Bring the World to your Child By Hosting a Foreign Exchange Student

By Vicki Odom

If you’ve read the newspaper lately, you know that the world can be a scary place: wars, economic crisis, revolutions, climate change, border disputes, refugees, and protests. So, how do we teach our children about the world, and the variety of people in it, when most of the examples we read about in the press are so negative?

One life changing way to broaden your child’s world view is to volunteer to host a high school foreign exchange student. Foreign exchange programs have been around for almost 100 years, and their mission has always been the same – to educate people about different cultures through person-to-person exchange. What better message to pass on to your children?

There are quite a few misconceptions about foreign exchange programs – especially around who can host. The biggest misconception is that you must have high school aged children when you host a high school exchange student. Nothing could be further from the truth.

“We welcome host families of all shapes and sizes – families with young children, families with no children, empty nesters whose children have left home, single parents and non-traditional families,” says Heather Wells, Senior Regional Director for Ayusa, a non-profit promoting global learning and leadership through foreign exchange and study abroad opportunities for high school students. “The key requirements for a host family are to provide a safe and nurturing home environment, genuinely love children, and have a desire to learn more about a different culture.”

Families with young children find that hosting an exchange student provides their children with an especially unique educational experience in the form of an international big brother or sister. Without even realizing it, children learn about different types of people and different cultural traditions.

Volunteer host families provide foreign exchange students a nurturing environment, three meals a day and a bedroom (either private or shared with a host sibling of the same gender). Each host family and student is supported by a professionally trained community representative who works with the family and student for the entire program. All interested host families must pass a criminal background check and a home visit by an exchange organization.

Foreign exchange students come from all over the world. Ayusa matches host families with students from more than 60 different countries including Argentina, China, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Germany, Japan, Lebanon, Norway, Pakistan, Sweden, Thailand, Tunisia and Turkey. All high school foreign exchange students are fully insured, bring their own spending money, and are proficient in English – and all high school exchange programs are regulated by the U.S. Department of State.

Interested host families are required to fill out an application, pass a background check and interview with a local exchange program representative in their homes. Once accepted to a program, host families can view profiles of students to find the right match for their family.

Ayusa is currently accepting applications for families to host an exchange student for the 2014-2015 school year. For more information about hosting a high school foreign exchange student, please contact Ayusa at 1.888.552.9872 or by visiting the website at:

www.ayusa.org
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The Houston Family Arts Center (HFAC) announces its 10th mainstage season, which explores life, love and laughter through timeless musicals, zany comedies, a classic murder mystery and a Shakespearean comedy. This exciting line-up begins with the zany, musical comedy Nunsense. After the laugh prepare for mystery with Agatha Christie’s And Then There Were None, followed by the traditional holiday production of Dickens’ A Christmas Carol. The New Year opens with the beautiful and touching A Secret Garden. HFAC ends the season with a trip around the world and the first stop is France for a riveting production of The Three Musketeers. Argentina is the next destination with the award winning, Evita. Then on to merry, old England for Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream. This magical season ends with the patriotic musical, 1776.

Acting Artistic Director, Lisa Garza says, “This is a season that will inspire you to explore the past- in literature, in history, and in yourself. The HFAC 2014-15 Season allows you to experience past- in literature, in history, and in yourself. The HFAC 2014-15 Season allows you to experience every crowd has a silver lining. The parabolic in HFAC’s next production. For Eva Peron, every crowd has a silver lining. The parabolic career of Argentina’s first lady inspired Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice’s pop-opera phenomenon. Was she a sainted hero of the working-class or a working-class seductress? This passionate work retains the power to entice and inflame.

Suggested for mature audiences
Shakespeare comes to life, June 12 – July 5 with A Midsummer Night’s Dream. The canon’s most enchanted comedy pursues love with calculated abandon! This story of mortal and immortal paramours set in a mythical forest is one that will cast a spell on lovers of all ages.

Closing this exciting season, July 24 – August 16, is the American musical, 1776. With revolutionary immediacy, our lofty founding fathers are found to be genuine people who debate, bargain, and fray one another’s nerves as they struggle on the tortuous road to independence. This musical witness to the creation of one of the most eloquent documents in history will stir the soul of every American.

Season subscriptions packages are now available for purchase for the 2014-2015 season. Season subscriptions offer incentives and discounts to new and returning patrons for every performance and packages start as low as $100. Subscribers save 20% off single-ticket prices. Other subscriber perks include the opportunity to pick the best seats before they go on sale to the general public, personalized customer service, two complimentary concession items for every show and recognition in every Playbill. Patrons can purchase their subscriptions online at www.houstonfac.com or call the HFAC box office at 281-685-6374.
Sunburn is caused from over-exposure to the harmful ultraviolet rays of the sun. While the symptoms (such as red skin that is painful to the touch) are usually temporary, the skin damage is often permanent and can cause serious long-term health effects, including skin cancer, pigmentation and premature aging. In addition to the skin, eyes can get burned from sun exposure; sunburned eyes turn red, dry, and painful, and can feel gritty.

Sunburn results when the amount of exposure to the sun or other ultraviolet light source exceeds the ability of the body’s protective pigment, melanin, to protect the skin. Sunburn in a very light-skinned person may occur in less than 15 minutes of midday sun exposure, while a dark skinned person may tolerate the same exposure for hours.

Sunlight contains an invisible form of radiation called ultraviolet (UV) rays. UV A and possibly UV B can harm skin, connective tissue and increase risk for developing skin cancer. Certain drugs such as some blood pressure medication, antibiotics and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs increase sensitivity to sunlight and the risk of getting sunburn.

**SYMPTOMS**

The first signs of a sunburn may not appear for a few hours. The full effect to your skin may not appear for 24 hours or longer. Possible symptoms include:

- Red, tender skin that is warm to touch. (1st degree burn)
- Blisters that develop hours to days later. (2nd degree burn)
- Severe reactions (sometimes called “sun poisoning”), including fever, chills, nausea, or rash.
- Skin peeling on sunburned areas several days after the sunburn.

**FIRST AID**

- Try taking a cool bath or shower. Or place wet, cold wash cloths on the burn for 10 to 15 minutes, several times a day. You can mix baking soda in the water to help relieve the pain. Small children may become easily chilled, so keep the water tepid.
- Apply a soothing lotion to the skin.
- Aloe gel is a common household remedy for sunburns. Aloe contains active compounds that help stop pain and inflammation of the skin.
- Over-the-counter steroid cream can also be applied several times a day.
- Over-the-counter pain medication, such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, or NSAIDs, including aspirin, may be helpful, and are excellent for reducing burn inflammation whereas Tylenol only reduces pain, not the burn itself.

For more information, check out: www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/uvradiation.
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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) say that nearly 90,000 patients die in U.S. hospitals each year due to a preventable disease – many could be avoided if everyone properly washed their hands.

From germs on office equipment to sick colleagues who decided to come into work anyway, people face the same dangers in the workplace. The same simple fact holds true: Washing your hands regularly is an effective way to prevent yourself from catching or spreading a preventable disease or illness.

WHEN TO WASH YOUR HANDS

The CDC recommends washing your hands every time you:

• Prepare or eat food
• Use the restroom
• Tend to someone who is sick; both before and after
• Blow your nose, cough, or sneeze
• Handle garbage
• Treat a cut or wound
• Change a diaper or clean up after children
• Handle an animal or animal waste

HAND WASHING BASICS

The CDC has issued specific guidelines about effective hand washing:

• Wet hands with water
• Use plain bar or liquid soap
• Create a lather by vigorously rubbing hands together for 15-20 seconds—about the amount of time it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” twice
• Be sure to wash palms, back of hands, fingers, and nails (clean nails by gently scratching nails down your opposing soapy palm)
• Rinse off soap under a stream of water

WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO?

• Focus on hand washing in the lunch and/or break room
• Be careful when using sponges and dish towels. These are ideal sites for bacterial growth. Always wash your hands after using these items.
• Maintain a clean work area; regularly clean any office equipment, especially shared items such as phones and keyboards.
• Remind your colleagues of the importance of hand washing, particularly when you witness someone neglecting to wash his or her hands.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about how washing hands regularly can help prevent disease, ask your health care provider, or visit the CDC’s creative Web site dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of hand washing at www.henrythehand.com.

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In previous newsletters, I offered tips on how to execute the basic strokes for players who are just beginning to play tennis or who want to resume playing. I am now offering suggestions on how to play the “modern” game mostly geared towards players who are happy with hitting the ball over the net and controlling the point with consistency. These players may be already playing for leagues or tournaments and are looking for more “weapons” on the court. In this issue, I will offer instructions on how to execute the Top Spin Backhand. This shot is used when a player is presently hitting the ball long and out. The ball will be aimed high over the net and hit with power. The ball will have a “top spin” so that when the ball hits the court, it will take a big hop, forcing the opponent to fall back close to the fence, or to hit the ball on the rise.

In the illustrations, Tyler Duncum, one of the top players of the Grey Rock Tennis Academy, shows the proper technique to execute this stroke. Tyler is coached by the Director of the Tennis Academy, Darin Pleasant. This shot can also be executed from the service line as an “approach shot” to the net.

Step 1: The Back Swing: When Tyler is pulled wide to her backhand, she makes a quick turn of her upper body and takes her racket back. The head of the racket is now at waist height, her shoulders are turned, the left hand holding the racket, and her right hand changing to the “continental grip”. She has loaded her left hip to help her drive her weight forward. Her left grip is relaxed and her wrist is “laid back” to allow maximum point of contact.

Step 2: The Point of Contact: The success of a top spin shot is keeping the ball on the strings going from low to high in a 30 degree angle and accelerating the racket head around the outside of the ball. Tyler started the swing high and “looped” it to allow the head of the racket to drop down. She will be brushing around the outside of the ball as she makes contact with it. Her right shoulder is almost opening and her weight has now been shifted toward the front.

Step 3: The Follow Through: In order to get maximum control and power, Tyler is keeping her left arm almost straight as she extends through the shot. She has “snapped” her left wrist and her right hand helps with the stability and power. She has now allows her left side to transfer forward towards the net.

Step 4: The Finish: Tyler’s upper body acceleration is creating a high finish over her right shoulder. Her legs are already in position to recover back towards the middle of the court.

Step 5: The Ready Position: Once Tyler returns the ball to her opponent, she goes back home (towards the center of the court), to be ready for the next shot. Her knees are slightly flexed, she is in a good athletic stance and her eyes are focused on the oncoming ball.
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