

Mary Poppins' Visit to the White House

By the Gordon Host Family from Bethesda, MD who are hosting Au Pair Ange Dihang Bombay from France

It was a very long winter here in Bethesda, MD, with snowstorm after snowstorm. It was especially a shock to the system for Ange, who is from the South of France. She thinks she had maybe seen snow five times in her whole life before coming here. And we had nearly twice that many storms this winter, accompanied by snow days where she and our 21-month-old son were stuck indoors all day.

All of that made our recent spring-time garden tour of the White House that much more glorious. Flowers! Sunlight! And, of course, the White House! The Army

Band played marches as we took in the flowers, gazed at the First Lady's "kitchen garden" and mostly just took a lot of pictures.

Ange says her favorite part was actually waiting in line to get in, with all the anticipation, wondering what it would be like inside the White House gates. Inside, she was fascinated by the Secret Service agents with their black sunglasses and earpieces, just like in the movies. Davis loved the band so much he didn't want to leave.

For me, it was great to be able to share this very special American experience with Ange and a couple of her friends. In January, I became a White House Correspondent and it's easy to get so caught up in the daily grind of work and press conferences that I forget what a great privilege it is to go to work in this historic and beautiful building. Seeing Ange's excitement helped me appreciate just how lucky I am.

And, of course, just about every day we are reminded of how lucky



Ange with the Gordon Family in front of the White House.

we are to have Ange as part of our family this year. There's a line in the movie 'Saving Mr. Banks' where the lead character insists that everyone misunderstands the Mary Poppins story. Mary Poppins wasn't sent there to save the children. She was there to save the parents. That's how we feel about Ange!

Thank you very much for this cheery article and the beautiful photos!!



How fun to visit the White House and learn about American history!

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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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Last-Days-of-Summer Pool Party

By Community Counselor Gila Peller from Northbrook, IL

On August 24, 2014, the Illinois EurAuPair girls and counselors

got together for their last summer hurrah! With the weather changing

and kids going back to school, the group took one last dip in the pool.

Each au pair came ready to engage, eat, swim and contributed to the summer spread of delicious lunch and treats. The girls played a game of volleyball and not a minute of good conversation was missed.

It was nice to get the girls from different groups together, so they could expand their friendships.

Looking forward to next year! Thank you, Gila, for sharing this summer memory with all of us at EurAuPair.



Chicago Au Pairs and Community Counselors enjoying a real American Pool and Barbecue Party.

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EurAupair Community Counselors in the Spotlight

Our Community Counselors are an essential part of EurAupair; without them the au pair program would not be possible. We are so thankful for the constant support they provide for their au pairs and host families. Thank you for dedicating your time and for making it possible for many foreign au pairs to experience the American way of life as well as allowing U.S families to learn about other cultures.

In this issue, Community Counselors in the Midwestern area are featured – enjoy reading about them, how they got introduced to EurAupair and why they enjoy this position so much. If you have a Community Counselor you would like to see in the next Gazette, please send article and photo(s) to gazette@euraupair.com. We look forward to hearing from host families, au pairs and Area Coordinators!

Barbara Salzmann-Hogberg, Wheaton, IL

Barbara joined EurAupair as a Community Counselor in March of 1998. Barbara is married and has two sons who are in their twenties. She works full time as a Sales Administrative Assistant for Erwin Junker Machinery. When not busy with work and au pair business, she likes to garden, dance, read, travel and socialize with friends. She travels 'home' to Germany as often as possible, to visit her family.

Since Barbara enjoys working with people from other countries, becoming a EurAupair Community Counselor was a perfect fit. She always plans interesting au pair get-togethers every month, no coffee shop meetings for her group! Being a German au pair in Barbara's group comes with an added bonus. If the au pair can't think of the English words, she can just ask for help. She feels the same as many other counselors – problem solving is the hardest. Yet Barbara has done lots of successful problem solving in the last 15 years.

Au pairs and families in Barbara's group are well taken care of, because she knows how to be the neutral, helpful, caring person. EurAupair is lucky to have you, Barbara, and we truly appreciate all you do!



Barbara (right) with her group of au pairs and one of her sons during their Halloween 2013 meeting.



Pat (left) with two of her au pairs on an Indiana winter day.

Patricia Vance, South Bend, IN

Patricia "Pat" joined EurAupair in February 2009. She lives in South Bend, IN with her husband. They are empty nesters, have three grown children and six grandchildren. Their babies at home are two Siberian Huskies and a black cat.

Her family's passion is international high school exchange and they have hosted eight students over the years from Sweden, Norway, Germany, Korea, and Italy. For seven years, she acted as a placing representative for students coming to the U.S.

Becoming a Community Counselor was an easy transition from being a high school exchange representative. Au pairs are older, but they have the same desire to improve their English and embrace the American culture. Ask her why the interest in foreign exchange, whether high school students or au pairs and her answer is: "I enjoy sharing the adventure of learning new things through experiencing them together".

Patricia always tries to have interesting monthly meetings with her au pairs. One recent meeting was a visit to Amish country of horse and buggy, bicycles, bonnets, and the absence of worldly conveniences. She writes: "As we toured the town in a horse-drawn Amish buggy, my au pairs' snapping pictures and giggling caught my attention. To our surprise was an elderly Amish woman driving down the street in complete Amish clothing and bonnet, on an electronic powered chair, followed closely by a horse and buggy. We decided the caption should be: 'What's Wrong With This Picture?'"

Patricia, we are fortunate to have you as a Community Counselor!

Vern Thelen, Fowler, MI

Vern joined our family of Community Counselors in 2010. He enjoys bicycling. Even riding up to 150 miles in one day! He loves vacationing and enjoys meeting new people.

When a friend of his wanted to place with a EurAupair au pair and there was no counselor in the area, he volunteered to be the Community Counselor. Luckily he enjoyed meeting the au pairs and host families, so he stayed on as a counselor for other families.

Vern writes: "My wife and I took au pair Nadine out to dinner for Christmas. It was a weekday night and dinner started at 7pm. Somehow the conversation became interesting and fun. Time went by quickly and suddenly it was 11:30pm. Nadine had left her cell phone in the car as the battery had died. Her host mom became very worried and called the police, because Nadine was missing and she had never arrived home late without calling. Somehow Nadine evaded the police to get home and I had a lot of apologizing to do."

Thank you, Vern, for always being there for your au pairs and host families!



Vern and his wife during one of their bicycle trips – here they rode 350 miles from Lansing to Mackinac Bridge.



Dee with her two adorable children, Zeynep and Max.

Duygu McMillion, Ballwin, MO

Dee joined EurAupair as a St. Louis Community Counselor in 2010. She writes:

"I'm from Turkey and came to the USA as an au pair about 10 years ago. After my au pair year ended, I decided to get my MBA and during that time I met my husband. So I ended up staying in the USA. I worked as a marketing specialist before I had my daughter Zeynep and decided to become a stay-at-home mom. Now I'm busy chasing after her and changing dirty diapers of my second child Max.

Becoming a counselor was an easy decision, because I felt I could help the au pairs and host families with my first-hand experience. Best part of being a Community Counselor is meeting new girls and host families. They remind me of the great experience I had years ago. Hardest part is being the moderator for a badly matched host family and au pair. But that's just part of the job and I really like being a Community Counselor."

Thank you, Dee, for all that you do for your host families and au pairs and for always providing fun articles and photos for the Gazette!



*Our Chicago
Community Counselor
Vicki - we love her smile.*

Vicki O'Leary, Chicago, IL

Vicki says about herself: "I work in a non-traditional field for a woman. I was hired by the City of Chicago as an ironworker in 1990. I now do EHS (environmental, health & safety) for the Chicago Department of Transportation. I was a late bloomer with finishing my B.A.'s and finally finishing my M.A. in 2012.

I have an awesome 21 year old son. While searching for child care, I found in the yellow pages 'au pairs'. Years later, as a host mom, I was asked if being a Community Counselor was something I might be interested in. It was at this lunch meeting I met our current Area Coordinator Vivi. She was a Community Counselor at the time and became my mentor. I knew that me being a Community Counselor would ensure that the new au pairs coming into my family would have a support system. I feel that I became a Community Counselor for one reason, but have stayed long past the years I needed an au pair in my family. Why is that? I work with all men. I live in a household of all men. To have some 'girl' time every month has been awesome. We go to 'chick flicks', to museums, and we explore the City of Chicago. The enjoyment I get from being around these brave young women has far outweighed the negatives.

The hardest part of being a Community Counselor is when an au pair experiences homesickness. Not just your typical homesickness, but also the kind that makes you just want to hug the young woman and reassure her that she will adjust. I think that by giving them extra attention and longer hugs, support from the other girls in your group, and letting them know that you are there for them makes all the difference in the world.

One of my fondest memories of being a Community Counselor was several years ago. We were going to go to the South Side Irish Parade in my neighborhood in Chicago. When the girls arrived at my house they had all gotten t-shirts imprinted on the front 'Irish for a day' and on the back each had 'German for life' or 'French for life' etc. Not only was it a great conversation starter at the parade, but also a way for them to honor their home country while taking part in the American tradition of St. Patrick's Day."

Thank you, Vicki, for being a fantastic Community Counselor for EurAupair!

Stephanie Tollefson, Madison, WI

Stephanie has been a volunteer Community Counselor with EurAupair since October 1999.

Ask her if she is busy and the answer will be: "I have four children ages 10 through 17, I work as a freelance translator and also work at a local dance studio, where I manage all aspects of the business and teach two days a week. Then add in my time as a Community Counselor for EurAupair."

Stephanie is very passionate about cultural exchange. She enjoys meeting au pairs and learning about their country's culture. Being from Germany herself, she stayed with American host families, before finally moving to the USA in her twenties. When you have had a great experience living with a host family, you only wish for others to have the same. Her monthly au pair meetings are a great mix of social get-togethers and cultural venues like theater and ballet.

Stephanie enjoys working with families who truly understand the cultural aspect of our program and loves when au pairs tell her that this has been the best year of their life so far.

Stephanie is very good at getting families and au pairs to communicate. She understands open communication is the road to success.

Stephanie, we are very glad to have you on our team!



The picture shows Stephanie (left) with two German au pairs, Anna and Jana, waiting to get into a Haunted House.



This fun photo shows Gila with two of her grandchildren.

Gila Peller, Northbrook, IL

Gila has been a EurAupair Community Counselor since December of 2006. Gila about herself:

"If I am not in front of a host family or au pair, I can be found on the floor playing with my grandchildren. I have five grandchildren, ages 1, 3, 7, 10 and 12. I enjoy spending time with them and watching them grow. My daughter, Shana, encouraged me to step out of my comfort zone of 'grandchildren only' and broaden my horizons. So I became a Community Counselor for EurAupair and have since become an avid emailer and communicator. Oh, the fun I have had!!

I enjoy watching the au pairs grow and become more independent and confident away from home. I love seeing them appreciate the beauty of the US, specifically Chicago and it makes me appreciate my city more. I have learned and experienced more about and within my hometown since becoming a counselor.

You never know who you will get in your group. One year, I had a French au pair who was a singer. She was on the show similar to American Idol. What a voice!!! Let's just say we had a very entertaining year."

We are lucky to have Gila on our team! She takes excellent care of her group and also spreads the word about the EurAupair program.

Samantha Kniess, Wausau, WI

Sam (as she likes to be called) joined EurAupair as a Community Counselor in July 2009.

She was born and raised in Brazil. Sam came to the USA in 2005 to be an au pair in Wausau, WI. She met her husband during her first year as an au pair and at the end of her second year, they got married. They have been married for almost 7 years and have an awesome 2 year old son. They love to spend time with him, play, swim and read books.

After almost 9 years, Sam continues to live in the same city, and her host family and her are still very close. She is a teacher at a public school since 2008 where she teaches English as a Second Language and has a 4K bilingual room for Spanish speaking students.

Samantha became a Community Counselor to continue to be involved with the program, to help the au pairs and families, plus she wanted to meet new people. The au pairs sometimes spend time at her house and stay over on the weekends. She has had a few of them volunteer in her classroom during their free time and they love it. Being that she was an au pair herself makes it easier to understand and help both sides.

Thank you, Sam, for being a very involved and dedicated Community Counselor!



Samantha with her husband and son - what a cute picture.



*Meet our Community Counselor
Ana - what a beautiful photo.*

Ana Ross, Southfield, MI

Ana, who became a Community Counselor in 2010, has two children; a 19-year-old daughter and a 13-year-old son. Ana enjoys walking her dog, riding her bike, singing in choirs and teaching fitness classes in several different locations. She likes meeting new people from all walks of life and being a Community Counselor gives her the opportunity to be involved in the international community and share our American culture.

Ana feels the hardest part of being a Community Counselor is bidding farewell to the au pairs every year or two. Ana remembers a funny anecdote from one of her monthly meetings: "I had reserved opera tickets for the meeting. We arrived at will call and the tickets were not there, since I hadn't joined the club that organized this outing. The au pairs all saw me turn bright red and we quickly corrected the situation by buying our opera tickets at the door."

EurAupair, your au pairs and host families are happy to have you, Ana!

Academic Achievement Award

Spanish Au Pair Raul Herrero Couto - hosted by the Schwall Family of Raritan, NJ - received an Academic Achievement Award from the Raritan Valley Community College where he completed the educational component of the au pair program. He was presented with the Service Learning Award for outstanding academic achievement.

Here is what Raul's Professor, Mrs. Suk, writes about him: "Raul is wonderful! He earned this award for two main reasons: one, he went above and beyond the required hours of the field component of this course; two, he created an incredible portfolio to chronicle all of his experiences in the US, Spain, and elsewhere with children. I was completely and utterly amazed!"

I have been having students use Weebly for about four years now and I can say, without a doubt, that his portfolio is head and shoulders above everyone else's. I know this would seem obvious given his background, but no matter, it wasn't necessarily the professional content that he included, it was the incredible insight and effort that he infused throughout the entire project, particularly his blog. I couldn't wait to read it each week! I loved the way he often cited texts in his posts along with thought-provoking quotes that were related to the week's theme. It was just fabulous!"

Congratulations, Raul, you can be very proud of yourself!!



Raul receives his award from the Raritan Valley Community College. Way to go, Raul!

My First Road Trip in the U.S.

By German Au Pair Angela Schmid with the Sidel Family in Bethesda, MD

Last weekend I had my first road trip since I am here in the U.S. Some friends invited me to join them to Tennessee and Georgia. They planned the whole trip, so I didn't have any trouble of searching sights and routes or booking the hotel. We started our 9-hour ride on Friday night. Even though the cars here in the U.S. are bigger than in Germany, it wasn't really comfortable. On Saturday morning, we went to a diner in Chattanooga, TN and I got my first original American breakfast: potatoes, eggs and ham.

The first stop of our tour was Lookout Mountain where there are different monuments. First, we explored the Ruby Falls. It is a cave 2000 feet underground, where you can see amazing configurations of rocks that have arisen from

water. There are rocks that look like an elephant foot, sliced bacon or a beehive. At the end of a long way we found the famous underground waterfall. It's fascinating, because nobody knows where the water is coming from.

When we finished the tour, we went to a place that is called Rock City. It's like a garden built of rocks. On a viewing platform you have the possibility to see seven different states – of course far away. But you also find some information about the distances and these states themselves. It was an amazing view, especially because the weather was perfect! Our ticket for the Lookout Mountain also included a ride with one of the steepest incline railways of the U.S.

Next, we drove to Lynchburg, TN to visit the original factory of the most famous whiskey – Jack Daniel's. It was very interesting especially for me, because when I lived in Germany, I was working in

a cocktail bar. It's amazing that they have a capacity of more than 20.000 barrels in one warehouse. Moreover, 11 million barrels are produced every year. On one hand, it's not very economical that they don't use every barrel two times. On the other hand, only with this procedure it's possible to guarantee the unique flavor of Jack Daniel's.

After this tour we went to a famous BBQ place next to Nashville. First our GPS navigated us to a pretty small diner that didn't really look like a popular BBQ diner. But the employees told us that the main branch is just 3 minutes away and they had live music that night. When we arrived, we were surprised! This location was like a set in a movie: a house next to a lake, sitting on the porch you can see small boats and listen to some amazing country music while I was eating my first original BBQ! Awesome! We were staying there a long time, even when

we had already finished our dinner.

The next day we came back to Chattanooga to visit the center of the city and its monuments, e.g. one of the longest pedestrian bridges. When we were driving home, we found some different interesting places like a very famous motorcycle road in North Carolina. Its special aspects are the 318 sharp curves in 11 miles. Unfortunately we couldn't rent a motorcycle, but it was fun by car as well.

All together, it was an amazing weekend and I hope that I am still going to explore a lot of other places during my year in the U.S.!!

Thank you, Angela, for sharing your adventure with us. It sounds like you had a lot of fun "on the road".



Angela and her friends at Lookout Mountain, GA. From here, seven states can be seen!



Angela enjoying the road trip through Georgia and Tennessee.