



Volunteer Coordinator
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CROSS-CULTURAL BUDDY PARTNER INFORMATION SHEET

Vision

International students are often very lonely, and new students may need to get oriented to their new surroundings when they first arrive in Columbus. By inviting an international student to spend some time with you and/or your family to have fun together, the student will feel like they have a **friend** here in Columbus. In return, you and/or your family will be enriched by learning about the student's culture.

How is this different from an English Conversation Partner?

The Buddy program was designed to match students from countries where English is spoken, such as India and some African countries, with individual IFI volunteers or families. Rather than needing help with English, they desire to build a friendship with a local friend who can be a resource person and cultural interpreter. While Conversation Partners meet weekly for an hour, the Buddy Partners meet at least twice a month for a longer time period. The focus is on doing an activity together that you/your family are already doing, or assisting the student in some way, (such as driving them to the store).

What time commitment is expected?

We ask that you or your family meet the student for an activity that you are doing or to meet for a meal at least twice a month. The activity should be at least 3 hours long. However, if you would like to interact with your student more often, that is encouraged! It is also encouraged that you try to maintain the friendship for at least 3 months. The student may periodically reach out to you for help with a ride to the store, or with a question.

When would I be needed?

Most international students arrive in the fall, but we have requests to match students with a Buddy throughout the year.

How will I and/or my family be matched with a student?

After you are approved as a new volunteer (you have completed a training and application, and your background and reference check reviews are approved), we look at our list of students waiting for Partners, and try to find a match with similar interests. The extent to which this is possible depends on who is on the list. If you are a single person, we would only match you with a student of the same gender and near your age. If you prefer a student from a particular country, cultural, or religious background, we will try to accommodate that if possible.

What if I am unable to contact the student I have been assigned?

Please remember that you are the “host” to a guest in our country. It can be very intimidating for an international student to make the first contact. Please do not give up after one attempt. Try the student several times, and call or text them if your emails are not answered. If after these attempts you are still unsuccessful, please contact the IFI office (294-2434) so that we can either facilitate the contact or match you with another student.

How long is my time commitment?

The official recommended time commitment is a minimum of one semester. However, the length of time that you will continue as buddies is determined by you and the student. In many cases, a strong friendship develops that lasts beyond the original commitment and in some cases even when the student returns home.

What if my student returns to his/her home country, or can no longer meet with me?

Please let us know so we can update our records. We would be happy to match you with someone else!

Do students speak English?

Yes, students in the buddy program will most likely be from English speaking countries. Also, in order to be a student at OSU, students must have a high level of English.

What types of activities would be suitable to do together?

If you are meeting with the student one-on-one, feel free to just hang out – share a meal together, go shopping, take a bike ride, or do some cooking, etc. If your whole family is involved, invite the student to a birthday party, for a cookout, to a sports game, or a concert. We have lots of other ideas, which we’ll send along after you have been matched!

What about sharing my faith?

Your commitment to the student should be that of unconditional friendship and love. Please be sensitive to the fact that the students come from many different cultural and religious backgrounds, and may have little or no previous exposure to Christianity. Hopefully over time, you will build a relationship of trust, which would be an appropriate context for sharing your faith. We ask that you not force spiritual discussion, but be sensitive to the student and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. In many cases, the students are very open to such discussions. It is appropriate to naturally include your faith as it relates to your life experiences.