

Bring Japan To Pennsylvania

Bring the world into your home this summer by hosting a Japanese student! These young people are excited to learn about your family's customs and culture, your values, foods, clothes and lifestyles. But, mostly they want to make friends with other young people and try communicating in English!

The exchangees of this program range in age from 12 to 17 years old and are members of the Japanese Lex, Labo or Utrek Organizations. Since 1972 over 35,000 Japanese youth have stayed with families in North America. The Lex and Labo Japanese teenagers will stay with Western Pennsylvania host families from July 23 through August 20, 2006 and the Utrek Japanese teens will stay with Eastern Pennsylvania host families from July 22 through August 18.

Host families share one thing in common – a willingness to welcome a Japanese youngster into their home as a family member, not as a tourist or special guest. Families are required to have a child who is the same sex and who is close in age to the Japanese youth, and they need to have the enthusiasm to share their lives and their culture with their Japanese visitor for the four-week homestay.

The Japanese members want to experience daily life in North America, so no special trips or entertainment is required. They look forward to doing family chores, learning new games, shopping, trying new foods, and sharing their own Japanese culture, foods and customs with their host family. The Japanese youth are happy to share a room with their host sister or brother.

Living with a Japanese 'son' or 'daughter' will expose your family to a new way of communicating. Once they overcome their initial nervousness and start to feel at home, the Japanese youth generally open up with more and more English. However, communicating with gestures, using a dictionary and phrase book provided for the host families and speaking "through the heart" are the most effective ways to communicate. Bilingual chaperones also accompany each delegation.

The costs of hosting a Japanese student are minimal. The Japanese organizations provide complete medical insurance, and students bring their own spending money for souvenirs and personal purchases. Hosts are not required to be

4-H members currently to participate, although the Penn State University approved screening process and eventual 4-H enrollment is required.

Pennsylvania received national recognition for the Sustained Excellence in the 4-H International Program November 12, in Madison, Wisconsin at the National Coordinators' Conference. Three states were recognized for continually providing an outstanding quality program which includes excellent orientations and training, good management and monitoring during the program, and follow-up evaluation. The program utilized volunteers in many roles and cooperated with other agencies.

Host family applications and additional information about this or other 4-H opportunities in Western Pennsylvania are available by contacting Wanda Braymer at Penn State Cooperative Extension in Crawford County at 13400 Dunham Road, Suite A, Meadville, PA 16335 or you may call 814-333-7460. If you are from Eastern Pennsylvania and are interested in the program, you may call Christi Buker at 717-766-1636. Cooperative Extension is an educational outreach of the College of Agricultural Sciences at Penn State University. Penn State is an affirmative action equal opportunity university. 4-H and this 4-H Japanese Exchange Program are open to all youth ages 8 to 19, without regard to race, sex or national origin.

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Sincerely,

Wanda Braymer
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4-H / Youth Development