

Meet This Year's Vernonia Exchange Students

The Vernonia community has had the pleasure of hosting numerous exchange students over the last few years. Last year there were thirteen, which was a lot. This year, a smaller group of six students are joining us for a year of cultural exchange. *Vernonia's Voice* thought it was important to take some time to meet and get to know our temporary residents, and introduce them to the community at large.



Petr, Anisa and Klara

Anisa Mukhtorova is from a small village in Tajikistan. Anisa, who is 15 and is staying with Randy and Sharon Parrow, has an infectious smile and a playful and warm personality. Anisa has only learned to speak English in the last six months, but is picking it up very quickly.

Anisa was transferred to Vernonia from Rainier a few weeks ago and is still settling into her new surroundings. She says she likes Vernonia very much. "People, teachers and students, everybody is so helpful and friendly. It very nice to be with people like this. I love it here!"

Anisa is planning to get involved at her new school. "I like to participate in school activities," she says. She is planning to play basketball this winter.

When asked about differences between her country and here, Anisa noted the food. "I really like the food here," she says with a giggle. "I like lasagna so much! With lots of cheese-- I like it so much!"

Anisa has enjoyed seeing the northwest and enjoys shopping in Portland. She had a chance to visit Seattle and go to the Space Needle.

Anisa was surprised by how many cars each family has in America. "In my country, I walk most places," she said. "Not everybody has cars but here every family has two or three. And even if it's not a far distance, they still drive."

Anisa says she chose to become an exchange student, "... because I like to travel, to have new experiences, to learn new languages and to have lots of fun."

Klara Breil is 16 and from a city in Germany near Frankfurt. She is being hosted by the Wallace family, and seems outgoing and mischievous with a good sense of humor. She speaks very good English.

Klara has a favorite meal she says she orders whenever she and her family go out-- "...fries, chicken and Sprite. So my host family already knows what I want-- so I don't even have to order."

Klara has already taken the ultimate American vacation-- she's been to Disneyland. "It was very fun, even though I was sick," she said. She has also already had the ultimate Oregon vacation-- river rafting on the Deschutes River.

Klara is also planning on playing basketball this winter.

Petr Jiranek, 18, is staying with the Ward family and is here from Prague, the capital city in the Czech Republic. Petr, who is somewhat reserved and a little serious, visited Vernonia last summer when he attended the Larry Steele Basketball Camp, and was coincidentally picked to come back here for his year as an exchange student.

Petr says he likes the small size of Vernonia. "In Prague, you only know a few people in your neighborhood-- here you get to know more people," he says.

Petr noted that everything is more spread out in the United States, "...everything here is huge!" he says.

Petr ran on the Cross Country team this fall, will play basketball this winter and plans to go out for track and field in the spring.

Petr says he came to the United States as an exchange student especially to play basketball, and to meet new people, make new friends and experience a new culture.

Liza-Marie Kleine is from a small German village and is living with her exchange sister Amy and the rest of the Rethwill family. Liza is 17 and very outgoing and friendly and speaks excellent English.

Liza says she became an exchange student in order to learn better English and experience different schools and people.

Liza got to go rafting with some of the other exchange students, Margo and Emma. "It was fun, but I was really scared." She also has been to Seaside and



Liza

hopes she gets to go to Seattle. But, "...I'm happy to stay here, do things with my family and enjoy the rain in Oregon!" she says, laughing.

Liza noted that people here are more polite than in Europe. "I really like that people here are friendly and ask you how your day is."

When asked if she has any favorite American

foods, Liza responded enthusiastically, "Peanut butter ice cream! It's amazing-- the best thing I've ever tried! I love it!"

Liza is playing volleyball and enjoyed the "Pack the Gym Night" during Homecoming Week. "It was a great feeling with all the people there." She was also looking forward to the Homecoming Dance. "I think that's really nice when everyone gets dressed up and wears dresses and tuxedos," she said. She said she intends to either play softball or run track in the spring.

Margo Cormier is 18, and is being hosted by Adrienne East and Matt and Sue Blair. Margo is from a small city in France and is confident and mature.

Margo has also had a chance to do something very American-- she and her host family took a summer road trip through Washington, Idaho, and Montana. "That was pretty cool," she said. She has also been to southern Oregon, and the coast.

Margo, who has been playing basketball for



Margo

eleven years in France, is planning to play here for VHS. A serious knee injury just after her arrival kept her from playing volleyball.

Margo says she wants to become a chef-- she has already been accepted into a famous cooking school in France for next year-- and hopes to own her own restaurant in the United States.

Emma Kneubuhler is from Brisbane, Australia, so she speaks very good English! In fact, she's already losing her accent. Emma is 16 and is staying with the Jon, Kinnell and Bridger Steward. She is very outgoing and seems to really be enjoying her time in Vernonia so far.

Coming from a big city, the move to a small community hasn't actually been that difficult for Emma. "It's kind of different being in a small town, but I like it," she says.

Emma says the food is very different here. "That was something I didn't expect," she says. When asked if she had any favorite American foods, Emma replied excitedly, "I had a Twinkie for the first time. I had one here and then I had a deep fried one at a fair. I was so excited!"

Emma has had a chance to travel to southern Oregon, went to see the Redwood forests of northern California and ridden in a jet boat on the Rogue River. "That was really fun!" she says. She has also been to Seaside. She has also been to the Portland Zoo and to OMSI. "I've been busy, really busy," she says with a laugh. Emma says she hopes to go to Seattle to see the Space Needle.

Emma said she hopes to see some live music while here in the states. "I love music and a lot of my favorite bands play in the US but not in Australia. So that's something I really want to do."

Emma has helped do volleyball stats and says she's looking forward to Halloween. "I got to carve a pumpkin for the first time last night!" she said excitedly.

Emma plans to play softball in the spring-- "I played soccer and field hockey in Australia, but I can't do them here."

Emma says she likes small town Vernonia. "You sort of know everybody and I like that," she says. "It's a lot different than living in Suburbia where you don't know anyone."



Emma



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