

AFS Downeast Area Team Newsletter

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3



AFS Area Team Updates

I don't know when I have felt so good at the end of August about the beginning of a new AFS year. Thanks to the wonderful Downeast volunteers and the staff who work hard with us, we are in a very good position. As Area Chair I would like to share some successes and bring everyone up to date on a few things.

- Progress on Volunteer Development
- Trip Coordinator Wanted
- Annual Meeting and Leadership Elections
- Hosting Wrap Up
- Sending Wrap Up
- Calendar for Hosted Students

Progress on Volunteer Development

We had a large challenge this year to find new leadership and volunteers. Here are some of our accomplishments.

- Have new people serving as Hosting Coordinator, Chair Elect, and Orientations Team
- Brought more returnees and new volunteers to the orientations
- Trained and registered liaisons before students arrived – achieved almost 100%
- Shared the jobs among more people at local, district and area levels
- Started a newsletter for volunteers and participants
- Considered whether to change the Dirigo/Downeast boundaries

Students from Maine Go Abroad

It is that time of year again when students from Maine are starting to settle in to routines in other parts of the world. One such student is Raven LaValle, 16, from Bar Harbor. She is spending the 2009/2010 school year in La Concepcion, Panama and is pictured here in her school uniform for the Instituto Adventista Panameno where she is currently enrolled. As the year goes on hopefully we will see many more pictures and hear stories from our Maine students gone abroad. Have a great time Raven!



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www.afsmaine.org

Check out the AFS website for more information and upcoming activities.

AFS Updates Continued...

Annual Meeting and Leadership Elections

The November meeting will focus on what local volunteers in the Area Team are doing. You need to be there to let us know what you are doing and learn what other volunteers are doing. Please save the afternoon and evening of November 15th as that seems the most likely time for the meeting.

This fall your current leadership team will complete its term. Some coordinators may want to stay on, but there will be room for new people who want to work with this dynamic group for 2 or 4 years making AFS programs happen in our area. I anticipate that the Chair Elect, Mary Leighton, will become your new Chair. Soon I will be contacting other coordinators about their positions. In case you have an interest, here are the current team positions and members. Any continuing coordinator would welcome an assistant or new volunteer to learn about the position.

Chair – Stephanie Ralph, resigning

Chair Elect – Mary Leighton

Treasurer – Linda Gifford

Hosting – Susan Colinet and Betsy Nortrup

Orientations – Michelle Brenner, Carmen Bernhardt, Terry Flanagan

Returnees - vacant

Sending – Roni Strout

Support – Larry Ralph

Volunteers – Betsy Eggleston

Cluster Students – Terry Flanagan

Hosting Wrap Up

What an awesome hosting season we have had! This is a major source of my elation. Downeast hosted one 2009 winter arrival, and is hosting 48 summer arrivals. When we thought we were done, the team made a real push to help with placements of 6 additional students still waiting for their families. Thank you to everyone who worked on this and to the staff who provided several important leads. We do have 5 students in longer Welcome Placements in Portland, Gorham, Erskine, and Brunswick, so be generous if our Hosting Coordinators ask for your help. Further good news, I expect all the paperwork for host families will be COMPLETE by September 1st. Many less visible calls, emails, tracking and support went into accomplishing this..

Sending Wrap Up

As with teams across the US, Downeast had fewer participants going abroad this year. We helped 25 students go abroad:

23 year or semester students

2 summer students.

4 students received NSLI (language study) scholarships to Russia, China and Egypt

3 students received Congress Bundestag scholarships to Germany

I was especially proud that the team was able to interview all the YES and NSLI scholarship applicants on VERY short notice. Thank you! I would like our area to help more students become AFSers this year.

Downeast Maine Area Team Activities Calendar As of August 16, 2009

Please check for changes at www.afsmaine.org

September 18 -20 Camp Winnebago, Fayette	Required orientation Friday 6 pm to Sunday noon for students. For families 10 to 12 on Sunday. Ask Liaisons to drive.
October 8-12 2 trips	Trip to Quebec – Trip leader Carmen Bernhardt, 923-3248, cbernhardt3@roadrunner.com . Limited to AFSers who do not need a Canadian visa. Trip to NYC with Maranacook GAPP program under Larry Liebling. Larry Ralph is the AFS contact, LarryR.AFS@gmail.com , 626-0779
Oct. 30 –Nov. 1 OR Nov. 6 – 8	Get to Know the Maine Coast Weekend
January 15-17	Visit western Maine Weekend hosted by Oxford Hills HS AFS
January 24	Burbs, Portland and Southern Districts hold Midwinter Orientation Contacts Gigi Leonard, danaandgigi@suscom-maine.net , 865-1796 and Betsy Nortrup, bnortrup@gmail.com , 985-4560 Central District holds Midwinter Orientation Contact Larry Ralph, LarryR.AFS@gmail.com 626-0779
January 30 or 31	East Coastal District holds Midwinter Orientation. Contact Betsy Eggleston, islandearth@acadia.net , 667-8518 Midcoast Districts holds Midwinter Orientation Contact Sheila Sawyer, dssawyer@hotmail.com , 882-6035 Lakes and Hills District holds Midwinter Orientation Contacts Lynn Hamper, hampfam@hughes.net 539-4586 and Michelle Brenner, kmbrenner@roadrunner.com 627-7069
March 7	AFS Ski Day at Sugarloaf Ski Area for all AFS participants, families, volunteers and friends
March 23	Legislative Day in Augusta
April 17 to 25	Boston trip of 3 days sometime during vacation.
May 21-23 Agassiz Village, Poland	Required Pre-Return Orientation Friday 6 pm to Sunday noon for students. Sunday 10 to 12 for families.
June 16 - 19	Trip to Niagara Falls Contact Larry Ralph, LarryR.AFS@gmail.com , 626-0779
June 28	Students leave families and go to End of Stay Activity
June 29	Most international flight departures

Arrival Camp and all it's Excitement

Arrival Camp 2009-10 started on Wednesday, 12 August – many volunteers arrived at Bates in the early evening and transformed a plain college dorm into a welcoming space. 50 beds were made, all-important towels provided, along with shampoo and soap. Names were posted on doors, posters, maps and welcoming banners were put up – and then there was nothing to do but wait. The volunteers went to bed around midnight, waiting even in their sleep for that phone call from the bus chaperone.

5:30 AM Thursday – the phone rings and we head into action. Racing through the halls, knocking on volunteers' doors, quickly dressing, and then assembling outside as the bus rolls in. The students staying in Downeast Maine unloaded their luggage, while the students continuing on to Dirigo were given an opportunity to stretch and use the restrooms. After carefully counting noses and calling roll call, the bus departed to continue the journey. Left behind were a dozen dazed students from Denmark, Austria, France, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, Switzerland and Panama. A brief conversation with them, and they were freed to go to sleep, shower or sit and talk – whichever activity appealed to them the most (shower, then sleep was favored). Later in the morning, we provided a continental breakfast and started orientations. Completing the required paperwork for AFS and the State Dept went smoothly. Topics discussed covered the basics of 'How do you say it in English' to discussions on schools, parties, host families and Mainers. Lunch in the middle of the day, and more conversations as they started getting used to this language that they would be speaking for the rest of the year. Dinner, a walking tour of Lewiston and many games of pool (making up rules to account for the condition of the table!) and of course, card games – using puzzle pieces for wagering. Bed came early for everyone!

5:00 AM Friday – another phone call, and off we go again. This bus brought our Belgians, Chileans, Norwegians, Portuguese, and our lone students from Turkey and Sweden. Now, we had willing help from the students that arrived on the first bus – English from non-Americans, someone to talk to when you realize that a year is a long time! In the evening, we had a picnic buffet – All American burgers, hot dogs, chicken and watermelon. Larry introduced the students to the next Olympic sport – Watermelon seed spitting (most of the guys thought it was interesting, the girls were generally less impressed). After the picnic, everyone broke up into teams of 4 and headed out to see American culture at it's finest – a scavenger hunt at Wal-Mart! With an adult in each group 'sworn' to not speaking (yeah, right!), the kids needed to find all the items on the list – without getting sidetracked by wanting to buy things! Wal-Mart's employees were most helpful, and we put all the items back when we were finished. Then, the students had time to start trying to spend those American dollars. We also had the help of German to US returnees Zina, and Dario, and many US returnees.

Midnight Friday – the much-awaited last phone call – the last bus was pulling in. This bus contained our tired Germans and Thais, Brazilians and one student from the Czech Republic. We were now complete (almost – we were going to pick up 4 more students, but we didn't know that yet). Getting everyone to bed as quickly as possible was the order of the night!

BY BETSY NORTRUP

Trip Coordinator Wanted

Now that we are in the third year of offering an expanded selection of trips, we need a volunteer to coordinate the trips. This is a limited commitment on the area level for someone who likes to communicate and is comfortable with basic spreadsheet functions. It will put you in touch with AFSers and families. The biggest time commitment will be in the next 3 weeks and again in February. The Coordinator must get the information about dates, cost, and purpose of the 4 or 5 trips and then send emails (or Facebook messages) to hosted students and families with the information. The notice for this fall is ready to go as an email. The Trip Coordinator will write a notice for the spring. The Coordinator will also keep track of the AFSers' requests. Our goal is to give each student the chance to go on one trip. Some trips will require additional chaperones, and people have already told us they would like to go. I can work with the Coordinator to find the remaining chaperones. Please contact me for more information, steph-pralph@gmail.com or 626-0779.