

Benay's YES Blog

My YES exchange year was the most unforgettable time of my life. When I go back to my country, I will take with me my independent living skills, pretty good English, my own trust in myself, a new culture, and lots of good memories.

During my time in the United States, I had many experiences like running track, giving a musical recital to 100 people, and meeting with lots of new and different people.

I learned many things, like how to be independent as a blind person, Braille music, writing and reading English, etc.

I did many activities, such as music and drama, sports, media, camps, etc.. These activities made me more social; I met with more people during these times.

I learned about new cultures and shared my own culture with others. Some people don't know enough things about Muslims, so I was there to talk about the stereotypes.

My YES year helped me to choose my career. When I am done with this year, I want to make a new, productive and accessible country for the blind and give support to parents of blind children and teachers of blind students.

I really enjoyed making new friends - it helped me practice my English. I met with people from different countries besides American students; my school had three exchange students besides me.

I had the nicest host family ever. I enjoyed my every second with them. I had two dogs, three cats, two sisters and one brother. They had good foods - my favorite American food is chili soup and tortilla chips with avocado dip.

I went to a private high school in Iowa; it was a really enjoyable time for me. The students and the faculty were very nice to me. I got equipment from the Iowa Braille School for my education like a digital book reader, Braille notebooks, text books, etc. They helped my teachers for being a teacher of a blind person.

I had a really nice placement organization (World Link), and I had a mother-daughter relationship with my coordinator. She was a really understanding person. Whenever I had a problem or I was feeling homesick or whenever I needed a person to talk to she was with me and she helped me all the time.

After I finished my school year, I had almost a month left in America, so I had a chance to join a camp about independent living skills for the blind. The camp was five days long and it was very fun. We learned about crossing the streets with our canes, so we walked a lot. We learned how to purchase our own monies, how to shop as a blind person and how to order in a restaurant. The camp counselors were from different parts of the United Kingdom, so I enjoyed listening to different accents from Scotland, Ireland and England.

This year, I also had my first sport experience: I ran track. A few times throughout my exchange year I was worried about gaining weight. One of these times was the same time as the beginning of track season. I thought about it, I talked with the coach, we got information from the Braille School, and I started. I had a student guide. She ran with me. We got a lot of cheers from the crowd.

During this year I had so many mixed feelings, for example happiness, homesickness, and worries, but I'm still glad to have been in Iowa. Though it is good to be home in Turkey again, I feel sad for saying goodbye to my friends, teachers and family in the U.S.

I recommend this experience to every person, and I thank everyone who recommended YES to me. I wish good luck to people who want to be a YES student.



Left to Right: [Back] Curtis Stuzman (World Link Coordinator), Linnea (My host sister), Marvin (My host Dad) [Front] Sherrie (My World Link Coordinator), Lana Stutzman (Curtis's wife), Anya (My host sister), Betsy (My host mom), Mary Ann Siller (My mom's friend)

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