“I learned that I can improve my skills with the help of others and that a language barrier doesn’t matter when you are making an effort to become friends.”
— Summer 2018 Host Sibling, MD, 15

(Photo courtesy of Danielle Dittmer, Illinois)
Developing a Shared Global Community

I hope everyone in our States’ 4-H community is having a wonderful start to 2019. This marks our 48th year and we are very excited about all the good things to come this year. 23 states will be providing a hosting opportunity to nearly 700 families in their cities and towns. Approximately 80 young 4-Hers will be traveling overseas to have a once-in-a-lifetime experience that will broaden their perspectives and expand their horizons. We also look forward to hosting another cohort of high school students from around the world to spend a year immersing themselves into American culture and representing their home countries within their host communities.

2018 saw more than 650 young people from 19 different countries welcomed into families and communities across the country. As always, through the warmth and generosity of our host families, these young people were able to flourish and take home not only improved language skills and cross-cultural competencies, but lasting memories and a connection to a place in America they can call home. In 2018 we also were thrilled to have Taiwan 4-H join our network of international partner organizations. 4-H in Taiwan is flourishing and we are excited to grow our relationship through international exchange. This spring we are embarking on a new journey as we are becoming a placement organization for the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program. The YES Program was founded in 2002 as a response to the tragic events of September 11th, 2001. YES seeks to build ties and shared understanding between Americans and students from countries with significant Muslim populations such as Egypt, Turkey, and Indonesia. We are excited about this new chapter and to meet wonderful new students and host families.

This coming summer, delegates traveling to Finland will take part in Nordic 4-H Camp in Denmark. The theme of the camp is “Community Across Borders”. Later in the fall, Korea 4-H will host the 1st 4-H Global Youth Leadership Camp. The theme is “Global Youth, Challenge the Future, Step Forward and Move Together!”. These two themes neatly summarize what the goal of our programs is all about – to help develop a shared global community through people-to-people exchange and to empower the next generation of potential leaders. Our world is experiencing tumultuous times and the pathway forward will be through young leaders who feel invested in successful outcomes that are shared with others around the world. A better and more peaceful world can be pursued only through developing real personal relationships with those who share the same challenges we face. It is our hope that exchange programming can be one vehicle through which these connections are forged.

Finally, I hope that everyone will take a moment to read about the 2018 State Coordinator Development Exchange that took place in Japan and Taiwan. This two-week program was an opportunity for a small cohort of our State Coordinators to meet face to face with their international counterparts, participate in their local activities and experience firsthand a different culture. With these broadened perspectives they can more effectively implement our programs in their states. Japan, as our oldest international exchange, still has much to teach us as their programs grow and develop. Taiwan, as our newest exchange, is bursting with energy and enthusiasm as seen through their vibrant 4-H community. To read more about this program and hear directly from some of the participants, please check out page 18.

I want to thank everyone for another successful year. We are very much looking forward to 2019 and to sharing another exciting year with you.

— Yoko Kawaguchi

President and CEO,
States’ 4-H International

States’ 4-H 2019–2020 Board of Directors

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Director, 4-H Youth Development,
Cornell University

Nancy Deringer
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D’Ann Rohrer
Extension Educator
Michigan State University Extension

Samuel Meisenhelder
Young Adult Representative,
Oregon

Schuyler Germann
Young Adult Representative,
Montana

Yoko Kawaguchi, States’ 4-H President and CEO
Developing Connections in Denver

States’ 4-H coordinators, Board members, volunteers, partners, and staff gathered once again for the 47th States’ 4-H Annual Conference in Denver, Colorado. The conference was held between Nov. 7th and 10th. Over this four-day period, conference attendees tackled topics including cross-cultural communication, host family orientation and evaluation, mindfulness as a communication skill, and harnessing the potential of social media for host family recruitment.

The Annual Conference is a space for connecting with long-time colleagues, creating new relationships, and sharing both challenging and positive aspects of international exchange. Ultimately, it energizes all the stakeholders in our exchange community and results in creative outcomes that improve States’ 4-H exchange programs. Our coordinators and volunteers work hard throughout the year to put new ideas into practice. Their dedication to continually improving our exchange programs is inspiring.

States’ 4-H had the opportunity to acknowledge several long-time State Coordinators. Rose Scott (KS) and Amber Rehberg (WI) were both recognized for their 15 years of dedication and service to our programs. States’ 4-H also celebrated the remarkable career of Courtney Loflin, who served as the State Coordinator in Colorado for 31 years and built a strong and steady program that positively impacted thousands of young people and families. It was a bittersweet moment for States’ 4-H as we are thrilled for Courtney’s new journey into retirement but are saddened to see her depart as a State Coordinator. As always, we remain incredibly grateful for the contributions of our honorees and to those made by all the Coordinators and volunteers who support States’ 4-H programs.

THANK YOU TO OUR 2018 & 2019 STATE COORDINATORS!

Through your dedication and hard work, we had 794 participants in 2018! (see page 19)

AK:  Jason Floyd  ID:  Judith McShane  MD:  Carrie Vivell  NY:  Andy Turner
AZ:  Jeremy Elliot-Engel  IL:  Elisha Hughes  MD:  Dr. Jeff Howard  OH:  Mary Lynn Thalheimer
CO:  Melissa Barton  IL:  Miriam Rosenbohm  MD:  Brenda Mason  VA:  Judy Ann Fray
FL:  Georgene Bender  KS:  Rose Scott  MO:  Joyce Taylor  VA:  Eliza Seibert
FL:  Deb Johnson  KS:  Deryl Waldren  MT:  Stephanie Davison  WA:  Nancy Baskett
FL:  Shane Michael  KY:  Mark Mains  NC:  Daniel Collins  WA:  Dianna Ullery
FL:  Jessica Sprain  KY:  Rachel Noble  SD:  Kristi Hinkle  WI:  Amber Rehberg

The States’ 4-H Board met with representatives of the Labo Foundation and the LEX/Hippo Family Club, two of States’ 4-H’s long-time partner organizations in Japan.

 Academic Yearlong Program students Mayu Suto (Japan, CO) and Daria Pieczynska (Poland, KS) joined the Annual Conference where they gave presentations about their home countries and led activities that shared unique aspects of their cultures.

Courtney Loflin was honored for her 31-year career as the State Coordinator in Colorado. States’ 4-H is immensely grateful for her dedication and commitment and wishes her the best in her retirement!
My Year in Japan

Araceli Carrillo is currently spending an academic year studying in Japan through the States’ 4-H in-Japan Academic Yearlong Program. Below, Araceli shares about her experience thus far.

My name is Araceli Carrillo, and I’m a 16 year-old American teenager, born and raised in California. I’m currently living in Japan courtesy of Lex/Hippo Family Club and States’ 4-H International.

Before I went to Japan, before I had younger siblings, before I ate raw fish on nearly a weekly basis, all I had was an idea. I was sitting at home and the thought popped into my head. How cool would it be if I could go to Japan. A few days later, I brought it up to my mom in the car. To my surprise, she didn’t immediately shoot it down! We started researching different programs that could get me to Japan and settled on the States’ 4-H Program, which fits me as a 4-Her.

After months of prepping, weeks of packing and days of unbridled anticipation, we finally arrived at the airport. Ahead of me was a 19 ½ hour flight which included a layover in Taiwan. Arriving at the airport in Japan was probably one of the most stressful experiences of my life. After going through Immigration I had to get an ID card. I then continued down the escalator, gathered my luggage, and after it was checked, I proceeded out the gates. My host family was there waiting for me with a sign that said “Welcome to Japan” and a lei made out of origami flowers.

Since arriving in Japan, even with my initial culture shock, my Hippo family has helped me so much when it came to anything and everything I needed. I feel like I’ve grown so much being in Japan and learning Japanese customs. Even though everyday life can be stressful, I also feel I’ve found out how to be more patient with myself and feel less pressure while still getting things done. Being thrust into Japanese culture is a really scary experience. From my first day I have been introducing myself in front of crowds in my broken Japanese. This is the part that I thought I would be fine with. I was not. Even after years of experience of public speaking in 4H, public speaking in a language I’m not comfortable or fluent in is a completely different challenge. Despite this, the Hippo members constantly compliment me on my Japanese skills and pronunciation and are always ready to help me learn a new word.

Learning how to get to school was difficult to say the least. The first day I had to go home alone I got lost 5 different times. Thankfully the train routes are pretty straight forward, so after a few days even my directionally-challenged self could get from point A to point B. At school, I joined the tea ceremony club, or Sadou-bu. It’s really difficult! We meet twice a week. I love the tea; I attended a Japanese tea ceremony once in America, and I’m really happy to be learning the traditional art of making such a delicious drink.

I also got to participate in the Kawagoe Festival! I wore traditional clothes and help pull one of the floats and lead our cheer. This is a very important culture festival and I am honored to have taken a part in it. At one point, I was allowed to hold a lantern which meant that when our float interacted with another one, I got to join the throng of people jumping and cheering between them.

This entire experience, from the idea in my head to where I am now has really helped me grow as a person. I am so grateful to everyone both in America and in Japan that are helping me make it. I am so excited for what the coming months will bring and when I come home, I can’t wait to put my experiences to good use.

—Araceli Carrillo, AYP Student, CA
The Benefits of Clustering

When finding host families, States’ 4-H Coordinators always try to ‘cluster’ their delegates, placing them in the same general area as other host families so as to create a lateral support network. Below, a Local Coordinator in Oregon shares the benefits of her county’s cluster.

Clustering has been wonderful for us in Grant County. For our two students (Yui and Jueun) it has made a huge difference in their experience and school life, especially in a small-town setting. That they do not share the same common language ensures that they have not developed a reliance on one another. Rather, their experiences complement and enrich each other.

Clustering in the same school district has had a positive impact on the students and community. If Yui and Jueun were going to different schools it would be harder for them to hang out, volunteer together, or do fun community activities with each other without inconveniencing their host families. When they have positive experiences together it influences perceptions. Community members hear positive feedback about their own communities from an outsider’s perspective and will enjoy welcoming other students in the future because they feel proud of their hometown. Clustering encourages recruitment in this way.

Yui and Jueun each have their unique friend group and each has different interests when it comes to volunteering but having another international student in the community has helped make it less lonely. Having them be from different countries also helps because they naturally share their culture, stories, and their lives with each other and so feel less shy about sharing with Americans. It has been fun for people in the community to get to know multiple international students and multiple countries through this hosting experience.

—Alexandria Maurer, Local Coordinator, OR

Montana 4-H Citizenship Seminar

Some of the goals of the high school exchange program to the U.S. are for students to gain an understanding of American culture, to explore the key elements of U.S. civil society, such as volunteering, and to develop leadership skills to use when they return home. To help students meet these goals, state coordinators provide them with experiential opportunities such as the Montana 4-H Citizenship Seminar. At this mock legislative event, students write bills, debate them in legislative committees and to decide which will pass out of committee to the “floor.”

This year, eight students from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, Ukraine, and South Korea participated. Their bills ranged from providing U.S. high school graduates with affordable higher education, to requiring world languages be taught in every school, to requiring counties to have mental health advisors. Two of the eight bills moved from committee to the mock legislative floor and both passed the full Senate! Students also participated in a service project to benefit Montana’s homeless population by donating materials for Care Kits, then assembling and delivering them to local organizations that serve homeless people. Students got the chance to meet with the governor, two U.S. senators, the secretary of state, and state legislators and toured the Montana Capitol building and Supreme Court. Some participants noted that the event was a highlight of their month and that they learned a lot.

FLEX Alumni Notes

Dymtro Lukashenko (MO, ’17-’18) presented on his exchange experience to the US Ambassador to Ukraine.

Zhike Joldybaeva, Kamilla Chukanova (MT/CO ’17-’18) co-organized a Global Youth Service Day trash pickup in Kyrgyzstan.
SEE THE WORLD — STATES’ 4-H OUTBOUND

2018 NORWAY OUTBOUND EXCHANGE

PARTNER: 4H Norge
ACTIVITIES: Arrival Orientation and sightseeing in Oslo, homestay with Norwegian 4-H family, day trips to Sweden
QUOTE: “I loved meeting people my own age and seeing how my life was both similar and different to their own.”

2018 JAPAN OUTBOUND EXCHANGE

PARTNERS: Labo, LEX
ACTIVITIES: Arrival Orientation in Tokyo, homestay with Japanese family, camp (Labo only), cultural excursions (LEX); 8-week program included immersive language classes and Tokyo sightseeing excursions
QUOTE: “It was an awesome experience; you learn a lot about yourself and the differences in culture between two countries.”

2018 COSTA RICA OUTBOUND EXCHANGE

PARTNER: Consejo Nacional de Clubes 4-S
ACTIVITIES: Arrival orientation and sightseeing in San Jose, homestay with 4-S family, 4-S Camp, beach excursion, La Paz waterfall gardens
QUOTE: “This program was the best and most rewarding experience that I have ever had.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION on future Outbound programs and the application process, visit www.states4hexchange.com/outbound.

Deadline for 2020 Outbound program is December 1, 2019.
Questions? Contact us at OB@states4h.org
COSTA RICA: I learned to adapt to different conditions, experienced a new culture, and expanded my horizons…

I still vividly remember the moment I met my host family. It was one of the most nerve-wracking but exciting moments of my life. For the first couple of days, I struggled to communicate. I was unsure and nervous about speaking Spanish, and all I could think about was my home in the U.S. A few days into the exchange, I decided that the best way to get over my homesickness was to really integrate myself into my host family. From then on, I started to see a change in my Spanish ability. By the end of the month, my Spanish had improved drastically, and I felt much more comfortable speaking the language. Through everyday interactions with my host family and friends, I learned more about Costa Rican culture and began to share my own. By the end of the exchange, my host family had become like a second family to me. The decision to throw all my effort into interacting with my host family truly made a difference in establishing such a close relationship. This summer, I will again visit my host family in Costa Rica, not through an exchange program, but because I formed such a strong bond with them in 2018. My exchange experience has impacted me in so many ways. I learned to adapt to different conditions, experience a new culture, and expanded my horizons. The decision to be an exchange student was one of the best decisions I have ever made, and the experiences, memories, and friendships formed in Costa Rica will forever be a part of my life.

—Anna Sutherland (MI Delegate to Costa Rica)

JAPAN: By the end of the month we were having family game nights every night...

Konichiwa! Hello. My name is Mahi Gupta and I am thirteen years old. Last summer, I went on an exchange trip to Japan where I began to learn about and appreciate the country’s rich culture by participating in many festivals and rituals. I made lifelong friends and became a true member of a family. While traveling to Japan was a truly amazing experience that I will never forget, there were obstacles that I had to overcome to learn about Japanese culture and to share my own. Like many delegates, before I met my host family I believed that it would be extremely difficult to communicate. I knew little to no Japanese and was unaware of how well my host family could speak English. I will admit, the first couple days were daunting as a tried to find the best way to communicate. However, after the initial days my fear and nervousness subsided. I realized that this was just a normal family – the only difference was that they spoke Japanese. Eventually, I forced myself to get over my shyness and get to know them, learn from them, teach them, and more.

In the beginning, I spoke slowly and pointed at objects to communicate. As my time in Japan grew, I found new ways to communicate. I still talked slowly, but I also began to use common Japanese words, hand gestures, and as a last resort, Google Translate. After only using common greetings early on, by the end of the month we were having family game nights every night. From the outside, language barriers seem difficult to overcome. However, it is really just a matter of getting comfortable and trying out different ways to communicate, whether it be verbally, through pictures, gestures, or even body language.

—Mahi Gupta (NJ Delegate to Japan)

LEFT: 2018 Outbound delegate Mahi Gupta (NJ) enjoys a meal with her host sister.
I Left My Heart in Japan

Karaline Cash participated in the 2018 4-week Japan program. She shares her reflections on her experience below.

For one memorable month I stayed with a host family in Japan and immersed myself in the culture. I can easily say that this was one of the best and most amazing times of my life. The time I got to spend in Japan thanks to States’ 4-H and Labo helped me better understand the people, culture, and country.

On my first day, I arrived in Kobe and was greeted by my host family in the station. They all wore huge smiles and greeted me with gifts. When we arrived home, I gave them the gifts I brought from America. It was an exciting moment for me to share some of my country’s culture.

Over the first week, I slowly adjusted to the culture shock and tried to absorb everything I was experiencing. One night, my host sister and I dressed up in yukatas and went to a summer festival where we met some of her friends. We all walked around looking at the stalls. We tried a variety of snacks and candies. As the night ended, we headed home.

The next week, my host sister, host mother, and I went to Iwate prefecture to stay with their grandparents. While we stayed there, we went to lots of different traditional handicraft shops. The shop owners told me stories as we made decorations and traditional Japanese sweets. On our way back home to Kobe, we stopped in Tokyo for a day. We went to Tokyo Tower and learned about the history of Tokyo and Tokyo Tower. The view from the top deck was breathtaking.

On the third week, we visited Kyoto for two days. We visited Kinkakuji and several other shrines and temples. I tried on a kimono, shopped around, and enjoyed the traditional buildings and towns.

The fourth week was Labo Camp. At camp, I hiked up Mount Daisen to a temple. The nature was beautiful and the sounds of cicadas, birds, and the wind were relaxing. I spent a lot of time talking to the younger kids and teaching them a bit about me and my culture. The kids were all eager to learn and hear my stories.

After we left Labo Camp, my host family and I went to watch the Hanabi fireworks in Kobe. The city view mixed with fireworks was beyond breathtaking. The last few days I spent with my host family exploring Kobe. We went shopping and went to Kobe Port Tower. The city was so colorful at night and the lights reflecting off the water were amazing.

This trip not only helped me understand Japanese culture, it also helped me learn about myself and my future. I am beyond grateful that I was able to experience this homestay and recommend it to anyone who is interested in having an adventure.

—Karaline Cash, VA, 2018 Japan 4-Week Delegate
Thoughts of a Global Citizen

Serena Peterson has been involved with States’ 4-H as a host, Outbound delegate, and Teen Leader. She reflects on the impact her participation has had on her life up to now and the decisions she has made along the way.

States’ 4-H has broadened my horizons and increased my appreciation for culture worldwide. My experience with States’ 4-H began in the summer of 2016, when my family hosted Kotone, an exchange student from Japan. The bond that formed over the course of a summer eating ice cream, swimming at the lake, and cooking up delicious food is one that will last a lifetime. Hosting brought us closer together as a family, increasing our awareness of the world and our roles within it.

My desire to be globally involved only grew after hosting Kotone, and the next summer, I embarked on an exchange trip to Costa Rica. The time I spent there served as a catalyst for my love for language and Latin American culture. I am now pursuing a Spanish minor and hope to utilize the language the rest of my life through study abroad and my career. I adore the country of Costa Rica and its people with all my heart, and still talk to my host sister, Julianna, often. The Costa Rica experience was also a period when I met some of my favorite 4-Hers of all time. I remember being in awe of my fellow delegates and our chaperone: their achievements, their worldliness, and their adaptability. We all learned to go with the flow, adjusting quickly to new situations during our month in Costa Rica. Learning to adapt is perhaps one of the greatest skills States’ 4-H teaches its participants.

My involvement with States’ 4-H did not end upon returning from my exchange trip. States’ 4-H graciously provided me the opportunity to assist in leading an orientation of year-long exchange students in Seattle this past summer. My love for the organization and the work it is doing was again revitalized as I assisted in workshops, community service projects, and helping the exchange students acclimate to American life. My leadership skills strengthened rapidly over the course of that week, and I was even reunited with my host sister, Kotone, in Seattle. We picked up right where we left off, and it felt amazing to reconnect with her. We decided that two years would be too long to wait before seeing each other again and resolved to spend Christmas together at my family’s farm in Missouri.

The adults who have guided me through my experiences with States’ 4-H have been superior role models for me and my fellow 4-Hers. I am continually inspired when I think about conversations I have had with these adults, and the understanding they have displayed for the world and its people. It is the shoes of adults like these that I envision myself filling someday. I cannot say enough about the exceptional people I have met through States’ 4-H, and the ways in which they have guided and influenced me. It is the desire to connect with individuals such as these that pushed me to think globally. I moved to a big city for college, pushed through childhood shyness until I became outgoing, and learned to take risks. The opportunity to realize this, and the courage it took to execute all big decisions I’ve made, would not have existed without States’ 4-H. I owe so much of who I am to this organization, and it is my sincerest wish that everyone become involved in States’ 4-H in some context. The betterment of our community, our country, and our world depend on it.

—Serena Peterson, MO (2016 Costa Rica Delegate and 2018 Teen Ambassador)
2018 INBOUND EXCHANGES ALL OVER THE USA

Thank you host families!
2018 INBOUND EXCHANGES ALL OVER THE USA

OKLAHOMA
OREGON
SOUTH DAKOTA
TEXAS
VIRGINIA
WASHINGTON
WISCONSIN
NORTH CAROLINA
NEW YORK
NEW JERSEY
OHIO
OREGON
SOUTH DAKOTA
TEXAS
WASHINGTON
WISCONSIN
VIRGINIA
Worldwide Connections

Being a part of the States’ 4-H Inbound Program is an opportunity to make friends and memories that cross borders. Below are two stories sent to us by host families. One recounts their 2018 hosting experience. The other illustrates how hosting can have a long-term impact.

Texas and Japan: No, you don’t usually use those two locations in the same sentence, especially not West Texas and Japan. At first glance, it doesn’t seem like residents of these different areas would have much in common.

My name is Katelyn Besler, and I live in Brownfield, Texas, about 35 miles southwest of Lubbock. My parents and I enjoyed introducing Iori to West Texas. She was a great sport about trying new foods and adventures, always taking pictures of food, people and places we visited. She really liked hamburgers in particular! Iori and I grew close by sharing our common interests – cooking and eating, crafts, card games and sightseeing. In fact, I’m now looking forward to going to Japan this summer! Before hosting Iori, I wouldn’t have considered going overseas without my family.

While Iori was here, we enjoyed several fun activities. We picked apples at an apple orchard, and then made apple fritters at home. We explored the Science Spectrum and toured historical homes at the National Ranching Heritage Center in Lubbock. I showed her where I raise pigs to show in livestock shows, and we got to see piglets being born. We went swimming in our backyard pool, and we went to the movies. We went to an Asian market in Lubbock to get Iori’s take on the foods sold there. At the market we bought mochi ice cream and marble drinks, both of which Iori had recommended. We also ate at a Japanese restaurant which Iori said was authentic.

Katelyn and Iori spending time together on a summer evening.

My favorite memory of the summer was watching the outdoor musical, “Texas”, in Palo Duro Canyon. The musical ended with fireworks set against the backdrop of the canyon. We both enjoyed watching the show, seeing fireworks and visiting the cast after the show.

Iori taught me how to make an origami swan. She also taught me how to make miso and soba soups, and I introduced her to my favorite television show, The Office. I also liked helping her with her English, and she taught me some Japanese words and phrases. We played Old Maid and Go Fish, and I taught her to play Solitaire.

Iori was only with us for four weeks, but the memories will last forever. And, having her visit led me to sign up to be an exchange student this summer. After she returned home, she mailed me two photo albums of the photos she took while here. I think we both have great memories to last a lifetime!

—Katelyn Besler, 2018 Host Sibling, TX

Signature on Form Brings World of Opportunities to Ohio Family

The results and reach of hosting go far beyond the initial encounters. Brian and Debra Roy of Medina, Ohio, first hosted a Japanese girl for their daughter, Brenna, in 2002 when she was 12. That same year, they sent their 14-year-old son, Gavin, on an Ohio 4-H Youth Study Tour to Europe. Both experiences changed the lives of the entire family. “A signature on an application form brought about lifetime relationships and career changes!” said Debra, who, with Brian, also serves as a program volunteer.

Brenna’s friendship with her Japanese sister, Haruka, has turned into 15 years of back-and-forth visits as the girls have grown into young women. Most recently, Brian and Debra attended Haruka’s wedding in Japan as honored guests. “It all began with the 4-H International Program,” said Debra, marveling on how well they were treated in Japan as Haruka’s “Ohio host parents.”

For Gavin, the European experience sparked an international interest with even more dramatic results. While earning his doctorate he decided to learn a 3rd language, Portuguese, and posted YouTube videos of himself as he studied. A follower suggested that he make videos to teach Brazilian people how to speak English, and his company, SmallAdvantages, was born.

That 2002 4-H trip to Europe “was definitely a turning point in my life,” said Gavin. “I realized the wealth of other cultures and languages that are out there.”

—Mary Lynn Thalheimer, OH State Coordinator
Our Summer Adventures

A treasure of information had just arrived: a packet with details about our exchange student! We examined the photos and noted the hobbies and interests Koshi had checked off. The information sparked our imaginations: what would he really be like in person? We anticipated the moment we would actually get to meet him, and when the day came to pick him up in Bozeman, the four-hour drive couldn’t go by fast enough.

We watched as the students introduced themselves, enjoyed the performances each group gave, but kept a keen eye on one student in particular: Koshi. When we finally got introduced, we tried to be friendly and welcoming. Koshi had a great smile—but we could tell from the start that his English wasn’t quite keeping up with us. We quickly switched to using shorter sentences, simpler words, and gestures to communicate.

Soon we were off on an adventure with Koshi—due to the timing of the inbound program, it coincided with our family’s yearly camping trip to Winthrop, Washington. We knew he would have some big adjustments to make almost immediately. Koshi cheerfully took it all in with a sparkle in his eyes and a smile that warmed us to him all the more. We had fun trying to work out ways to communicate, and generally we were able to get our ideas across.

Camping turned out to be a sweet bonding experience with Koshi—especially in how much he liked the ice cream at Sheri’s Sweet Shoppe! He joined right in with water balloon fights. He learned how to use lacrosse sticks. We played Frisbee and bocce ball. He surprised us with how quickly he gained confidence in tubing and even tried water skiing. He sat around the campfire with us and roasted s’mores.

He also had a project of journaling about his time in America, and he included us in the process. He would have us each fill in an entry. It was a neat way to feel like we were contributing to a record of this unique experience.

Koshi loved the simple times of playing soccer at the park, swimming at our local pool, playing board games, and playing with our pets. We didn’t have to do something grandiose for the kids to have a great time enjoying each other. I loved watching how my son Joshua stepped up to make Koshi feel included in everything.

We wanted him to be able to experience the culture of our area, so we arranged for him to ride in a combine with a local farmer. Koshi had brought some of his culture with him as well, cooking a meal for us and sharing many gifts.

When it came time to take Koshi back to Bozeman, we realized how much he had become a friend—and even felt like part of our family. After he left, our home seemed like it had a bit of a void where his presence had been. We truly missed him.

The next summer, we decided to host another student—it had been such a great learning experience for our family. This time we welcomed Kai into our home. At first he was a bit shy and homesick, but after a few days he seemed to have a breakthrough in really enjoying himself. His smile grew larger, and he seemed more at ease. He began to join in boating, tubing, and other activities with eagerness.

The following summer we hosted a girl for the first time: Aoi. Our daughter Hannah was able to be the host student, and our younger daughter Rachel bonded quite a bit with Aoi. She loved to laugh, and she loved our animals as much as we did. Aoi volunteered quite often to take them for walks and feed them. She even helped us paint our girls’ room. Our farewell to Aoi was at a water play area in Belgrade where the girls—laughing and hugging each other—got drenched with water.

The kids all took the ups and downs of camping, traveling, and life experiences with acceptance. They didn’t complain about mosquito bites and dry skin from camping, or hours spent in a car. Kai saw us dealing with a very sick dog. Aoi lost her camera.

Through it all, we seemed to bond together. We exchanged our cultures, and more than that, we exchanged a bit of ourselves. We had adventures, memories, and friendships we will treasure our whole lifetime, and that’s why our family looks forward each year to the summer exchange.

—Kelli Nelson, 2016-2019 Host Family, MT
Here are some of the findings from our National Evaluation sent to both host parents and host siblings yearly after the summer inbound program concludes. 219 host parents and host siblings participated this year.

**What was the impact of this program on States’ 4-H host families?**

As a result of our experience in this international exchange program, our family:

- Enjoyed learning about people who are different from us.
- Learned about a different culture from our delegate/chaperone.
- Learned to communicate with someone from a different culture.
- Developed skills in adapting to differences in values and behaviors.
- Wants to travel and experience the culture of our delegate/chaperone.

**What did States’ 4-H host siblings learn from this program?**

In this international exchange program:

- I enjoyed learning about people who are different from me.
- I was respectful of others.
- I could work things out when others didn’t agree with me.
- I worked well with others.
- I learned about a different culture from my student.
- I learned to communicate with someone from a different culture.

**How did States’ 4-H host siblings feel that this program changed them?**

As a result of my experience in this international exchange program:

- I plan to work on projects to improve my community.
- I am encouraged to volunteer more.
- I like to work with others to solve problems.
- I have new talents I can offer to others.
- I feel I am someone who wants to help others.
- I believe I can make a difference.
- I care more about contributing to make the world a better place.
- I want to travel and experience another culture.
- I want to host another student in the future.
Here is what some of the host families had to say about how the program compared to their expectations and about some of their favorite memories from this experience.

- My desire was for our entire family, especially my son, to connect with a child from a different culture.
- It exceeded our expectations because the child we hosted was such a great person! He was very adaptable and personable. It would have been a lot harder with a naturally introverted child, but he made it very easy to meet him half-way with the language barrier.
- It was a pleasure learning about Korea.
- Having our delegate on her 16th birthday & making it super special for her. She was very appreciative, loved trying new things & foods. We all will cherish this special time.
- Each night we played games and taught him new games- it brought our family closer together.
- Cooking and baking with our exchange student. She loved to do both and taught us several Japanese dishes.

Here are some comments from host siblings about what they learned about themselves.

- I learned I can find creative ways to communicate like drawing pictures. I realized we weren’t that different, but that her way of doing things was normal to her.
- We actually had a lot in common. She wasn’t that different from me. I learned that having an exchange student was great but very tiring. I’m glad my siblings played with her some so I could rest or read quietly.
- Don’t judge people until you really know and understand all about them.
Deukgyu: Hi, my name is Daniel (Deukgyu) Kim. I was a year long exchange student last year. My dad introduced this program to me in the summer of 2016. One year later in June of 2017, I got my host family in Alaska but wasn’t that happy at first because I was thinking about Alaska and it being so cold. I was so sad, I just wanted to change the place and I didn’t want to go but my dad encouraged me. So, I went to Alaska.

In Alaska I met my host family and I had a really good time during the summer. When school started I didn’t have any friends except Justin, my host brother, but I started playing football and hanging out with people. After a few days I got a lot of friends. They were trying to help me all the time, and if I didn’t understand they tried to explain. My school life was super fun but it was hard too. This exchange program gave me a lot of things.

Justin: Hi, my name is Justin Haltom, I live in Alaska and I have had the privilege of hosting Deukgyu Kim. When my mom told me that we were going to be hosting a year-long exchange student I thought, “oh boy, this is going to be a long year.” But pleasantly to my surprise, Deukgyu actually made my year better. It went by too fast, over the course of the year our friendship turned to a brotherly bond and I stopped calling him my exchange student and started calling him my brother.

Last spring, I started getting sad knowing he would be leaving but then learned his dad had bought me a plane ticket to come visit them in Korea. Going to Korea has probably been the best experience I’ve ever had. I learned so much about the Korean way of life and culture, everything from what teens do for fun to traditional cuisine. I highly recommend hosting an exchange student. You won’t regret it.
Why I Chaperone

Long-time chaperone, Rory Nansel, shares his thoughts on the importance of exchange and why it keeps bringing him back.

For more than two-thirds of my life, I have been blessed to be involved in both AFS and 4-H international exchanges as an exchange student to Finland, host family, program coordinator, mentor, and chaperone. My chaperone experience includes group travel to Japan (1995), The Dominican Republic (2005, 2007, 2016, 2017, and 2018), and Finland (2008, 2015 and the upcoming 2019 trip).

As I reflect on the many times I’ve chaperoned teen delegates, I find many reasons that compel me to continue to chaperone. It is one way I can influence a teen’s life and their outlook on the world. I can share my knowledge, travel and cultural experiences to orient and hopefully excite teens about their upcoming trips. I can help them step out of their comfort zone, face their own challenges, and try new experiences with an open mind. It is a joy to witness the delegates’ personal growth, and watch their world simultaneously open up and become smaller! In this age of social media, I also find joy in watching former delegates grow into well-rounded individuals and seeing where life takes them.

It is so important for American youth to have international experience. It develops awareness of more than “just us” in the world. Once they travel abroad, even if they never travel again, when they hear about the country they visited, they will think of someone else other than themselves. For me, the earthquake near my host family in Sendai, Japan is a prime example. While friendships in the US can be deep and lasting, friendships around the world often are longer lasting, and can be picked right back up, even after being dormant for many years. International travel provides a personal connection and often a different perspective on how and why people do things and think the way they do – a pathway to international understanding. The sum of these give teens a greater sense of self, a broader understanding of interaction with diverse people, and can continue to influence the following generations.

—Rory Nansel, VA

Instagram Stories!

Caleb Johnson (MO), a 2018 Outbound delegate to Japan, posted a photo to Instagram about his summer adventures. The post was seen by Fumika Kubo, a 2015-2016 Academic Yearlong Program student who had met Caleb while studying in Missouri during her program year. Caleb and Fumika exchanged messages and realized that two years after their first meeting they would once again be crossing paths. Thanks to Fumika’s work as a volunteer supporting summer exchange students, they would meet at the train station in Tokyo during Caleb’s trip home. Another serendipitous meeting that exhibits the power of international exchange!
ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

2018 State Coordinator Development Tour

In the fall of 2018, 10 States’ 4-H Coordinators traveled to Japan and Taiwan as part of the State Coordinator Development Tour. Participants had the opportunity to strengthen international relationships and increase the visibility and understanding of our organization in these countries.

“Agreeing to a homestay was out of my comfort zone as an adult, which is exactly why I needed this experience. I wanted a greater understanding of the emotions a young person might have during their homestay. My host’s generosity made the experience unforgettable. I visited with my host’s Labo club. The children and I shared dinner, played games, and practiced a traditional Japanese Tea Ceremony. Each morning my host cooked breakfast and we enjoyed conversation. My host dressed me in the Kimono she and her daughters wore for their weddings, an honor I will never forget. Through this experience I was reminded of the value of cultural exchange, the warmth of friendship transcends languages, miles, and culture.”

—Rachel Noble, KY

“The visit to Taiwan to learn about the Republic of China (ROC) 4-H Program was nothing less than amazing! In Pingtung we visited a Farmer’s Association (FA) and a 4-H Cocoa Club at an elementary school. The ROC 4-H Clubs are a collaboration with the Farmer’s Association who provide training and mentorship in the communities. At the school, we learned how the students grow and harvest sweet potatoes and cocoa. The students keep elaborate record books on the growth of the plants, with drawings to depict the weather, insects that might be present and other noteworthy details. We sampled freshly harvested sweet potato, and even the leaves, as they make use of the entire plant. In Shenkeng another Farmers Association provides leadership for the Tea Club. Members shared an afternoon tea ceremony with our delegation. Our final and maybe most impressive collaboration was at TDH, The Dessert House. Here, ROC 4-H Alumni provide training, mentorship and employment for several 4-H members. The bakery and tea shop prepares unique confections, allowing young 4-H members to gain skills, learn about the business and interact with customers. The partnership between the Farmers Association and the 4-H Club Program was truly impressive.”

—Stephanie Davison, MT

“Coming from a sparsely-populated state like Montana, the crowds in Tokyo were a bit overwhelming at first, but the Japanese people are like no others in terms of order, probably because so many people need to share resources. Even the “country towns” where most of us stayed with families for a few days had populations of 300,000, give or take. The people are very hospitable and go out of their way to accommodate their guests. The food is beautifully perfect, arranged neatly or stacked in vending machines from which one can purchase a hot meal. In both countries, the people welcomed and fed us generously clearly enjoying each other as much as their visitors. That said, no one in either country seemed to drink water, relying instead on tea, sake, and other drinks to quench their thirst, something that this Montanan found hard to swallow!”

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STATES’ 4-H INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

Current and previous member states since 1972

2019 Member States

AK  University of Alaska
AZ  University of Arizona
CO  Colorado State University
FL  University of Florida
ID  University of Idaho
IL  University of Illinois
KS  Kansas State University
KY  University of Kentucky
MD  University of Maryland
MI  Michigan State University
MO  University of Missouri
MT  Montana State University
NC  North Carolina State University
NJ  Rutgers University
NY  Cornell University
OH  Ohio State University
OK  Oklahoma State University
OR  Oregon State University
SD  South Dakota State University
TX  Texas A&M University
VA  Virginia Tech University
WA  Washington State University
WI  University of Wisconsin

Program participation since the beginning of States’ 4-H International in 1972

| Hosting in the USA | 54,080 |
| Traveling from the USA | 8,160 |
| All Programs, All Participants: | 62,240 |

2018 Program Activities

| All Programs | 794 Participants |
| Academic Year-Long Hosting | 105 Armenia, Estonia, Georgia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Moldova, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, South Korea, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine |
| Summer Inbound (Hosting in US) | 610 Costa Rica, Japan, Finland, South Korea, Taiwan |
| Summer Outbound (Travel Abroad) | 78 Costa Rica, Norway, Japan, South Korea |
| Academic Year-Long Outbound | 1 Japan |
SHARE YOUR WORLD!

Our mission since 1972
Enhancing world understanding and global citizenship through high-quality 4-H international cultural immersion and exchange programs for 4-H aged youth.

About States’ 4-H International
States’ 4-H International (States’ 4-H) is a not-for-profit educational and cultural organization, established under IRS code 501(c)3, in the State of Washington. States’ 4-H is governed by a board of directors comprised of Extension professionals from across the USA. The 4-H National Headquarters at NIFA has authorized States’ 4-H to use the 4-H name and emblem. States’ 4-H programs are coordinated through the State 4-H Office by 4-H Youth Development Centers of the Cooperative Extension System at land grant colleges and universities in each state.

Share your summer with a new friend from across the world!
Learn more by contacting your local or state 4-H Youth Development Coordinator, liking us on Facebook, following us on Instagram, or by visiting our website: http://www.states4hexchange.org

Explore the world!