

Student shares experience of living abroad for a year

MARLEIGH VAN ALDERWERELT

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT

Hoi! Ik ben Marleigh en ik kom uit America.

Translation: Hi! I'm Marleigh and I'm from America.

Almost two years ago I made the big decision to study abroad for my junior year of high school. I chose an organization that my family had worked with before and started the long process of applying to be a foreign exchange student. After many forms, questions, interviews and a long period of waiting, I was accepted by American Field Service USA Intercultural Programs to

spend the 2009-2010 school year abroad.

After another couple of months, I was notified that I was accepted by AFS the Netherlands, my first country choice, and that I had received a Merit Scholarship to help pay for my year. I chose the Netherlands because my father's family is from the Netherlands. I received my host family information in May. I wrote to my new family, enjoyed my last few months in Oregon and waited for my departure to the Netherlands on Aug. 19.

Flash forward: I've now been in the Netherlands for almost three months. I live in Wageningen, a

historical town known for its university with a population of 36,000 people, located in the center of the country. My host parents both work in the government and I have three host siblings. My host brother is 20 and is studying at the university in Groningen, a big city in the North-East of the country. My older host sister is 17 and is currently studying abroad in Arkansas for one year and I won't actually meet her until she returns to the Netherlands in June. My other host sister is 15 but she is in the same grade as me at school, which is great! I am very happy with my host family and they

have been very helpful with everything.

One of the main reasons that I chose to study in the Netherlands was to learn Dutch. Learning this completely new language has been hard

differ between students. For example, on three days of the week I start school at 8:30 a.m. and end at 4 p.m. The other two days, my first class isn't until 11 a.m. and then I get out early, at 1:30 p.m. or 2:30 p.m.

SleepLong plays original music at lunch

MARSHALL MILLER

With over 300 friends on Facebook, SleepLong has taken music from home to school. A local acoustic band, it features Samuel Huck, junior, Parker Howell, senior, and Donevan Karr, junior.

Roughly eight months after being taught how to play the guitar, Huck and Karr began to make music together, both singing as well. It was during the summer that they started SleepLong.

"Donevan and I started writing some music together, and then Parker kind of joined. Then we noticed that we sounded good so we started recording," Huck said. Their album was recorded through garage band. They realized that Howell had tremendous talent and was good at writing music. Their inspiration comes not only from the musical

talent of John Mayer but from each other and the experiences that they have in their lives. They write music whenever they have spare time and whenever they pick up their guitars.

SleepLong's self titled, debut album, can be found on iTunes for the cost of \$9.99. Their album was put onto iTunes with help from a company called Tunecore which promotes bands and lets them keep 75 percent of the royalties.

"We have made like seven dollars at Safeway and we don't know how much we have made on iTunes for another month or so," Huck said. Some of their songs can be viewed on their website, SleepLongBand.com.

They mostly play acoustic pop/folk that has little percussion which has been described as a very clean and distinct sound. All three of them sing. Some of their titles include,

"Never Coming Back," "More Than Magnets" and "Down-To-Earth."

"Our other name, (Spherical) was taken, and it sucked, Donevan never sleeps so that leads to him coming up with random band names basically every night," Huck said.

The band performs on Friday's in Room A206, which is usually packed full of people, eager to hear the band.

"They always come up to us in the halls and say how much they like our stuff," Huck said. He added that the parents also love their music but sometimes think that the sounds are a little slow.

"They are a very talented group of guys. I can see music taking them far," Christian Wilson, junior, said. To find out more, become a fan on Facebook or check out their live performances on Fridays in Room A206.



Courtesy of Marleigh van Alderwerelt

Marleigh van Alderwerelt, junior, stands in front of a Holocaust memorial in Berlin, Germany. Van Alderwerelt is spending her junior year abroad in the Netherlands and looks forward to traveling around Europe and becoming fluent in Dutch.

but it pays off when I'm able to communicate with my classmates and family in their language, rather than in English. People always say that Dutch is a hard language to learn because if you try to speak Dutch with Dutch people, they'll respond to you in English because they like speaking English and it's easier for them than trying to understand a foreigner attempting Dutch. I am far from being fluent in Dutch but every day I learn more and find myself understanding more.

The school I attend is called Het Pantarijn and it's only a six minute bike ride from my house. The Dutch school system is very different from the American school system and WLHS. The biggest difference is that education is different for those who will go to the University after they graduate and those that will not continue with their education. When Dutch students are 12 and finished with their primary education, they take a test that will determine which track they will follow. VWO is the only track that guarantees the University option for students and it is the hardest track of the three. At my school, I attend VWO Foreign exchange students are rarely put into VWO 5 or VWO 6 because the students in these levels are preparing for their final exams and taking their final exams, respectively.

Another big difference is that rather than having school for the same amount of time every day, schedules are flexible and

(depending on the day). Classes are 70 minutes long, with two 15 minute breaks during the day and a 30 minute break for lunch.

I'm currently taking math, biology, physics, English, art, Dutch, a leadership class (it just started so I don't know much about it yet) and informatica (a computer class), and I have gym once a week. Physics is my hardest class, besides Dutch, because the science vocabulary is a challenge and I've never taken Physics before. English is my favorite class. Another thing about school here that is still weird for me is that if a teacher is sick or has something else and can't teach the class, it's just cancelled—often without much notice!

A great thing about the Netherlands, and Europe in general, is the public transportation and the proximity of things. It takes only two hours to cross the entire country (west to east) in a car and trains will take you anywhere you want to go. From the city of Wageningen, you can catch a train to just about anywhere in the country. From Wageningen, it's an hour train ride to Amsterdam, where you can catch a train to almost anywhere in Europe. The Dutch are known for riding bikes everywhere and it truly is the best way to get around in any city here.

I hope that gives you a little insight into my life here in the Netherlands and I look forward to writing and sharing more about this wonderful country.

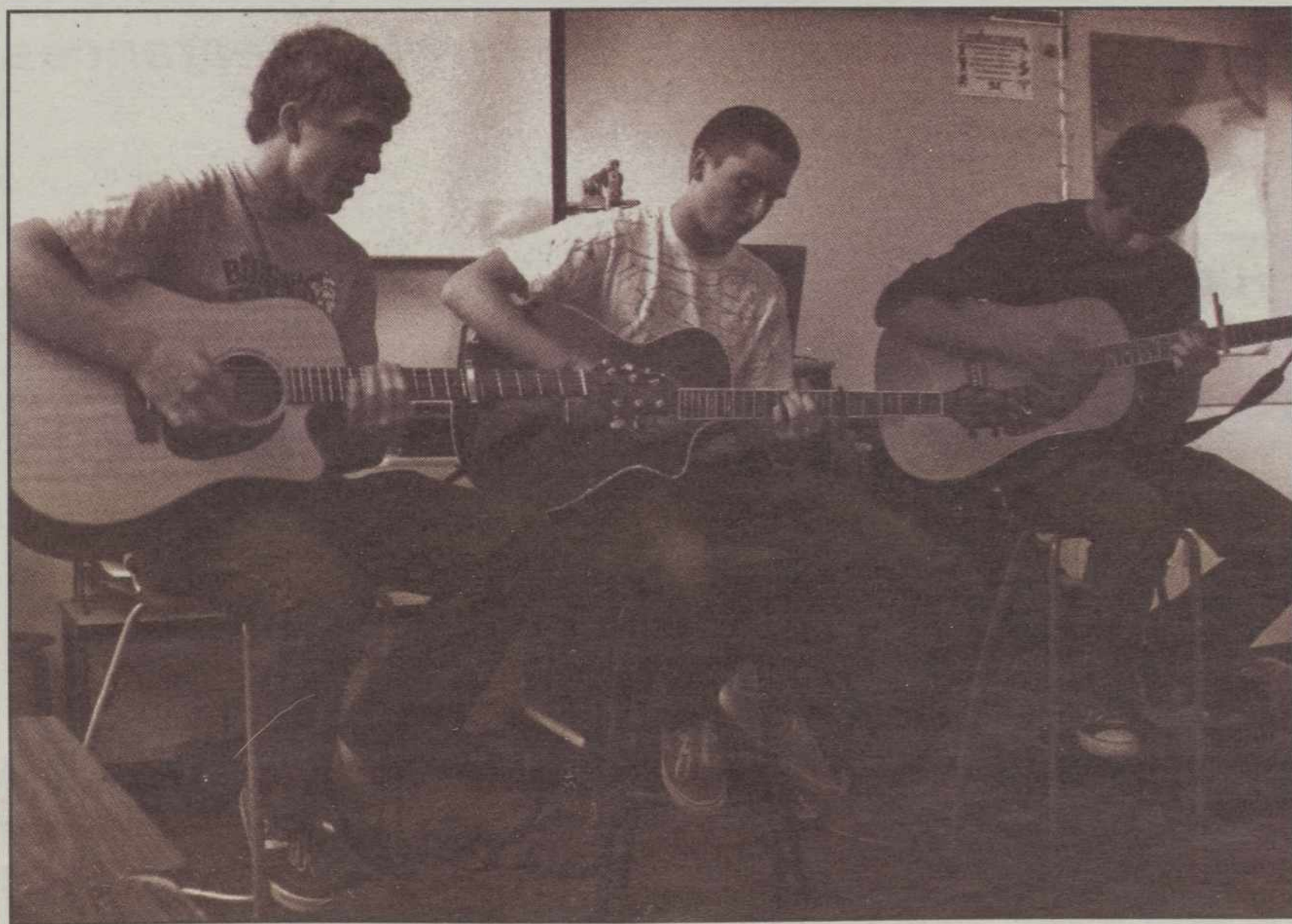


Photo by Carly Feke

SleepLong band members Samuel Huck, Parker Howell and Donevan Karr perform live on Fridays in Room A206. Their self titled, debut album is available on iTunes for \$9.99.