

Exchange Students Talk About America



In a cultural exchange, these Austrian students sang songs from their country. Austria has a rich musical heritage as the home of Mozart, Schubert, Strauss, and many other famous composers.

LOU ANN GOOD
Lancaster Farming Staff
LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)
— "I can't believe they advertise milk in America. Everyone in our country knows that milk is good

for you. We drink it with every meal and we like it better than Coke," Sabine said.

Sabine is one of the students that Lancaster Countians hosted recently through the EF Educational

Homestay Program.

The EF program brings students from other countries to spend a month living with local families. It's an opportunity for them to learn about American lifestyles

and to improve their English. All the students were very fluent in English, and could easily converse with the host families.

When the month-long visit was over, here is what some students had to say about America and its people.

"I liked the people. Americans seem friendlier, more open and quicker to share their feelings than people in my country," Sabine from Austria said.

Adam Kirchknoff from Hungary had some surprises when he came to America. He expected to see cowboys roaming the streets. He was disappointed. "I learned that America has many people with many different ways."

Since America is so big, he expected everyone would live in a large house.

"But in this country, many people live in small houses. And I saw quite a few poor people," he said. In Hungary, he said, there are the rich and the poor classes and no middleclass. But the classes do not separate them from establishing friendships with each other.

On the other hand, Sabine and many of the other students who live in the large city of Vienna

were amazed that so many people in America have a whole house to live in. In Vienna, only the very rich can afford to own a whole house.

Most of the students think that it would be fun to go to an American school because so much emphasis is on sports.

"In our country, we go to school to study. After school, we have homework. It would never do to tell our teacher, we cannot study tonight because we have to play football," a student remarked.

Few students in Austria hold jobs during the school year. Americans, they believe, keep so busy.

In Austria, all the stores close at 6 p.m. and on Saturday at noon. Although businesses are not open on Sunday, the time is seldom used to go to church.

"In America it seems like so many people believe in God. In our country, not so many people believe or don't believe, they are just agnostic," Sabine said.

"One of the first things that I learned to do in this country was to pray before we eat. In our country, we do not pray before we eat, but privately before bedtime," she said.

The students expressed surprise that a person must be 21 years old to drink alcoholic beverages. In their country, children grow up sipping their parents' drinks, although few children or teens drink alcoholic beverages on a regular basis. Milk is preferable as a beverage. The water in Austria is some of the purest and best tasting in the world.

Students preferred Italian food more than area favorites. They especially expressed a dislike for American desserts, which they thought were too sweet.

According to Sabine, sugar is used sparingly in Austria despite the rich looking desserts made in their country. During the last week of their visit, the students made a typical Austrian meal for the host families. Then it was the Americans, turn to exclaim, "This doesn't taste right."

Most of the host families thought the Austrian apple strudel needed more sugar and that the goulash was a bit bland.

When the students left, many teary good-byes and hugs were exchanged. Most host families expect to correspond with the students and hope to visit them eventually.

"It's an opportunity for host families to learn about other countries and cultures, and to discover how much alike people are regardless of where they live," said a host mother.

For more information about the program, contact EF Educational Homestay Programs, 1 Memorial Drive, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02142.

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Sabine and Adam talk about their impressions of life in the U.S.

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