

## SECOND EXCHANGE REPORT

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Dear MAP-Team,

I'm living in America now since exactly 200 days. So it is time for my next experience report. I love thinking back on the time I had here already and I have a big smile in my face. Every experience is so unique and I am very happy that I had the chance to make them. I have about 3 months left which kind of freaks me out because the time went by so fast; and I don't even know where to start. I guess the greatest experience so far was my birthday. You must know, it is my big dream to become a helicopter pilot and my host parents know that. So my birthday present was to fly a helicopter. I couldn't believe that. I have never been



in a helicopter before so it was great! I was flying a very small one, where we had just enough space for the instructor and me. We were flying over the Hudson River and the area where I live. Everything looked amazing. At one point the instructor just let me take over the whole control over the helicopter. It was such a great feeling and I could have never imagined doing that in my exchange year. My birthday was at the beginning of December which means it is right before Christmas.

Christmas was hard, the whole time everything was great; and I was very excited to celebrate Christmas with my host family. I really enjoyed it, but in the evening I got homesick, and I didn't want to because actually



I was happy. But I guess that was normal and I am happy too when I can be together with my own family next Christmas. Soon there was New Years Eve, which I celebrated, completely different than I am used to. We bought me a nice dress and went out to a party. At first I wasn't really happy about that because I knew that there would be mostly older people. But in the end it wasn't that bad and I danced a lot.



My New Year also started very good, because my school had a Ski and Snowboard Club that I joined. I love Snowboarding and was very glad to hear that I can do it here, too. We went every other

weekend for one day to an Area in Vermont. Those days were very tough because we had to be at the school at 5 am. When I was back at home, usually around 8pm I was completely done. But it was always so much fun and I met a lot of new people.

In general I'm not doing so much with friends after school, because they are always very busy and have to babysit their siblings a lot, which I don't like so much, but nevertheless I am busy.

I'm still in the Track Team of my school. In the winter time it was pretty hard because practice was always outside, no matter how cold it was. And since this week the new season has started. I already love it again even if the first practice was in the rain. But we had 26°C so it was great and a lot of fun.

In the meantime my school had an international culture fair where I also had a table for Germany and it was very funny and the people were really interested in my culture. We are three exchange students at my school and together we had one day where we held presentations about us, our lives, and our culture. It was also pretty cool and the students were very interested.

My host family is starting to become like my real family. They could never substitute my own family but I am glad to live with them. Together we are traveling a lot now. It is the goal that I have been in as many states as

possible. In February we have been for a long weekend in Charleston, South Carolina; and it was amazing. We had such a great time, a very nice hotel and the weather couldn't have been better. It was unbelievable for me to be able to wear a dress and go into the ocean in mid February after just a one and a half hour flight. I tried a lot of Southern American food and I really fell in love with this great city. I was really sad when we had to leave. On this short vacation my host dad and I spend a lot of time together because my host mom had to be in conferences. It was a big complement when he told me that he couldn't imagine having such a nice trip with one of his own daughters.



Our next vacations are already planned. In the Spring Break we are going to Florida where we will spend a couple of days in Disneyworld and a couple of days in Orlando. I am really looking forward to it and I know it will be great. We are talking about it every day and my suitcase is already packed. We are also going to the Niagara Falls and Canada, Boston, and Washington D.C.; and who knows where else. It is crazy



when I think about it. That I will have been in New York, Connecticut, Vermont, Massachusetts, Virginia, South Carolina, Florida, Philadelphia, and Pennsylvania at the end of my exchange year. I would have never even dreamed about it.

Basically, I think this year is really a kind of the best year of my life. I grew a lot; I think my personality has changed. I learned to handle things I would have never thought of being confronted with. I miss my family and friends a lot. They are in my mind every day and I am in touch with them a lot. Maybe more than the exchange organizations and Local

Coordinators advise but actually I am happy with the way it is. I value my parents much more. I have to say because of my mom's job my family is always a kind of separated and we were also arguing a lot about normal stuff, but now I realize that sometimes parents can be very helpful and they are always there for me. Before the exchange year I thought that I won't call them every week or that they would understand what is going on because it is very different here. But actually even I get nervous now if I don't hear anything from them in a couple of days. It is the same with my friends. People say that after a while you will lose the contact to your friends. But it isn't like that at all. I get a message from them every once in a while and they keep me updated and are interested in what I am doing; and I like that. I know who really cares about me and who was just a friend. In general I am also very happy to be home again in summer because I actually miss them a lot. I also have a boyfriend which I think is important to mention, because I know that a lot of people are not going to do an exchange year because of a boyfriend or girlfriend. But it can work. It really does, I would have never believed that. I mean, yes it is really hard and you never know if it is going to work out, especially in our age. But I am very glad that I still went to the USA even if this meant to leave the boyfriend at home for a long time.

My host parents are doing very much for me and they treat me like their own kid. They try to help me in every situation which they sometimes don't really need. But I am happy that they are also happy to have me. I can imagine that it will be very hard to say good bye and I still don't really want to think about it, but soon I have to. We also already planned when they will come to visit me in Germany and I really hope that we will stay in touch for a long time. It makes me sad when I am thinking about my friends here in the school. I like them so much and it is so hard that they are just such a small part of my life and that I probably won't see most of them ever again.



Of course I also have to say that I am so happy to finally be able to speak English in a proper way. I know that I am still making a lot of mistakes but I can't believe that I am writing such a long text without even thinking about Google Translate. A couple days ago I noticed that I don't even realize anymore if someone is speaking German. I can just understand both and don't even care anymore which language it actually is. I think this is really cool. At the beginning I was really afraid because I didn't think that my English improved but after approximately 5 months I can say that it is pretty good. Since we got a new exchange student whose English is actually really not good, which is also because he had trouble and so on and had to change all the time, I can feel that my language is really good.

A thing that I also really liked was this week when spring track started, we had a long break for about 4 weeks where I didn't really see anyone. It was so nice to come back, see all these familiar faces, talk to the people and get a lot of high fives. It made me feel less different. I was really shy all the time which I am actually not. But now it is different, something changed over those weeks. I became more confident, even in front of strangers. I am not that afraid anymore of making mistakes in speaking and I am very happy with everything right now.



Now I am very excited for spring. It is getting warmer every day; and with it all the people are getting happier. There will be a lot of events in the school like a Color Run and Prom and much more. I am ready to have some more great weeks until I go home but right now I am here and I enjoy every second.

Loreen Friedrich