

2018 EurAupair Au Pair of the Year

By Lorena Simon, Au Pair from France in Cumberland, ME

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, Lorena Simon from France was announced EurAupair's 2018 Au Pair of the Year! Enjoy reading about her unforgettable time with the Lucas Family from Cumberland, ME.

This is a story about a very shy 21 year old French girl, who left her country, her family, friends, and her daily life, to become an au pair for one year in the United States.

This French girl is me, but now I am 22. I have been here in the United States for 7 months. I live in Cumberland Foreside in Maine, and I can tell you... time has passed very quickly, really fast. I arrived in June 2017 to meet my American family. Lisa, my host mom came to welcome me at the airport with Sophie (5 years old) and the twins Henry and Oliver (3 years old). I then met Romeo, my host dad, when he came home from work. At the beginning, the days were not easy, I had to find my place in this family where everyone had their habits, and the children had to get used to me, as I got used to them.

In September, Laura, Lisa's mom came to live with us, which brought me great happiness. I had already met her before, and I immediately got along very well with this French and Spanish teacher. Sometimes, she talks to

me in French and I answer her in English. It's always pleasant to meet people who like your culture, your country... and who understand you when you miss "baguettes" and "pain au chocolat". She is someone very cordial, very cultivated and she has brought me a lot of joy since she came to live with us.

Everything changes very quickly, the summer makes way for the fall. What I like most during that period is to drive on

or the very American atmosphere, but I really enjoy attending school here! Thanks to my university, I do typical American things, as go support the "Polar Bears" during hockey, basketball, football games... Sometimes I feel like I am in a show made in USA.

In the house, I try to talk to the children mostly in French and I find nice games for them so they can play and learn French at the same time. For example, I created



The Lucas family and Laura, the host mom Lisa's mother

Maine's big roads, surrounded by all the trees with yellow/orange leaves with the sunbeams peeking through the foliage.

September is also the month we all started school. The children went to French School. For Sophie it was her second year there, but for Henry and Oliver it was their very first year! I thought that they would be stressed, but no, there were really excited to go to school like big boys! At the same time, I attended Bowdoin College. I was both excited and stressed... But what a pleasure to go to class there. I don't know if it's the New England architecture

a game with cinnamon letter cookies. I give them one letter, and one by one they need to give me a French word and English word that start with this letter and also the translation in English. They have fun thinking of animals and the noises they make. And at the end, I also give them an easy French word that starts with this letter, and when they give me the answer they can eat the cookie and I give them another. In reality, I don't know if they like this game or just like eating the cookies, but either way, it works well!

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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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Chicagoland Au Pairs in Wrigley Field, Chicago, IL

By Dawn Rothermel, Community Counselor in Round Lake, IL

Three years into a 4-year plan for a facelift for the second oldest ballpark in the US (Fenway

in Boston is the oldest), was a good time for the Chicagoland au pairs to take a behind-the-

scenes tour. Tour stops included the press box, the visiting team's locker room and dugout and of course, the famous bleachers! Although video boards were added in the facelift, the Cubs' manually operated scoreboard still remains intact and in use. Note it is only operated by boys as, well, there aren't any toilet facilities inside the scoreboard structure. The facelift is good

for Wrigley Field as not only is baseball played there but it is also host to other events, such as music concerts. Back in the day football was played there as well as a few Winter Classic hockey games. It was a beautiful sunny day for a walk around the old ballpark.

Thank you, Dawn, for organizing fun and culturally enriching monthly meetings!



Back row left to right: Host parents Robert and Elizabeth from Huntley, IL, au pair Michelle from Germany, Juliana from Colombia, Adriana from Colombia, Annika from Germany, Hanlie from South Africa and Area Coordinator Vivi.

Front row: Host children Christopher and Nathaniel, Community Counselor Dawn, au pair Nicole from South Africa and Ana from Spain

Chicago Wolves Ice Hockey Game

By Vivi Frumkin, Area Coordinator in Bloomingdale, IL

Chicago area Community Counselors, au pairs, friends and family got together at the Allstate Arena to watch the Chicago Wolves Ice Hockey team beat the Rockford IceHogs.

It is a yearly outing which everybody enjoys. We have great seats - 5 rows from the ice and it is very affordable. Only problem was who to cheer for.

Chicago Wolves is a minor league

affiliate (also called a farm team) of the Vegas Golden Knights.

Rockford IceHogs is a minor league affiliate (farm team) of the Chicago Blackhawks.

Thank you Vivi for sharing!

From left to right: au pair Nicole from South Africa, Juliana from Colombia and Community Counselor Dawn



From left to right: au pairs Alice from France, Laura from France, Lucy (Laura's friend), Kevin (Community Counselor Nancy's husband), Community Counselors Nancy and Ginny



From left to right: au pairs Luya from China, Hanlie from South Africa, Jenny from Venezuela, Area Coordinator Vivi and Community Counselor Gila

EurAupair Photos



Our Community Counselor Leeta from Boston, MA and au pairs Alia from Germany, Mia (German au pair from another program), Su from China and Laura from Colombia went to El Pelón Authentic Mexican Cuisine restaurant in Boston, MA to celebrate Cinco de Mayo!



Our Community Counselor Carole from Bronxville, NY and her au pairs Fengyan from China, Fernanda from Brazil, Paula from Germany, Olivia from France (who also brought a friend along), Laurane from France, Sara from France and Lisa from Venezuela went to the Husdon River Museum and Glenview Mansion for their April Cultural Event meeting.



Our Community Counselor Darcy from Noblesville, IN took au pairs Boya from China and Yeny from Colombia to the Indianapolis Museum of Art and Gardens. They also toured the Lilly house which is on the same grounds!



In honor of the Olympics, Community Counselor Nancy from Hometown, IN hosted an International potluck at her house. Each au pair brought a dish from her home country to share. It was delicious!!

From left to right: Community Counselor Nancy made American chocolate chip cookies, Julie from France made salade niçoise, Vivien from Germany made Kartoffelpuffer (potato pancakes), and Mayra from Brazil made a shrimp dish (Pastel de camarão), and Brigadeiro and Brigadeiro blanco, delicious Brazilian desserts!



Our Community Counselor Nancy from Hometown, IN and au pair from Germany Vivien toured the DeBrands Chocolate Factory in Fort Wayne, IN and learned a lot about how chocolate is made. They even got free delicious free samples!



Our Community Counselor Lynne in West Lafayette, IN and Ana (au pair from Brazil) participated in a Pottery Party at the community center with friends and made woven clay baskets. Ana really enjoyed the activity followed by lunch with the group.



During the April Cultural Event meeting, Community Counselor Leigh took her group to the Cherry Blossom Parade in San Francisco, CA.



Our Community Counselor Jeanette from La Honda, CA took her group of au pairs ice skating. Some au pairs had never been on ice before but they were all up and skating!

From left to right: au pairs Amelie from France, Lorena from Colombia, Shudan from China, Alejandra from Colombia, Community Counselor Jeanette (who is also Dutch), au pairs Carolina from Brazil, Laura from Finland, Elisa from France and Sunny from China.

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My parents and my younger sister visited me for Halloween. We went to NYC and Boston and of course we also visited my home state: Maine. When they met my host family, Lisa and Romeo prepared us a delicious, special lobster dinner. Because yes, lobster is sacred in Maine! I am very lucky to be in a happy and loving family where we eat healthy. Lisa cooks very, very well like a chef! And Romeo is the king of the barbecue. Then, there is me who bakes cookies and crêpes (for the pleasure of Henry). He asks for crêpes every night when he comes home from school. "Crêpes, crêpes, crêpes!"

Then one morning, when I opened my shutters, the landscape had changed. Everything was white. There was so much snow that only the branches of the trees near my window were visible.

WINTER IS COMING!
(...and Christmas, too!)

Christmas is probably my favorite holiday. Before I lived as an au pair, I had read on many au pair blogs that Christmas is a depressing time, a time for "chocolate and Netflix under a warm blanket". Knowing it was my first Christmas without my family, I was a little worried, especially when Lisa told me we were going to be around thirty people because all of her family would be visiting. Even though I had already met some of her family, I was a little stressed.

Then Christmas day came, I helped with the preparation of the meal (I made vanilla cannoli with Lisa's aunts). I also made foie gras toast (which I brought with me from France). Everybody loved it. At the end of the night, I was happy and proud of myself because all through the night I overcame my shyness. I had fun, I laughed, talked... Lisa's family is very adorable, similar to Lisa. A close family, friendly and very nice. When you're away from your own family, it feels good to feel integrated. When I talked with Lisa's aunts, I felt like I've known them for a very long time.

Then I said goodbye to 2017. I was in Boston with my friends for the New Year. I

think I've never been so cold in all my life, but I made such wonderful memories. The cold

they are more interested in the tasting than the preparation lol. But I really like them, they bring



Lorena with her host sister Sophie (5) at the carnival at L'Ecole Française du Maine on her first weekend.

was so fierce that we could not stay outside more than 30 minutes. (Fortunately, Starbucks was everywhere, on every street corner to welcome us). I welcomed 2018, on the coldest night of my life, feet in the snow, hands in my coat pockets, and eyes raised to admire the splendid fireworks.

Oh au pair life! I think to be an au pair is something unique. Each experience of this adventure is different. We all come for the same purpose and to do the same thing, but can we define what it's really like to be an au pair?

I was here to take care of three children, who are now like my little sister and brothers, and I share many things with them (even microbes! Because yes, when one is sick, the whole family is sick). I teach them French, they teach me English. I teach them my culture, they teach me theirs. We have our own cooking workshops where I teach them to make crêpes and mousse au chocolat, but I think

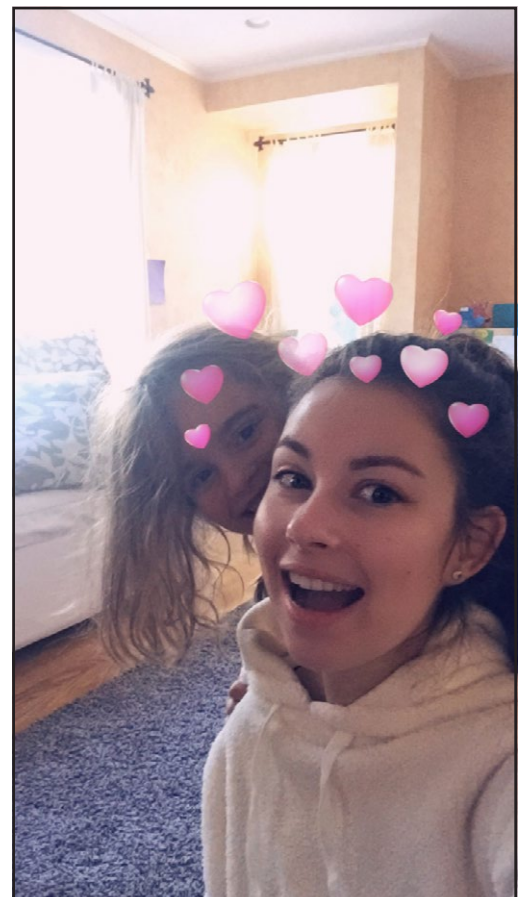
me so many experiences and the love...it's amazing. I learn more from them than I do in school. I don't feel the homesickness. It's as if I have always lived in Maine.

In any case, I am thankful for this experience, this new life to finally give me more confidence. I have found that even if there are difficult times, I always remain positive and optimistic, and at the end I find that I have grown and I have become even more capable of conquering new challenges than I ever imagined. If you are not sure whether or not you should become an au pair and if you are experiencing

doubts, I can tell you without hesitation: Go, really... GO! Sometimes you will feel afraid at the thought of traveling far away, leaving everything, your country, your family and your daily routine to go to a country where everything is new and the language is different and everyone is a stranger. But, I can tell you that Americans are so warmhearted and helpful and I've never regretted my decision. To leave everything to experience this adventure is one of the best decisions I've made in my life. This year in Maine changed me forever and most definitely, for the better.

Being an au pair is indefinable, you have to live it and I encourage all girls to try this wonderful experience. This amazing journey is so wonderful that I intend to stay one more year, to prolong this magnificent adventure.

A big Thank You goes to the Lucas family for nominating Lorena. Congratulations, Lorena, for becoming EurAupair's Au Pair of the Year 2018 and thank you for sharing your experience with us through this article!



Lorena with her host sister Sophie (5)