

## Re-Discovering Buffalo

### Statement of Experience

Julie Seier and her family participated in the German-American Youth Exchange Program in 2013 and she contributed the following statement:

In the summer of 2013 we took in two girls from Germany. Although our house was packed with my daughter, my son and the two of them, it turned out to be a great time. Whereas my daughter enjoyed having two sisters for a change, I reveled in learning about the girls' travels.

Since we had hosted Japanese students, who were brought in with a program by our school, before, I was not too nervous about



taking in

students from Germany. When St Joe's Collegiate Institute approached me, I was interested right away. I think they were looking for more female families due to the large amount of girls who had applied for the program. Considering my daughter too was excited about hosting and the other exchange program with the Japanese kids went so well, we decided to host again.



Us being a pretty non-nervous family, we were not worried about anything, we just let things slide. The only thing I thought about with both exchanges was the language barrier. My daughter hasn't taken German in school at all. Neither did I know any German, so I was going along with the thought: "Well, I hope that'll work out. It did. Everything was fine. Furthermore, I had the reassurance from the former hosting experience. Whenever we didn't know what we were doing, we just used a translator app. We didn't have to rely on a translator neither for the Japanese nor for the Germans.

When we met Svenja and Evelyn for the first time, I was very surprised at their amount of travel and knowledge, which they - especially for their young age - both had. Svenja had visited places in the United States that even I haven't been to. In our community most people don't leave the Buffalo area. Many of us grow up here and live here. So we were really impressed by how-well travelled the girls were and how much they had done in such a short time. Another thing that I enjoyed right from the beginning was listening to Svenja playing the piano. We have a piano that nobody ever plays and Svenja is very talented. It was special to see her play.

---

*"I loved seeing my daughter bond with the two German girls"*

---

I also loved seeing my daughter bonding with the two girls. She didn't mind sharing her bedroom at all

and fancied having sisters. She told me how much fun it was to have sleep overs every night. When I imagine sending my daughter off across the world to live with people I've never meet, seen or called, I'd have to summon up quite some nerves. Therefore, in my opinion, it was touching that their parents trusted us to take care of their children. This particularly holds true for Evelyn. She turned 13 while she was here. Traveling that far without ones parents at such a young age arouses my respect for her and her parents.

We were very busy all summer long, but that was a welcome change. The exchange program made us explore our environment anew. Living at Lake Erie, having the Niagara Falls nearby: We take much for granted and the beauty of our home town gets lost in the chaos of our daily lives. With the girls we were able to take the time to look at what is around us. Instead of working and going after our daily routine, we had the opportunity to show foreign students around and learn to appreciate our surroundings. This is one of the reasons why I would recommend hosting. In addition to getting to learn something about other cultures, you also get to re-discover your own.

It was a great and fun experience. If we had more space, we would host more often and for a longer time than just a few weeks. You get to know lovely people and learn about them as well as about yourself.

