

AuPair GAZETTE

Intercultural Child Care Programs

A Publication for EurAupair Program Participants and Friends Around the World!

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Following the Presidential Proclamation of June 22nd, 2020 suspending J-1 visas for Au Pairs (among other visas) until December 31, 2020, EurAupair received a massive amount of testimonials and support from Au Pairs, Host Families, Partners, Area Coordinators, Community Counselors and Staff members explaining what the Au Pair program means to them and why this suspension should be lifted immediately.

In this special edition of the EurAupair Gazette, we gathered a sample of the letters we received.

From the bottom of our heart, we would like to thank you all for supporting our program and Cultural Exchange in general.

*Sincerely,
The EurAupair Family*

From a EurAupair Host Mom in Arkansas:

"I am writing you to implore that you do what you can in order to convince the administration to remove language from the June 22, 2020 Executive Order that applies a visa ban on J-1 visas as they apply to Au Pairs. If this is not possible in the very near future, I would ask that you investigate what can be done to assist the State Department to create an expedited exemption process to start granting exemptions prior to the start of school in August. The Order arbitrarily and capriciously takes away my ability to decide how to best educate my children, which is contrary to the President's recently announced school choice policy. Furthermore, the action against J1 visas actually does not realize the central theme of the Order: to protect American jobs.

I am a single mother of two children in Arkansas, ages 11 and 7. One of my children medical issues that will prevent my children from being able to safely return to a traditional school environment while we continue to see a rise in cases due to the coronavirus. As a single mother, however, I am unable to homeschool my children without help. I have a responsibility to my family and community to continue to work.

With the decision to homeschool, I knew that I would have to find someone who not only could watch the children, but who could assist in their education. I made a list of my 'must haves' for this position: a newer teacher with a degree,

interested in furthering their own education, having some experience with special needs and older children, willing to provide additional learning opportunities for advanced learners, willing to commit to at least a year, and sharing our respect for the pandemic and health issues driving this choice.

After speaking to nanny agencies, friends, countless interviews curated from websites connecting us to local caregivers, I found that either these caregivers were out of my price range; were not as likely to be able to keep up with an active 7 year old if they had higher experience levels; were lacking the education level that was needed/desired; were lacking experience with special needs learners; indicated a desire for a short term appointment; did not have appropriate respect for the virus and the reasons why we need to create the learning environment that we are; and/or lacked any background or interest in education. Any of the candidates would have been sufficient for babysitting for a few hours or as a nanny for toddlers. They did not meet our specific needs for a more specialized caregiver.

Feeling frustrated with the pool of candidates, I did more research and learned about the Au Pair program. Through the program, we were able to specify our needs. In exchange for opening our home, providing room, board, transportation, assisting with educational fees and studies, and a modest salary, an au pair would assist in child care while acting as an exchange

student and being a part of our family for the next year. After reviewing more than 220 applications and conducting what seemed like countless interviews, we finally found a person that would meet our needs.

We selected a lady who is an English teacher in Mexico. She has worked with special needs learners and has tutored other children. She wanted to come to the United States to improve her English and study our education system for the next year. She is trilingual and willing to teach my children other languages to keep them invested and involved in their current curriculum. At the end of that time, she intended to return to Mexico to complete her Master's Degree related to teaching language to special needs learners, focusing primarily on how best to do this with children who have ADHD. Her time spent here would then be utilized not only in her future education, but also in teaching her language students and future leaders in Mexico about the United States of America.

We had just matched with our Au Pair and started the process to apply for the visa when we learned about the restrictions on J1 visas that would impact our au pair – with less than 1 month before the start of the school term. Our needs, issues, concerns, and available job pool have not changed. Yet this order prohibited my ability to provide a quality education in a safe environment that I selected for my children and to ensure that I

(Continued on next page...)

About Us...

EurAupair Intercultural Child Care Programs is a non-profit, public benefit organization designated by the U.S. Department of State to conduct the Au Pair cultural exchange program under the Fulbright Hays Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 and is intended "to promote mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries by means of educational and cultural exchanges".

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could return to work.

The Executive Order does provide for certain exemptions and discretion by the Department of State that I believe could apply in our situation. Section 3(b)(iv) provides that the order shall not apply to any alien whose presence would be in the national interest. Further, Section 4 allows for standards to be established to define categories of aliens that further standards of diplomacy and are necessary for the immediate and continued economic recovery of the United States. Finally, Section 5(b) of the Order specifies which visa holders must be scrutinized for being at risk of taking American jobs and fails to mention J1 visa holders entirely.

I believe that our Au Pair does meet all of these exceptions. First, the United States of America has a continued and ongoing interest in ensuring the education of its youth in a manner deemed appropriate by their parents. Is it now not more important than ever when public schools are grappling with

how to provide needed services for the new normal, especially when there are children such as mine who are more at risk? By providing a way for parents to thoughtfully dictate the direction of their children's learning and provide a more secure environment, it alleviates some of the stress that schools are having to address for in person instruction and protects our teachers who are currently rewriting their wills before returning to work. Moreover, it supports President Trump's statement to the American public a mere two weeks ago on June 16 when he said that, "school choice is the civil rights statement of the year, of the decade, and probably beyond, because all children have to have access to a quality education." Failure to allow for a parent to provide an educator for their children when it is clear it is not a threat to American jobs specifically takes school choice away from parents during this scary and dangerous time while preventing them from accessing a quality education. As such, this

would seem to meet the national interest standard.

Moreover, the national interest is met by allowing for the continued economic recovery of the United States. Au pairs allow working parents, and single parents like myself, the ability to return to work in a traditional environment. This in and of itself stimulates the local economy and adds to morale. After all, a parent forced to sacrifice a child for the national economy tends not to make for an invested workforce. In addition, though, the au pairs study in the United States and pay educational tuition and fees to local universities and colleges. They engage in the community in volunteer opportunities. They buy local. They take the opportunity to travel and see the country adding to the tourism revenue of states. They also file and pay American taxes.

Likewise, au pairs are in the country as part of a culture exchange program guided by federal regulations, which by its very nature is geared toward

diplomacy. Our selected au pair planned to learn about and will subsequently teach utilizing what she learned from the United States education system and United States culture to Mexican students who may grow to be business and government leaders in the future. Our interactions help teach our children different world points of view, strengthen our bonds and shared interests between nations, teaches empathy, and growth of character. It also develops additional connections and shared interests between our countries, which creates a goodwill which may be relied upon in the future.

Therefore, I request you to look into this matter for any relief that may be achieved. Preferably, the limitations toward J1s would be removed from the Executive Order. However, as there are natural exemptions for all au pairs under this order, a suitable outcome could still be achieved through an expedited exception process that would allow for au pairs to receive the necessary J1 visas."

From a EurAupair Host Mom in California:

"I have a strong, personal tie to international exchange programs, as when I was a child, we hosted 6 Icelandic Au Pairs over 6 years. I had never before left the U.S. and yet those connections impacted me deeply; two of the au pairs even attended my wedding 25 years later! Being connected to other cultures is critical for building a more impactful, inspiring global leader in the United States; if we become insular and xenophobic, we will crumble just like late

Rome did (you can study history to ensure we don't repeat it?). Personally, as I was inspired by my early childhood experiences with Au Pairs, I later studied Mandarin Chinese, lived in China as a home stay student, and was an international exchange student in China via the US Fulbright scholarship.

Now, we are seeking the same meaningful, cross-cultural exchange that the Au Pair program provided me as a child. The idea that Covid-19 would be impacted by the J-1 program

is beyond unsubstantiated - the current crisis was created by our own administration's appalling lack of leadership as well as fully uneducated medical advice and inconsistent regulations provided by the Trump administration. Our federal government failed us; not foreign governments or individuals. That programs like the Au Pair and J1 visa should be impacted by this administration's faults seems like collateral damage. We are all suffering enough. ENOUGH ALREADY. If anyone outside of

our embarrassing country is eager to come join us here, to help us rebuild from the ashes that the Trump administration has left in its wake, PLEASE let them join us. We need them. We need anyone who still believes that American culture and history is worthy of studying, who believes that American families can be gracious, caring hosts to foreigners, that our American children will not be shut off from the world but will benefit from the global, empathic, egalitarian ideals that this country was founded on."

From a EurAupair Host Mom in Washington:

"I have strong personal ties to international exchange programs, and highly recommend program continuation. My family has hosted Au Pairs for the past five years from the following countries: Mexico, Colombia, Spain, and Germany (twice). Our family, especially the children, has benefited enormously from this experience. Unlike what we have experienced with local nannies and babysitters, the bond developed between families and Au Pairs is special and unique. Our Au Pairs have shared their lives, language, food traditions, and cultural perspectives with us, and have become family members. We have also shared our lives, culture, and values with them. As such, these young women have

become goodwill ambassadors during their time in the US, and when they return home.

As world events have occurred over the years, our Au Pairs' friends and family members have expressed concerns about them being in the US and far from home. Our Au Pairs have reassured their loved ones that they are safe and happy and allay fears and misperceptions about the US, and its potential response to these events. Similarly, when they have returned home, they share with loved ones and colleagues about their experiences and create positive impressions and goodwill for our country. Our Au Pairs have become (or are becoming) influential young women in their home countries: a beauty pageant winner and spokesmodel/social media influencer, international

business procurement agent, engineer for a global ship building company, and teacher. Our current Au Pair plans to have a career in politics having completed an internship with the German federal government prior to joining our family.

If the J-1 Visitor Exchange program is suspended or terminated, our family will suffer extreme economic and emotional hardship. We live in a rural area where it is challenging to find childcare services, and I would likely lose my job due to an inability to travel extensively and work variable hours to meet client needs. I have been earning 50-60% of our family's annual household income so this would have a significant impact on our lives. We would no longer be able to employ our housekeeper

(a US citizen), and my children would no longer be able to participate in their after-school hobbies/enrichment activities which would also have an impact on our local economy. Their hobbies/enrichment activities support a wide variety of local small businesses: piano teacher, reading/writer tutor, occupational therapist, dance school, martial arts dojo, and lacrosse club. Our children would suffer emotionally and developmentally if they are unable to continue these activities.

The international exchange program benefits our family and local economy in immeasurable ways. We urge you to reconsider suspending or terminating this invaluable program."

**From Laura,
Au Pair from France
currently in Montclair, NJ**

"The J-1 visa offers me cultural and educational opportunities in the USA. I'm

so happy and grateful to be in America and to finally be able to practice my English and learning a new culture at the same time.

I'm learning every day in

my host family with my host kids the American culture, and I think it is the best option to learn and grow up personally and even professionally. This immersion is a true pleasure

even though we are in hard time, all the world is.

It is really important to keep this exchange visitor program for the American families and for the visitors."

**From Adriana,
Au Pair applicant
from Venezuela waiting
to be placed with a
Host Family in the U.S.**

"I am writing this letter because I am affected by the new Trump Administration proclamation. Today, I feel the need to share with you how important the Au Pair program

is to me. Since I have known about this cultural exchange program, I have been working hard to make this dream come true. It is an awesome opportunity to learn a foreign language and to do something I really love to do: spending time with kids and showing them a little bit of my country's culture and traditions. I would like to

live that experience, increase my English fluency, know new cultures and meet amazing new people

Au Pairs have an important role in the American families because we are able to take care of their kids very well at same time we can teach them a foreign language and about our culture. That's why I would like

to let you know that suspending J-1 visa for Au Pair is a complete mistake because this cultural exchange is a source of learning, opportunities and responsibilities, for both, the Au Pair and the Host Family. Please, I hope you can reconsider the situation regarding the J1-visa for Au Pairs."

**From Nursen,
Au Pair from Turkey
placed with a Host Family
in TX waiting to start
her Au Pair year**

"I matched with my Host Family in April but we faced a sad pandemic. I have a visa

appointment and also I have my DS 2019 form. My Host Family needs me and they adjusted all their plans

The Au Pair program is not a work program. It is a cultural exchange program that allows students to travel

to the United States each year to live as part of an American Host Family, attend college classes and become a part of the local community. Au Pairs not only get to experience the American way of life while learning English and gaining

an extended (American) family, but they also contribute to the economy by traveling and exploring all that the U.S. has to offer throughout their program."

**From Carren,
Au Pair from South Africa
currently in
Mission Viejo, CA**

"Most of the time when you tell people that you're an Au Pair, they have no idea what you are talking about.

Because to some, what we do seem insignificant but to the families that we come to live with, their precious kids and to us Au Pairs, this is the best experience ever. It's not only a culture exchange program, it's a life changing program.

We don't merely come here to take care of kids and live in the USA for a year, it's so much more than that! You become a part of a family, you grow as a person and learn so much! You make so many new friends from other countries. Being

an au pair taught me to have so much respect for different cultures, but it also taught me a lot about loving myself and who I am."

**From Juliane,
Au Pair from Brazil
placed with a Host Family
in Stafford, VA waiting to
start her Au Pair year**

"When I was 16 years old, my family received a student from Texas at home, we were the same age, she lived with us for a year and it was the most amazing experience of my adolescence, since she came back to her house, it aroused my will in me to be part of a program, get to know a new culture, new people, live with them, learn from them and pass on my culture and experiences

to them as well. However, I was in a very important year of my academic life, I was taking entrance exams and deciding my profession, the years passed, college came, but that desire to venture into another country had not left me.

In the last year of my graduation, I got to know the Au Pair program, I knew I was at the end of college and that would be my last opportunity, I started researching the program and I thought it was incredible, it was everything I wanted and some more.

Being part of a family,

getting to know their culture, making friends, getting to know a new place, living with them, so, at the beginning of the year, I joined the program. The day that I match with my future family was the Best of this year, I dreamed of being there with them, I did a lot of research on the city, I had a lot of conversations with the host parents and the children, we already have a connection. I should have gone in June, but due to the pandemic my dream was postponed. The Au Pair is the last chance for me to live this dream before I really start

my life in Brazil, before I start my professional life.

I hope to be there with my host family later this year, to live a happy Christmas, having my dream come true with them, and after that year, to return to my real family, to tell them all of my new experiences, which I will take for the rest of my life."

**From Meghan,
France, PIE**

“People ask why exchange programs of any kind are important (school; university etc.), but the idea of becoming an Au Pair is particularly pertinent in this day and age. This is an opportunity for young women to experience life in a different country and learn a new culture, customs and language, all whilst broadening their horizons. This is an enriching experience for our participants, but also for the families and communities they come across during their time in the USA, as it is first and foremost an exchange of culture. The next generation of American children grow up more aware of the rest of the world, of what opportunities are available to them and tend

to be more open minded as a result of this cultural exchange.

Additionally, becoming an Au Pair enables hardworking or struggling parents to be able to continue to work and not have to worry 24/7 about who their children are with or what their children are doing. Becoming an Au Pair is not an easy task and participants will work for months on their applications, demonstrating their motivation, willingness and desire to thrive and participate, despite our stringent vetting processes as set out by the US government. I have noticed through exchanges with my current participants in the USA that they have gained in maturity and have nurtured strong bonds with the children they look after. Additionally, their

second language (English) has improved in leaps and bounds. They enjoy the education component where they learn more about the USA too.

From an economic standpoint this program enriches the American economy: enabling parents to work more hours; receiving tax from Au Pair stipend and providing jobs in the American companies that organize these exchanges. Many Au Pairs come back to visit their families once they have left, so it also enriches the tourism industry, or some even choose to work in the USA later in life due to the success of their experience (...).

Suspending such a program would, in my opinion, have mid to long-term social and economic consequences for the USA and also Europe.

From what I am seeing currently, young women are becoming more and more wary of the Au Pair program based upon the current changes to the J-1 visa and as such, we are receiving fewer demands for the next year. This is worrying as these young women cannot guarantee that their visas will be safe, and feel like as an Au Pair they are the bottom of the food chain and easily dismissed, yet there are 10,000s of Au Pairs in the USA every year. This number is by no means small. To suspend this program would not only affect our Au Pairs from France, but the families that require the help and support they provide day in and day out.”

**From Nilufar,
Portugal, Multiway**

“MultiWay’s Au Pair Program gives Au Pairs the chance to spend a year in the United States taking care of children, and at the same time learn more about the American

way of life and its culture, make new friends and find time to study, which will improve a great deal their knowledge of the English language.

Suspending the program will be a big mistake as family and children are losing a lot of

benefits such as:

- **Convenience and Flexibility:** An Au Pair offers parents extra support to make juggling a busy schedule easier.
- **Stronger Connection:** Au Pairs create a stronger connection with children.

• Cultural Experience:

Host Families offer Au Pairs a cultural experience by sharing their life, and Family and children gain a similar experience, as well.”

**From Carlos,
Colombia,
Au Pairs & Travels**

The Au Pair program allows thousands of young people around the world to experience a unique and enriching cultural experience

that will help them in their life not only professionally but also personally. It also benefits American Host Families as hosting an Au Pair enables their family and children to be exposed to a new culture and way of thinking.

It is a big mistake to limit the Au Pair program and the unique opportunity to experience a new and diverse culture.

Life is full of challenges but limiting freedoms and exchange should not be the solution. The

Au Pair program has provided many opportunities and happiness to countless people around the world and it must receive more support and help from the governments.

**From Karen,
Venezuela,
Global Exchange
International**

“The Au Pair program has benefits for both parties, as the Au Pair can share knowledge and the Host Family can transmit cultural background, and vice versa. Undoubtedly,

suspending the Au Pair program would decrease the chances of having a cultural exchange allowing exchange and understanding.

So many families will not have the opportunity to spend time with an Au Pair who has all the willingness to make a better world and has a variety

of knowledge, traditions, customs, and language to share with the Host Family and their children.

Also, having the Au Pair program suspended, might increase the illegal migrations to the United States, since the program provides a secure path to improve thousands of young

females lives in their native countries. For all the mentioned above, we would like to kindly request this decision to be reconsidered and resume the program as soon as possible to continue enjoying the benefits this cultural exchange program offer.”

**From Jess Schmidt,
EurAupair
Northeastern Area
Coordinator**

“The suspension of the Au Pair program is truly disheartening for many reasons, but perhaps most significant is the loss of invaluable cultural exchange experiences. Cultural exchanges provide people with the opportunity to explore traditions outside of their

own. They help highlight diversity and encourage people to understand and appreciate differences. They create amazing cross-cultural connections that lead to meaningful, lasting relationships. Cultural exchanges also help us recognize the importance of seeing the world through different perspectives. This in turn leads to better acceptance of others and helps promote

inclusivity.

Au Pairs and Host Families have the unique opportunity to spend an entire year living together. Not only does this experience benefit the Au Pair and the Host Parents, but it also leaves a lasting impression on the young children in the family. These children are afforded the experience of a lifetime, living with a foreigner and learning first-

hand about other customs, traditions, and languages. They inherently grow up with an instilled value for different cultures, thus furthering the global benefit of cultural exchanges. Without a sound cultural exchange program, all of these opportunities and experiences will be lost. For the benefit of humanity, we need to reinstate the Au Pair program immediately.”

**From Vivi Frumkin,
EurAupair
Midwestern Area
Coordinator**

“Time flies when you are having fun! I joined EurAupair as a Community Counselor in 1998 and in 2002, I became the Midwest Area Coordinator.

The Au Pair program is a cultural exchange program with a child care component. The cultural exchange is an incredible experience for Au Pairs, Host Families and children.

I have always felt it was both an honor and a privilege

to witness the result of this program. Au Pairs return to their home countries with positive feelings about life in the USA. Children learn about cultures in different countries, learn some words in different languages, try foreign foods and even learn some geography. Host parents enjoy the child care, not only in-home child care but with the cultural aspect for their children. The result being we all learn from each other and become better world citizens.

As a Community Counselor, I will never forget the first

South African Au Pair I met. She had a million questions about the USA and I had an equal million questions about South Africa. We learned from each other in the personal way this program allowed us to do.

Joyful things like a child knowing how to say good morning in several different languages have always made me smile.

One host mom was worried about her children’s eating habits, once their au pair returned home. Her children had refused to eat vegetables until her Chinese au

pair presented vegetables made the Chinese way.

So many stories! So many reasons for keeping the Au Pair program!

The Au Pair program makes such a difference to everybody involved. It would be a huge mistake to stop au pairs for giving US citizens the opportunity to learn first-hand about other countries and for au pairs to return home with a feeling about USA, they may not get from their local news.”

**From Pam Porvaznik,
EurAupair
Community Counselor
in Wichita, KS**

“It’s too bad when good things get lumped in with “other” things. To President Trump’s credit, he’s doing his best to keep Americans safe from an insidious virus that seems impossible to contain or control, while at the same

time seemingly doing harm to a respectable international Au Pair program that has helped thousands of American parents with everyday child care for more than 30 years.

The suspension of the J-1 Visa program will deny working parents the opportunity to have vibrant, joy-filled girls from other countries come to the United States to care for

their children. And it will deny girls who love children and dream of coming to our land of open skies, tall skyscrapers and rushing oceans the time of their lives.

For those young women, it’s hard to find an educational experience such as the EurAupair experience that entails living abroad, being welcomed into the home of a

loving host family, caring for young charges that they eagerly embrace...and get paid to do it!

My hope is that President Trump will take another look at the suspension of the J-1 Visa and make some exceptions for those of us who have enjoyed the EurAupair experience for many years.”

**From Linda Harris,
EurAupair
Community Counselor
in Anacortes, WA**

“Please know that I find it very disappointing and discouraging that J-1 visas and the Au Pair program have been put on hold. As an Au

Pair Community Counselor, I have seen first-hand what a win-win program this is. A strong bond of appreciation and understanding is a natural outcome of a program like this. First-hand, I have seen the children thrive, the parents able to effectively continue

with work and careers, the Au Pair learn new skills and appreciation for this country, and my community and I are learning and appreciating a broader world view.

I believe that the individuals who are attracted to come as Au Pairs tend to be exceptional in

their willingness to work hard, learn new skills, and provide a valuable service. The outcome tends to be life-long bonds, beneficial to all concerned.

Please do whatever possible to encourage the international Au Pair program to continue.”

“People say travel broadens the mind because you are exposed to different cultures, new perspectives, and simply something different. Of course, my Au Pair stay “educated” me but it was much more than broadening and educating. When I entered the airplane in Germany to fly to New York City and, a few days later, to my Host Family in Northern Virginia, I did not realize how this Au Pair year would be a huge part of who I am, who I became, and who I will be.

My Au Pair year was shaped by cute and unforgettable moments that also, sometimes, came along with being overwhelmed, scared, and speechless for several reasons – both: good and bad. I met wonderful people whom I am still friends with and whom I still, 14 years later, visit. We still exchange presents, hugs, and share all our important life events together. “My” two kids are now having their driver’s licenses, picked me up from the airport, and asked me if I want my drink with ice or no ice because they remembered that “Germans don’t do water with ice.”

Usually, people ask what brought me to become an Au Pair – well, simple answer, but not really sophisticated: I like kids and the U.S. always fascinated me. But what really matters is where your Au Pair year experiences brought you after you had, in tears, left your Host Family that was, by then, not just your Host Family anymore, but the extension of your natural family back home.

When I returned to Germany after 12 months, I realized what the reverse culture shock really means: I was proud to have succeeded this year but I was also unhappy. This is a side of the Au Pair year that is oftentimes

forgotten and that remains unmentioned. I missed the colorful way of life and the U.S.-American mentality. Germany, by then, appeared to me as grey and grumpy. However, since it was not an option to return to the U.S. at this moment (due to very practical real-life aspects such as a lack of an educational degree and money), I have decided to bring the United States back into my life.

I started to work for EurAupair’s German sending office and was on the “other side” – I was now reviewing Au Pair applications and sending Au Pairs off to a life-changing experience they did not yet understand. After trying to figure out who I am and, even more importantly, who I want to be, I realized that after my Au Pair year, there would be no way to return to my old me. I became that highly motivated young woman during my Au Pair stay who realized that you would get what you want if you just really want it. (I do not want to call it the American Dream because I think this sounds kitschy and people usually start rolling their eyes when you say such things.) Being an Au Pair made me understand that a “drive” to reach your goals will lead you to the place you want to be – whatever and wherever this place might be.

This motivation and (for a German) American-style optimism of the “you can do it approach” got me a Bachelor’s as well as a Master’s degree in American Studies and two wonderful semesters abroad in Boston and Washington DC. Throughout my studies, I had the chance to do internships, study programs, and I met people who kept touching my life in a unique way. My Host Family and their friends remained a constant support for me when I was in the United

States. I am beyond thankful for all the people who helped me to “make it here.” This would have all not happened without my very first step in the U.S. as an Au Pair. Because this year showed me what matters in life – personally and career-wise.

In contrast to the rather reserved German cultural mentality, (most) Americans are full of optimism and dreams – and this is what you need. You need to dream big to make it; you need to be passionate to succeed. This passionate “drive” is something the German school system and its society do not necessarily teach you. You are taught to study something “useful” and something you can actually make money with and American Studies does, in many people’s idea, not belong to this category. But I did not care because my passion has always won when considering more “prudent” options. Now I know that I was right and that my passion did win after all – although the road to where I am now was a little bit bumpy from time to time. But it is the bumps that make life interesting and rewarding.

My bumpy road continued when starting (and finishing) the PhD in Claremont, California in Cultural Studies and Education. Throwback: When I was in high school, I had a C in English and an F in Mathematics and the majority of teachers told me I would never be able to finish high school because I am not intelligent enough. Luckily, I have wonderful parents and an amazing Host Family that assured me you do not need mathematics to succeed in life and to fulfill your dreams. Nobody would have ever thought that I would get a PhD – but I did. But without the Au Pair year, this would not have

happened.

During my PhD, I was a Community Counselor for EurAupair and, in this way, I know all sides and facets of the intercultural child care program: I know what an Au Pair feels and thinks but I can also relate to the Host Families as well as sending offices in the respective home countries of the Au Pairs. And the journey is not over yet because I was offered the position of the Regional Director for the West in the head office in Laguna Beach, California in January 2020. Again, I would not be here without my Au Pair experience.

I am still not done yet with my journey and I am excited to see what life will bring. However, I am, currently, also concerned because of COVID-19 – a pandemic that has thrown over so many journeys on an economic, political, social, as well as cultural level. In an increasingly globalized world, we are all in this together and we need to coexist because we are interdependent and our journeys are all connected across oceans. Therefore, I do hope that incredible people, moments, and coincidences will still be part of all our journeys in a peaceful responsible manner – especially in unpredictable times like this.”