

## TESTIMONIALS – HOST FAMILY EXPERIENCE!

### #1

Diego has been a real joy to have in our house. He makes his bed, keeps his room clean and is always very willing to help with anything. But the real joy has been that he is a nice young man. Very willing to help others. He has even been helping another student down the street with his Spanish. He is kind, thoughtful, and patient. He has communicated well in English. He has gotten along with all three of our boys and has mixed well with Trevor's high school friends. I hear from others at the school how much they have liked Diego to be there. We have made a lifelong friend. It has been a great 8 weeks! We miss Diego and loved the experience. Thanks for allowing us to be a part of this!

***Bob Starnes***

### #2

My oldest daughter had gone off to college and I saw an email about the students coming to my youngest daughter's school. I felt it would be a great opportunity for us as a family and we could all learn something in the process. It was fun to share our home and culture and to learn about Stephy's home and culture. Our worlds seemed to get closer and closer and now we feel we have a new member of the family that we will always cherish stay connected with. It is really a great way to step out of your comfort zone and reach out to someone. At first, you may think there is no way to fit this in to your schedule but really, the whole process fits around your family. I think my daughter learned so much from Stephy and all the other children that came to her school.

***Harriet Kirk***

### #3

Thanks so much for letting Tito stay with us. We do miss him and enjoyed talking to him last night when he called. You did an excellent job selecting the students who participated in the program. All the kids were wonderful and very appreciative and kind. It has been a blessing having Tito here. He is a genuinely good child and very compassionate. His English has really improved also.

***Cindy Hannah***

#### #4

We have had a very busy past couple of weeks. We spent the Thanksgiving holiday in the mountains at a theme park and tourist area and this past weekend Shelby and Majo went on a girls "spa" retreat with our church. The football team at school won the state championship this past Friday and there has been a lot of activity involved with this. We have mixed emotions about sending "our child" home. I hope she has had a good time. Thanks for letting us be a part of your program.

*Diana White*

#### #5

It seems too soon to be saying goodbye! Last evening we were talking about the short time left, and Melisa said she was not ready to leave! We all agreed that she should just stay and her parents could pick her up sometime next year! She has been a great joy and truly has become just one of my "4 children". Thank you with entrusting her care to us. It has been a "marker" in all our lives that we will forever remember.

*The Eberle family of "6"!*

#### #6

The Blessing of Life as a Host Family

Two years ago, I saw a blurb in our school newsletter requesting host families for Guatemalan students coming to the USA to study for 2 months. I had recently registered for a watercolor adventure workshop in Guatemala and thought this might be an opportunity to learn more about the country and its people. Having been on several mission trips to the Dominican Republic (another Latin American country), I had developed a love of the people, their language, and many of their customs. After my family and I discussed and prayed about hosting a student, we signed up to be a host family. From mid October to mid December, we had a 15-year old boy become a part of our family; it was a wonderful experience. Prior to his arrival, his mother and I had emailed back and forth, and discovered many common traits; we have continued over the last 2 years to email, and I was privileged to even stay with she and her son (whom we hosted that year) for 1 night when I explored Guatemala last February. It is a joy and privilege to call her "friend".

This year we knew we wanted to be a host family again! We had received blessings the first time around, and we wanted to share in those blessings again. We picked Andres up at the airport when he arrived in October; again, his mom and I had been emailing for a couple of

months, so I felt I knew her. We did not know Andres, but we found him at the luggage carousel retrieving his luggage. Suffice it to say, we immediately felt like he was a part of our family. The connection we felt with him was immediate and natural. He immersed himself into our school (Christ Pres Academy), getting involved in extracurricular sports activities, and making lasting friendships quickly. All three of our children felt like he was their brother; our 3 ½-year old granddaughter loved him dearly; and our extended family welcomed him with open arms, as well. Midway through the 2-month program, we also had a Guatemalan girl come to stay with us for the duration of the time. Within a short few hours of being in our home, she seemed well adjusted, happy, and again became a part of our family. It was our joy and honor to host her, even if for a short time.

We learn so much from the students about Guatemalan culture, about the Mayan people and other sects in Guatemala, about traditions and celebrations, about languages spoken, about economical struggles, about religious groups, about governmental procedures, etc. Most of this discussion takes place during normal times of conversing, without intentionally quizzing them. However, they are eager to share all about their country, and love to be asked questions. Monica is a part of a dance troupe and even did two of her native dances for us.

Though the students are eager to return to their families and their “normal” way of life, it is, in many cases, a difficult break for them to make. It also can be very difficult for the host families to bid them farewell, as was our case. Truly, they were a part of our family, and will forever have a home here in Tennessee. We will remain in contact with them, and look forward to being reunited sometime in the future.

PLEASE be encouraged to be a host family if you have not already done so. If you have, please promote your experience to others, so that together we can host as many students from Guatemala as want to come and experience the United States. It is our hope and prayer that, in the not too distant future, our students can reciprocate by studying abroad in Guatemala.

***Lisa, Rodney and Benjamin Syler***

## **#7**

Wow, where do I begin. It was the most wonderful experience in the world opening the eyes of a child to the wonders in the United States. I just wish we had more time to show her many more places and fun things in Tennessee. I think it was a growing experience for my family and would recommend anyone to interact with the FACES cultural program. We really appreciated the opportunity to have our student Natalia. Sincerely,

***Elizabeth Schultheis***

## #8

Our experience as a host family was a positive and enriching event. The initial changes related to another member of the household were quickly worked out and our new "daughter" quickly became a member of the family. Even the simplest aspects of family-life were enhanced by our exchange student; dinner conversation, discussions in the car, and even the daily routine were opportunities for cultural exchanges and learning experiences. Both our children and we adults learned much about Guatemala and even our own country as we explained traditions, shared stories, and learned from each other. Opening your home to another student is clearly rewarding for the both the exchange student and the host family.

*John Foreman*

## #9

"We have had two students through the FACES program in the past three years. We had incredible experiences with both Sofi and Marcelo. Both become members of our family and added so much to our family in their two months with us. As with most things, we got so much more from this program than we gave. We will definitely do it again."

*Michelle Conn*

## #10

"We hosted two young ladies through the Faces program in the falls of 2008 & 2009. We formed relationships with both girls, which will last a lifetime. It was a wonderful experience for both of our teenagers to have teenagers from Guatemala living with us for an extended period of time. We were thrilled to visit both of them in their country summer of 2010. We would recommend this program highly - it made our lives richer."

*Sharon Clifton*

## #11

"First, I think you and your staff do a very good job staying in touch with those families that expressed interest in participating in the program. Using e-mail, and phone calls, and being able to learn about the potential students' interests, ages, grade level, and English language abilities in advance helped us to make a good match with our son's age and interests. It was also great that your staff were all quite fluent in English."

Secondly, volunteering to host an exchange student was one of the best decisions we ever made as a family. Our student was wonderful! Jose was so well mannered and respectful. He was responsible and eager to experience everything he could about our culture and life in the U.S. He and our son got along very well and he was a total joy to have in our home, and we hope to have him return and stay with us again.

Thirdly, your program does a great job covering all the expenses for the students. We had a little confusion at the beginning about the money for school lunches but that got worked out. Having the health insurance card was a big plus too even though we did not have to use it.

I would highly recommend this exchange program to other families and would be happy to speak with or e-mail other interested host families to answer any questions they might have about this experience”

***Sarah Wall***

## **#12**

"This program is the best! It was a great opportunity for our kids and the whole family to share our experiences. Monica really became a member of the family and was missed when the holidays came and she was gone."

***Larry Harrington***

## **#13**

We had a wonderful experience as a host family. JP fit in very well and is now a member of our family :). We prayed from May until October about God preparing all of our hearts for the experience (including our student's), and for God to match us with the right child and we all (including JP) felt like he answered our prayers. We continue to keep in contact and hope to visit with each other again in the future.

Thank you,

***Chris Cannon***

## #14

We had a good experience participating in the cultural exchange program. Nice to know that Shanty had a wonderful time here. She adjusted really well to the daily routines, food at our house and the school. It was a real pleasure to host a girl like Shanty.

Faces and Our Cultures is a very wonderful program and we are very thankful to you and the organization for selecting us as one of the host families.

***Satish and Simantini Mohapatra***

## #15

We were very impressed with the Faces organization and our experience. We felt very much supported and connected with Gabby should we have needed any assistance. We had great communication with Sofi's family. I cannot express how much we enjoyed this experience and thankful for the opportunity we had!! We have spoken HIGHLY to other families and praying that a continued relationship with ACS and Faces will continue!  
Thank you for all you do!

***Audrey Beute***

## #16

We were truly blessed while Valeria stayed with our family. Not only did we learn so much about the Country of Guatemala, but we have gained another extension of family!

I encourage anyone who has never opened up their home and hearts to other cultures to do so. You will be blessed!

With a grateful heart,

***Nadia Shaya***

## #17

We cannot begin to tell you how much we enjoyed hosting Alvaro in Indianapolis. He was a wonderful, easy-going, funny addition to our family. He got along extremely well with our son, Joe, and we consider ourselves very lucky to have gotten such a great kid for our first hosting experience.

We appreciated all the contact from the folks in the Faces and Our Cultures Program along the way and how smoothly everything went during his visit.

Alvaro could not wait to experience winter and the snow during his visit. The first time it snowed, he could not get enough of it. By Thanksgiving, we thought we'd give Alvaro a real Indiana winter experience and took him tobogganing at one of the state parks. Two times down and I think he was done with winter. He opted out of more trips down the toboggan run for hot chocolate in the warming house. I think every time he saw the weather report after that he longed a bit for the beaches of Guatemala.

Warm Regards,

***Leslie Joseph (And the Lybik family)***

**#18**

Jose (Quique) is a really great person, very polite, and friendly. We really enjoyed having him at our house! Thank you so much for asking.

***Jean Washington***

**#19**

Our family thoroughly enjoyed the exchange experience with Esteban. We cannot think of any ways in which you can improve upon the quality program that you have in place. As a mom, I tried to think about how I could make Esteban feel comfortable being so far from home, so that he would not be homesick.

We followed all of the program suggestions as far as giving him his own room, bathroom, etc. and we also made sure we had a full schedule so he was busy right away. We asked him what type of snacks he would like to have in the house and I made sure he was as comfortable helping himself to food in our home as our own children when they want a snack. He seemed to quickly adapt and we think he was happy and comfortable throughout.

All and all, it was a tremendous experience and we would be happy to host again at any time. Thank you for your diligent work to match the families and to foster the communication between the students.

Kind regards,

***Susanne Hogan and family***  
(Dan, Andrew, Katie & Emma)

## #20

We truly enjoyed having Arturo stay with our family and we miss him now that he has gone home. He was very well prepared for the trip by your program. This is the most organized exchange program we have been part of as a family after hosting more than a half dozen students from a range of programs. Arturo was so polite, helpful and fun to have around. He made a lot of friends at school and our son, Lucas, had a great time hanging with him. Perhaps the most rewarding experience was seeing Arturo experience snow for the first time and then join the high school ski team (which took first at state last year). He went from snow plowing to skiing gates in several weeks and then skied in a high school ski race, finishing ahead of 11 other skiers in the race. Too bad he couldn't stay for the whole ski season - he might have helped the team win state again!

Thanks Sandy for all your organization and good work.

***Nikki Sorum***

## #21

We enjoyed our cultural experience as well. Fatima blended well into our family. She was willing to "go with the flow".... Americans lead crazy schedules that make me scratch my own head at times!! Why do we do all this stuff?!....and Fatima was willing to do it too.

God places people into our lives and it is my hope that she went home with a smile and a fond memory. Even among our cultural differences, we were able to find our similarities. People really aren't that different ~ it's fun and rewarding to find the common ground. We were prepared well. Communication throughout the process was exceptional. Thank you.

***Sarah and James Dirksen***