Host Family Program

AFS is a non-profit international voluntary organization. Every year we host exchange students aged 15-17 from across the globe for 10 months. Exchange students will attend local secondary schools and live with local families in Hong Kong, allowing them to immerse in the culture.

Reasons to be a Host Family

This unique experience helps you / your children to

- Improve communication and problem solving skills
- Improve English, even learn a foreign language
- Build up international friendship
- Create a closer family bond
- Learn about foreign cultures

To be a Host Family

Host Family only need to provide

1. Daily Meals
2. A Bed
3. Unconditional Love and Acceptance of Cultural Difference

Interested families only need to

1. Leave your information and wait for our staff to contact you
2. Fill in the application form
3. AFS will arrange a home visit
4. Selected student will be assigned to your home
5. Attend orientation

Exchange students usually arrive at the end of August and depart at the end of June next year, but even if you could not commit for the whole period, we also offer short-term hosting opportunity

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My ‘Children’ Abroad

Jerry and Susanna hosted an Italian student Nicolo and a Denmark student Torben before. Including the host student, there were 4 children at their home, the difference in habits and culture certainly led to conflicts, but Jerry and Susanna treated these conflicts as an opportunity for their children to learn how to solve a problem through communication.

Sometimes when the students are not willing to listen and follow the house rules, it really drives Jerry and Susanna mad, they also considered whether they should give up. However, when we took a look at the letters and cards that they shared with us, we understood why they would choose to continue. Nicolo is a kid who is very willing to express his emotion, apart from always chatting with host mum and dad, he also brought cards and learned how to write Chinese letters on special occasions like birthday. Susanna recalled the time before Nicolo left, she once called his Italian name, he said, mum, please keep calling me my Chinese name. After boarding, he also sent a message to Jerry and told him that he hid a letter under the bed, it was another long letter.

Until now, Nicolo is still in their family whatapp group, he keeps sharing his experience with Torben, his progress in school work and even what he had at lunch with all family members. Although it is just a one-year stay, they have already treated each other as a family member.

Learn from the Problems

Speaking of the time when Johnny and Halo received French exchange student Esther’s profile, they were very excited. Until Esther arrived at Hong Kong and they really lived together, problems arose. For Johnny and Halo’s son and daughter who are just 10 and 8 years old respectively, it is a real shock for suddenly having an elder sister who shares the attention of their parent, and she is even a foreigner. As a result, they were not so willing to communicate with her, Esther also became more and more quiet. If you are the host parent, how would you handle this situation?

When children started to be aware of Esther’s changes, Halo made use of the opportunity and inspired them to think about their attitude and behavior. Halo also talked to Esther and inspired her to think whether it is effective to just avoid the problem. This is actually the core of the host family experience, like what Halo said ‘It is not just about cultural exchange, but also a great chance for every family member to think, break through and grow! When you add a new element into a family, it must generate changes! The magic is hard to be described by words, we encourage you to be the next host family!’
**Break the Stereotype**

What pop into your mind when you think of Italian and German? We always say hosting students is a great way to experience culture of different countries, but for Rosa who hosted students from Italy, Germany and Japan before, it is far more than that. These experiences broke the stereotype of Rosa and her family.

Rosa’s family hosted 2 Italian exchange students before. The first student Anna is more like a ‘typical’ Italian. She is independent and outgoing, but her concept in time and hygiene is different from what we usually expect in Hong Kong, which made it difficult for Rosa’s daughter Cherry to share the same room with her. However, Rosa said it was actually a chance for Cherry to think like a mum or a host family and know how a daughter and an exchange student should behave. Hosting another Italian student Martina next year was then an experience which changed Rosa’s perception on Italian. As Martina is such an organized, responsible and punctual person, she realized that it is not accurate to judge a person based on his or her nationality. There are so many different kinds of people in every country.

Before hosting students, Cherry was not willing to join the year exchange program, but this 2-year experience really changed her mind. In 2016-17 she decided to spend a year in Germany. Interestingly Rosa also hosted a German student in the same year. This year Rosa’s family traveled to Germany and met Cherry’s host family there, Martina also joined them in Berlin! We believe that it was a memorable experience for all of them!

**Exchange Student is like a ‘Mirror’**

Mr. & Mrs. Li hosted 2 students who have very different personalities. Valeria is an outgoing student from Spain, her communication style was so direct that Mr. & Mrs. Li felt shocked at first, but she loved sharing and interacting with family members, even forced them to have dinner together and chat every day. She brought very positive change to the family. Japanese student Miki was the opposite shy and quiet at first, but after Mr. & Mrs. Li talking to her patiently for several times, she integrated well into the family. At last, she didn't even want to leave Hong Kong. Witnessing such a dramatic change really give them a strong sense of satisfaction.

Hosting student enriched family life, for Mr. & Mrs Li, host students are sometimes like a mirror too, just like when they saw host student playing with her phone all the time, their daughter also thought that was not appropriate. At this time, Mr. & Mrs. Li would say 'Actually sometimes you are more or less like this.'

**More Stories**

www.afs.hk/story
WHO ARE AFS EXCHANGE STUDENTS?
AFS exchange students are from different parts of the world like Europe, USA, South America and Japan. They have been through the serious selection process by AFS office in their countries, showing positive and proactive attitude, passion in overseas exchange and acceptance of cultural differences. Our matching is mainly based on the interest and personality of the student, the location of host school and the requirement of host family (usually regarding the gender of the student).

I AM NOT A FLUENT ENGLISH SPEAKER, CAN I BECOME A HOST FAMILY?
Of course! Many exchange students coming to Hong Kong are from non-English speaking countries, who may only be able to speak basic English too. At the same time, AFS encourages exchange students to learn the local cultures, so you are very welcome to teach students Cantonese for cultural exchange.

I DO NOT HAVE A BIG HOUSE, DO I NEED TO PROVIDE THE STUDENT WITH HIS / HER OWN BEDROOM?
No need! Exchange students are well aware that Hong Kong is a highly dense city with compact living environment, you only need to provide a bed that is not in the living room or a room with family member of a different gender.

I HAVE A BUSY LIFE, AM I SUITABLE TO BE A HOST FAMILY?
We only expect our host families to treat exchange students as a part of their families and let them participate in the normal family life. Therefore no need to arrange extra activities for the students, you just need to give care, advice and assistance to students and be with them in their exchange year. Even if you could not commit for the whole period, we also offer short-term hosting opportunity.

APART FROM DAILY MEALS AND A BED, ARE THERE OTHER EXPENSES OF BEING A HOST FAMILY?
You do not need to provide subsidies to exchange students. Students are responsible for their own pocket money and AFS is responsible for their medical expenses, school fees, textbook fees, transportation cost to school and school lunch subsidy, etc.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THERE ARE PROBLEMS GETTING ALONG WITH MY STUDENT?
We encourage you to first communicate with your student directly. If you need support, each host family is assigned a trained volunteer, who will liaise with you and your student. We also host orientation regularly to provide needed support or guidance.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY WHAT SUPPORT DOES AFS PROVIDE?
AFS purchases medical insurance for all exchange students. You will also have access to a 24-hour support hotline for contacting AFS Hong Kong office staff when needed.