

Daniela Wende EurAupair Au Pair of the Year 2014

EurAupair's Annual Au Pair of the Year Award serves to recognize the outstanding participants of our program and to show how much they are appreciated. After reading the many touching and heartwarming stories from host families and au pairs, Daniela Wende from Germany was announced EurAupair's Au Pair of the Year! Enjoy reading about her unforgettable time with the Allen Family from Clayton, NC.

By saying "yes" to the Allen family from Garner, NC, I made a decision that changed me and my life forever. I never thought that I could feel so much at home, so far away from home like I do here with them. From the very first second I walked in the door I felt welcome, just because the house is full of laughter and love all the time and everyone treated me like a family member. It impressed me, with how much love my host parents, Michelle and Eddie, take care of their four kids: Peyton (7), Cameron (6), Mackenzie (3) and Bailey (2). I fell in love with all four of them right away. Peyton is just the best big brother you could ask for and he loves to help wherever he can. Cameron is the joker and entertainer. He likes to make the whole family laugh. Mackenzie loves that she is the only girl and she is the princess amongst her 3 brothers and Bailey is the little monkey with a lot of charm and he always makes you happy.



Beautiful family photo!

One of the first things my host mom told me was that their lives are busy and I will have my hands full here. And she was right. When I arrived, Bailey was only 6 months old and Mackenzie had just turned 2, so I saw very fast how busy it can be with a baby, a toddler and two boys with a lot of energy. During the first days here I had a lot of these moments, when suddenly all kids would need my attention at the same time and just a lunch could end in a disaster, if I didn't organize it right. I would have to feed Bailey, help Mackenzie in the bathroom and prepare lunch for Cameron and Peyton, all at the

same time.

Therefore I had to coordinate everything a little bit better and I had to make all the kids' schedules work together. There are three different schools, three different school times, nap times, play dates, dentist and doctor appointments, haircuts and a lot more that I have to remember each day. In addition to that, I always try to help my host mom with things I can get done for her around the house, for example picking out the kids' clothes for the next day, take pajamas out or set up the table for dinner. I always try to make her life easier and to give her less to worry about.

Although I really like Garner, where I spent the first ten months of my au pair year, it's a small town and there were not any other au pairs within thirty miles of where we lived, so I had to work very hard to meet friends and to find things to do. But there were a lot of nice parks, a library with a great story time for every age, and even a 'stay at home mommy's' group I found for play dates with the kids. There was a lot for me to do with the kids when they were not in school. Over the summer I enjoyed playing with the kids around the neighborhood all day long and we spent a lot of time at our pool or under the sprinkler in the neighbor's backyard.

Eventually, in the middle of the summer the family decided to

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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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Au Pair of the Year Daniela with her host siblings Mackenzie, Cameron, Bailey and Peyton.

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EurAupair Community Service Activities

Many EurAupair Community Counselors across the country have started organizing community service meetings with their groups of Au Pairs. Read about how Au Pairs and Community Counselors have been giving back to their community, by helping at food banks, soup kitchens and much more. Thank you to all our Au Pairs and Community Counselors for helping those in need!

Hope Ministries, Indiana

By Au Pair Nadia Henry (France) with the Sucosky family from South Bend, IN.

On Sunday March 23rd, 2014 my community counselor Pat, me and two other au pairs, Jani and Christina, arrived at Hope Ministries to help serve meals for the people in need. When we arrived, Kim, the cook,

welcomed us and told us to put on an apron, hair net and gloves and to help her to prepare the lunch. We had to prepare the salad, the apple sauce with peaches, and cut the chicken. At 11:30 am, we started to serve the meals to approximately 100 people. Each of us had something to serve. Pat was serving the noodles with chicken, I was serving the corn pie, Jani was serving the bread and the salad, and Christina the apple sauce

and the cake. It was a truly beautiful and very humble experience.

In the picture from left to right: Community Counselor Patricia Vance, Au Pairs Christina (Germany), Janina (Germany) and Nadia (France).



Circle of Concern, Missouri

By St. Louis, MO Community Counselor Dee McMillion.

St. Louis au pairs and community counselors volunteered at the local food pantry "Circle of Concern". They helped fundraising

From left to right are Au Pairs Katharina (Germany), Melody (China), Aline (Germany) and Community Counselor Julie Blow.

and donated lots of canned goods. While volunteering, the au pairs got a brief explanation of how the center operates and learned about the ways they can give back to their community. Circle of Concern is primarily operated by volunteers. Each month the center feeds more than 2,200 hungry families and provides financial assistance in the West St. Louis area. By the time we were leaving, we were all proud and happy to help out and thankful for everything we have.

Wausau School District, Wisconsin

Community Counselor Samantha Kniess from Wausau, WI wrote about this meeting in February 2014.

As part of our meeting, au pairs Barbara and Jana attended the Annual Sweetheart Breakfast and volunteered their time. It is the main fundraiser event for the 4-K programs (4 year old kindergarteners) in the Wausau School District. Jana and Barbara helped with the carnival and were

absolutely wonderful working with the children and their families!

The money raised at this event will go towards classroom resources and supplies for all of the 4-K classrooms in our school district and community sites.

Au pairs Jana (Germany) and Barbara (Brazil) making sure that the kindergarteners were having a great time at the fundraiser.



Feed My Starving Children, Illinois

By Chicago Community Counselor Dawn Rothermel.

On a Saturday night, community counselors Gila Peller and Dawn Rothermel combined forces with their au pairs to help pack food at the Libertyville, IL Feed My Starving Children complex. Yes – you read that right – the au pairs gave up prime time Saturday night

Au pairs and host children helping at Feed my Starving Children in Libertyville, IL.

to volunteer their time and help starving children!!

After the initial orientation, washing up, it was off to the tables to do some assembly work. The task at hand tonight was making rice packets, each packet containing 6 meals and costing \$0.22. Wow! Each table was identified by a different country to where the rice packets would be sent. The au pairs did great and really enjoyed the experience. When it was over, all of the volunteers had packed 146 boxes of rice packets (36 to a box), which would feed 83 children for an entire year. Way to go au pairs!

Chippewa Tribal College

By German Au Pair Jadwiga Zschornack who lives with the Prielipp Family in Mount Pleasant, MI

My au pair program started in July 2013 and like all other au pairs, I had to choose a local college in order to attend classes. I live in a college town and besides Central Michigan University (CMU), there is also the Chippewa Tribal College. I wanted to visit a local college in order to make new friends and I decided to sign up at the Tribal College. What's special about this college is that 90% of the students have to belong to a Native American tribe.

My college life started on September 28th, 2013 and I signed up for Psychology. Right after the first class I realized that

I would rather take a different class. That's why I switched to History, with classes every Tuesday evening from 5.30 – 8.30 pm. We were seven people in class; one of them was Native American.

It was interesting to learn how American History was perceived by Native Americans. We had lots of discussions in our class; sometimes from an American point of view and at other times from the Native Americans' perspective.

I am very happy I chose the Chippewa Tribal College and the History class, because I was able to gain a real impression of the relationships between Native Americans and Americans. I would

always take this class again, because I now know more about the country which has been my home for almost one year.

Thank you, Jadwiga, for writing about your very special college experience.



Jadwiga with her teacher and fellow students at Chippewa Tribal College.

Au Pair of our Lives: Ming Fen "Daphne" Kuo

By the Cory Family from Fairfax, VA

Daphne jumps right in. Daphne, from Taiwan, came to our family at the most chaotic time of year - the first weeks of school. September just flies by with last minute supply purchases, back-to-school-nights, and the dreaded readjustment to waking before the sun after a summer of lazy mornings.

Oliver, who was three when she came to us, fell in love immediately. He had no tearful mornings, and spends his days reading, drawing, playing, and singing - all in Mandarin. Aidan, 13 now, is awakened (miraculously) in time to make it to school and sent

off with a healthy, homemade lunch. As a teacher who leaves the house before anyone else is awake, knowing that my family is in good hands, is an invaluable peace of mind.

Daphne is interested in our children. Despite the fact that her main responsibility is taking care of Oliver, Daphne has cultivated a connection with Aidan in a way that previous au pairs haven't found the patience to do. She ignores his sarcastic comments (What?! A teen, sarcastic?) with impressive stoicism. Daphne has attended several of Aidan's basketball games on Saturday mornings, because she wanted to. She also helped Aidan study his lines for the school play, then attended both performances. She teaches him songs on the piano and has tapped in to her own creativity and talent to encourage Aidan in the visual arts as well.

Daphne is reliable. If she says, "I'll take care of it," we can be sure the task will be done as if we ourselves had done it, often better. Our kids are safe with her.

Daphne is always learning. Daphne takes the best out of every situation and is always learning. She teaches us to learn and explore as well. She often takes the children on adventures with her: Korean language meet-ups, museums, sushi buffets, she even offered to take Aidan to Alaska with her!

Daphne is very brave. On teacher work days, she takes the kids into D.C. to visit museums - her idea. She traveled to Alaska, where she had previously worked in a Salmon factory, during her vacation last year. She also made a stop in Los Angeles.

The fact that her fellow travelers were unable to join her, didn't discourage her. Her next stop? Chicago, then Australia. Besides being a wonderful au pair, Daphne is a fascinating person. She is a talented athlete, a competitive volleyball player and impressive on the basketball court.

Daphne is an essential part of our family. She integrated silently and seamlessly into our family. So much so, that it's almost as if she's been with us all our lives. Daphne tolerates our little quirks, and supports us in all of our endeavors - she helped me mount an art installation, has taken up hot yoga with me, and goes kite flying and sledding with the children. When she has spent holidays with us, Bill says she treats gift giving as a competitive sport. Her big heart and creative mind have produced treasures we will cherish for years to come. We both received personalized videos for Mother's / Father's Day. One evening I came home from a very bad day at work. She asked me how my day was and I broke into tears. When I came back downstairs, she gave me some candies to brighten my day. Then she prepared all of our favorite foods for dinner.

We are grateful to have her in our lives. Daphne is a blessing. Whether or not Daphne wins the competition, she is the Au Pair of our lives.

EurAupair would like to thank the Cory family for sharing their memories with us. Congratulations, Daphne, for being one of the Au Pair of the Year finalists!



Daphne and her host brother Oliver at the playground.

Everything We Could Have Hoped For

By the Chudner/Sivash Family from Bayside, NY

Anna Hess, from Germany, came into our home on a rainy afternoon in April 2013. She was quiet, timid and appeared nervous. However, I was probably even more nervous than she; dozens of questions and concerns were going through my mind. Is she going to like our family? What if we do not get along? Would she be able to befriend my oldest son, a teenager? Would she find a common ground with my eight-year-old son, who is going on eighteen and challenges everything and everyone in his path? How would this young girl, almost a child herself, be able to handle my five months old twin boys, the task that had proven to be a huge challenge for even myself and my husband? Little did I know that I really had nothing to worry about.

My family lives in Queens, NY and I have four sons. I work as an obstetrician-gynecologist, a demanding job. My husband is the manager of an information technology department of a large company and has a lot of responsibilities as well. My oldest son is a senior in High School. My second son is in the third grade and in reality, is an adult in the family. My little twins, who were born premature, really brought a whole new meaning to the expression "double trouble." In other words, juggling our careers with raising four children had not been an easy task and we were really looking forward to having an au pair.

It did not take long for us to fall in love



Anna with her host siblings Daniel, Alan and Dylan.

with Anna. Intelligent, compassionate and hard working, she is everything that we could have hoped for. Respectful and tactful, but also witty and quick with her words, Anna possesses a great sense of humor which allows her to fit in well with our family, as we like to tease each other and joke around a lot. Anna is very mature for her age and has a sharp mind. She has been absorbing her new surroundings like a sponge. Not only has she learned a lot about the United States and our lives and experiences in this country, but she has internalized the knowledge and became a truly well-rounded person.

In addition, Anna is instrumental to caring for the twins. In the beginning, I showed her what to do and

explained to her how I like things done. However, for some time now, it is I who ask her what I should do for the babies and when I should do it. Whether they are hungry, tired, wet or just literally pulling each other's hair out, Anna is always the first one to react. She is always there to feed, calm, sooth and console them. Despite her busy and tiring days with the twins, she tries to make time to play games with my older children and help them with their homework. Not only did she become a sister to my children, but also a dear friend to me. After a long day at work or a sleepless night with my babies, I find a lot of comfort just venting to her about my troubles. She always understands and finds the words to make me feel better.

In conclusion, I would like to nominate Anna for the Au Pair of the Year Award. She is an amazing person with unique personal characteristics. She is irreplaceable when it comes to taking care of my children. She has truly become a member of the family. We rely on her fully, whether we are taking care of the children or just having fun together. I am proud and very lucky to be Anna's host mother. She is truly an au pair extraordinaire.

Thank you to the Chudner family for writing about the family's life with Anna. And congrats to Anna for making it into EurAupair's Au Pair of the Year final 3!!

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move to a new town, Clayton, thirty minutes away from Garner. However, before that could happen we had to sell the house. That meant, for every showing the house had to be cleaned, beds made, toys picked up and I had to leave the house with the kids and the dog for at least an hour. This proved to be a big challenge on a rainy day or during nap times. Luckily the house got sold in three weeks and this meant we had to move to a rental for five months until the house we were building was done. We had to move twice with four kids, a dog and everything we have, which to anyone who doesn't know, is very, very challenging.

After all the trouble and problems that come with the move, in the end I couldn't be happier about it. I found two really good friends in Elizabeth from South Africa and Anna from Poland, here in Clayton. Over the last couple of months we have spent a lot of time together and I learned a lot about the South African and Polish culture. We all meet every Tuesday after work at Starbucks for a couple of hours and sometimes it would just sound like a group of mommies when we are talking about our host kids, good and bad behavior, play dates and whatever happened over the last few

days.

Along with the move to a new area and everything that came with it, my host parents both got new jobs, so now I'm even more responsible that everything works out while they are not at home. Homework, dinner, athletics, workers who come to fix things on the house and everything else that has to get done. But with all the help and support I get from my host parents, I'm able to handle it all and it's a great experience for me. I can't believe that it's already 18 months ago that I left my parents' house to come to America with my first flight ever to take care of four kids.

On the other hand it feels like I have been here for a lot more than 18 months because of all the experience I have gained. I've been to New York, North and South Carolina, Maryland, Florida, California and Michigan. For me it is just amazing how different all the states of the U.S. are and how easy you can fall in love with all of them. Even though I have found a second family in the USA, one of the most special moments to me during my time here was when my parents came to visit me. My mom and dad were so happy to see that I am happy. During their time here they were able to see for themselves how wonderful the Allen

family is and they are really grateful for everything my host parents do for me. My parents had a great time here with everyone and they can't wait to come back at the end of my second year.

Now, the only thing I have left to say is: Thank You! Thank you to everyone who made it possible for me to come to the United States and everyone who made it a wonderful time here. Thank you to my parents for the support they gave me, to EurAupair for offering a fantastic au pair program, Jean for being a great Community Counselor (to me and my host family) and last but not least the best host family I could imagine. Thank you so much for choosing me as your au pair and for letting me become a part of your lovely family. I will always remember the wonderful time we had together.

I am finishing my au pair program in September and I'm really sad that I will have to leave the Allen family. I love them so much and I hope they will always be a part of my life. It means a lot to me that I was able to help them to go through a lot of changes and to be such a big part of Peyton's, Cameron's, Mackenzie's and Bailey's life. I've gained a second family here and I hope it will not be a goodbye when I have to leave, I would rather say "see you later". But

before that happens I will try to have another eight wonderful months do for me. My parents had a great time here with everyone here and make some more memories that I can always remember with a smile on my face.

A big Thank You goes to the Allen family for nominating Daniela. Congratulations, Daniela, for becoming EurAupair's Au Pair of the Year 2014!!



Daniela Wende, EurAupair Au Pair of the Year 2014 with the four Allen children.