



*Dear Host Family:*

*Welcome to the New Hope Christian School International Student Program. Your decision to become a host family has opened a world of opportunities for you and for that young person coming into your home. You will be able to learn of a culture different from yours while providing the experience for a foreign student to learn of our culture. By opening your hearts and home, you will impact the life of another for a year, and possibly for eternity.*

*New Hope Christian Schools was founded on mission convictions, and this program is helping to fulfill them. By bringing international students to our school and your home, we are responding to the call in Mark 16:15... “He said unto them, Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” The only difference is that we are bringing the world to us.*

*I would like to thank you and your family for opening your home to an international student. I am certain that this year will be a challenging and rewarding year for your family as you develop a new friendship and learn more about another’s country. You also are fulfilling a student’s dream of coming to the United States and living with an American family.*

*Thank you.*

*Sincerely,*

*Diana Hale  
International Student Program Director  
New Hope Christian Schools*

# Host Family Handbook

June 2008

## INTRODUCTION

Hosting a student from another country is a life changing experience for you and for that student. They will literally become a member of your family. During this time there will be a lot of adjustments that will need to be made by everyone involved. We have prepared this handbook to help. Hopefully it will be of benefit to you. The student will also receive a handbook to help him/her adjust to this new life.

## YOUR RESOURCE PERSONNEL

New Hope Christian Schools' "final" authority rests in the Board of Directors. The Board has designated our Principal, Terrell Bowdoin, to oversee the International Student program. He, in turn, has directed Diana Hale operate and oversee the program. Should you have questions, contact her by telephone or at [dianah@newhopechristian.net](mailto:dianah@newhopechristian.net).

There may also be a HOST RESPITE group who will be available to host your student for a few days at a time, should you need it.

## YOUR ROLE AS A HOST

Your role in this program is an important one. You will be the student's family during their stay away from home. This new and somewhat fearful time for them will require a good deal of support from you. We encourage you to take an active part in their experiences here.

Welcome the student into your home as a family member and treat him/her as you would your own son or daughter. Be an example from which your student can learn American culture, customs, etc. and take a genuine interest in his/her character and the customs and cultures of their homeland.

Relax and when opportunities arise, share Jesus with wisdom and love.

## PREPARING FOR THIS EXPERIENCE AND CORRESPONDING WITH YOUR STUDENT AND HIS FAMILY

Discuss with your family their expectations and those they have of the student, the International Student Program, and the school.

After reading your International Student's biography and sharing your own letter with the student, learn as much about your their country (internet, library, videos, etc.), and about the student and his family.

One of the best ways to prepare for your student's arrival is to begin correspondence with them immediately after the placement has been confirmed. The student and his parents are very anxious to hear directly from you and may have questions about your family, your home, the community, and the school they will attend.

You can correspond with your student through mail (snail) or e-mail. This contact will probably help more quickly after student's arrival. Dialogue freely, using simple language, at the start and enjoy the initial bonding that will soon take hold. Keep in mind that sentence structure varies from country to country and simply enjoy the experience.

Write a letter also to the student's natural parents to help put their minds at ease. It is a good opportunity for them to learn more about the people who will be taking care of their "pride and joy" for the next school year.

Your student will contact you with details of their arrival. Be prepared to meet the plane with as much of the family as possible. Prepare a sign with their name in large letters since they may look different than the photos you receive. The 2-3 photos of your family that you sent the student will make it easier for him to recognize you.

Your student will arrive with luggage for a long stay; plan on bringing a vehicle to the airport that luggage and people comfortably.

Realize that your student has just finished a long and tiring journey. Provide time for them to get rested before being involved in a lot of activity. Welcoming parties or visitors should wait at least 12 to 24 hours. If the student is energetic due to the excitement of arriving, accommodate that but realize there will come a time when they may need to rest.

### **ADJUSTING AFTER THE ARRIVAL**

A few items to remember regarding adjustment.

1. Begin your introduction activities after your student seems more refreshed.
2. Introduce him to the area by showing him around your home first, then school and town. Use maps and/or diagrams as you tour around to help him get a sense of the "lay of the land".
3. Remember customs differ and mundane activities such as taking a bath may be greatly different. Try not to assume anything regarding daily routine. Discuss house rules and expectations within the first few days. It is a good idea to write these things down for reference and be consistent.
4. Your student is now a family member; gradually incorporate him/her in as much as possible. It will be beneficial for both of you.
5. Remembering your own feelings of apprehension, anxiety, excitement, nervousness and enthusiasm that you experienced about this program are probably doubled in the student. As you share your lifestyle, describing those things you value in life, be sure to keep the communication lines open. You may need to

- explain the why you do what you do since our lifestyle is a change for the international student. The ‘whys’ are as important as the ‘dos’.
6. It seems natural to expect some cultural shock shortly after an international student arrives in America since lifestyles and family practices may vary so drastically in comparison to other countries. This shock may create strange and adverse behavior on the student’s part. Watching and listening to facial expressions and body language will enable you to spot uncertainty and frustration. Communicate what you are observing and see if you can enable your student to make a smooth adjustment. Remember to be understanding while remaining firm in critical areas. It is important to remain consistent and uphold your standards.
  7. Flexibility and tolerance are helpful in the early phase until you and your student’s expectations are realized and communicated.

### **TIPS FOR SUCCESS**

Please read through this handbook AND the International Student Handbook sent to the student, which can be downloaded from the school’s website. Many helpful tips appear in both.

One key to a successful host experience is communication. It is important for you to realize that it is as frustrating to the student as it is to you when the communication lines are not open. It is important for you to establish an open, honest communication line when your student first arrives. Your student may be nervous at first. Try to enable them to feel comfortable by showing them that you are going to be open and honest, and that you have a genuine concern about the student and his/her happiness, and they will be more likely to warm up to you and extend the same openness and honesty.

Your student’s early attempts at speaking English may sound harsh or even rude. This may be because they don’t know the proper terms to use or that is how they would say it in their home country. Explain to the student that they used the wrong wording, or that it is not polite to speak in such a manner in America. If you talk to the student with an explanatory tone instead of a condemning tone, they will more likely take it as a help instead of a criticism. Again, patience and understanding are vital.

### **CULTURAL DIFFERENCES**

The phrase “It’s not right, it’s not wrong, it’s just different!” explains many of the customs and cultural differences you will encounter with your student. “Culture” can be defined as the patterns of thought and behavior that are collectively established in each society. It includes the way you automatically respond to stories, events, other people or situations that you face. It is vitally important that you and your student look at cultural differences as exciting means to discover each other’s lifestyles. Remember that they are here to learn of life in another country while you have invited them for the same reason. Exchange ideas and converse often.

As you see things done differently, talk to your student. Find out why they do what they do, and explain why you do things in a way that is different to them. Except for moral issues, do not attach a judgment to ways things are done. Just remember to keep communications open and flowing both directions.

At times, you will have immediate reactions to your student's culture. These "red flags" warn you of vast cultural differences which could lead to misunderstanding. Your student may think an American way of doing something is "stupid" while you may think the same about their way of doing something. Do not let these red flags stop communication but use them to enhance communication by getting together with your student and exploring the basis for the differences. By finding explanations together, you reduce the possibility for offense.

## ADJUSTMENT STAGES

There are eight (8) stages of adjustment that the student and host family go through in the foreign student experience. In brief outline form, these are:

- I      **Preparation** - the period before the student's departure from his country. Remember to do a lot of communicating.
  
- II     **Honeymoon** - the first few weeks when everything is exciting for all involved
  
- III    **Settling In** - When the student and you start becoming familiar with each other. During this time, follow these suggestions.
  - A.     Keep family routines flexible.
    - 1.     Postpone new projects such as replacing carpet, etc.
    - 2.     Look at each family routine to see if there would be a better way.
    - 3.     Expect some irritations and resolve to talk them out.
  - B.     Deal with expectations not realized.
    - 1.     Accept differences that cause the "let down" feeling.
    - 2.     Discover true friendship by working through disappointments.
  - C.     Set realistic goals.
    - 1.     Discuss goals within the family and with the new student.
    - 2.     List your reasons for all the goals presented.
    - 3.     Discard inappropriate goals, establish new ones.
  
- IV    **Deepening the Relationship** - Thoroughly explain the spoken and unspoken rules within your family. In this discussion, stress the reason for each rule and how it applies to the family members, including the new student. Some areas to cover are:
  - A.     How we express appreciation/thanks in our family.
  - B.     How we express disagreement.

- C. What it means in our family to be “on time”.
  - D. What is private property and what belongs to the family as a whole.
  - E. When and where (in the house) can teens entertain their friends.
  - F. The meaning of a shut bedroom door. (Don’t bother, I’m resting, etc.)
  - G. Appropriate bathroom etiquette and hygiene.
- V **Culture Shock** - At the beginning, everything is exciting and fun, but then you notice the student is having upsetting feelings. This is often due to “culture shock”. This happens when the student begins to really notice differences in their culture and ours. Usually it is a combination of emotions and small events they don’t quite understand. You can help ease these situations by following these suggestions:
- A. Define anything the student questions; don’t try to solve but rather explain.
  - B. Discuss culture shock with them, helping them to realize it is normal and will pass.
  - C. Encourage them to reach out in friendship at this time.
  - D. Allow for “bad” days when they are emotional; don’t press them at this time.
  - E. Expect times of withdrawal.
  - F. Expect disagreements and respond to them in Christian love.
  - G. Encourage extra rest.
  - H. Perhaps allow a call home or other concession at this time.
  - I. Minimize complications.
- VI **The Holidays** - May represent a time for the student in which they will become very homesick, missing natural families. Minimize this by the following activities:
- A. Plan ahead and help your student prepare for the holidays by sharing their traditions and by sending cards and packages home early.
  - B. Be prepared for upsetting experiences and have a lot of distracting activities planned.
  - C. Be tolerant and understanding.
- VII **Culture Learning** - This is that period of time when the actual learning takes place and the student begins to develop long and lasting friendships with other students and the host family. They begin to be at ease in the American culture and are able to function quite well. This is the longest period and the one most filled with enjoyable experiences. Be sure to record much of this time through photos and videos. Help your student to share these times with his/her family at home by sending many photos (with explanations) home.
- VIII **Ending the experience** - The final weeks of the stay will be emotional ones for both the student and host family. He will have excitement about returning home

and also sadness at leaving behind your family and all his new friends. You will experience a feeling of loss. It is important that you and your student recognize these feelings and deal with them. Hopefully you will be able to part as brothers and sisters in the Lord and know that the time will come when we will all be united with the Lord.

**Follow up** - Be sure to maintain communication long after his return home, especially if he had not accepted Jesus as Savior.

**Academics** - As a foreign student at New Hope Christian Schools, there are important items the student needs to be aware of. Foreign students are accepted under two basic programs:

- A. One American Orientation Year. This is a year when we are trying to expose the student to as much about America as possible, placing him in classes that are easy for him to be successful. Many of these classes will not be at high school level and will not be given high school credit. This is for the student who plans on being in the US for one year only.
- B. US High School Diploma Program. For the student wanting a diploma from a US high school, NHCS will establish a Graduation Projection which will include all the high school credit classes required of local students. The foreign student will need to successfully pass all these classes in order to receive enough credits for a high school diploma.

All Foreign students must enroll in an English class and US History class. All students will be required to attend NHCS as a full time student, being at school for the full day.

All Foreign students will be expected to maintain a “C” average in their academic studies. Those who have a grade below a “C” in a class will be conferenced with; If the low grade continues, then will be place on Academic Warning. Academic Warning is for a student who receives one grade below the “C” level. Should the student receive more than one grade below “C” then he will be placed on Academic Probation. He will be on probation for a 30 day period. If the grade is brought up during that time he will be removed from probation, however, if the low grades persist and significant effort to improve them has not been made, the student may be subject to dismissal from the program.

All Foreign students are accepted for a year at a time and must make re-application if wanting to extend their stay past that time. As host family your commitment is also for a year at a time. At the end of the year, you are under no obligation to extend your host service any further.

**The Daily “Nitty-Gritty” of Hosting** - Below are some of the practical applications of how to best host a Foreign Student.

A. Household Chores

You should treat your student just as you would your own child. This means including them in the routine chores around the house. Although we do not expect students to be maids or lawn care specialists, we do expect them to participate in household chores to keep your home running smoothly just like your own child. At the beginning of their stay, it is a good idea to write down what you expect from your student in this area. Go over the duties with them and answer any questions. Provide the student with a copy of the written chores. This will help minimize confusion and disagreements.

B. Religion

Regardless of the church you attend or the background of the student coming to you, we ask that they attend church with you on a regular basis. We are asking them to learn about the customs (religion being one) of the people of the US. We ask that you do not force your student to participate in religious activities with your family; however, you should feel free to offer the opportunity to them. These students need to be careful about making life changing decisions without the consent of their natural parents; however, the choice of salvation should always be an option to them. Remember to not put undo pressure on them in this area, realizing that decisions are often made to please you and not purely from an actual desire of the heart.

C. Dating

Again, treat your student like your own teen. Regarding dating, be sure to place reasonable guidelines which agree with the school's policy and your family rules. We encourage them to attend social functions as a group, in order to learn as much of our culture as possible. We also advise them to not develop one to one relationships which will be hard to break when returning home. Also, remember that they have been warned that sexual activity is strictly forbidden and will result in an immediate dismissal from the program.

D. Money matters

The students are responsible for their own personal expenses during their stay. These include such items as clothing, personal hygiene products, outings with friends, phone calls, etc. All other costs are covered through their fee payment, which was made before they received the INS form I-20. Your student may want/need to open a checking account when they arrive, since they will often have all expense monies in a lump sum with them. You will need to help them establish this account.

- E. Health insurance is the responsibility of the student's family. Be sure to establish this when you correspond with them prior to the student's arrival.
- F. Employment of a foreign student is strongly discouraged, unless it be as a temporary learning experience. Do not allow them to pursue outside work as a means of providing needed finances.
- G. Emergency Procedures:
  - 1. Health: See to the safety of the student first, then contact the school administration. The school will arrange contact with the natural parents.
  - 2. Natural Disasters: See to the safety of the student first, then contact the school administration. The school will arrange contact with the natural parents.
- H. Travel of a foreign student is confined to traveling with the host family or with the school. Independent travel, or travel with other students to non-school activities outside the country is strictly forbidden. Exceptions to this rule must be approved by the school administration and the natural parents.
- I. Visits from your student's natural family are acceptable with the following:
  - 1. Only family members, no girlfriends/boyfriends.
  - 2. The host family needs to grant permission before the students invites the natural family.
  - 3. The host family should NOT expect to house the natural family. The student needs to make arrangements at a local hotel for them.
  - 4. If the student wishes to travel with the family, be sure he/she has gained the permission of the school administration.
  - 5. Remind them that they are students of the NHCS Foreign Student program and must follow the rules and policies even during the family's visit.
- J. NHCS Foreign Student Rules of Conduct.
  - 1. Students shall not consume or purchase alcoholic beverages.
  - 2. Students shall not engage in sexual activities.
  - 3. Students shall not purchase or use illegal drugs.
  - 4. Students shall not purchase or use tobacco products.
  - 5. Students shall abide by all laws of the United States.
  - 6. Students shall not purchase firearms.
  - 7. Students shall not be employed in a competitive job.

8. Students shall not enter into contractual agreements.
  9. Students shall attend classes regularly and be on time. Multiple tardies result in a Corrective Action Notice (CAN) being written which usually results in Lunch Detention or Community Service on campus.
  10. Students shall not purchase or drive motor vehicles, except during an official Driver's Education course.
  11. Students should demonstrate every effort to cooperate with the NHCS staff and host family.
  12. Students shall maintain at least a "C" average in every class.
  13. Students should understand that a diploma is not guaranteed and that each student's program will be arranged to accommodate his/her needs/abilities.
  14. Students shall not move themselves to a new host family. If a move is necessary, the school and host family will make the arrangements. Should a student demand a move the school will determine whether a move is applicable or whether the student needs to be returned home due to lack of co-operation with the host family.
  15. Students need to know that the decisions of the School Board and school administration are the final authority.
  16. Students are encouraged to enjoy their time at NHCS.
- K. Host Family Guidelines: Please read and agree to the following before accepting a Foreign Student.
1. The host family assumes responsibility for the welfare of the student coming to live in their home.
  2. The host family agrees to work with NHCS to keep the lines of communication open for all involved: school, student, host family, natural family.
  3. If the host family decides to discontinue hosting a student the school must be notified immediately and be given at least 2 weeks to relocate the student.
  4. The host family will abide by and enforce the rules established for the student.
  5. The host family will strive to include the student in the family unit and will co-operate with NHCS in the daily activities of the student.
  6. The host family agrees to have a good time sharing cultures with the foreign students and in sharing Jesus Christ with him/her.

**IN CONCLUSION:** There may be additional changes that come up. Please contact the school (541-476-4588) whenever you have questions or suggestions. As we work together we can make this a successful program that shares Jesus with people from other countries while educating a student in his/her new cultural setting. Thank you for your commitment.