



NEWS FROM ASCA

An ongoing series of reports, articles, and news items about the Arlington Sister City Association's programs and activities, plus news from its Sister Cities

April 2017

Adventures of an Aachen Student in Arlington or ASCA's High School Homestay Exchange program



Iris with her friend Lucy at the Lincoln Memorial

The High School Homestay Exchange program is an opportunity for ASCA to host a student from one of our sister cities for a year or semester of high school in Arlington.

This is a wonderful opportunity to help a young person experience life and culture in the U.S. The program is at the heart of ASCA's mission of creating bonds between people from our sister cities and the people of Arlington. In addition, the program benefits host families and local school communities. Students frequently report that their experiences are "life-changing", and indeed they often make friendships that last a lifetime.

Lifetime memories and everlasting friendships

Iris Bischofs from Aachen, a 10th grade student was with us this past fall to spend a semester at Yorktown High School. Her words best describe how such a program can have an influence on opening broader horizons on both sides of the Atlantic, let alone leaving unforgettable memories and lasting friendships:

"On August 31, my big adventure began, because I was on my way to Arlington, living with a host family and going to school for the next 5 months. First I was really nervous, because

I wasn't sure if I would get along in a new country, but my worries were unnecessary. My host family, the Robbins, were so friendly and nice to me that I settled in really quick. They also have two dogs, which are so cute and they often sleep on my bed, which I really like. I am so happy with my family and the support I received, it couldn't have been better.

I attended Yorktown High School, with about 1800 students, which is for me a really big school. I really liked it. The school system is different than the system in Germany, but this wasn't a problem. Quite the contrary! I enjoy experiencing new classes that I cannot take in Germany like photography, orchestra, and health.

After school I also had cheer practice two to three times per week. We practiced cheers, jumps and stunts for the football and basketball games. Before I arrived in Arlington I really wanted to try and do cheerleading because I've often seen it in movies. In Germany cheer is not as popular as it is in the US. I had to try out for the cheer team and I was really excited to the Junior-Varsity Cheer Team. On the weekends I went on trips with my host family or met with friends. We baked cookies, had bonfires and went to Washington to see all the famous buildings and monuments.



Iris in her cheerleader uniform

A U.S. department of State sponsored program

We work closely with our sister cities who choose the high school student whom they recommend. The student must be between the ages of 15 and 18 1/2 on the first day of school.

The sponsoring sister city must have an International Coordinator to interview the student and determine if the student will be a good fit for the program, conduct language testing to ensure that the student has the English proficiency necessary to complete a semester or year in an Arlington high school (English Language Test for International Students - ELTiS) and assist the student and their family with the required paperwork. All fees are paid by the exchange student's family.

A U.S. State Department-designated sponsoring organization that is endorsed by the

Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET) ensures that ASCA's Local Coordinator is certified by the Department of State and adheres closely to the rules and regulations that are in place to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of each High School Homestay Exchange (HSHE) student. The sponsoring organization processes the J-1 secondary school student visa. Once the sponsoring organization approves the student for the HSHE program, the Local Coordinator recruits a host family. The sponsoring organization must also approve the host family. The Local Coordinator works with the local school to ensure that there is a place for the student in the school. Once the HSHE student is in the United States, the Local Coordinator serves as the liaison with the high school, provides oversight and support to the exchange student and host family, and includes the student in ASCA activities as appropriate.

In accordance with Arlington Public Schools Policy, ASCA has one seat per year for a student from one of our Sister Cities. In the past we have been able to split the school year between 2 students with each student staying in Arlington for one semester and not overlapping.

The High School Homestay Program's continuing history



The adventure goes on for Insa, who is currently enrolled in Yorktown High School

Daphne Lathouras has been ASCA's Arlington coordinator since 2013. She has been instrumental in the success of the program, and has been there for the students who have come in recent years.

In 2014-2015, two students from Aachen who had previously participated in the Elementary Exchange were hosted by their Elementary Exchange families and joined their peers in 10th grade at Yorktown High School.

Iris Bischofs has gone back to Aachen but Insa Obrikat, the new student from Aachen, is adapting very well to life in Arlington and is developing a great relationship with her host family.

Two boys from Aachen are applying to come to Arlington for the 2017-2018 school year. The one who will be coming for the fall semester already has a host family from the elementary-school exchange that lives in the Washington-Lee school district, where he will be going.

Becoming part of the program

Application deadlines are based on the timeline provided by the sponsoring organization. ASCA is working with Sister Cities International for sponsoring students.

ASCA requests that our Sister Cities present formal requests for students interested in participating in the High School Homestay Exchange at the September meeting. At that time the board will confer and determine which student(s) will be accepted into the program for the following school year (September 2017 is the deadline for students interested in the 2018/19 school year). The Sister City must have an International Coordinator in place to conduct the language testing and manage the paperwork for the exchange.

SUPPORT US BY BECOMING A MEMBER!

Arlington Sister City Association (ASCA), is a nonprofit organization established 1993. ASCA promotes the region's international profile through a variety of exchanges in education, commerce, culture, and the arts.