

Having A Great Time in China

by ASSE Exchange Student Alix (Moraga, California) enjoying her adventure in China

I have lived in China for a little over four months. I have had to make many adjustments to my normal life to come here, but I don't regret it. I have made many new friends and am learning important subjects in school. I get to live in a completely different environment than what I grew up in and therefore experience things I would not be able to experience back home in California.

I wake up every morning between 6:00 and 6:30 AM. I get dressed and brush my teeth. The grandmother in my host family makes breakfast then sends me off to school. Normal Chinese schools often have over 1,000 students. The school I go to is not a traditional Chinese school. My school is for students who have fully committed themselves to studying abroad for university. There are four classes per

in my room.

My classes include: Chinese comprehension, Chinese listening, HSK, A-level math, STEAM, calligraphy, mandatory self-study periods, a little PE, business and tea culture. There are three other foreigners at my school, including an Italian, a German and an Australian. In the mornings, at 7:30 AM, there would be stretching and some running then we would go to breakfast. After my last class I would play outside for a while, then go and eat dinner. After school I now do martial arts classes with my host brother and am learning golf (a childhood dream of mine) at the sports university that my host parents work at.

Before coming to China, I had done my best to study Chinese culture and language. Because of my earlier travels, including a month in Japan, and my advance preparation, I did not

experience much culture shock. However, there was one big difference between my trip to Japan and my trip to China... I am fluent in Japanese but not in Chinese. I am not used to traveling to places where I can't speak the language, and Shijiazhuang is not known for its English speakers. As you would expect, communication is very difficult. Everyone is nice, but it is very frustrating when you can tell someone

is talking about you, but you can't understand what they are saying.

The only two things I was unprepared for was the roads and the food. I had been aware of China's infamous drivers, but you have to



Alix made Chinese traditional food, dumplings.

experience it to truly grasp how crazy driving in China is. There seems no such thing as waiting, and highway patrol does not exist. Also, before I arrived, I was not aware that in China there are days that certain cars cannot be driven. It makes sense given the number of people in China and the traffic, but to me, as a Californian, a restriction on driving is a completely foreign concept. The food took some getting used to. Home-cooked Chinese food is very simple. However, I had never eaten real Chinese food before because it is impossible to find authentic Chinese food in America.

Despite the hard work of learning Chinese and adapting to a different country, I am having a great time. I will be in China for another five months, but I hope that this stay will not be my last in China.



She made Chinese traditional iron art with the artist.

day, but the school day lasts from 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM, not including self-study which lasts until 9:30 PM. The self-study for the foreign students is optional, so I rarely attend since I find that I can study better when I am alone

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School Pride



Spanish Scholarship (FAO Spain) World Heritage Exchange Student Paula.

For the second time in three years, the Greenfield-Central High School Pride Marching Band competed in the Indiana State School Music Association State Marching Band Finals. Spanish Scholarship (FAO Spain) Exchange Student Paula was among those in the marching band this year.

Greenfield-Central took runner-up at the state competition for the second time in three years. Over 400 hours of practice took place with these students. Congratulations to Greenfield-Central. Paula is enjoying her exchange year with the Shirley/Anderson family in Pendleton, Indiana.

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

Cooking With Simeon

By Host Mom Dorshan Millhouse (Lorena, Texas)



Spanish Scholarship (FAO Spain) Exchange Student Simeon

Spanish Scholarship (FAO Spain) World Heritage Exchange Student Simeon is hosted by the Millhouse family in Texas. His host mother shares, "Our family has truly enjoyed hosting Simeon. He has a great sense of humor, confidence to try new things and is super patient with our active little ones. He fits right in and we will all be sad when we have to say goodbye at the end of this experience." They enjoy seeing him being a part of the football team, eating his first s'mores, cooking the perfect omelette to share with the family and even be a great "new big brother" to his siblings.

A Simple Wish

by FAO Spanish Scholarship ASSE Exchange Student Elena enjoying her exchange year in Hope, Idaho

FAO Spanish Scholarship ASSE Exchange Student Elena had a special wish for Christmas - to experience snow. She wrote down her wish on a decoration slate which said: "The only thing I want for Christmas is snow and peanut cream." Elena says, "The last thing was more of a joke, but between us that phrase became mythical. Today, December 25, I woke up and there was the snow. Thanks, Santa!"

We thank the Noble family in Hope, Idaho for welcoming Elena into their homes and for playing a big role in so many sweet moments of her journey and ASSE Area Representative Cheryl Kidwell for helping make this experience happen for the Nobles and Elena.



Venturing Outside Her Comfort Zone

By ASSE Exchange Student Claire (Taiwan) enjoying her exchange year in Granite, Oklahoma.

Meet Claire - scholarship winner from Taiwan, chosen on merit and ambassadorship to study in the USA. Claire makes a point to take part in all family and school activities presented to her.

Her host family has taken her to a rodeo, she plays on the high school's softball team with her host sister, her host mom taught her how to make pizza and pancakes and she has made cherry pies and other desserts for her host family.

We have asked Claire to share her thoughts about her exchange experience so far: "Deciding to be an exchange student was a hard thing for me because I needed to get out of my comfort zone, and go to a new surrounding that I have never known. But just like Tangled said "Venture outside your comfort zone. The rewards are worth it." I stepped out and started a

new life in my year. So far, everything is going great. I have made a lot of friends at school. Everyone there is passionate and kind. I love my host family. They make me feel like part of them. The best thing is I joined the cheerleader team. Practice with my lovely team is the best time ever. Although we need lots of energy for doing cheer, I am looking forward to our first cheer in a few weeks! I hope I can safely enjoy this exchange year, learn hard, try hard, and play hard."

We love her positive attitude and her enjoying this experience to the fullest! Please also join us in congratulating Claire, as she was also just elected Class Vice President! We cannot wait to see what else this young ambassador will accomplish during her exchange year, and a huge "Thank You" to the Nolan family for giving her the love and support to achieve great things!



ASSE Exchange Student Claire and the Nolan host family

NASA Experience

By ASSE Area Representatives Robin Shields Beal and Erin Harrell

Robin Shields Beal ASSE Area Representative for Florida organized a once in a lifetime event for the ASSE Exchange Students.

Thank you, NASA for the VIP invitation welcoming 19 exchange students from all over the world, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Italy, Germany, Spain, Latvia, Ukraine, Taiwan, China, Lithuania, and France. It was a successful launch for SpaceX Falcon 9 and Dragon capsule on a resupply mission to the International Space

Station.

ASSE Area Representative Erin Harrell says, "We were treated to a VIP viewing of the SpaceX launch. We met Robert "Bob" Cabana who took this photo with all of us. He is the Director of NASA's John F. Kennedy Space Center. He is an Astronaut and a former Naval Flight Officer and Aviator in the USMC. He was so kind to take time out of this very important day to speak with the students. We are all so very thankful!!! I still have goosebumps from this day!"



Javier (Spain), Shalva (FLEX Georgia), Bowen (China), Lavinia (Italy), Claire (France), Anano (FLEX Georgia), Elsa (Spain), Francesco (Italy), Martyna (FLEX Lithuania), Martin (Spain), Pei Han (Taiwan), Tadeas (Czech Republic), Kamila (FLEX Kazakhstan), Pablo (Spain), Odeta (FLEX Latvia), Olah (FLEX Ukraine), and Francesco (Italy)

High School in a French Castle

By Orienda, ASSE Exchange Student (Farmington, Michigan) enjoying her exchange year in France

Orienda from Michigan is spending her exchange year near the beautiful French Alps and shares with us some of the beautiful experiences she has had so far.

"I decided to come to France as an exchange student because I have always wanted to learn about French culture. Europe is so rich in history, and France is home to divine artwork, food, traditions, and architecture.

After studying French in school in America, I knew I had to pursue my life lifelong dream and experience life in France. After spending two months here, my French has improved immensely. My biggest fear was that I would constantly be lost and unable to understand, but it's crazy how quickly I've improved! School gets easier every day and I've learned so much from my friends and teachers. Every day holds something new and I never

stop learning new things, whether it be language wise, academically, or a lifelong lesson. My school and town are so special and I feel like I'm still a tourist in my town.

French architecture is probably one of my most favorite things about France. It's absolutely gorgeous. I live in a small town called Evian which is home to Evian water! I am so lucky to live here. My school is right on Lake Geneva and it's a castle! I love French school and I couldn't be happier to go to school in such an amazing town. While being on the water, Evian is also in the middle of a mountain range, which makes it so much more special. I have gone mountain climbing in Mont Blanc, been boating on Lake Geneva, eaten the best food I've ever had, and I've only been here for a few months. I am so excited to see what the rest of my year here has in store."



Orienda and her little friend in France

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!



Exchange Student Cameron from Australia (WEP) got to see the Canadian national sport with his host family. He watched the Chicoutimi Saguenéens' hockey team compete in a great game of ice hockey. Thank you to the Maltais host family from Hebertville, Quebec for hosting Cameron and showing him a Canadian tradition.



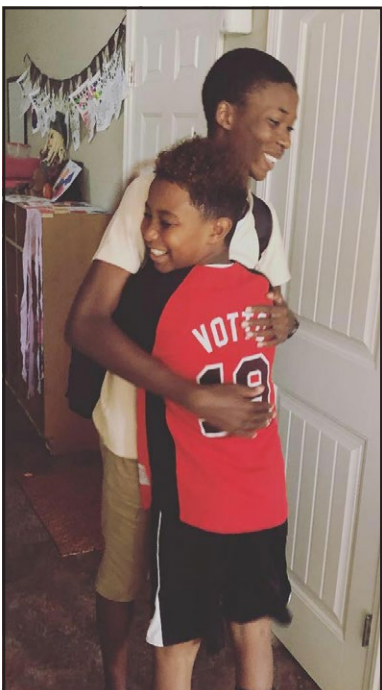
YES Scholarship ASSE Exchange Student Abraham from Ghana living with the Ward family in Vernonia, Oregon helped to build two baseball dugouts for the Vernonia High School baseball team. He says, "volunteering was fun and it was great to learn how to use those machines I never saw before. I'm not professional, but I can build a dugout. It was a wonderful experience."



FLEX World Heritage Exchange Student Sofiya from Ukraine and her host siblings in South Webster, Ohio couldn't be more ready for Christmas. Sofiya shared with us that she has a strong bond with her American brothers and that she is so happy being a part of the best family ever. We are so glad to see students having such a beautiful connection with their host families! Thank you Howe family for welcoming Sofiya so warmly in your cozy home.



ASSE CBYX (Congress- Bundestag Youth Exchange) student Lasse from Germany is hosted by the VanderWal family in Volga, South Dakota. Lasse (top row, 2nd from the left) and his host family are attending his first high school varsity football game.



This image shows exactly why the little moments are the ones that count. Every day little host brother Charlie meets ASSE YES scholarship exchange student Muhamad from Nigeria at the door with a hug when he gets home from school. Muhammad is living with the Barnes host family in Reynoldsburg, Ohio.



ASSE Exchange Students Chiara and Tamara from Italy (Mondo Insieme) dressed up so nicely for Halloween in Colorado! Chiara is living with the Olson family in Littleton, Colorado and Tamara is living with the Gunther family in Highlands Ranch, Colorado.



Cowboy Poetry was a hit in Heber City, Utah! Here is ASSE Exchange Student Hedda from Sweden and her friends. Hedda is living with the Wright Family.



ASSE FLEX Exchange Student Nazik from Kyrgyzstan volunteered at the Athens Fall Festival doing face painting. Nazik is living with the Ewart/Thigpen family in Athens, Alabama.



We love when we see friendships formed between the exchange students. The three young ladies pictured here are from different countries but there is no distance too far between friends. The world is smaller when we listen and care for one another. "The students always remind me of the love that there is in the world," says Area Coordinator Elizabeth Miller Milby. Pictured are ASSE Exchange Students Anna from France, Dariya of Ukraine, and Elmerillia of Indonesia.



FLEX ASSE Exchange Student Samara from Kyrgyzstan and her host mother Nancy are getting in the holiday spirit in Michigan with a lovely tradition of gingerbread house decorating! They each decorated one and we think they turned out great! Thank you to the Irish family in Traverse City, Michigan for welcoming Samara to your home with open arms and for making this year one to remember forever.



ASSE Exchange Student Hanna from Germany is hosted by the Frailey family in Pataskala, Ohio. They enjoy having her as part of their family and are including her in all their family activities. She is enjoying the falling leaves with her adorable host siblings and they are all having a lovely time together.

*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

An Amazing Time in Germany

by ASSE CBYX Scholarship Student Trevor from Dorris, California

CBYX Scholarship Student Trevor in Germany says, "I am having an amazing time here! My host family has been nothing but great to me and the town I am in is great. School is still a little difficult, but the language is getting much better. I know that soon school will become easier and easier to understand. We just got back from our family vacation to Berlin and I had an amazing time. I got to see the sights and it blew me away. I was actually there at all these places that I learned about in history class."

This year will be the 35th anniversary of the Congress Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX) and is ASSE's only reciprocal exchange program funded by the U.S. Department of State. The CBYX program provides a unique opportunity for 250 young Americans to spend a year in Germany, while at the same time, giving 300 young Germans the chance to live a year in the United States!



CBYX Exchange Student Trevor

Wreaths Across America

Maurice, ASSE CBYX Exchange Student from Germany, Ruta, ASSE FLEX Exchange Student from Latvia, and Belen, ASSE Spanish Scholarship Student (FAO Spain), with Area Representative/host mom Kate Rizor, spent the afternoon at Fort Custer National Cemetery in August, Michigan, taking part in the Wreaths Across America commemoration.

Each December on National Wreaths Across America Day, the mission to remember, honor and teach is carried out by coordinating wreath-laying ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery, as well as at more than 1,400 locations in all 50 U.S. states, at sea and abroad. Our exchange students were more than happy to take part.



Maurice (CBYX Germany), Ruta (FLEX Latvia) and Belen (FAO Spain)

International Education Week Presenting Moldova!

By ASSE FLEX Scholarship Student Vlada (Moldova) enjoying her exchange year in Illinois

ASSE FLEX Exchange Student Vlada from Moldova living with the Shubert family in Illinois presented her country during International Education Week at Central High School. She talked about their traditions, beautiful countryside, and cuisine which made her as proud as ever of her country. Vlada says, "before my arrival in the U.S. none of my friends knew about Moldova. I'm so glad I had the opportunity to share a part of me and the place I come from. Now as IEW is over I will still continue to present my country so more and more people will know about it after I leave."

International Education Week (IEW), is an opportunity to celebrate the benefits of international education and exchange worldwide. This joint initiative



of the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Education is part of their efforts to promote programs that prepare Americans for a global environment and attract future leaders from abroad to study, learn, and exchange experiences.

Operation Christmas Child

By World Heritage FLEX Scholarship Exchange Student Sherzod enjoying his exchange year in Sabetha, Kansas

World Heritage FLEX scholarship student Sherzod from Tajikistan volunteered for Operation Christmas Child.

He says, "I traveled to Denver, Colorado to volunteer for Operation Christmas Child. I got a great impression while I was volunteering there. I worked there for three days and I worked as hard as I could. The management was good and it was all organized very well. Through volunteering, I improved my ability as a team member. I learned the best ways to look through boxes, how to pack things in properly, and how to stack shoe boxes to make them fit inside larger boxes. The hardest part of the job was physically pushing myself to get the best performance out of myself. The most enjoyable part of the job was the friendly atmosphere and the little competitions we had between team members. Indeed, it was a great experience working with a diverse group of people with the common goal of bringing happiness to under privileged children around the world!"

We asked Sherzod more about where his volunteering spirit is coming from and it appears that it all started back in his home country. Every year, he was part of a Christmas celebration in different

orphanages organized by the FLEX (Future Leaders Exchange) Alumni Tajikistan, which he hoped and believed he would be a part of one day. Because he enjoyed and genuinely cared about every Christmas event he volunteered at, he committed to continuing this tradition in the USA as well.

He asked his friends at school for ideas and people in his community without any luck. He never gave up and he ultimately found out at church that they had an Operation Christmas Child trip to Denver, Colorado and they needed volunteers. "I thought let's do it this year and get new experiences," Sherzod said to his host family with enthusiasm. He got to know all about Operation Christmas Child, the world's largest Christmas project of its kind. He met a lot of people and more importantly, he never gave up on his dream, so the dream came true.

Sherzod's volunteer activity is not limited to this particular one. Since

he came to the USA, he has also volunteered at Bern Community Center Pancake Feed, Fall Festival and he volunteered on Veterans day when he made a fundraising donation, collected money for injured veterans, and gave poppies out to remind people to honor our veterans.

He has shared some thoughts for the New Year. "I hope that in this year to come, you make mistakes. Because if you are making mistakes, then you are making new things, trying new things, learning,

living, pushing yourself, changing yourself, changing your world. You're doing things you've never done before, and more importantly, you're doing something.

So that's my wish for you, and all of us, and my wish for myself. Make new mistakes. Make glorious, amazing mistakes. Make mistakes nobody's ever made before. Don't freeze, don't stop, don't worry that it isn't good enough, or it isn't perfect, whatever it is: sport, or love, or work or family or life. Whatever it is you're scared of doing, do it. Make your mistakes, next year and forever. My hope is to empower and thereby inspire other people to have the courage to go out into the world and try their best to make it a better place for everyone."

We would like to thank Susan and Tom Gudenkauf for welcoming Sherzod with open arms in their home and for being so supportive of his passions and beliefs. He could not do this without their generous, loving commitment. We are also thankful to World Heritage Area Representative Karalee Fisher for making this experience happen for Sherzod and for helping him at every step in this amazing exchange journey.



FLEX Scholarship Student Sherzod