



COLLEGE OF THE ATLANTIC COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

Student Program Description and Tips

EXPECTATIONS AND GUIDELINES

It is our hope that you as an international student and Community Connections Program participant will develop a mutually beneficial relationship with local families. This is an opportunity to deepen your understanding of culture in the United States through participation in the everyday activities of a local volunteer family. Families are enriched by the opportunity to learn about your traditions, your cultural practices, and your perspectives of the world and with whom you are connected. A desirable program outcome is to provide you a social connection and source of emotional support beyond what is already offered at COA. Each pairing defines that relationship differently. However, we have found the following tips and guidelines to be helpful:



- Cross-cultural communication is difficult and requires a commitment by all parties to be open and honest, to communicate frustration or embarrassment, and to define appropriate boundaries.
- The family or the student can initiate a get-together. Either party can decline, as well.
- There is no specific time-commitment. Time spent together varies widely and is up to the participants to determine.
- Community Connections families have no financial responsibility for students. Asking for or lending money is not encouraged. However, if a family invites you to partake in an activity that requires money (for an entrance fee, lunch, etc.), it is appropriate that the host pay for you.
- Community Connections families are not expected to provide housing over breaks, or transport to the airport or bus station, but are free to offer as they feel suit.

COMMON ACTIVITIES

- Cooking and eating dinner together
- Outdoor activities: walking, hiking, sailing, skiing, soccer, gardening
- Hobbies such as photography, crafting, etc.
- Celebrating family occasions- birthdays, holidays, children's school events
- Attending community events such as fairs or sporting events
- COA performances, lectures, etc.
- Shopping, going to a ball game, seeing a movie, or simply talking about current events and daily happenings.

ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR DEVELOPING A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR HOST FAMILY

- Share photos, music, movies, books, postcards or recipes from your home country and culture with your host family. They volunteered to take part in this program and are very interested in hearing about where you came from!
- Share information on holiday customs, daily life, and current events from your country.

- What to talk about? Americans generally like discussing things like your background and past experiences, travels, favorite hobbies, local and international current events, religion, and to an extent politics. Americans are generally more reserved about discussing things like financial matters, political viewpoints (sometimes), income, and personal family matters, at least until you have developed a very strong relationship with them.
- Invite your host family to events at COA that you may be participating in. Are you in the play? Invite them to watch you. Performing in the Fandango? Or if you are attending an event at COA, you might ask your host family to come see that with you as well.
- Remember that you and your host family have volunteered to take part in this program—i.e. you are “willing participants”, so while getting to know new people may be awkward at first, taking the time to get to know each other will break down some of the initial barriers.
- If your relationship with your host family doesn’t seem to be working out after efforts have been made to get to know your family, please contact Kylee Allen so a new “Connection” can be made (if that is desired).

CONTACT INFORMATION

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