

## Exchange student likes KM

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER  
Staff Writer

Ricarda Huelsmann is getting a first-hand lesson in American culture. The German teen is a foreign exchange student living with Anna and Everette Owen and their daughter Selena.

Hoping to work in sports medicine, Ricarda says living in America for a few months will help her with college and career. The immersion in English is especially important.

"I have to speak English here," she said.

Despite six years of English language instruction, when Ricarda arrived in August she struggled to understand the American pronunciation style. She had been trained in British English.

Now four months later she is holding her own in family and school conversations.

One of the biggest differences between Ricarda's village and Kings Mountain is size. Her home has around 1,200 residents compared to Kings Mountain's 10,000.

In Germany, Ricarda and

her family live in a duplex apartment. Like most families, they share one car.

While German teens must be 18 to get a driver's license, they can drink alcohol at age 16. Driver's education class cost \$2,000.

Because Germany has many bicycle and walking paths and homes and businesses are closer together, residents can easily get along without a car.

Ricarda names pizza and Wendy's frosty as her favorite American foods. She jokes that these foods are much less healthy than the typical German fare.

"We eat healthier but I like the food here," she said.

Sports are much more important here than Germany. Archery and volleyball are the two main athletic activities there. Ricarda is taking advantage of the American interest in sports to pursue cross country and basketball.

Huge displays of Christmas lights are a new experience for Ricarda. In Germany the emphasis is on live trees and greenery.

"I can't wait to take her to McAdenville," Anna Owens said.

Though the Owens live in Kings Mountain, Selena and Ricarda are students at Shelby High School. Ricarda says her classes are more focused on individual work here. In Germany there are more group projects and more writing assignments.

The Owens became a host family after Selena befriended an exchange student from South Africa. They met Ginger Jeffcoat, a supervisor with the American Institute for Foreign Study, who had placed the South African student.

"She showed us Ricarda's profile and we said okay," Anna Owens said.

Now Selena wants to go abroad as a foreign exchange student.

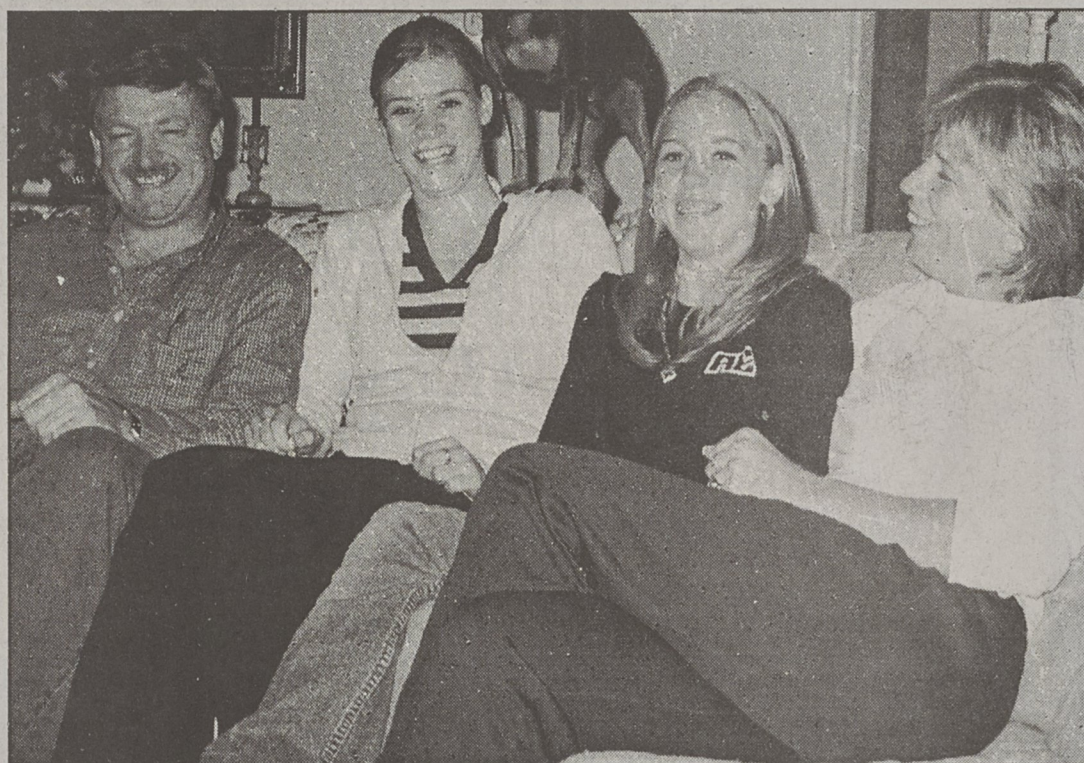
"I'd love it. I think it would be fun," she said.

Host families and schools benefit from foreign exchange students, Jeffcoat said.

"Classes are given a global perspective that's not available in the text book."

During her 15 years with AIFS, Jeffcoat has watched local host families gain cultural awareness.

"It's a learning experience. Most host families are very



ANDIE BRYMER / HERALD  
Everette Owens (left), Ricarda Huelsmann, Selena Owens and Anna Owens pose for a family photo. The Owens have two older daughters, Shena and Stephanie.

pleased they decided to participate."

The students bring their own spending money and have health insurance. They go through a rigorous screening process and must be recommended by an

English language teacher. They also must pass a physical exam before being accepted into the program.

Jeffcoat coordinates activities with host families and students. She supervises all placements.

In addition to coordinating host families, AIFS places American students abroad, operates gifted and talented, au pair (nanny) and summer programs.

For more information, call 704-739-5623.

### BRIEFS

#### Choral concert set December 4

The Kings Mountain High School choral department will present its annual winter choral concert Thursday, Dec. 4 at 7:30 p.m. at B.N. Barnes Auditorium.

All four choirs will be presenting seasonal music. The choirs include Women's Select, Ninth Grade Chorus, Kings Revue and Symphonic Chorale. Symphonic Chorale, the 80-voice award-winning choir, will be the highlight of the program.

Each chorus will present pieces by well-known composers. All of the choirs are directed by Eugene Bumgardner. The assistant director is Sherry Young, who will be accompanying the choirs at the piano.

Masterpieces from G.F. Handel's famous Messiah will be presented by Justin Smith, student accompanist, before the concert begins.

For more information call Eugene Bumgardner at 734-5647 ext. 37.

#### Band concert set for December 11

The annual winter band concert by the Kings Mountain District School Bands will be Thursday, Dec. 11 at 7:30 p.m. at B.N. Barnes Auditorium.

The concert will feature the KMMS 8th grade band, the KMHS 9th grade band and the Concert Blazer Band.

Directors are Chris Cole and Gil Doggett.

Admission is free and the public is invited.

#### Turner earns certification

Julie Turner of Kings Mountain is one of 8,195 elementary and secondary school teachers nationwide who achieved National Board Certification in 2003, according to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. This achievement brings the total number of National Board Certified Teachers to 32,130.

Turner teaches first grade at North Elementary School. She has been a teacher for five years and holds degrees in Elementary Education.

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