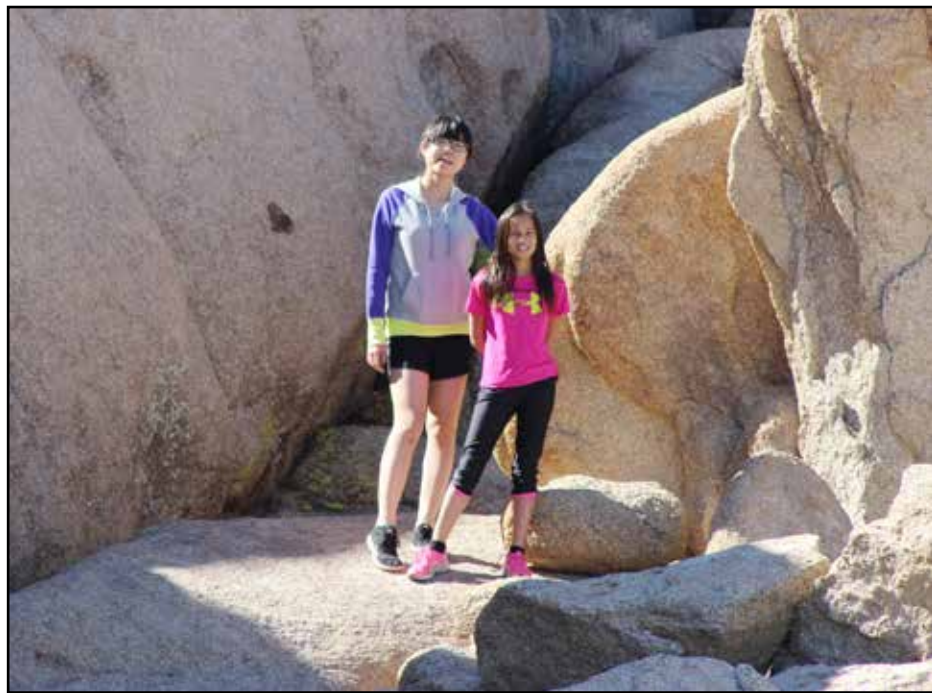
-Shuqi Zhao

Nikki's host family had adopted their daughter from China as a baby and they chose to host Nikki so their daughter could get a taste of the Chinese culture. Nikki and her host sister, Aisjha, have become close, and definitely are enjoying the cultural exchange.

Nikki has maintained a 4.0 grade point average while participating in both sports and fine arts such as Jazz Band. Nikki is also involved in a Music Tech class at Inman High School and through that class she composed an arrangement of 'What Child Is This' for piano and violin. Nikki played the piano part, while her host sister played the violin part at the high school's Christmas concert.

ASSE Area Representative Sandra Isom describes Nikki as a delightful young lady. Sandra says, "Nikki's excitement for life is contagious. I've really enjoyed seeing her bloom in the time she has been here, and will definitely miss her when she goes back to China at the end of her exchange year."

Nikki's host mom, Darcel Miles tells of one of her favorite times with Nikki. "It was the night we brought her home from the airport. When she got out of our Jeep, she looked up, saw the stars and was amazed saying she never had seen them like that before. Our daughter, Aisjha and Nikki grabbed some pillows, laid down in the back yard and watched the stars for a long while. That's when I knew how different our small town in the middle of Kansas was going to be for her. Nikki's drive and talent has helped her to experience some new fun things and meet some lifelong friends. Everytime I look up at the stars or see an amazing sun set I will think of her fondly of her."



Shuqi (Nikki) Zhao, ASSE Exchange Student (China) and her host sister Aisjha enjoy a visit to Joshua Tree National Park Nikki says, "I will never forget that day in the park. It was immense and the huge rocks which were probably fifty times bigger than me were everywhere. It's amazing to stand under the sunshine and between the rock without anybody around me. My host sister and I climbed the huge rocks. It was fun but at the same time frightening. We helped each other, holding hands together and cautiously made it out of that rock labyrinth. It was absolutely unforgettable."

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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.

Please send your best photograph and article to:
ASSE News, 10754 Belle Creek Blvd., Suite 101, Henderson CO 80640 USA
Tel: 303-227-7634 • Fax: 303-252-0629 • E-mail: mloving@assee.com

Until next edition,
Mary Loving ASSE News Editor

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 of the fun!



ASSE Exchange Students enjoyed the opportunity to share about their countries during the ASSE Area Representative Training Meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Malika Alenova (*FLEX Kyrgyzstan), Aliya Gaffanova (*FLEX Russia), Annika Haverkamp (Germany), Ines Herain (France), Benedetta Rossi (Italy), Sara Stacciotti (Italy), Alessandra Carpineti (Italy), Yun Ting 'Sunnie' (Taiwan)



Washington State ASSE Area Representative Lori Blanchard and her students enjoyed the Seattle Thunderbirds hockey game against their rivals the Portland Winterhawks. The game was close...went into overtime. Although the Thunderbirds lost, the students had a fabulous time.

In the photo left to right: Kristyna Princova (Czech Republic), Kseniya Shulga (*FLEX Russia), Ilaria Fanari (Italy), Daniel Hansen (Denmark), Nichlas Boten (Norway), Josep Comingo Catafal (Spain), and host brother Eric.



ASSE Exchange Students enjoy a visit to the Champs-Élysées in Paris France. Left to right is Karla Joanna Aguilar Angeles (Mexico), Emma Golden (Evergreen, Colorado, USA), Ivana Lucho Beltran (Mexico), Raina Young (Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada), Anni (Norway) and Helene (Denmark).

Ivana Lucho Beltra, ASSE Exchange Student (Mexico) says, "...in these few months I have not just learnt a new language but I have also met a ton of incredible people, discovered another form of life, eaten delicious food and discovered a magnificent country that doesn't stop amazing me. I have also discovered myself, this is an experience. I would definitely do it again."



Skiing the Alps! Host sister Eléonore, ASSE Exchange Student Gemma Calandra from Tiburon, California, USA spending her exchange experience in France and friend Fantine had a fun time! Gemma expresses, "Thank you to ASSE for this opportunity."



Amanda Seymour, ASSE Area Representative in southwestern North Dakota says, "My students loved ice skating and just having the opportunity to get together and be silly! I think most all of my students were first time skaters with the exception of Ella from Finland. They are a great group of kids!"

ASSE Exchange students, left to right: Sydra (host sister of Nodoka), Thibault Deray (France), Jacopo Valentini (Italy), Camilla Cattaneo (Italy), Ella St. Clair Stevenson (Finland), Tiana Weghorst (Germany), Malin Eckel (Norway) and Nodoka Okuno (Japan).



ASSE Exchange Student Connor Artman of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania USA experiencing his dream to spend a year in Italy says this photo describes his year so far.

Connor (in the lower left corner) says, "It shows how genuinely open the people of Fabriano have been towards helping me integrate into society here. So far I've made many friends and had lots of fun with everybody. This picture highlights how everyone is close - knit in this town."



ASSE Exchange Student Kim Bucher (*CBYX Germany) on the left side in the photo prepares with her team for performing at the State Festival in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, USA.

"I tried out in December and got chosen with 11 other people (out of 16). The play is about a girl who is worried about her "what ifs..." and the play shows how the rest of us are comforting her. Most of it is in Shel Silverstein poems."



ASSE Exchange Students Iryna Zaporizka, (*FLEX Ukraine), Teresa Bouza Hernandez (Spain) and Enis Petersen (Denmark) ready to greet families at Knightdale High School in Knightdale, North Carolina, USA



The Bean – Chicago

By ASSE Area Representative Brenda McNallan, Coon Rapids, Minnesota, USA

ASSE Exchange students Aipara Tastekey (*FLEX Kazakhstan), Timur Aisarov (*FLEX Kyrgyzstan) and Gaukhar Tuletova (*FLEX Kazakhstan) along with ASSE Area Representative Brenda McNallan researched and planned an economical and educational couple of days in Chicago. They also experienced teamwork negotiating public transportation for the entire journey.

The group spent hours in two museums, took advantage of many photo ops and enjoyed trying new foods including Chicago Pizza with a stuffed crust.

Brenda comments, “We learned how to live in close quarters together, listen to each other, get past minor disagreements and support each other while learning and experiencing new things.”

ASSE Exchange Students Aipara Tastekey (*FLEX Kazakhstan), Timur Aisarov (*FLEX Kyrgyzstan) and Gaukhar Tuletova (*FLEX Kazakhstan) enjoy a photo op at ‘The Bean’ in Chicago, Illinois, USA

Opening Doors

Stephanie Hildebrand, ASSE Exchange Student from Puebla, Mexico expresses the difference being an exchange student has made in her life, “An academic exchange opens many doors to a new culture as well as to the language. Especially it opens the door to meet people like in the photo where I am with an Italian, a Mexican, and two Americans. Each of us live different experiences in the exchange. Being an exchange student changes the way you see the world”



ASSE Exchange Students spending their Exchange year in Germany – left to right: Astrid Daniela Aguirre (Walled Lake, Michigan, USA), Filippo Nessi (Italy), Regina Aguilar Valdes (Downingtown, Pennsylvania, USA), Luis Kretschmer (Los Cabos, Mexico), Stephanie Hildebrand (Puebla, Mexico), Jorge Mendez (Leon, Mexico)

Half Marathon

by ASSE Area Representative Kathy Smith, Coweta, Oklahoma, USA and ASSE Exchange Student Pauline Soell (Germany)

ASSE Exchange Student Pauline Soell (Germany) has been very busy since arriving. She was fortunate to be a part of the high school girls softball team that went to the state finals. The team welcomed her immediately to the point of allowing her to be a substitute runner and score for the team! During the softball off season, she continued participating with the team running to stay in shape.

I invited Pauline to join my niece and me as we prepared for the Williams Route 66 Half Marathon in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA. I had walked the full marathon the previous year, but I was encouraging others to push themselves further than a 5K to a half marathon. Our longest preparation walk prior to the 13.1 mile half marathon was almost 6 miles.

In the fall, Pauline entered her 4-H poultry in the Wagoner County Fair, receiving First place with the Cochon Cockerel

and then, at the Tulsa State Fair both her waterfowl and Bantams received Reserve Champion awards.

Pauline is looking forward to going to Prom,

and enjoying all the activities available to her while she is in the United States.

Kathy says, “I believe that Pauline is a very special girl!”



ASSE Area Representative Kathy Smith, Michelle Elliott, ASSE Exchange Student Pauline Soell (Germany), and Barb Barela enjoy the excitement of the Williams Route 66 Half Marathon. Photo used by permission

Taking Advantage of New Opportunities

By Dorothea ‘Dora’ Wendroth, ASSE Exchange Student (Germany) spending her exchange year with the Bell family in Jasper, Missouri, USA

“I wasn’t involved in poultry and I didn’t have a special interest in it before I came to the U.S.. My host family is in 4-H and when we came back from one of the fairs, the idea came up that I should show poultry, too.

We started to look into what I could and wanted show. I choose to show a Bantam Gold Laced Sebright hen, named Goldie that my host sister had at the grandparent’s house. To prepare for the show, I had to learn the basic parts of a chicken and what they should look like, reasons for disqualifications and a detailed description of my chicken, the breeds and classes, I also learned how to hold a chicken properly and how to put it properly in and out of a cage. My host sister taught me all of it in two months. She knows a lot!

Then we went to the Oklahoma State Poultry Federation Show. There were thousands of birds in a huge barn! This spring I will compete in Springfield, Missouri USA. Besides poultry, I help my host family with 4-H in goats, sheep, gardening and I learned to

ride a horse.

At school I’m in choir where I’m also going to compete as a solo and in a trio, and I play the vibraphone in the percussion section of the band. I did volleyball and now play basketball. My basketball team is really nice and plays well. We are 20-1!!! At one game I scored 5 points. Also, I help at school organizing different events.

I have also learned a lot in my classes like how to make better videos, how to teach little children and much more. I also learned more about my home country Germany. And of course I got better in English.

If I could I would take the school system with me back to Germany. I like how you can choose your classes, how you can play so many different sports, and how the most classes are really small. I will take with me the polite and friendly habits of Americans. I also will try to start playing basketball in Germany as well.



Dorothea ‘Dora’ Wendroth, ASSE Exchange Student (Germany) placed 4th in showmanship at the Oklahoma State Poultry Federation Show in Shawnee, Oklahoma USA. She has a great teacher, as her host sister placed 1st overall.

The Start of a Long Journey in a Different World

By Patrick Gisler, ASSE Exchange Student (Switzerland), spending his exchange year in China



I will never forget the 27. August 2014 the day of departure to an unknown journey on a different country with a different culture and a completely different language. For the first time in my life, I left my family, friends and my home behind me not for a week, not for a month but for a year. Not only is the country on the other side of the world but also many of my relatives and friends are not familiar with China and do not know much about the country I am leaving for. Therefore, it was not surprising that many people were confused when I told them that I would go to China for one year. "Why China?" was always the question, to answer this question, which I heard many times, was extremely hard because I

did not know the answer. "I want to learn Chinese" was my standard answer to satisfy them, however, it is only one part of the truth. The fact that there is something more inside me, a fascination that has grown inside me for this country since I first came to China two years ago. Ever since, I had the deep desire to experience the Chinese Culture and the way of living in China.

At Linyi Airport I was picked up by my host father, Mr. Zheng and host brother. They all gave me a heart-warming welcome and I felt extremely happy. The way to their home was a little adventure for me not knowing where we would go and seeing the different landscape and houses. It was a thrilling experience. Arriving at home I met my host mother and ate my first Chinese dinner together. Even though, I could not eat much because I was completely exhausted, I greatly enjoyed the meal. Ever since I feel extremely

welcomed and I extremely appreciate the help and support that I get from my host family.

Three days after my arrival, the moment of truth finally arrived: My first day in a Chinese school. At first I was shocked, having the first day of school on a Sunday evening, could not mean any good for the future weekends. However, when I entered the school this was quickly forgotten because I was overwhelmed when I saw the headline on the television screen saying: Welcome to our school Patrick. Everything I experienced on this very first day was different, my classmates, my teachers, the classroom and especially the school schedule.

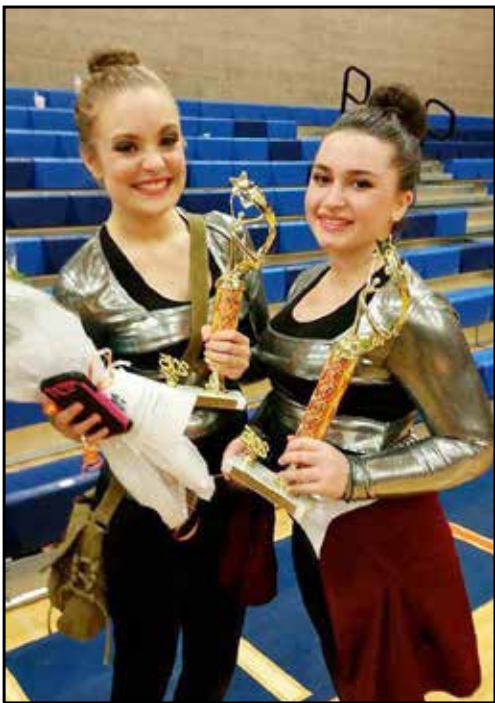
After a little bit more than a week, my stomach finally got used to the Chinese food. In the beginning it was a huge change due to Swiss food lying heavier in one's stomach with all the sauces, cream and cheese. However, I need to admit that I enjoy very much eating Chinese food with



its huge versatility. Even though I might not like everything, especially in the seafood section, my doubts about whether I would only eat very few kinds of food were vanishing the longer I stayed here. I ate a lot of food that I would not even dare to look at back in Switzerland. My whole eating habit changed from only eating what I love and know to try out almost everything that people offer me. So far this method is a great success I discovered a whole new world of food. I keep tasting new things to experience as much Chinese food as possible.

Drill Team Dream

By Mariam Ghlonti, ASSE Exchange Student (*FLEX, Georgia) spending her exchange year in Montesano, Washington, USA



I had no idea what a Drill Team was before I arrived in America. I saw them at our first football game performing on the field and I was blown away by their routines and moves. I've always dreamed of dancing with pom poms and wearing the uniform, so when I heard about the auditions for the Competition Drill Team I tried out and got selected.

I started in November getting up at 5 with practices starting at 6 and lasting until 8 o'clock. I also practice in the evenings in my room to improve my moves. My drill sisters are really

*Mariam Ghlonti, ASSE Exchange Student (*FLEX Georgia) on the left side and teammate on the right.*

supportive and they always help me out when I need it.

For the competitions our coach, Kelsey choreographed two dances for us; military and pom routines. She also chose two songs for us. Military dance is based on military drills. Comparing to the pom routine, military is performed without pom poms and the moves are clearer, sharper, and neater than when doing pom. Some teams use flags and rifles in the military drill routines but our team does not use them.

Pom routine is a more energetic dance. We use pom poms to make the picture of dance more visible to people. We also use more gymnastic moves like splits,

kicks, toe touches, and somersaults. Both of the routines are usually really fast and energetic.

January was my most successful month in my whole exchange year! I had 2 competitions with the Drill Team and took 1st & 3rd place twice in both routines and in both competitions!

I am amazed by American people! I love the way they aren't scared to show off their pride and beliefs. I adore the way they are always here to help community and make a change. The American society is a great example for me, when I get home I will use my experience to make a difference.

One of Our Own

By Nancy and Norm Brown of Nebraska City, Nebraska USA who have hosted 13 ASSE Exchange students.

"The best part of being a host family is seeing the friends that our students make with the local students here in Nebraska City and the special bond that we make with each student. My dad Rev Ed Brown hosted seven foreign exchange students from 1995 until his passing away in February 2000. Nancy and I were told we could never have children so we started talking about hosting foreign exchange students. After much talking with ASSE Area Rep Jean Morrison and Nebraska City High School Principal Marc Adler we decided we would host Alexander Eversberg from Cologne, Germany. He arrived in time for Homecoming Weekend in October 2000 and our adventure has continued for 14 years. We treat the kids as one of our own.

A few 'Words of Wisdom' we offer to first time host families is to treat the exchange student as one of your own kids. We have a set of rules such as be

home by curfew when they are out with their friends. If something comes up that our student won't be home by curfew, they call us and we see about staying out longer. Our students have chores as any child in our home would do.

We also do fun things like going to KC Royals baseball games, visiting the Omaha Henry Doorly Zoo, explore the Offutt Space Museum, plus we do a family night activity once a week.

We encourage our students to get involved with school activities. Most of our students have tried athletics and have done very well. The boys play soccer in the spring and have tried football, basketball or wrestling. Some of our students have joined the choir, have been in the musical production and have been involved with FCCLA (Family, Career and Community Leaders of America). Through their activities they have made good friends with students and teachers.

Our current student Kilian Keetz (*CBYX Germany) calls us Mom and Dad and our 12 year old son Nicholas enjoys having a big brother or sister every school year. Our other students have been Neele Bartsch (Germany), Nadine Bose (Germany), Frida Rickers (Germany), Aja Pavacova (Czech Republic), Michael Rocher (Germany), Natalia from Brazil with another exchange program, Valentin Kerl (Germany), Imke Ahlen (Germany), Yannis Dahlman (Germany), Francisca Wohlter (Germany), Andreas Fuchs (Germany), Tom Brunshen (Germany).

ASSE values the dedicated support and opportunity that the Brown family has given to so many students over the years!



*Nancy and Norm Brown, Nicholas and Kilian Keetz, ASSE Exchange Student (*CBYX Germany)*