

My time in the Buffalo-Dortmund Sister City exchange program was a true experience. I had the pleasure and opportunity to take a few weeks out of my summer to host a German student named Jüstus and found that he fit in well with my life. Having a person, you are unfamiliar with live with you and do the things you do for a couple weeks may sound strange or kind of annoying, but it is anything but that. I found that my student was shy at first (who wouldn't be) but after the first day became extremely sociable. He and my friends got along great. He came along with me to hang out with friends, play sports, as well as all my other regular summer activities and he was even comfortable enough to come to camp Ska-No-Ka-San with me where he befriended the friendly staff and hundreds of other boys in our *Boys Two Week* session.

The following summer I along with 12 other students from a mix of Iroquois, Hamburg, East Aurora, and other schools got on a flight to leave for Dortmund to reconnect with our students. Only to find ourselves being the shy ones for the first day but again, after a short period of time became comfortable and began talking as if we were lifelong friends. We soon began to learn of German culture by living it. Subtle differences between our lives such as outlets, brands, and design became apparent but my favorite and most noticeable distinction between our lives was the food. Personally, I enjoy the food in Germany better than I do here, not because what they eat is exactly different but the way it is made, and the quality just seems to be better. What I believe that not a lot of people realize is that there is so much to the world besides Western New York or the U.S. for that matter. The world is much bigger than we think and being able to experience other cultures with my friends was truly incredible.

Travel in Europe is easy, and we did a lot of it. For the majority of the trip we were out and about, not just in the homes of our host families. Being from such a large nation, it was hard for a lot of us to fathom that within just a few hours or minutes, we could be in an entirely different country. We took trips to other areas such as Cologne where we got to explore the famous Köln Cathedral and Düsseldorf, where we got to shop, see the Rhein, and I was able to meet up with some old friends of mine. We also took excursions to Amsterdam and spent a few nights in Berlin. Exploring these places gave us all perspective of the world and was overall one of the most enjoyable times of my life.

The exchange is coordinated and run by Lynn Engle, a remarkable German professor and is likely better widely known for being a Fulbright Award Recipient. The Fulbright program is one of the most prestigious and competitive fellowship programs in the world, and its main focus is to improve intercultural relations, diplomacy, and competence between the people of the U.S. and other countries. Lynn, along with the other exchange supervisors will ensure that you feel safe and comfortable while abroad.

Being in this exchange gave me the opportunity to get involved with a special group of people who are interested in exploring the world and broadening

their horizons. I went on the trip with a few friends and came back with lots more, plenty of whom I stay in touch with and even see on a weekly or day-to-day basis. It is open to those who speak German or don't, while I was on my trip only a select few of students actually spoke German. Being an ambassador on this trip would be a great experience for anybody involved, whether it's early action for building a resumé, improving on language, or out of pure interest, being able to represent yourselves, your city, and your country is a special experience that not everybody in the world is able to do.

The experience of the trip is not one I can fully describe in an essay, but I promise to whomever decides to do this, your expectations can remain high.