

## Learning from One Another

### Statement of Experience

Joanne Setlock-Weisbeck and her family participated in the German–American Youth Exchange Program in 2009 and she contributed the following statement:

Our son took German as a second language in both elementary and high school. As a high school student, he had the opportunity to travel to Germany and stay with a host family for several weeks. Afterward we in turn, hosted the student of that family, for the same period of time. We all looked forward to this experience and thought it would be a wonderful opportunity to expand our son's vision and understanding and knowledge of the world outside of his homeland. We, his parents, also eagerly looked forward to the opportunity to expand our own knowledge of another country and its customs by having a German student live with us as well.

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*“Opportunity to expand our own knowledge and our knowledge of another country”*

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We did not have any reservations about hosting a German student. Much to the contrary, we thought of it as an exciting opportunity. We simply hoped our student would be happy in our home and we could provide enough interesting things to do as a family. We were fortunate in that the high school had organized trips and activities for all of the students together and parents were welcome to attend. Activities included things like a tour of the City, a trip to Niagara Falls, Letchworth State Park and various other fun adventures. As a family, we hosted a party, which included a cookout and swim. The students all had a ball. Our visiting student helped us get ready for the party and created signs in both German and English.

We found our time hosting extremely rewarding. Our student and really all of the students from Germany were respectful, fun, engaging and provided a host of details comparing our two countries and various customs. Our student, for example, was very surprised by what she termed “all of our green space” and also how far we had to drive to get to things – such

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*“We found our time hosting extremely rewarding”*

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as stores and markets, etc, and how these things were all so much further apart than the same things were in Germany. In Germany, they could do much more walking to get to where they wanted to go. We also learned about food preferences, for example, the difference in what a typical German breakfast,

lunch or dinner would be compared to ours. We also learned about the difference in driving regulations, schooling and college compared to the U.S.A.

As a family, we all felt as if this experience was one of the most rewarding times we all had together. Besides realizing how much we all had in common, I became more aware and more grateful for all of our “green space” as our student called it along with many other things. I would highly recommend hosting to anyone considering it, and say don't hesitate. You won't be sorry. Your life and your heart will grow a little larger, and a little better. You will realize how much we all have in common. The German people are some of the kindest, warmest and most welcoming I've ever been fortunate enough to know.