

My First Year as an Au Pair - A Year that has Changed My Life!

By Julie Conan, Au Pair from France in Fort Wayne, IN with the Lubbehusen Family.

I arrived in Indiana 10 months ago and it was the beginning of the summer. I am the first au pair of my host family, so for them as for me, it was a first time. I would always remember my arrival. Jessica was carrying this big sign with my name that they had drawn by themselves for me. We were all so impatient, stressed and moved that when we recognized each other, we had tears in our eyes.

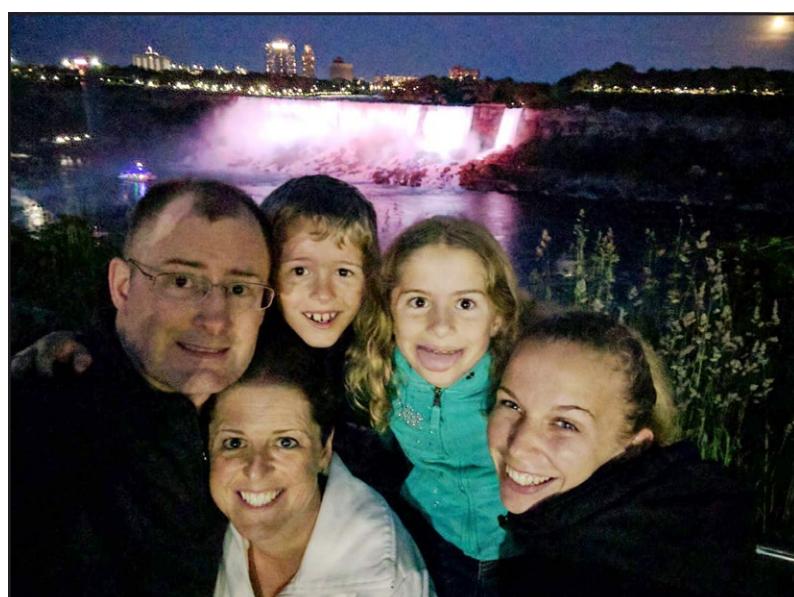
The following weeks passed so quickly. Summer is surely one of the best times to discover Indiana (before realizing it can be -7 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter!). The weather is nice and warm, children are on vacation, people are having barbecues, and swimming in the lake. Although this period corresponds to my adaptation, I keep only happy memories of this time. Thanks to my host parents, Mike and Connie, life quickly became easy. They did everything to make me feel at home and immediately regarded me as a family member.

They helped me in all my initiatives and always paid attention to what I could feel far from my country. I am so thankful and grateful for everything they have done for me. I always tried to give the best of myself, to communicate to them my joy of being with them and to thank them for having

welcomed me so well. Little by little we have established a real relationship of trust and care between all of us.

This summer was spent between games, bike tours, walks, activities and pools. I could play whole days outside cops and robbers with Ryan, Jessica and the neighborhood kids. The house was always full of joy ... and children! Sometimes I could see ten children running across the kitchen to grab some water and then run back outside to

For my birthday, we went on a road trip to Massachusetts! We got to visit Niagara Falls and tour the city of Boston. It was an amazing experience and they did this unselfishly for me. We had such a great time that there is no way I will ever forget it! On our way home, I learned that my grandmother was seriously ill. She had injured herself falling. My family had taken her to the hospital, and upon inspecting they discovered a



The Lubbehusen family and Julie

play! Jessica and Ryan were so happy! One day Ryan hugged me and said, 'This is the best summer of my life'. I only then realized how much I changed their lives too. They used to spend their time with a nanny, but are now in their house, with their toys, their friends and a new older sister to take care of them and share their life with.

very big tumor had formed in her brain. In order to give her more time, she was going to have an operation at the end of the week, but the doctors had said that she would never be the same after that.

I shared the news with my host family and they were so sympathetic. Everyone started crying in the car and *Continued on Page 4...*

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About Us...

EurAupair Intercultural Child Care Programs is a non-profit, public benefit organization designated by the U.S. Department of State to conduct the Au Pair cultural exchange program under the Fulbright Hays Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 and is intended "to promote mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries by means of educational and cultural exchanges".

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Host Family Experience

By Shelley Balanko, a Host Mom in Anacortes, WA

Being a host family is a wonderful and enriching experience for us all. We began hosting au pairs in 2015 after having full time nanny care for our twins, Ava and Mitchell. The twins had turned 4 and were beginning preschool in the fall so we were looking for an alternative to full time care. We were disappointed that we could not find a preschool that offered a second language in our area as we wanted to provide our children with some form of cultural enrichment. We were aware of the au pair program, and thought it might be the perfect fit for our new needs.

Since 2015, we've hosted au pairs from Mexico, Colombia, Spain, and now Germany. Each

au pair brings so much to our family with their unique personalities, interests, and talents. It's been amazing to watch how the children and each au pair form a special bond that's unlike any other relationship they have. Of course, there are always bumps along the way with the typical stresses of daily life, developmental challenges of growing kids, language barriers, homesickness, and culture clashes. But, at the end of the year, we're all better off for having gone through life together - laughter, tears, and all the rest.

We've been very fortunate to meet terrific young women who have shared themselves and their worlds with us. It's also really gratifying to be a contribution to these

young women's lives as they are improving their English skills, and making choices about furthering their education and pursuing careers. Even little things like delighting in the first time one of our au pairs experienced snow or tasted a s'more, makes us appreciate our everyday

lives in a new way.

It's always difficult to say good-bye, but new beginnings are also really exciting. We only hope we give back as much as we get! Thank you Daniela, Sol, Gloria, and Cinja for bringing so much joy, love, and fun to our lives.

Thank you Shelley for sharing with us your experience! We wish you many more happy moments with your au pairs!



The Balanko host mom and children with their current au pair from Germany, Cinja

THANK YOU!

By Area Coordinator Vivi Frumkin in Bloomingdale, IL

I would like to say thank you to all our Community Counselors. Without you, our program wouldn't work.

You volunteer, you care, you promote our program plus you take time out of your own busy lives to help our families and au pairs

have successful years.

Sometimes it's easy, other times it can be frustrating. Yet you hang in there and always search for that golden middle road everybody can walk on.

A couple of weeks ago, I had a conversation with an ex-Community Counselor. After years of being a counselor, she had to step down due to a new job. She told me how her years as a Community Counselor had helped her become a better person in this new job. Handling people, helping to fix people problems, solve issues etc. As she said: "Mentally I went straight back to my counselor years and pulled on the education I received during those years."

So, I congratulate all Community Counselors on completing their pseudo PhD degrees while volunteering as Community Counselors and thank you all for your hard work.

Thank you Vivi for all you do for EurAupair too!



Who knew this 5 year old girl would end up as an Area Coordinator for EurAupair? Vivi in Sweden back in 1956!



Left to Right: Community Counselor Maria, Area Coordinator Vivi and Community Counselor Nancy

EurAupair Photos



Community Counselor Rebecca from King of Prussia, PA took her group of au pairs to Dewey Beach, Delaware. Here you can see Yuki from China and Paula from Brazil



Community Counselor Pamela from Wichita, KS and au pair Lupita from Mexico went to the world-class sculpture gardens at the local university, Wichita State University



Community Counselor Sylvia from Philadelphia, PA took her au pairs to the Philadelphia Chinese Lantern Festival. From left to right: au pair Schane from South Africa, Thayane, Richaeli and Thais from Brazil



Community Counselor Nancy from Garrett, IN shared with us this picture and comment: "In the world of au pairs we say hello to some and goodbye/good luck to others. We hope the friends of the departing au pairs will become friends with the newly arrived au pairs. After all what's better than instant friends."

From left to right: au pair Maria from Venezuela who has just arrived in Indiana, Vivien from Germany who is about to go home after completing a successful au pair year, Mayar from Brazil who is also about to leave after a successful au pair year, au pair friends Jona and Joné.



Community Counselor Andrea in Buffalo, NY organized a Cultural activity and took her au pairs on a tour of the Naval Ship museum in Buffalo, NY. Au pairs Cristina from Spain, Paula from Brazil and Pati from Colombia on the deck of the USS Little Rock!



Community Counselor Sylvia from Philadelphia, PA and au pairs Schane from South Africa, Thayane, Richaeli and Thais from Brazil met for pizza to catch up!



Community Counselor Nancy from Huntertown, IN took her au pairs to the DeBrands Chocolate Factory in Fort Wayne, IN. From left to right: au pair Annika from Germany, Community Counselor Nancy, au pair Aroa from Spain and Mirjam from Finland

Community Counselor Experience

By Elizabeth Ramsey, Community Counselor in Stony Point, NY



Being a Community Counselor is an enthusiastic experience that involves passion for cultural adventures and desire to work with international au pairs and host families. As a Community Counselor, we facilitate relationships between host families and au pairs; give them assistance throughout their year offering ongoing support to make this an experience of a lifetime. As a Community Counselor I need to have a team attitude, perseverance, creative marketing, and responsibility to ensure adherence to program regulations

From left to right: au pairs Nuria from Spain and Celia from France

Community Counselor Elizabeth met with two of her au pairs on the ice rink at the Westchester Ice Skating Academy for their monthly meeting.

established by the US State Department.

As part of a Community Counselor's responsibilities, we interview host families and conduct orientations before the au pair arrivals, and meet with the au pairs after arrival. We maintain a record of all personal monthly contacts with host families, and arrange monthly meetings with the au pair group; maintaining all reports in database. Also we ensure that each au pair completes educational requirements and has a great American experience. I've met so many great au pairs from Asia, Europe, North, Central and South America. It's been a very rewarding and incredible experience!

Thank you Elizabeth for all you do for our au pairs and host families!

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we decided together that it was necessary that I go back to see her one last time. You can believe in destiny or not, but everything seemed perfectly prepared for my trip back to France to work. My suitcase was in the trunk, I had my passport, the children were going to camp the week after and my host parents, whom I would never thank enough for that, were ready to cross the Canadian border again to drop me off in Toronto where the nearest international airport was located. Only 15 hours after talking with my mother I

was at the hospital with my grandmother!

Returning to the American Midwest, knowing that my life in France would never be the same without my grandmother and leaving my family to mourn her without me was one of the hardest trials of my life. But when I got home, the children, their *joie de vivre* and the soothing conversations with Connie, gradually managed to calm my sadness. And it's at this moment, pushed by Connie and Mike who encouraged me to socialize, to go out and have fun, that I met all of my awesome friends and

even a boyfriend. Thanks to all these people in my life, I've traveled so much and learned so much of

up anymore, knowing their little secrets and them asking for a last kiss before bed time. More than just an



Julie and her host brother Ryan (9)

the American culture. I even got invited to my first American wedding!

Just in case you didn't understand it yet, my host family is amazing! They have been perfect for me and I would like to think that I have been perfect for them. I can never thank them enough for all their generosity, patience and hospitality. So, extending a second year seemed obvious to me, since I was not ready to leave them and no longer see them growing

adventure in the other part of the world, I've rebuilt a piece of my life here and I can say after ten months, that I feel my heart is at home in two separate parts of the world. Surrounded by a family and friends that I have grown to love and cherish.

Thank you Julie for sharing your experience with us. We wish you and your host family many more happy moments together!



Julie and her host sister Jessica (11)