

# EXCEL CLASS OF 2011-2012 DISCOVERS AMERICA

*Monika* Urbonaite, Salado  
High School, Salado, Texas



“I love the school and the people here. Everyone is friendly and kind. My peers and I laughed when one girl tried to say my last name – Urbonaite – and she said ‘Urba-WHAT?’ So far, there have been a lot of fun times and memorable moments. At first in school, I was a little bit lost; I kept forgetting where are the classes and the way of studying is different, but now everything is just fine. I am very happy to be here and everything is better than I expected!”

*Monika, third from left, at a football game with two exchange students from the A-SMYLE and FLEX programs (first and second students from left), and a classmate.*

*Emile* Indrasiute, Cor Jesu Academy,  
St. Louis, Missouri

*Simona* Pociute, Mercer County  
High School, Aledo, Illinois



“I see my time here as one in which I will grow in many ways. English is not the only thing I’m developing here – I am making new friends, getting used to different traditions, ways of communication – basically, I am starting a new life. When you are in a new situation like this, it is a good opportunity to get to know yourself better. I have a wonderful host family which helps me so much, but still, I encounter more situations where I make my own decisions here than in my home country. This will help me become more independent and open-minded.... I always knew how interesting it would be to meet people who see world the differently, but I didn’t understand how fascinating it really was. Now I think that I may choose a career that has something to do with different cultures, languages, and people. I know that I will travelling and visiting new places in my later years, and I’m inspired to do it by the time I spend here in the United States. (Simona is pictured at far right, with new friends at Homecoming.)

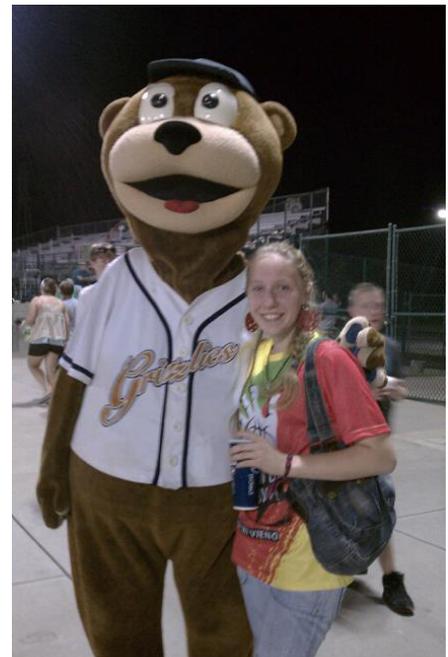
“My experiences in the United States are very interesting, and if I found difficulties at first, now I see them as a fun adventure. Firstly as I came here, I thought that everything was different – environment, culture, and food. I could not eat American food, it was so unusual. But there were so many things that I discovered! Now if anybody asks me what is my favourite food, I don’t hesitate and respond: WAFFLES! Fun things happen in my school, too. When I am sitting with my friends, they always ask me questions: do you have MacDonald’s in Lithuania? Do you have this, do you have that. And usually those are things that I have to say no, we don’t have that. Then my friends tell me: okay, we will take you here and there! It is really fun how excited they are about showing me all those things that are different! I’m as excited as they are. In only one month in U.S., fun things are happening! (Emile is pictured below, middle, with two friends at a football game.)



Vygante Myzgerite, Lebanon High School,  
Lebanon, Illinois

“I’ve heard that almost everybody in the U.S. loves football and baseball, and I really wanted to see what real baseball or football was, so I was very excited when we got baseball tickets. I was hoping for something really active, but at the game, I couldn’t understand what they were doing, or why it would last three hours. So I decided that maybe you have to be a true American if you want to understand baseball. :) Of course, I had lots of fun there and I love that everybody is so excited about the game. And I really want to understand it, too! I am pretty sure that when I do, it will be a lot more fun. And of course, I must see football, too! In America, I see, talk, and live in the English language every day.... Who knows—maybe here I will find a new way of life!”

Lukas Dagilis, St. Francis High School,  
Traverse City, Michigan



Vygante with the Grizzlies mascot at her first baseball game.



Lukas (back row, middle) and other exchange students in his cluster during a visit to the Grand Traverse Band.

“My first real month in the U.S. has so far been very exciting. I’m not having much trouble adjusting; everyone is very friendly and helpful. I have seen quite a bit of Michigan, done a few new activities, met lots of new people, and had lots and lots of fun. For me, the most surprising thing is just how little most people know about the rest of the world. Barely anyone has even heard of Lithuania. Another thing that is surprising is that many people don’t believe that I’m foreign. I have to prove to them that I’m foreign by speaking Lithuanian, French, sometimes even Russian! Overall I think that this is going to be a great year of my life.”



Simonas Vainauskas, Greenville High School,  
Greenville, Alabama

This is the first college football game that I’ve been to and probably the most fun I’ve had in the U.S.! I got to experience southern football culture and meet a lot of new people. It also helped me to learn more stuff about American football, which is a brand-new sport to me. Overall, this has been an incredible experience and I enjoyed it very, very much!

