

EXCEL CLASS OF 2010-2011: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Eleonora Lekavičiūtė studied at Kirkwood High School, Kirkwood, Missouri

“When I first came here, I had lots of outstanding things happen to me; I don’t think I could forget any of them. Riding horses, visiting museums, my first American football game, going to the zoo, hanging out with my new friends, spending a weekend by a lake, seeing St. Louis and all of the nature here – everything was memorable, and added up to the whole remarkable image of U.S.

“There is a lot to say about my life here this year, certainly more than just a couple of sentences! But what I really enjoyed was school. The teachers were very helpful at Kirkwood High School, and I didn’t struggle with the language or classes, because they always helped me. The things they taught were well prepared and interesting. People were very interested in where I’m from, and asked me all about Lithuania.

“I found new friends that I will keep in touch with for my whole life, and my host family was more than I expected. I always tried to set higher standards for myself, I tried to use every opportunity that I encounter here; I wanted to compete and reach for goals.”

When asked about her favorite experience, Eleonora said, “One of my favorite experiences was going to Florida, the BUBW Conference. First of all, I put so much effort into writing the essay and I found out that I won on my birthday, so it was a great present for myself! The Conference itself was amazing and the people I met there now are friends for life.”

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Eleonora, left, with a new friend from Kosovo.

Speaking about her volunteer community service, Eleonora said, “It was not just the people around us that we helped; it was also for our own good, as we learn how truly important it is to give, and not only receive. After volunteering, I learned to see everything positively, it makes me happy to think that someone feels better after what I did. It was very productive.”



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Gabrielė Papievytė attended Brookwood High School in Snellville, Georgia

When she first arrived, Gabrielė said, “Every day is a new experience. When not in your home country, every day is an interesting challenge. So far, I had really amazing moments here; one of the most memorable experiences is running on the cross country team. Whether you are in cross country or another sport, it is the easiest way to physically excel, find friends, socialize, and have fun. It is amazing to share your feelings near the finish line, where you feel a true spirit of how welcome you are here. That is wonderful!”

When asked what she learned from her community service each month, she said, “That a good leader is a good servant. Helping others made me feel so good.” She said that one of her favorite experiences during her time in America “was probably that amazing day before Christmas, when we went to people in need and gave out food and went gift shopping for them. The joy and thankfulness in their eyes was something magical to me; it made me feel so needed!”



Gabriele, second from left, and teammates at a cross-country meet.

Gabriele Bartoseviciute attended Oxford High School in Oxford, Mississippi

“I guess each and every day was somewhat amazing and full of surprises, so it’s hard to choose one particular experience, and name it as my favorite. The trip to Choctaw was most amazing – I got to know the culture and the languages that, to be honest, I didn’t know that existed before I came here.”

When asked about her community service, she said, “The United States has been known as a country where volunteerism has a big place in people’s lives. Society is stable because people support each other. Therefore, teaching foreign exchange students about the importance of giving your free time and efforts to those who really need it helps to stabilize all society. It creates a nation’s mentality, it inspires other people to get out and do something for the country and for other people, and to make life brighter. I believe being an active member of your community is more like a duty that everyone should take with responsibility. The American experience teaches us to take responsibility in our local communities where even small efforts can lead to big changes.”



Gabriele Bartoseviciute, left, pictured with new friends on other American Councils exchange programs, from Russia, Serbia, Moldova, and Albania.