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American Intercultural
Student Exchange
A non-profit tax exempt educational Foundation

Office of the
President

AISE PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

American Intercultural Student Exchange (AISE) was founded with the belief that international student exchange makes a vital contribution to human understanding by offering students, their parents and host families an irreplaceable opportunity to deepen comprehension and respect for other peoples and cultures and to discover the realities of the human community.

AISE is a non-profit, tax-exempt, educational Foundation for high school students, dedicated to fostering increased international understanding through the promotion of worldwide intercultural learning and living experiences.

AISE is governed by a Board of Trustees including representatives from related fields such as education, business, law, host families and individuals who have personally participated in exchange Programs. AISE had received a grant from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Information Agency under the authority of the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961.

In the United States the AISE National Headquarter is in Lake Village, Arkansas. The Program is supervised by professionally trained people with many years of experience in intercultural student exchange. Many staff members have lived and taught or studied abroad. AISE staff includes a Director of Counseling, located in Tennessee; Regional Managers; State Supervisors and over 400 Area Representatives in forty-eight states with overseas Representatives in **Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Netherlands, Switzerland, France, Italy, Spain, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Latvia, Poland, Turkey, Russia, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, China, Korea, Vietnam, Japan, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, and Serbia.** Hundreds of volunteers throughout these counties strengthen the Program on the community and school level.

The Program enables qualified overseas high school students between the ages of 15 and 18 the opportunity to live with an American Host Family and attend a local high school for one academic school year. The same opportunity in reverse is offered to American high school students. Only qualified students by AISE standards are accepted to spend a School Year overseas with a carefully screened and selected Host Family.

Participating students are between the ages of 15 and 18 because AISE believes that this age group is most receptive to adapting to a family living and academic experience in a new culture. All students are first carefully screened and must be recommended by Principals and

Teachers in their local schools overseas before they are accepted for the Program. Only those students who can evidence academic interest and achievement, exemplary character, curiosity, adaptability, and good command of the English language are acceptable. Each student must satisfactorily complete a personal interview by qualified representatives of AISE. The interviewer's written evaluation becomes a part of the student's complete dossier.

During the first months of each year four copies of the accepted student applications are sent to the AISE National Headquarters. The dossier includes the student's official application form, academic transcripts with an English translation, school and personal recommendations, medical records, a two-page typewritten autobiographical essay written by the student, four passport-size photographs, and five photographs of the student and his/her immediate family. Two applications are sent to the AISE Area Representative who presents one to the Host Family. When the student is enrolled in the high school, the Host Family shares their application with the school. Exchange Students arrive with round-trip airline tickets marked "non-refundable" issued to their final destination. The Exchange Students also have complete medical coverage for the entire duration of their stay in the United States. The natural parents provide a monthly allowance and the American Host Families are responsible for room and board.

The American Host Families are recruited year-round. Before the new school year begins, AISE believes that it is important to find qualified host families as early as possible so that correspondence can begin that much sooner between the host family and student. Experience has proven that this correspondence helps to eliminate many false expectations and to build friendship, trust and understanding. After the beginning of the new school year, AISE continues to recruit qualified host families should circumstances require the student to relocate.

The AISE Area Representative contacts the principals of each high school to obtain permission for an Exchange Student to attend the school. The Host Family will also contact the appropriate school officials regarding placement of an Exchange Student for the school year.

Each prospective American Host Family is personally interviewed by the local Area Representative who completes a Home Visit Screening Form. The prospective Host Family must complete a five page detailed Host Family application covering the family's background, interests, and hobbies. Except when the Host Family has already hosted a student on the AISE Program previously, two letters of reference must be provided to the Area Representative, Preferably one from an employer, and one from a community organization (church, service club or other such organization), or from a friend who knows the family well attesting to the stability and good reputation of the family.

Once qualified, the entire family becomes involved in the selection of the Exchange Student. Records of the student's placement are filed in appropriate local, regional, national and international offices. The procedure is then in motion to obtain the student's visa.

Exchange Students and their parents are required to attend an intensive Orientation Meeting overseas prior to their son's or daughter's departure. At the time of arrival of the Exchange Student, the AISE Area Representative and the Host Families will be at the airport to meet the students. Approximately one week after the Exchange Students arrive, the AISE Area Representative will conduct a comprehensive Orientation Meeting based on a detailed agenda. At this time students and Host Families are once more informed about the rules of behavior and official restrictions under which the AISE Program functions. At this meeting Exchange Students meet privately with their Area Representative to become better acquainted.

Every Student and Host Family is furnished with the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the AISE Area Representative, information about the appropriate AISE Regional Office, the AISE National Headquarters and the official United States Department of State, Washington, D.C. The national AISE Office has a 24-hour answering service.

Approximately three weeks after the students arrive, the Area Representative will contact once more each student and Host Family to reconfirm that everything is satisfactory. Monthly communication with the Host Family and Exchange Student will be maintained throughout the year. During the school year AISE requires that the local Area Representatives have three get-togethers for parties and celebrations of holidays.

The procedure for American students wishing to apply on the AISE Program for participation as Exchange Students living with overseas Host Families is similar to that of an international student wishing to come to the United States. Students are interviewed privately with their parents by the AISE Area Representative. AISE requires an official School Year Program Application Form and four passport-sized photographs and five family pictures. The American student must also furnish a two-page typewritten autobiographical essay, official transcripts of the last two grades of school and a certificate of health signed by the student's family doctor. Also required are two Letters of Recommendation – one from the Principal of the high school, and one from a teacher. In addition, the AISE Area Representative contacts the student's Counselor for an appraisal of the student's qualifications.

The American School Year Students depart for their host country in August (January for students going to Australia).

The AISE Program stresses family living as the heart of the learning experience – offering students the chance to share in other cultures through personal involvement in the homes, schools and communities of their host countries.