

Laura Kupilik, EurAupair Au Pair of the Year 2012

Laura, EurAupair's 2nd Annual Au Pair of the Year, shares why her year with the Aina family from Florence, KY, has been so exceptional.

"Aaaaahh!!!!!! You're one of the four finalists!!!!!!", my host mom screamed while she was running to my room and showed me the mail she had received. I didn't know what to say, I knew she had submitted her wonderful and warm-hearted written essay about me, but I didn't expect that I was going to be one of the finalists. And now it was my turn

to write an essay about my year as an au pair. I started to think of how I'm going to express all the special moments and feelings, the happy times and memories I've had here, in a written essay.

It was a Monday morning, but not just any Monday morning. It was the 16th May 2011 and the most exciting day in my entire life! A dream came true - United States of America, here I come!! A new country, a new culture, a new home, a new family and new friends?

That's what goes through your mind when you're at the airport saying goodbye to all the people you love at home. I walked through security, turned around one last time and my adventure finally began. I arrived in New York and I knew it was going to be the time of my life. The week in NYC was just amazing and totally breathtaking. Everybody knows the Big Apple from movies but in real life - it's even better!

After this wonderful time and *Continued on back page...*

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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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Laura with her host siblings Demi, Tiwa and Teni

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Anika Neubert, IAPA Au Pair of the Year 2012 Finalist

The IAPA (International Au Pair Association) Au Pair of the Year Award gives au pairs the recognition they deserve for the wonderful job they do caring for children. Based on this essay Mrs Saenz – Anika's host mom from Trent Woods, NC – submitted to EurAupair, Anika was selected as one of 3 finalists of this award, from among 170 au pair programs worldwide.

"Anika Neubert has been a gift to our family since the day she arrived last spring. Last year when my husband and I were selecting an au pair, Anika stood out right away. She was mature, experienced, educated, and well-rounded. We spoke with her several times over Skype and were so thoroughly impressed, we asked EurAupair to allow us the opportunity to host her before anyone else could claim her as theirs.

The night I picked her up from the airport, my husband was boarding a flight for Afghanistan where he would spend the next 6 months. It didn't take long for Anika to get familiar with her

surroundings. She's quick on her feet, a fantastic communicator and extremely patient. Our 4-year-old, Johnny, loved Anika from the moment he met her. He's a sweet and caring little boy and he tried to make Anika feel at home the very next morning by showing her his blankie, by quizzing her about where she is from and asking where her mommy and daddy live. She smiled and patiently answered Johnny's questions while our 2-year-old, Ben, stared at her with a death-glare from across the room. He doesn't warm up as quickly to people as his older brother. Again, her patience and calm demeanor eased my little boy through the transition of a new au pair and his daddy leaving without blinking an eye. These days, I'm pretty sure that Ben is in love with Anika and would trade his right arm to keep her around another year.

Anika had four days to settle in before our third child made her appearance into this world. Samantha Lee was born 3 weeks early and at a wee 5 pounds. Anika was patient with the boys and I as

we made yet another huge transition into becoming a family with 3 kids under four and only one parent. It took another 3 months for me to finish residency, which never would have been possible without Anika.

Five months after she arrived, she and I moved all 3 kids from Florida to North Carolina, while my husband was still in Afghanistan. She went above and beyond her duties by helping me unpack boxes, lift and carry things around the house, and killing roaches. That's right. Killing roaches. Anika is as tough as nails and squashed those things without blinking an eye.

Three weeks after we moved to North Carolina, she and I experienced our first earthquake together, followed a week later by our first hurricane (the worst one in North Carolina's recent history). We evacuated to Raleigh, and came home to an intact house, but no electricity for the next 3 days. We survived in the summer heat and humidity. But we both nearly cried while we hugged, jumping up and down when the power came back on

the evening of the 3rd day.

My husband made it home safely 2 months ago, and I have Anika to thank for making it possible that he and I get to spend a few moments alone together every now and then. Anika has made the transition into becoming a husband and wife team again so much easier.

Anika is a blessing in more ways than I can describe. Even though the boys and I have given her the flu several times – she doesn't complain. I'm sure we've given her several headaches and probably some heartburn. I wish I could describe how thankful I am for her. I love and appreciate her, and she has become a part of our family. She has helped me through the most difficult 9 months of my life and has helped me excel at work as a physician, at home as a mother and wife, as well as in my education. She deserves to be recognized for everything that she has not only done for me, but for my family. I am a better person because of her and I pray every day her life is as wonderful as she's made ours during our time together. "



Anika with her 3 host siblings Ben, Samantha Lee and Johnny

EurAupair Winter Adventures



Au Pair Anastasia Buhalev, hosted by the Baucom family in Atlanta, GA, with her sister in Panama City Beach

My second year in America has already started though I have never had anybody visiting me from Germany. That's why I was super excited that my sister could make it. I had an awesome time showing her around; she enjoyed shopping of course! She had a hard time speaking English, which was funny – not in a mean way though.

Her wish was to spend some days at the beach, so we went on a trip to Panama City Beach together. The white beach was beautiful. We had a great time together and I enjoyed every moment of her being here.

Thank you, Anastasia, for writing about your sister's visit.

Au pairs Ruya, Julia, Anais and Liz with her host sister Syd, enjoyed the Christmas decorations at the 'real' Macy's on 34th Street in NYC.

Liz and host sister Syd joined us after taking a walk across the Brooklyn Bridge and before heading home to trim the tree. It is inspirational to see the close relationship Liz has with her host sister and to see them enjoying 'their' city together. It is very nice to have a big sister!

Thank you to NJ Community Counselor Marita Falconer for arranging this Christmassy monthly meeting.



Au Pairs and host sister enjoy the Christmas atmosphere at Macy's



Chicago and Michigan Au Pairs, Community Counselors and Area Coordinator have fun at the Wolves ice hockey game!

Thank you to IL Community Counselor Dawn Rothermel for writing about their fun February activity:

On Saturday, February 18, 2012, about a dozen Midwest au pairs

from Chicago-land and Michigan, along with some friends and family, gathered rinkside at the Chicago Wolves' ice hockey game against the Charlotte Checkers. Everyone got a

bird's eye view of the penalty box, which was pretty much where the excitement for the game existed, as the Wolves didn't win 1-0 until their 5th power player.

The au pairs are looking forward to their next group outing in April, a behind-the-scenes tour of Wrigley Field, home of the Chicago Cubs.

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one month with a host family, I transmitted to my second family in Florence, KY - the Aina family! I will never forget the moment when I arrived at the airport, I went up the escalator and saw my host mom and three little Angels waiting for me with a yellow poster in their hands saying 'Welcome Home, Laura!'. It was such a warm welcome with big hugs, followed by colorful flowers with a card, a balloon and a welcome-cake (with 5 little hearts on it, one for each of us) at home. That was way more than I had expected.

From the beginning all of them treated me like a family member - this is something that not every au pair can say about their host families, but for me and for my family it is one of the most important things and it is one of many things that I'm very thankful for. I never had the feeling that I'm just an employee, not even an au pair. I've always been the sister to my 3 new 'siblings' and like a daughter to my host parents. Again, my expectations of living with another family were exceeded. It didn't take a long time until all of us had found out that we're all 'kind of crazy' - this is why we are just a perfect match. One day at dinner I asked them "What do you think would've happened if I had been a 'normal' au pair?" Everybody looked at each other and just started laughing. It is really difficult to have one day that we don't have fun together or create a new little joke that only we know about and we will always think of.

T-I-W-A Terrific, Intelligent, Wonderful, Awesome - He's my one and only little brother. "Tiwi" and I just love to drive in the car listening to our favorite songs together. When I pick Tiwa up from school, he comes into the car and says "Hey Lär-Bär, how has your day been so far?", that always makes me happy. One day we were jumping around at home and suddenly we fell - we looked at each other and just started laughing lying



Laura with Tiwa

on the floor for twenty minutes. I'll always remember this moment we shared. Tiwa is really smart and every day I learn something new from him and he asks for German words and is really interested in learning them. For Christmas he gave me one of the cutest things I've ever got. He knew that I wanted to get some UGG-boots so he cut out a little paper wrote UGG on it and taped it on my shoe. It seemed to be just a little thing, but it is a heart-warming memory.

D-E-M-I Dramatic, Energetic, Musically, Ironic - She's my little shopping-sister. "Dem" and I just love to spend our time together, going to the mall trying on clothes or buying new things to be creative for our scrapbooks. She loves to wear my clothes, one day she said with an astonished look "When did you get this shirt? I didn't find this in your closet!" Again, I had to laugh so much and couldn't stop. With her own special way to talk or to look at me it's pretty hard to be mad at her. She's able to turn every situation into a funny time so that everybody has to laugh.



Laura with Demi

When Demi has to write something about her family she always writes that she has one brother and two sisters, including me. We always have so much fun when we go out and have some sister-time!

T-E-N-I Thoughtful, Exotic, Nice, Incredible - She's my little hug-sister. "Ten" really cares that both of us always look pretty and cute. When I'm not at home she calls me and says "I hope you still look pretty" or when we're doing homework she just looks at me and says "Laura, why are you so cute?". These moments I will keep in my heart forever and they will always make me happy. It's hard to believe that a seven year old girl can be so thoughtful as Teni is. She always has the right sentence to cheer me up and make me smile. She would

always say "You're not my friend, you're MY SISTER!" When I drop her off at school in the morning, she leaves the car and says "Bye Laura, I love you." How can your day start any better and more lovingly than that?



Laura with Teni

We had an amazing summer together. We spent most of the time outside in the backyard or riding bikes. Since my girls love to do gymnastics they thought they have to teach me to do a handstand and to flip over. After practicing for many days I finally did it (even though I thought I was going to break my neck, but the girls were so excited) and I knew they were proud of me.

For my birthday I got a banner that had 'Shopaholic, Fashionista, Super-Aupair!' on it, a pink cake with little make-up decoration and many balloons. For me it was a special birthday and it warmed my heart when I saw how affectionately they had done everything for me, because I had only been here for one month.

In August we all went to Disneyworld together - that was one of the best weeks that we spent together. I felt like I was a child again and was happy that I could share this time with my family.

For Christmas I got one of the cutest gifts ever from my siblings. It's a bracelet with three little charms on it and each charm has the birthstone of my siblings on it, so that they're always with me.

One of our special activities is to create new nicknames. Each sibling has another name for me. One day I signed a card for my host parents and my host dad asked "Who's that?", because my name had changed again.

Sometimes when I come home and the girls didn't see me, they disappear and come back wearing the same colored clothes that I wear, so that we can all match. For Christmas, Santa brought all of us

the same dress and we had a little modeling contest. When we eat dinner, we usually have 'German-contests', I say an English word and the kids have to say it in German and they're improving their German every day.

We have so many wonderful memories all together and it's hard just to write some of them. It's actually impossible to have one day where we don't have fun or can't laugh about something. You don't always need special events! The little things make everything unforgettable. Sometimes it's just a special way how to say a word, this special smile on a face or this special hug that you get - these little things that my family did have brightened up my days.

Taking care of three children and trying to give them the best I can, is not always easy. Each child is different and has his or her own personality - but with all the love I get, it's more than worth it to give my best for my second family.

What we always say.. One day back in Germany I will laugh about one of our little jokes and nobody will understand why I can't stop laughing. That's what all the memories are for and why they will last forever.

It's not just that I got a second family during my time in the US, I also went to many places that I've never thought of. I learned a lot, not just a language or about America, also about myself and how to handle all kind of situations. I got to know so many things that are different here compared to home. Even though we all live in one world, every country and culture is different. I met many interesting people and two special friends - we spent every weekend together and both of the girls will stay in my heart forever.

I can't tell how happy I am that I found my American home here and some special friends. I never expected this one year to be as amazing as it was. I'm thankful to my host parents 'Maaa' and 'Shakin-Yem' who let me be part of their family, to my sweet siblings Tiwa, Demi and Teni who treated me like a real sister, to my friend Mina who made the week in NYC just awesome and last but not least to my special angels Anke and Steffi who discovered the American way of life with me and shared so many wonderful memories. All together it was an exceptional time that I enjoyed endlessly, in five words: **The time of my life!**"