

Have you thought about being a host family for an exchange student?

EF (Education First) High School Exchange Year is a non-profit organization that brings volunteer host families and students from 15 different countries together for a school year. EF was established in 1979 when the U.S. wanted to increase the diplomacy and global awareness between the United States and other countries of the world. They wanted a way for other people around the world to think more favorably of the U.S., make the world a little smaller, and a way to appreciate the various cultures. EF is regulated by the Department of State and is the largest exchange program in the U.S. Over the 40+ years, EF has brought more than 100,000 exchange students to host families around the nation. We currently have three exchange students (Lisa from Japan, Alice from Italy, and Ben from Germany) attending GWA this year. They love the school, their host families, the new friends they have made, and being a part of the community.

What makes for a good host family? Our host families are volunteers and represent the diversity of American culture - with varied economic, religious, and racial backgrounds. Among those who truly enjoy the exchange experience are parents looking to give their families a glimpse of the world and introduce them to new customs and cultures, without having to travel the globe. Many of our host families do not have children and are single while others have adult children who no longer live at home or have young kids. They say that hosting an exchange student gives them an opportunity to enrich their own lives and connect with their community in a whole new way. Students come over with their own spending money and insurance.

What are others saying about the program?

"My children developed such a close relationship that they will be going to Spain this year to visit their new Spanish brother. Our children's exposure to this program has broadened their minds. They have taken a genuine interest in learning a second language and now have the travel bug" - a host dad.

What is required to be able to host an exchange student? Not much:

- To provide three meals a day for the student
- Host parents at least age 25
- Anyone 17+ in the home to pass a background check
- Provide a bed of a non-convertible nature (no futons)
- Provide a caring home and interested in learning about a student's culture and showing them the American culture.