

A World Awaits You

A Journal on People with Disabilities Traveling with a Purpose



Generation Access

Youth with Disabilities Venture Abroad

Welcome From Evan Ryan

Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs

I am proud that the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs continues to be a leader in promoting, sponsoring, and endorsing opportunities for people with disabilities. International exchange programs change lives, and we firmly believe that the benefits of people-to-people exchange should be available to everyone. We are committed to leading by example as we demonstrate fairness, equity, and inclusion.

As an example, this year we launched the Lives Without Limits campaign to highlight the successes of our international exchange alumni with disabilities. I encourage you to view our Lives Without Limits videos at eca.state.gov/lives-without-limits to meet some of these remarkable people.

In thinking about the long-term importance and impact of international exchange, we're focusing on youth - the leaders of tomorrow. As we work to engage emerging leaders around the world, we must ensure that we are reaching young people with disabilities.

I am pleased to present this issue of A World Awaits You (AWAY), focused on increasing and supporting the involvement of young people with disabilities in international exchanges. In this issue you will find stories about participants in State Department's exchange programs among the other valuable resources being provided.

This publication is just one of the terrific resources produced by the National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange (NCDE). The State Department established the NCDE in 1995 and funds it annually, working closely with Mobility International USA. The Clearinghouse is a key element in our efforts to build bridges of understanding and cooperation between Americans and the people of other countries regarding international exchange and disability.



Whether you are a person with a disability considering options for an international exchange experience, or you are working to include people with disabilities in your international exchange programs, I encourage you to connect with the NCDE to learn more about free resources.

We are pleased to work with you to spread the word that international exchange programs are open to everyone.



Invitation From Susan Sygall

Mobility International USA

CEO and Co-Founder



Everywhere I travel I am in awe of the youth leaders with disabilities I meet who are changing the world. At Mobility International USA (MIUSA), we are working towards a world where all people with disabilities achieve their full human rights through international exchange and development. We believe that the path to a more inclusive world lies in people with disabilities connecting with their peers and allies across the world and working together. In this issue of the A World Awaits You (AWAY), we focus on the next generation of world travelers – youth with disabilities – who are transforming ideas of disability rights like we have never seen before.

Diversity is increasingly important; Americans with disabilities are attending schools with the full force of laws like the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and more and more students with disabilities around the world are receiving protections under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD). Social media technologies like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are making the world more accessible by connecting people, building ideas, planning activities and advancing domestic and international social movements.

Estimates suggest there are between 180 and 220 million youth with disabilities worldwide, nearly 80 percent of whom live in developing countries, according to the fact sheet on youth with disabilities produced by the United Nations for the International Year of Youth. With half the world's population below the age of 15, the number of youth with disabilities can be expected to rise markedly over the coming decades.

That's where you come in! We ask you, influencers of the next generation of travelers and leaders, to think about your own cultural perceptions and preconceived notions of what is possible, look at the systems and networks you work within, and become an ally in our efforts to change the face of international exchange through the full inclusion of people with all types of disabilities. It's our time and responsibility to ensure youth with disabilities are fully represented and have equal access to the life-changing experience of international exchange. This AWAY issue introduces you to the stories of youth with disabilities who have participated in international exchange, shares tips for addressing the unique challenges they may face and offers perspectives from the professionals and families that support them.

Join us. We are here to support you on your journey!



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High School Exchange Programs at the U.S. State Department

You may already know about youth-focused exchange programs through the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). But, did you know that the U.S. Department of State actively promotes and seeks to advance the diverse participation of youth, including those with disabilities, in these different programs?

The full participation of youth with disabilities in international exchange is a critical step in increasing independent living skills, accessing post-secondary education opportunities, and pursuing competitive employment. International exchange also provides an understanding and respect for other peoples and cultures, cross-cultural competencies, including foreign language proficiency, and a true global perspective.

Exchange programs sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs provide a mechanism for youth with disabilities, whatever their background, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or disability, to access opportunities they might not have otherwise even dreamed of at a young age. And, their successful participation in a competitive exchange program sets in motion a series of future opportunities to positively impact their communities and world as the next generation of leaders.

The National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange at Mobility International USA is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to advance the full participation of people with disabilities in all types of international exchange. By providing resources and advice on participating in international exchange, we give people with disabilities the tools to open up new worlds for themselves.

Learn more about youth exchange opportunities and disability-related resources in "Online Resources to Get Started" later in this A World Awaits You (AWAY) issue.

ECA Diversity Statement

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Department of State strives to ensure that its efforts reflect the diversity of U.S. society and societies abroad. The Bureau seeks and encourages the involvement of people from traditionally underrepresented audiences in all its grants, programs and other activities and in its workforce and workplace. Opportunities are open to people regardless of their race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, geographic location, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. The Bureau is committed to fairness, equity and inclusion.





INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

NAME

MUHAMMAD

FROM

PAKISTAN

TO

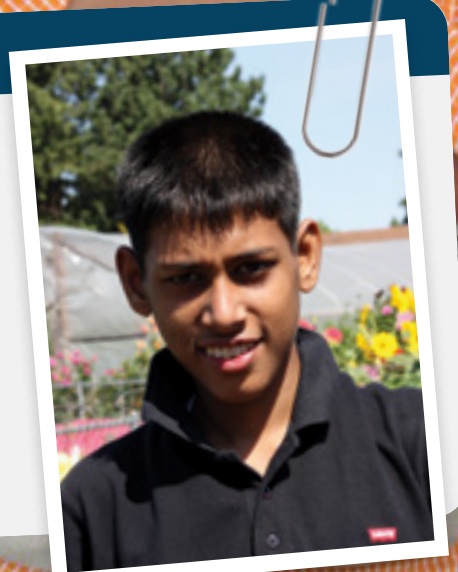
USA

PROGRAM

YES



0123456789



Like Father, Like Son: A Deaf Pakistani Student's Exchange Experience

When Muhammad, a U.S. Department of State-funded Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) student from Pakistan, first arrived in the United States, he had no idea what to expect. But, he brimmed with excitement at the opportunity to experience life in America. His exchange experience was unique because he would be experiencing true immersion in not just one, but two non-native languages: English and American Sign Language (ASL).

Growing up in the Deaf community in Pakistan, Muhammad's primary communication was in Pakistani Sign Language (PSL), but he embraced opportunities in his country to learn ASL and English. Because ASL and PSL are very distinct and unique languages (PSL is related to Nepalese and Indian Sign Languages while ASL is related to French and European Sign Languages), Muhammad spent the months leading up to his exchange practicing his skills intensively in both languages.

MIUSA caught up with Muhammad and his host father, Ian, on video chat to learn more about Muhammad's transition from life in Pakistan to an entirely new and different culture in Seattle, Washington.

In Seattle, Muhammad was placed at a school that includes students with and without disabilities, and matched with a Deaf host family. Though there were two other Deaf/hard of hearing students at the school, this was his first experience in a predominantly hearing environment. Muhammad used ASL interpreters to support full communication access in the classroom, and at home, communicated directly with his host father in sign language.

Though his past experiences were remarkably different from that of his classmates in America, Muhammad demonstrated that with access to the right services and supports, he could experience U.S. life just like his peers.

MIUSA: Can you tell us about your life in Pakistan?

MUHAMMAD: My mother is Deaf and my father is hearing. I have two brothers, one who is Deaf like me, and one who is hearing. I attend a School for the Deaf there and really enjoy playing cricket. In Pakistan, I am in the Deaf community and all my friends are Deaf. My family was very excited for me to participate in this experience because it was a chance to improve my English and open new opportunities for my future.

MIUSA: When you first arrived in the United States, we know there were some things you had to get used to. For instance, we remember you weren't too fond of American food! How have you adjusted since then?

MUHAMMAD: Yes, the food was a challenge! I miss Pakistani food, but American food has grown on me. I also enjoy a lot of Indian food with my host father, Ian. I have really enjoyed my time in the United States.

MIUSA: What were your favorite things about your international exchange experience?

MUHAMMAD: My favorites included participating in my math, history and physical education classes, flag football and being with my friends.





The Host Father's Perspective

Muhammad's host father Ian, who is also Deaf and uses sign language to communicate, moved from India to the United States as a young adult and immersed himself in the U.S. Deaf community in the Pacific Northwest. At first, Ian was resistant to the idea of being a host father. Ian came around to the idea when he realized that he had parallel experiences he could draw upon in supporting Muhammad in his new community.

"I was in Muhammad's shoes 20 years ago when I came to the United States I see myself in Muhammad's experiences adjusting to life as a Deaf person in America and learning to communicate in ASL."

Observing Muhammad's changes throughout his exchange experience, Ian shared, "When Muhammad first came to the United States, he told me he wanted to work as a taxi driver when he finished high school. Now, he wants to go to college at the Rochester Institute of Technology in New York."

Without a doubt, Muhammad has returned home to Pakistan with a new perspective on many levels. His match with a Deaf host family gave him the chance to explore Deaf culture in the United States, connect with successful Deaf mentors, and expand his understanding of possibilities for Deaf people. And, his placement in a mainstream high school with Deaf and hearing peers has helped him build the skills to bridge communication gaps in spoken and signed languages.

Did You Know?

Linguists believe there could be up to 200 – 300 sign languages worldwide.

How to Say "Pakistan" in Sign Language



Left Hand

Hold your pointer finger straight up



Right Hand

Bring your thumb and pointer finger together to form a circle, with your other three fingers sticking straight up



Both Hands

Bring your left and right hands together to touch while they are still formed like this



 INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

 NAME

SENKA MEKIC

 FROM

SERBIA

 TO

USA

 PROGRAM

A-SMYLE



0123456789



A Stubborn Attitude Turns a Chance into an Opportunity

At first glance, Senka Mekic is polite and soft-spoken. But, spend just a few minutes talking with this U.S. Department of State-funded American Serbia and Montenegro Youth Leadership Exchange (A-SMYLE) student and you'll realize first impressions aren't meant to last. Senka admits, "I'm not just a bit stubborn, I'm very stubborn!"

Senka, who left her native Serbia at just 17 years old to attend high school in the United States for a year, stumbled upon the program by complete chance. It was her brother that knew about the A-SMYLE program. When he went to the local high school to begin testing, Senka tagged along out of curiosity.

You can guess what happened next: Senka ended up taking the test on a whim. But, as she survived rounds one, two, and three of the application process, Senka didn't fully believe that an experience like this could be possible.

Senka remarks, "When I saw the thousands of kids that applied I thought 'Well, they will consider me, but I'll be somewhere in the bottom of the pile.' "

When she received the call that she had been accepted to the program, she had mixed feelings of happiness and anxiety.

"I thought about giving up, but I thought about the experience and how much this was going to help, and I'm a person that's not very easy to convince to do anything, and here, they were trying to send me overseas!"

Growing up with cerebral palsy in Serbia, Senka was raised just like her peers without disabilities. At school, she was the only student with a disability. At home, Senka moved about independently, but sometimes relied on her mom to support her with specific tasks.

“I was one of the lucky ones because I was attending a regular school with all the other kids. Until I was a teenager, I never felt or thought I was different in any way until I saw I wasn’t really the same like everybody else.”

Fast Forward to the U.S. Experience

The biggest challenge for Senka was immersion into a completely new environment.

Senka was introduced to a network of people who cared about her much like her own parents. Senka’s host mother, Marisa, says, “We did our best to make [the home environment] something that she could do by herself.” She adds, “We would ask, ‘Is there anything we could do differently? Is there anything that you need?’ ” to make sure Senka was as independent as possible.

At school, Senka was matched with a guidance counselor who was responsible for ensuring she had what she needed. It took some time to get settled in, especially in a school that was so much larger than she had experienced in Serbia.

For instance, Senka experienced fine motor difficulties with the combination lock on her locker, so she picked up a lock with a key instead. Because her locker was on the second floor and difficult for her to get to, Senka admits, “I stubbornly carried all of my books around on my back. Finally, I went to my guidance counselor and I asked for a locker on the first floor.”

Her guidance counselor was surprised that she had waited so long to bring up the issue. Senka shares, “That’s one of the things I would have done differently [in this experience], I would have gone to my counselor earlier.” Now at the end of her exchange experience, Senka’s thinking about studying public relations at a university in Turkey. The experience has reinforced what Senka knew about herself all along – that she is strong, independent, and talented – but now she has the tools to apply these traits in an international context.

I saw that I could make a difference even though I have a disability. I realized I could do the stuff that I wanted to do, but I didn’t know I could actually make a difference in the world. It was a very eye-opening feeling. It was very amazing.



INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

NAME

NATHAN LIU

FROM

USA

TO

CHINA

PROGRAM

NSLI-Y



0123456789



Ready or Not, Here I Come!

His bags were packed, his passport and flight tickets were in hand, but three days before he was to fly into Beijing, Nathan Liu still didn't have a confirmed host family on his high school study abroad program. He hadn't considered that the delay could have something to do with his being blind until a friend raised the question:

“Are some countries more accessible than others?”

After months of getting ready for his language immersion experience in China, Nathan was taken aback by the possibility that perhaps China wasn't ready for him.

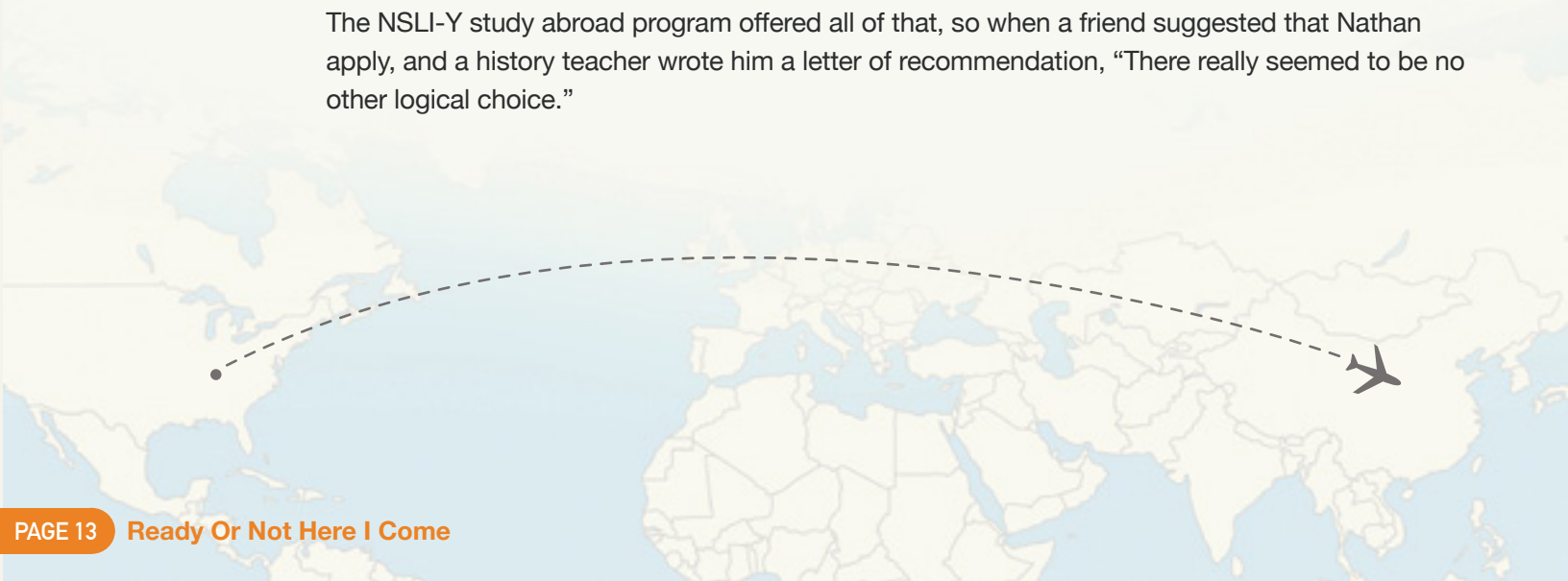
Having attended a mainstream high school in the United States, Nathan knew that, with a few accommodations in place, he was completely capable of taking on the same workload as his peers without disabilities. But in a country like China, where inclusive classrooms are less common and students with disabilities often study at specialized schools, Nathan's participation might have initially seemed intimidating to the high school in Changzhou, a city about 100 miles northwest of Shanghai.

Still, Nathan had come too far, having successfully passed the rigorous application process for the U.S. Department of State-funded National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y) program.

Nathan worked closely with the NSLI-Y staff to help them understand his specific needs and abilities. They, in turn, identified a host family - mom, dad and younger brother - to welcome Nathan into their home.

There was no going back now – not that he would want to! Nathan's childhood growing up in Germany had instilled in him a passion for international travel and cultures, while a desire to explore his family's Chinese-American heritage compelled him to seek out opportunities to be immersed in China.

The NSLI-Y study abroad program offered all of that, so when a friend suggested that Nathan apply, and a history teacher wrote him a letter of recommendation, “There really seemed to be no other logical choice.”





Although China did present challenges for someone with a disability, it also offered powerful opportunities.

“My mother, who is very passionate about disability rights, said this is a great opportunity to show people abroad what disabled people can do.”

Once in Changzhou, Nathan savored the experiences offered by his program and host culture and nurtured friendships with Chinese students who would later visit him in the United States.

While studying Mandarin at a high school in Changzhou, Nathan was teaching a lesson of his own. Since most of his teachers had never had a disabled student in their class before, they were initially uncertain about how to accommodate him.

With a few adjustments similar to those he uses in the United States, including large print worksheets and a magnifier, Nathan’s teachers eventually became more confident in their ability to instruct a classroom of students with and without disabilities.

“My teachers were very accommodating. They made sure I didn’t get lost, they situated me more towards the front of the classroom to make sure that I could see everything, and it was very helpful. Sure, I needed a little more help on certain assignments, but other than that, I could really do everything. I was just as engaged as the other kids.”

So are some countries more accessible than others?

If Nathan had known about China’s limited accessibility and cultural attitudes towards disability in advance, would he have chosen to study in a different country, one with a stellar reputation for inclusion?

It’s doubtful!

Living in China, and experiencing support from his Chinese teachers, host family, and new friends, taught Nathan that despite a country’s laws regarding disability access (or lack thereof), it’s ultimately the people in the country who have the power to be inclusive.

“Regardless of where they come from, I believe that human beings really just want to help each other.”

His best experience, as his mother predicted, was a chance to show people in the rest of the world what disabled people could do.

“The fact I was able to open their eyes to a certain extent was very gratifying.”

And Nathan wants more youth with disabilities to have the opportunity to go to other places, not just to China, but to Iran, Russia, Egypt or anywhere else and really get a chance to share their stories, make lifelong friends, and change the perceptions of others regarding disabled people.



Want to know more about Nathan? Play his video presentation about his study abroad trip, recorded during an #AccessTheWorld Virtual Meetup

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipEVWqc7eSU



INTERNATIONAL
EXCHANGE

NAME

HABEN GIRMA

FROM

USA

TO

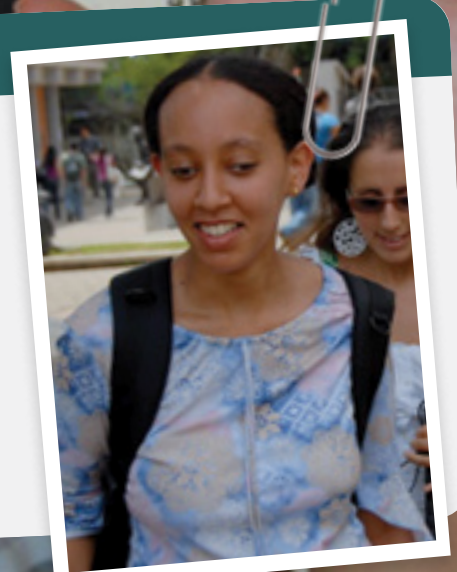
MALI

PROGRAM

BuildOn Volunteer



0123456789



Building a Foundation for Future Excellence

Growing up, Haben Girma knew that international exchange was bound to be in her future. She had visited Eritrea and Ethiopia, places her parents called home before immigrating to the United States. So when Haben learned about BuildOn (www.buildon.org) as a teenager, she was determined to go. She was excited about BuildOn's mission of empowering and educating youth by building schools in some of the world's poorest remote communities and knew first-hand the importance of access to education.

As a deaf-blind individual, Haben was raised in a culture of high expectations. Her parents and teachers worked with her to ensure that she learned braille and developed strong orientation and mobility (O&M) skills. Immersed in this mindset, Haben continuously sought new opportunities to challenge herself and build her independence.

When Haben shared her desire to participate in an upcoming BuildOn school build in Mali, her parents were initially nervous. With roots in Africa, Haben's parents were already all too familiar with the potential risks and were concerned for their daughter's safety. What if she got lost? Bitten by a snake or hurt in some way?

It Wasn't Just Her Parents Who Had Concerns

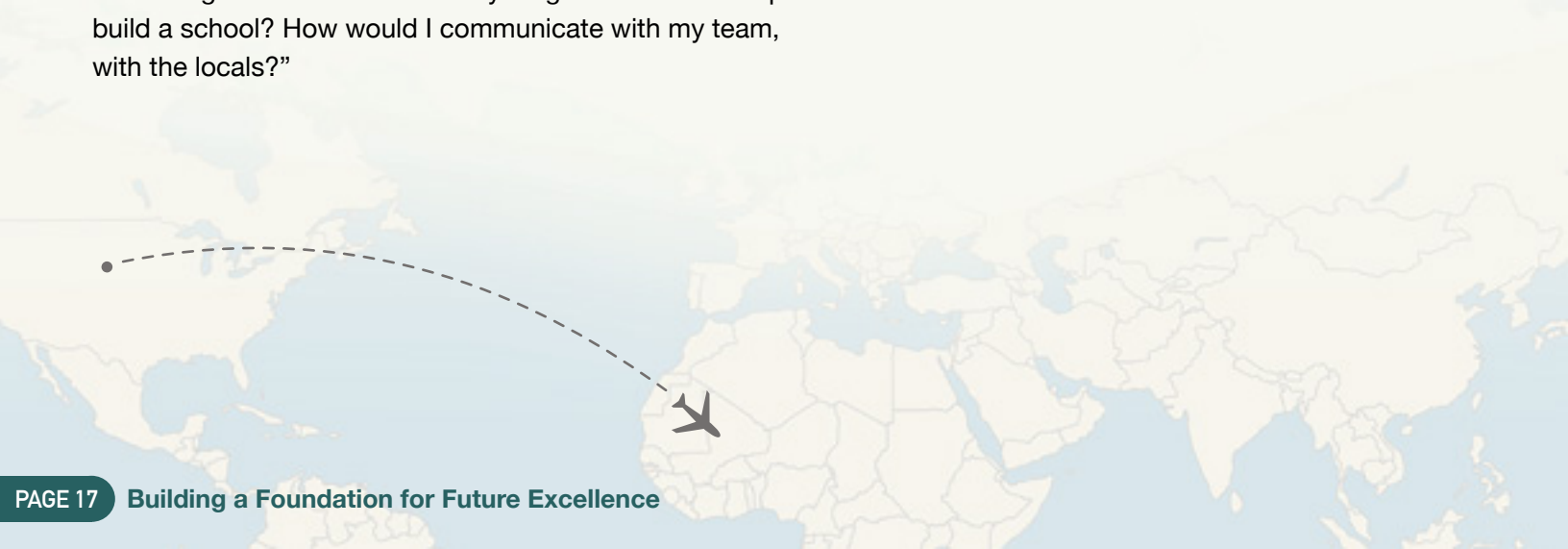
Haben explains, "I felt nervous! I did not really know how I would figure out how to do everything. How would I help build a school? How would I communicate with my team, with the locals?"

She worked directly with program staff to prepare for her participation in the project. Throughout her communication, Haben found that her initial concerns about disability access were dwindling away. She accessed programmatic materials in braille, worked with the staff to develop information sheets that would help her prepare for cultural and language differences, and openly shared her unresolved concerns so that they could be addressed.

"I talked to the program director and asked for her opinion. She said, 'I don't know either, but we'll find a way to make it work.' If challenges came up, I had people to help me resolve them."

Haben's experience also challenged her to think about her layers of identity. Haben shares, "The locals saw me as an American first and foremost, not as an Eritrean, not as a person with a disability, but as an American. Disability is stigmatized in Eritrea just like in most of the developing world, yet when I visited Mali I escaped a lot of that treatment because of my status as an American."

Coming home, Haben felt a new sense of optimism and confidence. The completion of a challenging project abroad helped her truly believe that her disability was not a barrier to future goals. These are skills she says are essential for other youth with disabilities to find success in college and post-college opportunities.





All my life, people told me my disability would not stop me from doing whatever I wanted to do. Successfully completing a trip abroad allowed me to really believe that.

Haben's parents felt more confident after her Mali trip, too. "Sending me to Mali was really scary for them, but afterwards they were very proud. My mom said that it helped her feel comfortable with the idea of me going to college out of state. She felt if I could do Mali, I could do anything."

Haben's volunteer abroad experience as a high school student was the beginning of many adventures to China, Costa Rica, Italy, and more. The trip abroad solidified her desire to work in disability rights and education law. Knowing that only 6% of deaf-blind children throughout the United States have access to qualified special education teachers, she has devoted her personal and professional pursuits to ensuring students with disabilities have equitable access to education.

Haben has since graduated with her undergraduate degree from Lewis & Clark College and a Juris Doctor degree from Harvard Law School. Nowadays, she serves as a Skadden Fellow at Disability Rights Advocates in Berkeley, California, where she works to improve education by advocating for students with disabilities to receive accessible instructional materials.

"It's now my approach to life. There are still things I don't know how I will accomplish, but I'm optimistic that I will figure it out, or others will be there to help me figure it out. Going on a trip abroad helps you develop optimism and self-confidence. Those are very important skills for college and life beyond college. I highly recommend that high school students try to do a volunteer experience abroad."





INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

NAME

AZAT TOROEV

FROM

KYRGYZSTAN

TO

USA

PROGRAM

FLEX



0123456789



A New Commitment to Social Justice

Azat Toroev, a U.S. Department of State-funded Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) participant from Kyrgyzstan who has a physical disability, came to the United States driven by his interests in film, volunteering, and journalism. Azat quickly became an active presence in his host community of Fort Collins, Colorado.

Back in my country I did not know that the rights of disabled people are so protected in the United States. I think there are many positive things to learn from Americans, especially about taking care of our fellow people.

In Kyrgyzstan, says Azat, it is hard to imagine people with physical and other disabilities having so many opportunities outside of their homes. Azat knows how important support from society can be, although it is sometimes difficult to find.

After he saw the convenient equipment and services that people with disabilities could access in the United States, it brought up strong emotions in him about what he wishes for his country.

“It was in Eugene, Oregon during Mobility International USA’s workshop for exchange students with disabilities that I fully felt cared for. I didn’t feel rejection or compassion; I felt that MIUSA staff members were confident in my abilities and that I was capable in overcoming my fears and doubts to challenge myself. Now I know that through challenging yourself you can change the world.”

Then when Azat arrived to his host community in Fort Collins, he saw the same — people really care about disabled people. He was impressed by three-wheeled adaptive bikes and big buttons to push to automatically open doors for those who need assistance.

“After all the things that happened, I went through a turning point. I want to change the situation towards disabled people in my country.”

What’s Next For Azat?

Upon his return home, Azat is thinking about law school. “Seeing all the injustice in the world, especially to women, made me very uncomfortable. I have decided to apply for the best law school in Kyrgyzstan and study international law.”



Why Parents Can Be Persuaded

When Michelle She started her first year of college in Tennessee far from her home in Maryland, her parents weren't concerned about the distance or her year delay in starting. At least not in comparison to where she went the year before, and what she gained in return.

"At first we were concerned our daughter is going so far away for college, but after her experience in Germany it is like nothing. It was good in preparing her," says Michelle's father, Mingda She.

When Michelle told her father she was applying for an exchange program after high school, his first concern was that it would delay her going to college. As parents, their other concern was about how her disability would affect her experience abroad. What if their daughter got lost or fell on the snow in Germany, since her cerebral palsy can create difficulty with walking, balance, spatial awareness, or sense of direction?

Although Michelle had traveled abroad with her family to visit grandparents in China, her trip to Germany on the U.S. Department of State-funded Congress Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX) would be the first on her own.

Looking back now, her parents can see the overseas experience was very good training for her, but in the beginning she had to persuade them.

"Michelle just insisted she was able to overcome those difficulties, such as her fear of crossing busy streets even at traffic lights. She said she will live in someone's home and felt it was a good opportunity to gain independence," says Mr. She, who agrees that under the pressure of being on her own, Michelle achieved just that and a sense of maturity that comes with it.

"We felt Germany would be similar to the United States in how they treat disabled people; if she is able to live here, she should be able to live there as well."

It also helped that Michelle had a love of languages and other cultures, and wanted to pursue an international and education related career. "It was a good match, so we said we better let her go."

Between the sturdy, waterproof, and warm shoes they bought for Michelle, and Germany's good public transportation and snow clearing of streets – she settled in to her year abroad.

The AFS Intercultural Programs staff, who administered the CBYX program and were informed of her disability, were good at communicating and taking care of any health issues that Michelle experienced during the program, says Mr. She.

"Sometimes it is harder than you think," admits Mr. She with a chuckle, though he advises other parents of youth with disabilities that they need not worry so much.

They are by themselves, in another country, and may face difficult situations, but they have the potential and they will learn quite a bit. They are more capable than you think. It is a good opportunity for them to get these kinds of experiences.





INTERNATIONAL
EXCHANGE

NAME

MICHELLE SHE

FROM

USA

TO

GERMANY


PROGRAM

CBYX



0123456789





As an international exchange professional, you can work with parents of young people with disabilities to understand and address concerns parents may have. Keep these tips in mind.



Explain to parents that your international exchange program is for people with and without disabilities

Parents of young people with disabilities often have a long history of advocating for their son or daughter's participation in all types of programs. They may be skeptical about an exchange program's ability to effectively include people with disabilities. Address this potential concern head-on by making sure disability is represented in your materials and resources, whether it is making sure photos of students with disabilities are represented in your promotional materials, sharing stories and anecdotes of other young people with disabilities who have gone abroad on your programs, including language around disability in anti-discrimination policies, or connecting the parents of prospective applicants with other parents of young people with disabilities who have gone abroad.

Share information about how parents can stay connected

For some parents, the idea of not having consistent access to communication with their child is a significant barrier. Will your program be active on social media (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, or more) or does your program have an update system that makes parents feel connected to what's happening, even if their son or daughter isn't communicating directly?

Connect with disability rights organizations in the host country to learn about local disability culture, support, and legal protections

If parents are nervous about their son or daughter's disability-related needs, it may help to remind them that people with disabilities similar to theirs already live in the host country! When planning a program, research information about the disability organizations, networks, and laws in the hosting country (or countries). Knowing that a program is already aware and connected with local information in the host country is reassuring to parents and prepares you with local resources and support should a need arise.

Develop a student-specific emergency preparedness plan

Start by working with parents to identify a travel health insurance plan that will effectively cover the participant's disability-related and emergency needs and identify a communication system that involves the parents and other resources should there be an on-site emergency issue. Many travel insurance plans include a provision to fly a parent or emergency contact should a person be hospitalized during their exchange experience. Encourage parents to have a current passport just in case.

#ChangeExchange

Where are youth with disabilities in international exchange?

Youth represent our next generation of thought leaders, scientists, politicians, and teachers. Our world needs their full engagement as global citizens. But, are we reaching everyone?

Youth, Including Youth With Disabilities, Are Everywhere



180 to 220
MILLION
youth with disabilities
WORLDWIDE

Youth with disabilities
COULD FILL THE
entire country of
BRAZIL
the world's 5th most
populous country



18% of global population are youth

10% of American high school students have a disability

Youth With Disabilities Face Limited Education Opportunities

98%

of youth with disabilities in developing countries do not go to school

99%

of girls with disabilities in developing countries are illiterate

40%

of American high school students with disabilities do not graduate on time

9%

of American students with disabilities go on to a 4-year college



Youth with disabilities are less likely than their peers to be expected to go to college

International Exchange Has the Power to Dramatically Change the Lives of Youth

Increased confidence & independence

Access to future education & work opportunities

Language & cultural competencies

Commitment to being a global citizen

Youth with Disabilities are Counting on These Opportunities, So They Need to Be Counted



What will you do to increase participation of youth with disabilities in international exchange?

Join the conversation

#ChangeExchange

Online Resources to Get Started

The U.S. Department of State offers study abroad scholarship opportunities for American high students and strives to represent the diversity of the United States, including persons with disabilities, in all exchange programs.

The National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y) offers merit-based scholarships to U. S. high-school aged students for overseas study of seven critical foreign languages: Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), Hindi, Korean, Persian (Tajiki), Russian and Turkish.

The Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Abroad Program offers scholarships to American high school students to spend the an academic year in countries with significant Muslim populations.

The Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Program (CBYX) was established in 1983 to celebrate German-American friendship based on common values of democracy.

The American Youth Leadership Program offers opportunities for American high students and educators to travel abroad on a three-to four-week-long exchange program to gain first-hand knowledge of foreign cultures and to collaborate on solving global issues.



Learn more at

<http://exchanges.state.gov/highschool>



Each year, almost 2,000 U.S. Department of State-sponsored exchange students from over 50 countries, all of whom have undergone a competitive, merit-based selection process, spend the academic year in communities across the United States.

American Serbia and Montenegro Youth Leadership Exchange (A-SMYLE) participants attend an American high school and live with an American host family.

The Congress–Bundestag Youth Exchange Program (CBYX) offers German students a scholarship to develop critical intercultural skills while learning what it is like to live and attend school in the United States.

The Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) provides scholarships for high school students, ages 15-17, from Eurasia to live with an American host family and attend an American high school.

The Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program provides scholarships to high school students from countries with significant Muslim populations to live with host families, attend high school, engage in activities to learn about U.S. society and values, and educate others about their home countries and cultures.

Exchange students can help bring the world into your home and community.



Learn more at
<http://hosting.state.gov>

www.miusa.org/ncde

Our website features tip sheets, stories, best practices and more on supporting people with disabilities in all types of international exchange. Get your research off to a quick start by checking out some of our resources and related links.





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Mobility International USA

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Travel Effect

United Nations Enable