

ECSU Student Hosts German Exchange Student

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Contributor

One of the pleasures of working at a newspaper office is that you obtain interesting information from various sources.

I was working at my desk when I noticed a press release from the Cultural Academic Student Exchange among my stack of papers. The release was about foreign exchange students interested in coming to America. I read the information and called the number to see if I would qualify as a host parent.

This was going to be very new to me even though I have two kids already. My daughter Deniece is 12 and my son Kinte is two. I was very excited about the idea that I may have a teenager from another country staying with me.

I was told by a case representative that in order to qualify, the student must be fed at least three meals a day, they must have a bed to sleep in, and they must be treated like family. The student would bring their own spending money for personal expenses and have their own medical insurance.

None of the qualifications were a problem. I had a three bedroom apartment and providing meals would be easy because I love to cook. And as far as being treated like family, I have a very close family and we all enjoy one another's company.

Shortly after I expressed my interest in hosting a foreign student and found that I met the necessary requirements, I was given profiles of some of the students available. The application con-

tained questions about my hobbies, family, job, medical history and criminal record.

My daughter and I went through the profiles and picked out a prospective student. In less than 24 hours after I mailed in my paperwork, I received a phone call stating that I had qualified and that the student I had chosen was available.

Her name is Chi-Young Ryu (pronounced Chee-Young Riyo) from Germany, and she is currently 18. She called me from Germany, where she lives with her mother, Chang-Sook Ryu, a housewife; father, Cheon-Woo Ryu, a Korean restaurant owner and an older brother, Chung-Hoon, on Aug. 14, 2001 and told me that she would arrive at Raleigh-Durham Airport in North Carolina Aug. 17, 2001.

After talking with her on the phone, I was very happy and excited. My children helped me prepare the room for Chi-Young. According to Chi-Young's profile, her and my daughter had simi-

lar hobbies. They both enjoyed hip hop music. Deniece had a selection of music that she thought Chi-Young would enjoy and she did.

I arrived in Raleigh, Aug. 17 and I recognized her instantly because I had a picture of her from her file which had

been sent to me by the agency. We hugged one another and proceeded home to Roper, NC where she met my kids and some of my family members.

Since her arrival, Chi-Young has got accustomed to words and phrases that she has never heard before. She

participated in our town Christmas parade Dec. 9, and I asked her to write "Happy Holidays" in German. She said that Germans don't say that — they simply say, "Merry Christmas."

"At first, it was hard to understand the teachers and words I've never heard before in my life," Chi-Young said, "but it's getting better from day to day."

One such phrase is "shout-out." We were listening to the radio and the an-

nouncer said to call in your shout-outs. Chi-Young asked me is that when you talk very loudly and I explained to her what it meant.

While in Germany, Chi-Young attended a private Christian school where there was no dress code. Here, she is a senior at Plymouth High School where she has maintained honor roll and the principal's list.

Plymouth High has a dress code in which dresses and skirts must be certain lengths and baggy jeans and halter tops are not allowed.

"Learning is more enjoyable but a big change for me, especially the dress code and the whole school system," said Chi-Young. "The students are not separated in different types of schools, depending on their standards as they are in Germany. The people here are so much open minded and friendlier."

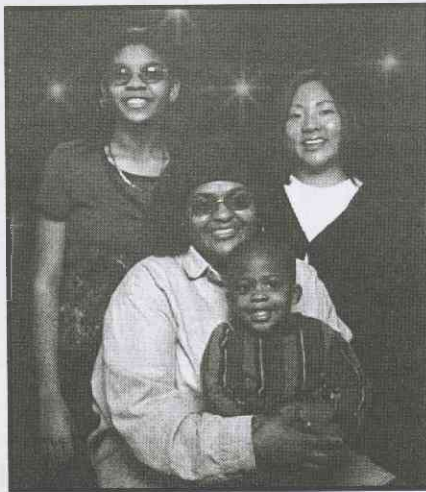
Of all the places she has visited since being in the United States, Chi-Young likes to go to the Colonial Mall in Greenville. We have also been to Nags Head beach, Kings Dominion theme park, flea markets, the Rocky Mount mall, football games, soccer games, Raleigh, Fayetteville, birthday parties, dances, clubs and various county festivals.

I also took Chi-Young to Lewiston, NC with me to meet a couple that I know from Germany. She had a great time because she was able to speak in German. My friends and Chi-Young's entire conversation was spoken in German. The wife's husband translated the conversation to me.

Though Chi-Young describes her experience in America as enjoyable, Chi-Young expressed that the high pregnancy rate in American high schools is disappointing. She also feels that the nation's crime and drugs are problems. She said that punishment for crimes in Germany is much harsher compared to the U.S.

Chi-Young has told me quite a bit about Germany. She said one cannot sit in the front seat of an automobile until they are at least 12 years old. One must be 18 in order to get a license. One must be 16 years old in order to drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes. Automobile insurance is very expensive. Taxes are much higher in Germany. Christmas is a big celebration. And only businesses display Christmas decorations.

Hosting Chi-Young has been a wonderful experience for my kids and I. Chi-Young will be leaving in June and all those who know her will miss her. I have told her that I am planning to visit her in Germany but hopefully, I will see her if she comes back to the U.S. and attend college. She says she would like to attend Yale or Harvard.



Chi-Young Ryu with Anna and family

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