

# Family Handbook

# What Is the Friendship Family Program?

The Friendship Family Program is a *family visitation* program **not** a *home-stay hosting* program. Students attend classes at Fort Hays State University and are responsible for their own accommodations. Friendship Family members are **friends** with their students just as they are friends with others. Their student friends are visiting from other parts of the world.

Who can sign up to participate in the Friendship Family Program?

Individuals, students, married couples, and families are all encouraged to become Friendship Family Program Friends. Community members of all ages are encouraged to participate in the Friendship Family Program.

# What is Expected of Friendship Family Program Families?

- Agree to be a family to one or more FHSU international student(s) for at least one year
- Contact your student at least once a month, even if only a phone call to see how he/she is doing
- Include students in some of your activities, spend time in conversation with your student
- Answer questions about American life and culture, care about your student
- Actively support and participate in the social activities planned for Friendship Family Program members and students

# Why should I participate?

Some of the rewards and benefits include:

- You/your family will meet people from other parts of the world and learn about their culture
- Teach others about life in the United States and our culture. See the U.S. through different eyes
- Help students living far from home to adjust to life in a new country
- Meet other community members with similar interests
- "Travel" while staying at home
- Gain a new friend!!

# What are my Responsibilities?

There's nothing complicated about being a family. We suggest that you:

- **BE YOURSELF.** Informality makes everyone feel more at ease. Do, however, speak more slowly and try to avoid slang. You may have to ask your new friend to repeat things several times, but do not be embarrassed, everybody's learning.
- <u>LEARN ABOUT YOUR STUDENT'S COUNTRY</u>. Respect his/her religious faith, national customs, dietary preferences. Do not try to "Americanize" your friend.

- GREET AND KEEP IN TOUCH WITH YOUR STUDENT. At first a note or email might work better than a phone call to open lines of communication. Cell phones will also be popular with the students. Please remember that punctuality may be less important in the culture where your friend has been living.
- <u>STUDENT FIRST</u>. Do not forget that the student's academic responsibilities
  must always come first and he/she must organize their social life accordingly.
  If your invitation is refused, try again later.
- **INCLUDE YOUR STUDENTS FRIENDS IN SOME ACTIVITIES.** Your hospitality will be appreciated and your horizons expanded!

#### What is NOT your responsibility - What Families Need to Know:

Your responsibilities do not include housing, legal matters, serious health and emotional problems (should any arise), immigration, and other governmental obligations. Should your student need assistance in any of these areas, please refer them to the Office of International Student Services at Fort Hays State University.

Religion and religious institutions constitute an important aspect of culture in the United States that international students should have an opportunity to observe and learn about, if they desire. International students come to us with their own religious and political beliefs. Any form of evangelizing, "witnessing" or proselytizing may be offensive and confusing to them and is forbidden by the Friendship Family Program and National Association of Foreign Student Affairs: Association for International Educators. Friendship Family Program Families should be sensitive to and respectful of students' beliefs while allowing for a mutual exchange of ideas.

Students have their own housing and so it is not necessary to supply overnight accommodations. However, if you have the available space, an invitation to spend a weekend or a holiday break may be mutually enjoyable.

Matching of Families and Students are completed during the first few weeks of each semester. You, as the family, should initiate contact with your student soon after your assignment.

# How do I get started?

You can become a part of the Friendship Family Program by filling out an application to become a family. Applications can be picked up in the Student Affairs Office, Sheridan Hall 208 at Fort Hays State University or from our Friendship Family Program website at www.fhsu.edu/international/ffp

Once we have received your application, the matching process will begin. In addition to becoming matched with a student or students, you will receive a newsletter for Friendship Family participants which will include an events calendar, family and student activity ideas, and information about upcoming events planned.

#### When to contact the International Student Services Office?

Again, your responsibilities do not include housing, legal matters, serious health and emotional problems (should any arise), immigration, and other governmental obligations. Also, you are not obligated to help students find housing off-campus or provide any money or items to help furnish an apartment a student does rent off-campus. Many students who study at FHSU are interested in obtaining a US drivers license. You are not obligated to teach students how to drive or provide them with a vehicle to practice their driving skills. Classes are offered to teach them driving basics and students are eligible to enroll in these courses. Please contact our office immediately if any of the above situations arise with your students.

Also, please contact our office if, after you have received your placement(s), you encounter problems contacting your student or if you feel like the match is not working, for whatever reason. Our office is here to provide you with support and assistance while you are matched with FHSU students. We can not provide you assistance if we do not know that a match is not working. Once we are notified, we will take the proper steps to help alleviate the situation.

# **Your International Friend – A Guide for Friendship Families**

<u>Let's Get Together</u>: We encourage you to make first contact with your student shortly after you are matched. A good first activity can be a meal or an evening of conversation. The Friendship Family usually provides the transportation for the first visit because many of our international students do not possess a driver's license.

<u>A Matter of Time:</u> Americans are extremely time conscious. This may not be the case in the culture where your student was raised, so don't be surprised if your student is late.

<u>My Name Is</u>: Many students adopt American names. However, if your student has not, repeat the name back to the student to make sure you are pronouncing it correctly. You may need to practice. Be sure to tell the student how to address each member of your family as well. It can also be fun to learn a few words of greeting in your student's language.

<u>Let's Have a Drink</u>: In many cultures a drink of coffee or tea is offered as soon as a guest arrives. Many cultures drink hot tea or warm beverages. Ask your student what he or she likes and prepare it for your meeting.

<u>Man's Best Friend</u>: Many cultures do not allow animals inside the home, so keep your pet at a distance until you know how your student will react.

An Extended Family: Students can be lonely from time to time and may enjoy talking about their families and friends. Be sure to include children in conversations. Students often enjoy children because they are easier to talk with and may "substitute" for brothers and sisters back home.

<u>Speaking of Politics</u>: Try to familiarize yourself with your student's country – its form of government, population, size, cities, religions, and holidays. This will help you to be more aware of similarities and differences between the two cultures. Your student will probably be your best resource, but it is helpful to have some of this information before your meeting. Discussing similarities and difference between cultures can make stimulating conversation.

<u>What's for Dinner</u>: Your first meal should be simple – easy for you to prepare and easy for your student who is trying to learn your customs. Since food restrictions exist in many cultures, you should ask your student if there are foods that cannot be eaten. This should be done when the invitation is extended. Meats and milk are foods most often prohibited or avoided. Chicken and rice appear to be "safe" in many cultures. Rich desserts are often unknown abroad, so a piece of fruit or simply a cup of tea maybe more appropriate.

<u>What is Friendship</u>: Some students have commented that Americans are insincere. This appears to stem from a basic misunderstanding between the words "friendship" and "friendliness". Some are disappointed when relationships do not take on a deeper meaning. In many cultures, friendship is reserved for only a few people, is based on mutual love and respect, and involves unlimited obligation. Talking about how friendships develop in the United States may help the student achieve a realistic view of what can be expected of American friends.

<u>Let's Keep in Touch</u>: Many students feel a deep loss of friends and relatives when they leave home. It is important, therefore, to keep in touch with the student so he or she feels wanted and accepted. A brief note, phone call, or birthday card can help the student remember that even if you haven't seen each other in awhile, he or she has not been forgotten.

**School Days, School Days**: Remember that being a student is a number one priority. Students may be reluctant to accept invitations during busy school periods, so don't be disappointed if the student must decline in favor of studying. Make it clear that not every invitation needs to be accepted when it interferes with academic schedules.

<u>Lessons in Faith</u>: Inviting your student to attend church with you is acceptable. It is especially important, however, to tell students that they can decline if they prefer not to attend religious services. PROSELYTIZING IS NOT ACCEPTABLE. It is hoped that both families and students will respect each other's religious beliefs.

You Can Help: People who enter a new culture almost always suffer from physical and emotional symptoms known collectively as culture shock. It is exhausting to learn a new language, new customs, how to get around, and become comfortable in a new land. The Friendship Family can do much to ease in this adjustment and culture shock be realizing this is a normal and "real" experience that most newcomers encounter. The best help can be listening patiently and offering support when it is needed.

<u>No Man's Land</u>: Friendship with your student is meant to be a richly rewarding experience for both student and family. Remember that if the student should run into legal or financial problems, it is best to refer the student to the Office of International Student Services. The OISS is here to help the student in serious matters so unnecessary burden is not placed on the Friendship Family.

<u>For Additional Information</u>: The information in this handbook is meant to serve has reference material for you. If you are concerned about any item not covered here, do not hesitate to call the Office of International Student Services, 628-4276.

# Simple & Easy ways to have fun with your new international friend:

# Invite your student. . .

- 1. over for dinner
- 2. to go for a walk or to the park
- 3. to attend a sporting event
- 4. to attend a movie
- 5. to a local museum
- 6. to the Hays Aquatic Park
- 7. to an Encore event
- 8. to go shopping at Wal-Mart, The Mall, etc.
- 9. to celebrate the holidays with your family
- to celebrate birthdays, weddings or baby showers with your family & friends if possible
- 11. go bowling
- 12. play miniature golf
- 13. go on a road trip with your family
- 14. to share stories about their family, friends, and culture with you
- 15. talk to you about the transition of moving to Hays, studying at FHSU & learning the new culture
- 16. to get involved with activities on-campus, go to activities with them, if possible
- 17. improve their English by conversing with you frequently
- 18. teach you how to speak their language
- 19. teach you how to prepare food from their culture
- 20. share with you any musical talents they may have
- 21. teach you crafts from their culture
- 22. play board games, card games
- 23. take a tour of Hays
- 24. take a tour of local areas of interest
- 25. visit a farm
- 26. attend events planned for Friendship Family participants
- 27. study when they need too
- 28. ask questions of you about American culture, family life, etc.
- 29. invite their new friends at FHSU to meet you
- 30. keep in touch with you after they leave Hays

# Ways to brighten their days . .

- 1. Send a card in the mail just because
- 2. Send a card celebrating an American holiday
- 3. Send a card celebrating their cultural holiday
- 4. Put together a mid-term or finals week care package
- 5. Send small treats/tokens celebrating American holidays
- 6. Cook or buy treats for no reason
- 7. Call/email just to say hello
- 8. Remember their birthday

# Twenty Questions to ask your new international friend:

- 1. What is your middle name?
- 2. What is your favorite food?
- 3. Where were you born?
- 4. What classes are you taking this semester?
- 5. What is your major?
- 6. Do you have a pet?
- 7. Do you belong to an organized religion?
- 8. What is your favorite past-time or hobby?
- 9. Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend?
- 10. How many brothers and sisters do you have?
- 11. What would you like to do after graduation?
- 12. Do you belong to any groups or clubs on campus?
- 13. What do you do to relax?
- 14. Do you work? Where? How many hours?
- 15. What countries have you visited?
- 16. Do you like college?
- 17. Do you like to sing or play a musical instrument?
- 18. Do you speak any other languages?
- 19. What kind of magazines do you like to read?
- 20. How did you find out about FHSU?