

## My Au Pair Experience

By Au Pair Valerie Nepgen, South Africa with the Colloton Family in Alexandria, VA

I am extremely thankful for my host family. I have been here almost two years now. They have been such a great host family. I could honestly not have asked for any better family. My host kid, Stanley, is just the best! We play, laugh, hug and have bonding memories everyday. He honestly feels like my little brother. My host dad, Mike, is such a blast. It's so fun being able to make jokes around the house, it makes me feel home since I did the same with my own dad. My host mom, Kim, is the sweetest person. She is always willing to help when she can. I honestly felt home from the first day and now I totally feel like they are my second family. I am so sad to say bye soon... Without my host family, I would have never been able to travel around the States! I have

been to A LOT of places because of them giving me the opportunity to be here! They



showed me so many places and guided me to see so many more places during my vacation time. I would have never met all my best friends from all over the world like Japan, France, Germany, Italy, Hungary and many more places. I am also extremely thankful for my family, friends and boyfriend from back home that have been supporting me every step of the way during my Au Pair experience. Without them I would have never been here and gone through to be an Au Pair. They are truly my everything and I just love them so much. I can't wait to see them soon and catch up on the two years that I missed!

With lots of love & many things to be thankful for!

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## 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".

## My Year as an Au Pair

By Au Pair Maryflor Belmonte, Venezuela with the Ambersley Family in Ponte Vedra, FL

Swimming with dolphins, traveling by boat, paddle boarding, getting to know New York, Tennessee, Washington, Philadelphia, etc., are some of the experiences I lived during my first year as an Au Pair and that marked my journey in these first 12 months.

Likewise, my Venezuelan traditions and customs were present at all times, from the moment I cooked arepas or

Pabellón Criollo (national dish of my country) until when we played at school and the subject that the children learned was Spanish so Tuesdays went from Taco Tuesday to Spanish Tuesday.

Also the support and company of friends that I made during the program and the love received by my host parents and kids helped in moments where I missed my family

and friends from my country a lot, so there was never a lack of laughter and beautiful moments to remember.

This has been an incredible personal growth experience and as we say in my country, "Everything happens for a reason and God has plans for each and every one of us."



## Would You Like to Contribute?

If you would like to contribute to the EurAupair Gazette, please email [info@euraupair.com](mailto:info@euraupair.com). We would love to hear from our Host Families, Au Pairs, Community Counselors, Area Coordinators and Partners.

# My Year as EurAupair Community Counselor and What to Expect

By Community Counselor Gabriele Mecca in Maryland

As a retiree and a widow, my days were filled with mundane activities which I thought, after working forever, I would be happy and content to do since I had all this "free time".

Instead, I found myself taking too much time with some errands, and not motivated to actually starting others. I missed interacting with people!

My youngest daughter saved me from sheer boredom. She saw an ad in her Mom's Club, and told me about someone looking for a Community Counselor for an Au Pair program.

Wait, what?

So, I called, Heidi Thomas (Area Coordinator) and inquired what the job entailed. I can only say, it was the best call I made.

My first dynamic, full of energy, Au Pair was from South Africa assigned to a part of MD that was isolated, boring and totally not what my Au Pair expected. So, within two months I was introduced into the "rematch program" and the finer points of negotiation, compromise, and final acceptance that the parties wanted to separate. Then came the rush to find a new family for the departing Au Pair, and a new Au Pair

for the host family. Heidi received many calls during that time and held steady with great advice and a willing ear. My first Au Pair was sent north and adjusted well with her new family.

My second Au Pair was a delightful Au Pair from Northern Italy - a region where I lived for many years! Transportation was an issue but my Au Pair was resilient in finding modes of transport I was even unaware of. Like Flexi Bus Service. Who knew?????

This part of my job is

stimulating, fun, creative and provided a learning curve for both my Au Pairs and myself. Practical matters, like getting a local driver's license, becoming familiar with the surrounding areas, meeting up with other Au Pairs, first over Zoom (during COVID) and then participating in taking part during Cultural Day, proved to be interesting as I got to meet other Community Counselors and Au Pairs! It also helped to be able to meet challenges and see a positive outcome for all involved. Again,

having Heidi Thomas available to vent, talk to and get her perspective, is an added bonus to being a community counselor.

It was truly sad to say goodbye to my Italian Au Pair as she returned to Italy. It is a blessing to know I have a permanent place to visit since I also got to meet her mother, visiting from Italy, for lunch! So much fun to meet up and learn more about my Au Pair's Family. My first Au Pair and I are still in touch and she is so happy in Cambodia teaching English to the kids! Her enthusiasm and joie de vivre are amazing!

Now, I am looking forward to meeting my third and fourth Au Pairs. I truly love my gig job.

I want to add by saying learning and understanding about the governmental regulations, visa requirements, cultural differences and most importantly helping the Au Pairs adjust to their host families, is a privilege and an honor. Not to forget the important role of the host family, I will say this is a wonderful opportunity to interact with our host families as well.

Maybe I will write about them, next time:)



# My Experience as an Au Pair in 2023

By Au Pair Kristal Rodriguez, Venezuela with the Theis Family in Easton, PA

One of the reasons for me to join this program was that I wanted to see more of the world, I wanted to travel in the U.S.

In my case, I grew up watching movies and listening to several bands and artists that were American. That woke up in me a certain type of curiosity about this nation.

I always felt curious and not just about the language, but way more... the horizons, skylines, the story, the architecture, beautiful and diverse, with its lights and shadows.

Who has not heard of 09/11? Who has not heard Thriller from Michael Jackson on Halloween? Who has not seen TV series about serial killers in America? Who has not seen a movie about crazy stories in Las Vegas? Or the Statue of Liberty in New York?

In my opinion, I think everyone has...or most people at least, because there are so many movies and bands that has spread out parts of the soul of this country... and it is because the United States has so much to discover...

I am Kristal.

This is my first year as an Au Pair, I started working in the South and ended up living in the east coast, Pennsylvania specifically, and the most beautiful things I have experienced since I came here are the opportunities to build your own happiness, in this journey I have had the chance to explore: The Grand Canyon, Las Vegas, Arkansas, Arizona, New Orleans, New York, New Jersey, San Francisco, and Lake Tahoe. It has been a journey filled with a lot of emotions, excitement, gratefulness, new learnings, and more.

But most of all, everyone should be aware that working as an Au Pair is not easy, to leave your loved ones and come to a foreign country when you don't have anyone but yourself is not easy... Host families are there for you sometimes... And it takes a high commitment and responsibility to keep children safe and happy, I am taking care of twins -3 years old- and it has been challenging for me, but anyways you end up loving the kids because you know that once they love

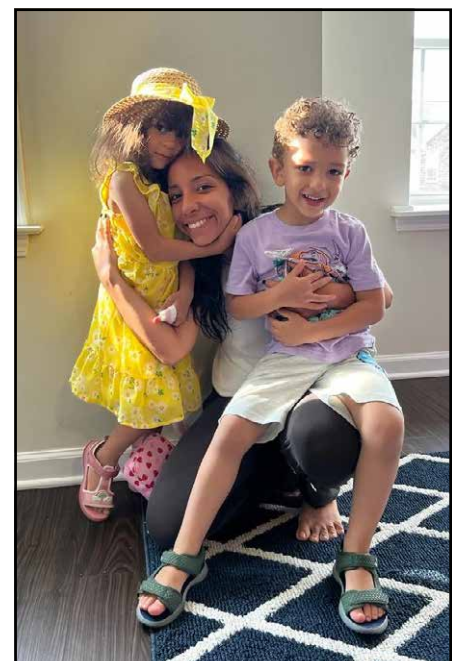
you, they really do... and that's what makes it beautiful in the end.

I wonder how these twins are going to end up being as adults, because they are pretty much like the ying - yang, she is a good girl -the princess of the house-, but he is mischievous -the dinosaur of the house-...Probably they will not remember me when they grow up, who knows... but certainly, I will always remember all of the anecdotes and the things I went through while taking care of them.

So in general, being an Au Pair has been an experience that has helped me to grow more as a person, and I am grateful for that.

I have made friends from different nationalities, cultures, and that is something that also helps you to see that there are so many different ways of living, thinking and perceiving this world.

Even if sometimes is not easy, I try to stay positive, and for all of those who have read this article, thank you so much for your time and have a great day! God bless you.



# EurAupair Photos

## Monthly Activities



*CC Katarzyna from Stratford, CT taking her Au Pairs out in New York City*



*CC Ana Storton (Palm Desert, CA) with her Au Pairs at Anza Borrego Desert State Park in California.*



*From left to right, Au Pairs Wilarut (Thailand) and Angie (Colombia) at the Tulip festival in Kansas*



*Au Pairs enjoying their cultural event at the Wilds in Cumberland, OH*  
*From left to right: Dafne (Colombia), Aryam (Venezuela), Ann (South Africa), Melody (Dominican Republic) and Georgina (Mexico)*



*Easter egg painting at CC Swantje's home in Chicago, IL*  
*From left to right: Naomi (Italy), Monica (Argentina), Taru (Finland), Federico (Italy), Camila (Venezuela), Agus (Argentina) and Melissa (Turkey)*



*Picnic on the Lakefront enjoying the beautiful skyline views that Chicago has to offer.*  
*From left to right: Federico (Italy), Naomi (Italy), Claudia (Spain), Gissel (Mexico), Agus (Argentina), CC Swantje, Zully (Colombia), Taru (Finland), Camila (Venezuela) and Monica (Argentina)*



*Cherry Blossom Festival in Philadelphia, PA*  
*Au Pairs Eliana (Venezuela), Kristal (Venezuela), Alessandra (Italy), Fai (Thailand), Kloy (Thailand), Danahury (Dominican Republic), Berenice (Mexico), Carmen (Spain), Hande (Turkey), Michelle (South Africa), Laura (Colombia), Julie (South Africa). CCs Sylvia (Pennsylvania, PA), Thais (Williamstown, NJ), Dora (Newark, DE), Kathy (Northfield, NJ), and Jackie (Doylestown, PA)*

# EurAupair Photos

## Monthly Activities



Area Coordinator Heidi (Elkridge, MD) along with CCs Kaylor (Bryans Road, MD), Gabriele (Odenton, MD) and Temesha (Bryans Road, MD) brought their Au Pairs to the National American History Museum in Washington, D.C.



CC Anne (Smyrna, GA) had a picnic with the Au Pairs for their monthly meeting. From left to right: Liebe (South Africa), Scarlet (China), Chalisa (Thailand) Chloe (France), Joy (South Africa) and Andrea (Mexico)



CC Patricia met Au Pairs at the Barnes of Nappanee in Nappanee, IN.

Pictured left to right: Jennifer (Mexico), Marlene (Germany), Laura (Brazil), and Matlhodi Maake, (South Africa)



Au Pairs visiting the Statue of Liberty for their cultural event  
From left to right: Abigail (Argentina), Lizeth (Colombia), Xiomara (Colombia), Isla (Brazil), Ligia (Dominican Republic), Barbara (Spain), Mariana (Mexico), Area Coordinator Gisella (Moorestown, NJ) and Valery (Mexico)



The girls enjoyed playing Fowling in Michigan

From left to right (back): Ruth (Brazil), Alejandra (Mexico), Jennifer (Brazil), Maria (Argentina), Karon (Colombia)  
From left to right (front): Sharon (Argentina), Bea (Spain)

## Recipe Corner

### Venezuelan Arepas from Au Pair Anacarla Caraballo, Venezuela

#### Ingredients:

- 2 cups precooked cornmeal
- 2 1/2 cups water, room temperature
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tbsp vegetable oil

#### Directions:

- Preheat oven to 410° F.
- Pour the water into a large bowl. Make sure it is room temperature.
- Add the salt. Blend well with a mixer, fork or spatula to make sure it dissolves well.
- While you continue to beat the mixture, slowly add the corn meal—a little bit at a time.
- Once all the flour is added, keep mixing until the corn meal, water and salt are thoroughly blended and dissolved.

- Set aside the masa in its bowl. Let it rest for 5 minutes so that the flour is thoroughly hydrated. The masa should be smooth, firm yet malleable.
- While waiting for the 5 minutes' rest, heat your non-stick pan over medium heat. Coat with a little bit of oil.
- Fill a small bowl with water to wet your hands to make the arepas.
- Take about 2 Tbsp of the masa in your damp hands. The masa should fit easily in your palm so that it is easy to shape into a small ball.
- Cross your hands, so that one is on top of the other, with the masa ball between them. Rotate your right hand in a circle, so that you are at the

same time both pressing the masa into a flat disc and keeping its round shape.

- The last step in shaping your arepa is to quickly pass and lightly press the masa disc from one hand to the other until it is about 3/4 of an inch thick and 4 inches wide. Smooth the edges with your fingertips (quickly dip them into the water bowl first) so that they stay as round as possible and without cracks.
- Place your arepas in batches on the preheated surface of your nonstick pan. Let each side turn golden, about 4 to 5 minutes per side. Check them often so that they don't burn.
- Once they are nicely browned on both sides, place the arepas on a baking sheet in your preheated oven for 10 minutes. They should be somewhat puffy, so that if you tap an arepa lightly on top, it will sound

like you are tapping an empty box.

- Serve arepas hot, whether you stuff them with your choice of fillings or serve solo to accompany your favorite Venezuelan guiso or stew.

