

Meet the Exchange Students

Each year the Vernonia School District welcomes a group of exchange students from countries around the world to spend the school year here, living with local families, learning and participating in activities at the school, and becoming part of our community. This year nine exchange students will call Vernonia home, and Vernonia's Voice wanted to introduce five of them; look for the rest of the students in our October 21 issue.

Elena Zielke is from a small village in central Germany near the city of Saalburg-Ebersdorf. She is spending this year living with the Brandi Abney family. She has been an important member of the girls cross country team this fall and will do track and field in the spring. She likes Vernonia because, "you have everything you need here." Elena said she decided to be an exchange student in order to meet new people, improve her English, and learn about American culture. She says she plans to study sports medicine after graduation.

Asia Plaza Garcia is from the north Basque Country region of Spain from a city called Vitoria-Gasteiz. She is spending her year living with Jeana, Justin, Sadie, and Savannah Gump. She thinks Vernonia is a pretty town and likes that it is in the middle of the forest. "The buildings are very beautiful," she says, and they remind her of a typical small town in an American movie. Asia became an exchange student to improve her English, and also to experience a "change in my routine." After



(L-R) Elena Zielke, Asia Plaza Garcia, Philomene Abt, Hannah Duval, and Sebastian Gill

graduation she is considering going into the military to become a pilot, or maybe studying politics.

Philomene Abt is staying with the Brandi Abney family and is from Lille, a city in the north of France. Philo is part of the cross country team this fall, will try basketball in the winter, and maybe run track in the spring. She is also playing the saxophone in the band. She thinks Vernonia is very small, "but cute." All of Philo's three older siblings have been exchange students, so she wanted to do the same thing because they all had great experiences; she also wants to improve her English language skills. After she graduates from high school, Philo plans to attend McGill University in Canada

to study psychology and gender issues.

Hannah Duval is from a small city called Bielefeld in Germany. She is living with Jeana, Justin, Sadie, and Savannah Gump this year. She would like to play basketball this winter, and will do track and field in the spring, competing in the high jump and sprints. Hannah says, although she prefers bigger cities, she thinks Vernonia is a pretty town. "I can live here," she says. Hannah has already graduated from high school in Germany, and says she may go on to study psychology or something with languages. She says she became an exchange student because she wanted to meet new people and have an American high school experience.

Sebastian Gill is from an island in the north of Denmark. At 6' 5" Sebastian will be a welcome addition to the Logger's basketball program this winter and says he will try baseball in the spring. He is spending this year with Erin and Tyler Swepston. Sebastian says Vernonia is very different from his home because of all the surrounding forests. He thinks the people in Vernonia are very kind. "I think this is a great town," he says. Sebastian wanted to come to the U.S. as an exchange student because his grandmother is originally from Illinois and moved to Denmark, and three of her children were exchange students in the U.S., including Sebastian's mother. He says he is not sure about his future, but might study business.

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