Des collégiens américains découvrent la commune

L'échange effectué entre les Campelières et un établissement américain, a permis l'accueil et l'hébergement en famille d'une douzaine de jeunes

Les douze jeunes collégiens américains ont également été reçus en mairie par Richard Galy, le maire de la commune. (Photo J.-M. P)

Cette année, pour la première fois, le collège des Campelières avait décidé de faire des échanges avec des établissements scolaires américains. « Cela fait des années que nous entretenons de tels rapports avec des structures européennes. Nous avons décidé de franchir l'Atlantique », indique un responsable du collège.

L'initiative du projet revient à Mme Allenda, professeur d'anglais : « Je pensais qu'un échange avec un collège américain serait très enrichissant pour tout le monde ».

Grâce à l'aide de collègues, Mmes Roverant et Cecillon, elles aussi professeurs d'anglais, et de la direction du collège, le projet a vu le jour en cette fin d'année scolaire.

Avant de se rencontrer, les jeunes Français et Américains de Farmington Hills, ont commencé par correspondre par lettres et mails pour se présenter. En avril dernier, vingt-quatre collégiens français, tous en classe de cinquième, ont séjourné dans des familles américaines. « Une excellente occasion pour eux de découvrir la culture de leurs hôtes ».

Découvrir une autre culture

Aujourd'hui, les Américains visitent à leur tour notre région : visite de Cannes, de Biot, Grasse et ses parfums, Monaco, Marineland... mais aussi Mougins et son vieux-village qui a séduit ces touristes d'un jour.

« Ces échanges sont l'occasion pour les jeunes des deux collèges de découvrir une autre culture, une autre façon de vivre ». Les premières retombées de cet échange étant très positives, le projet devrait se pérenniser dans les années à venir.

J.-M. P.
Exchanging worlds

French, Flagstaff students get taste of foreign cultures

By KELI MAURER
Daily Sun Correspondent

When her host mother mentions the word "shopping," 10-year-old Nadege's eyes light up and a big smile spreads across her face.

She's recently discovered peanut butter, an American treat, and it's one of her favorite things.

Nadege Tenza is taking part in a foreign exchange program for fifth- and sixth-graders coordinated by Sechrist Elementary School. Twenty-four French boys and girls fly back home tomorrow. Then, 21 of those students and their families will get ready to host Flagstaff kids in late May.

"In the beginning, it was tense getting to know each other," said Matt Evans, Nadege's host father. His 10-year-old daughter Molly goes to school at DeMiguel.

"But we made an effort to get together and go out with the other French kids (here on exchange)."

Evans' wife Jennifer said she will miss Nadege when she leaves. She said this is the first time the Evans family has participated in the exchange program and added that it's an incredible experience.

"Kids are kids, even if they can't speak the same language," she said.

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Twelve-year-old Renouard Benjamin (left) struggles against the persistent hand of Rafflin Remi, 11, who was trying to apply sunscreen Friday morning at Sechrist Elementary School. The two boys, along with 22 other French fifth- and sixth-graders, are visiting Flagstaff as part of an exchange program.
French students revel in life here for 3 weeks, regret having to go home

By Joe Winter

When two dozen students from a Paris suburb arrived here almost three weeks ago, they were tired from hours on an overdue plane, and their hosts felt the mixed emotions that come with anticipation.

Tomorrow, when it's time to return to the Twin Cities International Airport, then home to France, none of them will want to part.

Many of the parents told Richard Stebbins, the Rock School principal who helped arrange their stay, that the experience has changed their lives forever.

The students reveled in shopping during multiple trips to the Mall of America, like something like a pair of jeans costs $75 in Paris. They were surprised that both their host families and store clerks were so hospitable.

The trip was sponsored through the French Class in America, which was born out of the "transplanted class" experience in France and involves more than 200,000 French elementary school children each year.

"I was very surprised how attached I've gotten to the children," said Kim Gillison, who is hosting Mohamed Benhamou. Gillison added that she admires the fifth-grader's resolve. "I can't imagine sending my 11-year-olds to Paris. That's a big trip."

Mohamed and Gillison's fifth-grade twins, Devin and Avery, tease each other just like regular siblings — even though only one of the visiting students speaks English. "Half of the fun is the language," Gillison said. They've gotten by with the help of an English-French dictionary.

Mohamed lost a tooth while here, and informed his host family that there's really no such thing as the tooth fairy. 

Everyone knows it's really called the tooth mouse.

The teacher from Paris, Thierry Rodriguez Desilva, stayed with John and Grace Guldan. (Counselor Salvador Salazar, who translated for the students, stayed with Ron and Carole Shimson.)

"I haven't used my French in 25 years," Grace Guldan said. "This is a Godsend. It all came back."

Guldan observed while the students met with Hudson Mayor Jack Breault — and asked some rather pointed questions about how tax dollars and welfare monies are used here.

In France, Breault quickly learned, both taxes and government spending are much higher, and the mayor has much more political power. Politicians are held to a high accountability for that spending, and the kids wanted to know how great the scrutiny is.

The students also met with Alderman Don Brunck, who defended French while fighting in World War II. They asked him about his plane and imprisonment, were excited to try on his flight jacket and vowed to watch American war movies, especially "Hail, Caesar!" upon returning home.

Guldan and the host teacher talked about education in France, and her family and children back home. Rodriguez Desilva has gained grants virtually every year to obtain travel and allow the students an opportunity they normally would not have.

She added that food is much more spicy here. More people have cars, and gas costs about 40 percent of what it does in Paris, where tickets cost about $17.50 and the second class prices are $40. Local taxes in the Hudson area have much bigger lots, and in France a relatively small house costs $100,000 to $300,000.

"It's interesting to see how people live here," she said.

A small reprieve is found in a government program which new houses can be purchased at a government with part of the incentive to encourage new homes, retaining the old ones where people have lived for generations.

Rodriguez Desilva's students had to adjust to a different schedule when attending school with their new classmates. In France they have Wednesdays as their long day, but in turn go to school every other Saturday morning.

Stephanie Weber was one of the four mothers and their children from Rock who accompanied Stebbins and one of the first to the airport on March 29.

She describes the trip as a "weekend in a big city," They were the last ones off the plane, and it was a very large plane," Weber said. "One of the moms said it was like giving birth.

The initial excitement of finally meeting was soon preempted by the practical chore of getting everyone's luggage loaded. The guests at first wondered where the other host families were, expected they'd all be there to greet them.

There was one overwhelming first impression. "They couldn't believe how welcome they felt in people's homes," Steve Weber said. In France, people visit each other in coffee shops, seldom in their own homes.

"The language was a little awkward at first," Stephanie Weber said. "But it's amazing how kids can communicate. They find a way, just as we are."

"It takes a little bit longer to get things done, and there are some moments of humor," Steve Weber said. "Planning to go somewhere is sometimes like grabbing a coat and holding it up to say, 'Let's go.'"

The students took part in numerous activities, one almost every other day, and also put on a French American cultural presentation featuring diversity in song. "They also got a wagon ride drawn by two Shetland ponies, and they loved it. These are city kids," Steve Weber said.

Stebbins said he has never experienced a foreign exchange program of this scope before. The idea came up at a National Principal's Meeting in San Diego, and the next step was checking the interest of parents, which was phenomenal and involved many people, he said.

It's likely that program could be held again next year, and possibly expanded to include a trip by local youngsters to France. The School Board would have to issue its approval before the idea goes any further, Stebbins said.

He added that at this age level, students take the experience to heart much more than when they grow older, and it has a greater impact on their life. It was gratifying to see parents who did not know each other that well come together and become "best of friends" through the experience, Stebbins said.

OLGO RAYEDEMONDE WEDRAOOGO, left, and Diki Thondup, the only student from Paris who also speaks English, listen to a presentation by Mayor Jack Breault on the workings of the city council (top). Breault also addressed the mechanisms for municipal politics in general while the students were in his office. Staff photo by Joe Winter.
Highlights of French Students' Visit

In the early morning of Sunday, April 17, 1999, French students and their teachers arrived at the high school gym, greeting their hosts with cheerful cries of "Bonjour!" The sleepy hosts and students went to their homes and went to bed.

They awoke later that afternoon, very inquisitive. The students were shown around the house, amazed at how different this was from France. They were introduced to family members, had American meals, and gifts were given to the hosts. They were excited.

On Monday, they went to their first day of American school. The students and the hosting children met in the Commons first period, introducing themselves, and singing their national anthem. Mr. Clairmont also gave a short speech. Second period they went on a tour of the school and Corvallis, then they returned third period to be picked up by the hosts, and spent the rest of the day with them.

Tuesday, they spent most of the day with Mr. Clairmont. Several were in groups which gave presentations to several of the high school, middle school and primary school classrooms.

The rest of the week went pretty much the same way as Tuesday. They attended the dance on Friday. It cost $1.50 per person, but the students and hosts got in for free. (Including my French student, Alexandre Porte, and I)

We all had a good time, dancing to swinging music, munching on some great snacks and meeting new friends.

On the weekend, Alexandre, my family and I went fishing at Lake Como. We didn't catch any poison (French for "fish"). We also went to Southgate Mall in Missoula. He bought a lot of clothing, especially polo shirts.

Monday was school at usual, but after that, the fun activities started.

Tuesday, the French students went to an Indian Reservation for the day. They took some pictures for their parents, and also bought some nice souvenirs to take home.

On Wednesday, they, and some other students from our school including me, hiked up Blodgett Canyon, from 6:30-11:30 AM. We got some nice pictures there, as well. We got up pretty far, but we were not disappointed when we had to descend.

On Thursday, they went to a museum. They also got to ride some mules! The weather was less than satisfactory, but they had a great time.

Friday, our last full day with them, they went to Mt. Missoula in the morning. They said their good-byes to the saddened students, not wanting them to leave, then they left for the Daly Mansion Barbecue & Potluck, with us following later. There was a tour, games and dinner, then at 6:30 they said more good-byes and we all cleaned up.

Then finally, early Saturday, May 1, 1999, we dropped the students off at the gym. Then they left for France, riding away on the bus, waving to us.

By: William Sigler, Jr.

An Interview with Mr. Clairmont

- How long have you been coordinating the exchange the program?
  - Mr. Clairmont: "Since 1995."

- How many students usually participate?
  - Mr. Clairmont: "15-21."

- Has anyone from our school ever gone to France?
  - Mr. Clairmont: "About 50."

- What was it like?
  - Mr. Clairmont: "A lot of fun, and work."

- Would you do it again?
  - Mr. Clairmont: "Oh yeah!"

- Were the French students confused in the U.S.?
  - Mr. Clairmont: "No."

- Have you ever gone to France with this program?
  - Mr. Clairmont: "6 times."

- How long has this program existed?
  - Mr. Clairmont: "15 years."

- Have there ever been any serious problems?
  - Mr. Clairmont: "Never."

- Have the hosts had much trouble understanding the French students?
  - Mr. Clairmont: "No."

- What did the students feel like after the French students left?
  - Mr. Clairmont: "They missed them."

- Do you think all had a good time?
  - Mr. Clairmont: "An excellent time!"

- Did most of the students want to host again, and/or go to France and be hosted after their experience?
  - Mr. Clairmont: "Yes."

By: William Sigler, Jr.

Interview with a French Student

- How did you like America?
  - Alexandre Porte: "I enjoyed it very much!"

- How is Montana different from France?
  - A.P.: "Montana has very beautiful mountains. France is flat. Also, there are many things here, that are either more expensive, or not available at all in France."

- What do you like best about Montana?
  - A.P.: "Montana has a lot of mountains, and the wildlife is plentiful. Also, fishing is fun!"

- How do you like the people here?
  - A.P.: "They are very helpful. People go out of their way to help us, and they are very friendly."

- Did you get along with the other French students who came here?
  - A.P.: "Oh, yes! We mostly didn't know each other before the trip, since we all came from different schools, but all our parents work at Lucent Technologies, and some of us were friends before the trip."

- What did you do on the field trips, and did you enjoy them?
  - A.P.: The field trips were fun! We went many places, including Blodgett Canyon, a house-making company, and we even rode horses.

- What do you like to do in France?
  - A.P.: "I like to fish a lot!"

- Was the language, laws, etc. confusing here?
  - A.P.: "A little bit, but not that confusing."

- Do you know any other languages?
  - A.P.: "I am studying Spanish at my school. The host father knows some too."

By: William Sigler, Jr.
attractive lifestyle
Grafton

Grafton students will leave for France, spending 11 days in Paris and another week in their host's home, according to their host.

The mayor of Grafton, France, Monique Mouraud and Alexandra Gauthier, 14, view the Friendship 7 exhibit at the NASA Glenn Research Center in Cleveland. The mayor and students from France were on an exchange visit with Midview High School students.

AMERICAN-FRENCH SLANG TRANSLATIONS
What's happening? O que on se passe?
Cool! Cool, genial!
She's hot! Elle est posée, elle est canon
He's hot! Beau gars, il est canon
My boyfriend Mon petit copain/ami
My girlfriend Ma petite copine/ami
That rocks! Rock on! Ca chante, c'est super
Me too! Moi aussi!
I'm afraid de perdre
Oh my goodness! Oh la la!

Truck/Truck
Gratin, idol, idol
Put aside (for sure)
C'est claust, bien sûr
High five
Tape, tape
My corn (my home/room)
Moi c'est ma, ma pièce
You are crazy!
Tu es fou!
Metal mouth/braze face
Sous la dents
Gangster/gangsta
Gangster/voyle bandits
Swapped beat
Four-peat
Tattoo

The mayor of Grafton, France, Monique Mouraud and Alexandra Gauthier, 14, view the Friendship 7 exhibit at the NASA Glenn Research Center in Cleveland. The mayor and students from France were on an exchange visit with Midview High School students.