

Small high school is big at accepting foreign exchange students

By April Bamburg

Foreign exchange students have come and gone from Vernonia High School for many years. This year eight students from around the globe came to experience life in the states and enrich the cultural diversity of the the high school.

Narisara Satrulee

Narisara Satrulee, known around VHS as Oyl, is seventeen and came from Bangkok, Thailand. She is staying with Cindy and David Naillon, and their son Shawn. She is here through the ASSE program.

In Bangkok, Satrulee lives with her parents, Mana and Sirmsook Satrulee, and a sister, Narisara, who she calls "Nui." Her mother is a banking officer, and her father works in shipping.

"My best decision was to become a foreign exchange student," she said. "I had a hard time at first, and have had some bad times, but there has been more good than bad."

Satrulee enjoys playing badminton and swimming. She also played volleyball during the fall sports season, wrestled for a short time in the winter season, and is participating in track and field for the spring season.

School has been an adjustment for Satrulee. "At home, you can't choose the subjects you want to take, and some days we have seven subjects, some days we have nine," she said. "The kids here look quite different. Schools in Thailand are very strict. We can wear no makeup, have uniforms and cannot dye our hair."

She was in her senior year of school when she came to America, and must finish the last semester when she returns, after which she has to prepare for entrance exams to universities in Thailand. She will leave Vernonia on June 22.

This is not Satrulee's first time in America, as she came here with her family when she was ten. "We traveled and fol-

lowed a map around California and Washington," she said. "I liked what I saw, and decided I would come back."

Ani Militzer

Ani Militzer, 17, comes to Vernonia from Berlin, Germany. She is staying with Candace and Kevin Swayze, and their two children.

Militzer lives in the German capitol of six to seven million people with her parents, Katrin and Mathias Militzer. Katrin is a trauma nurse in the emergency room, and Mathias owns a telecommunications/computer company.

Militzer has found that her opinion of the United States has not changed too much. "It takes you a long time to get from one place to another, people are friendly and helpful."

Militzer is an only child, but says she has found a sister and brother in her host family. "My younger sister, Nicole, is a freshman, and my little brother, Kevin Jr., is a seventh grader. They are like my sister and brother to me."

There aren't a lot of similarities between her school in Germany and school here in Vernonia, she says, but there seem to be quite a few differences. "In Germany, we have different classes every day. Sometimes we have five classes a day, sometimes we have eight. We have classes of twenty-five students, and four classes for each grade," she said. "Each class has its own room, and teachers go to the classrooms, students don't go to the teachers." Another difference between the schools is that prom, winter formal and homecoming are not activities in German schools.

All in all, Militzer has been happy in Vernonia. "In the six months I've been here, I've found great friends in school and my host family."

Fabian Franz

Another Berlin resident, Fabian Franz was the last of the exchange students to arrive in Vernonia, attending his



Vernonia's cross cultural friends this year include, back row from left, Lola Muminova and Ani Militzer; middle row, Narisara Satrulee, Johanna Seidel, Elena Majbova and Fabian Franz; and front, Jiri Burda and Kohei Nagashio.

first day of classes on March 6. Previously, Franz had been living with a family in California.

He is staying with Dawn and Milton Plews and their son Colin, who is a junior at Vernonia High School.

At home, Franz lives with his mother, Gudrun, father, Cornel, and younger sister, Friederike, who will be thirteen. His mother works in the management at the Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin; his father teaches direction for the Bavarian State Opera.

Franz is 16 years old and agreed with Militzer regarding the differences between the schools in Berlin and here. He disagrees though, that there aren't very many similarities. "Things are pretty much the same here," he said. "The food is the same; the students are the same."

After his return to Berlin, he will have to attend school for three years before he graduates. He plans on spending two years in the army, then going to college, possibly for something science related.

Johanna Seidel

A third exchange student from Germany is 17-year-old Johanna Seidel. She is staying with Don and Nona Skinner, and another exchange student, Elena Majbova. Seidel comes to Vernonia from Rohr, Germany, a town of about 1100 people.

Her mother, Hildegard, stays at home, and her father, Bodo, is a pastor for three different towns. She also has three brothers, Joseph, who is 18, Jonathan, who is five and seven-year-old Benjamin.

"I never really thought about the place I would stay, but then the organization sent me the letter and said I would stay in Vernonia," she said. "I couldn't find Vernonia on the map, but it's okay. I don't care. I found friends and we do things together."

The school system in America is different than in Germany, she said. "In Germany, I was in school until two or three

p.m. In the afternoon I had different things to do, and the daily schedule was different. Also, I had 16 subjects a day, not seven."

During her time in the U.S., Seidel has been to Washington, and walked through San Francisco and Alcatraz prison.

Lola Muminova

Lola Muminova, the youngest of the foreign exchange students, is 16 years old. She comes from Tashkent, Uzbekistan, and is staying with Alfred (Sandy) and Wyla Mikalow.

Muminova lives in Tashkent with her parents, Rustam and Alla Muminova, and her sister, Saida, who is in her junior year at a university in Uzbekistan. Her mother is a swimming coach, and her father works for the government.

She chose to become an exchange student in order to meet new people, and to experience a culture different from her own.

She played basketball this year, and is on the girls golf team for the upcoming spring season. Sports are not a part of school in Tashkent.

"The schools are totally different," she said. "We go to school six days a week and cannot choose our classes."

Muminova had never been to the United States before, and said that she had heard many things, most of which was stereotyping.

She plans on being a lawyer, specializing in business law, in either Uzbekistan or the United States.

Jiri Burda

Jiri Burda, came from the Czech Republic to stay with Cathy and Reginald Ward, and their son, Josh.

Burda is eighteen and lives in Prague, the capital city of the Czech Republic, with his parents, Pavel and Andela Burda. His father is a manager of the Czech Basketball Federation; his mother is a supervising manager in Tesco. His brother, Petr, was a foreign exchange student for two years, and also

stayed with the Ward family.

Burda says that his opinion of the United States was, and still is, that it is a great country.

As the rest of the exchange students have, Burda has noticed some differences between his school in the Czech Republic and VHS. "Teachers are more open to opinions here," he said. There are similarities though, like student behavior and "a lot of homework."

He will return to Prague on July 2. "That's a pity," he said. "I'll miss the Independence Day!" After he returns to Prague, he hopes to become a referee with FIBA, the European basketball league, and will begin studying for his referee tests.

Elena Majbova

Elena Majbova, who is also staying with Don and Nona Skinner, comes from Puchov, Slovakia. She is 18 years old, and lives in the town of nearly 20,000 people, with her parents, Milan and Viera Majbova, an older brother, Peter, and her dog, Tarzan. Viera works in the state archives, and Milan is an appraiser in the building trade.

"I have never been in the United States before, and my opinion of the U.S. was just what people had told me, that most people were not really friendly," she said. "I found that it wasn't true. I found friends, and I am having a great time."

After she returns to Puchov, Majbova will finish her secondary schooling, then plans to study psychology at Slovakia University.

Kohei Nagashio

Kohei Nagashio didn't come directly from Japan to Vernonia. The 17-year-old is staying with Paul and Shelly Goodman and their two children, Jeff and Jared. Before coming to Vernonia, however, Nagashio spent five months in Topeka, Kansas, where he attended English camp. He came to the United States because he was bored in Japan, he said.

He lives in Omiya, in the Saitama prefecture in Japan, Please see page 12

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