



AFS “FriendShare” Program:

A Guide for Volunteers



AFS: Leading International Student Exchange for More than 55 Years

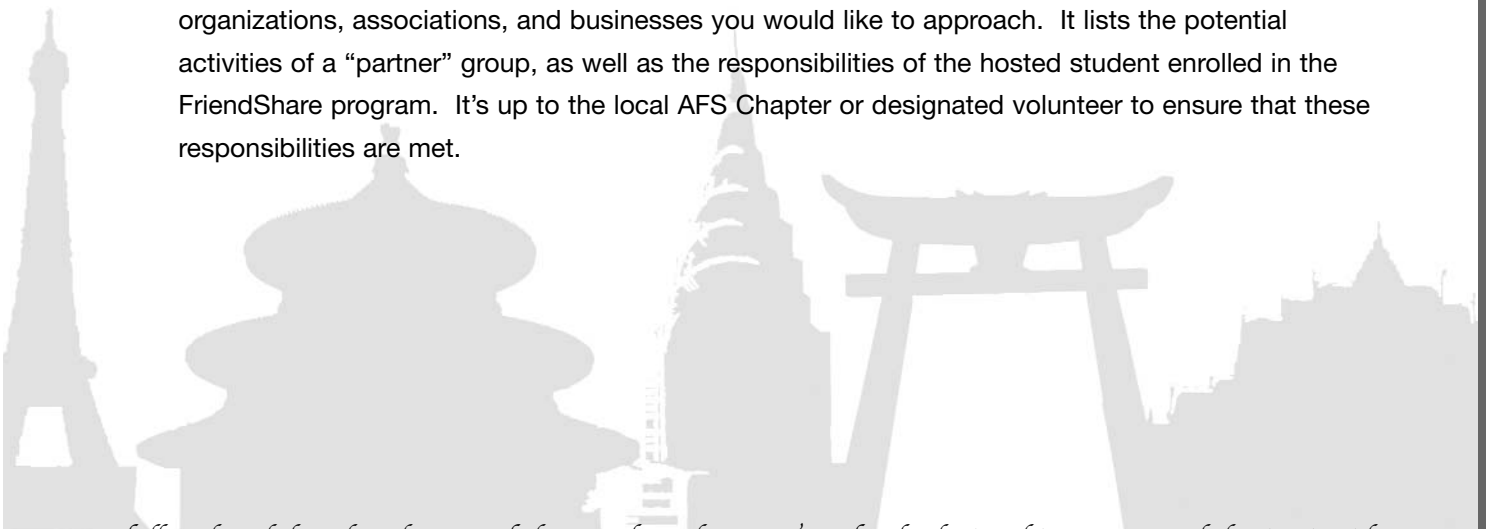


AFS “FriendShare” Program: A Guide for Volunteers

What is FriendShare?

FriendShare is a program that: enriches the hosted AFS Exchange Student’s experience; introduces the value of the AFS experience to a wider audience in communities where you need to recruit students, host families, and volunteers; provides opportunities for local Area Teams to build mutually-beneficial relationships with community organizations, businesses, and corporations; and builds awareness for the importance of public diplomacy, and the need for intercultural understanding in ways that support the AFS Mission. FriendShare is very easy to implement in communities both large and small, urban and rural.

This guide introduces and explains the opportunities offered by FriendShare to community-based organizations, associations, and businesses you would like to approach. It lists the potential activities of a “partner” group, as well as the responsibilities of the hosted student enrolled in the FriendShare program. It’s up to the local AFS Chapter or designated volunteer to ensure that these responsibilities are met.



1. Develop a list of potential community groups to become FriendShare partners.

- Review the list of your community-placed students prior to arrival, or if students have arrived, review the list to match student interests with potential organizations.
- This list of potential FriendShare partners can reflect specific interests of students (see some ideas on page 5). For example, if one of your hosted students is interested in nature and the outdoors, try connecting them with a Boy or Girl Scout troop, the Sierra Club, or another environmental group in your community.
- Don't limit yourself to community-based organizations. Businesses, religious organizations, school classes or clubs, even fire stations, can all be partners. Ask people you know to recommend groups.



2. Approach Targeted Community Partners

- Make a plan of the best way to reach potential partner groups. If you know someone who's a member, ask that person to accompany you on an initial meeting with the group's president or leaders. Explain FriendShare to them and find out what they think is the best means of informing their group about this wonderful opportunity to be part of the life of a young person from another country. Try to get them to agree to allow you to make a 20-minute presentation at their next meeting.

3. Make Presentations to Potential Partners

- Refer to the Guide for Making Community Presentations (page 4). Be sure to explain the benefits of FriendShare to the group, as well as how it benefits the exchange student. Have a list of your community-placed students available to entice the group to "adopt" on the spot.
- No later than two days after your presentation, mail the organization a thank you note.
- Two weeks after your presentation, contact potential partners to confirm whether they want to participate. (If the organization declines to participate, keep a record of this contact so that any future contact can be made with this in mind.)

4. Match Students with Partner Organizations

- Confirm the student assignment in writing with a letter of welcome following their arrival.
- Ensure that the hosted student understands his or her responsibilities in the partnership with the organization. Help prepare students for speaking engagements as necessary.



5. Provide an Information Packet to the Partner Organization

- Give the partner organization information about the student who has been assigned to them or whom they have selected. Make a copy of the application, or create a bio of the student. Be sure to include information such as birth date, hobbies and interests, address in the U.S. and in the home country.

6. Arrange for Public Recognition of Your Partner Organization's Participation

- Arrange for publicity for the partner organization, such as when a student is visiting, enjoying an activity with the partner organization, or making a presentation to the organization. Invite local media to do a feature story or to send a photographer.
- Supply your FriendShare partners with a press release about the FriendShare program that includes information on their student(s). Encourage partners to send out publicity too, both externally to media and internally to their members or employees via newsletter or website.



8. Contact the Partner Organization(s) Periodically

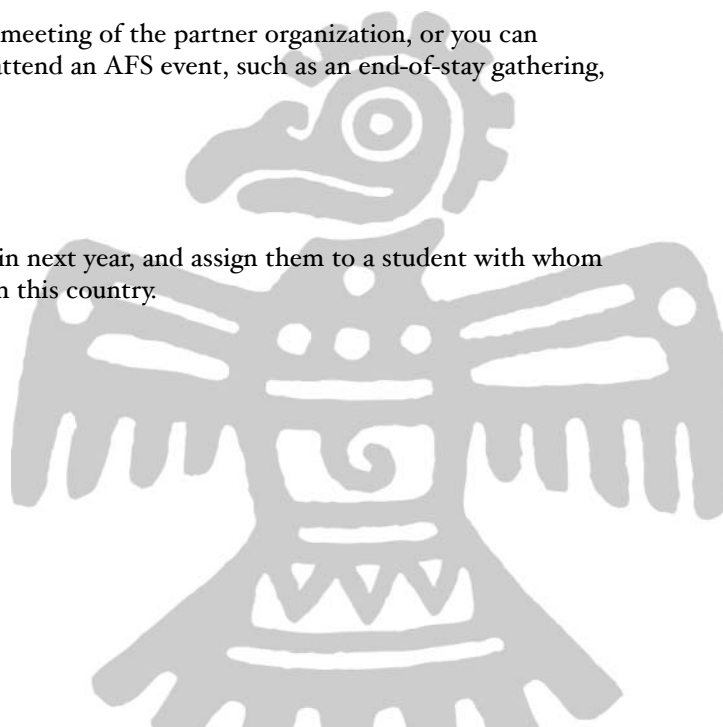
- Check on progress and activities regularly. This serves as a reminder to the partner organization, as well as a way for you to keep track of any good ideas or activities to share with others.
- Check to be sure that the organization has sent an initial greeting to the assigned student. Keep records of all such contacts and helpful information or ideas.

9. Present the Partner Organization with a Thank You Certificate

- Toward the end of the year, make plans to recognize the partner organization.
- This can be part of a formal presentation at a meeting of the partner organization, or you can invite a representative of the organization to attend an AFS event, such as an end-of-stay gathering, picnic, or celebration.

10. Sign Them up For Next Year

- Ask them if they would like to participate again next year, and assign them to a student with whom they can correspond before he or she arrives in this country.



How to Make a FriendShare Presentation:

1. Introduce yourself and how/why you became involved in AFS.

2. What is AFS?

For more than 55 years, AFS Intercultural Programs has been leading international high school student exchange. AFS was founded by volunteer American Field Service ambulance drivers from World Wars I and II who believed—as AFS believes today—that the way to build a more just and peaceful world begins when people from different countries meet, learn about each other, and begin to understand each other. AFS is a worldwide nonprofit and is largely a volunteer-driven organization, with 8,000 U.S. volunteers and 100,000 worldwide.

AFS programs make it possible for U.S. students to live and study abroad, and provide host family and school placements in the U.S. for high school students from 55 countries.

AFS Mission: AFS-USA works toward a more just and peaceful world by providing international and intercultural learning experiences to individuals, families, schools, and communities through a global volunteer partnership.

What is FriendShare?

FriendShare was established to help AFS Exchange Students feel welcome and at home in our communities, and to allow more community members to share in the many benefits people receive when they meet and get to know young people from other countries. The goal is to establish a relationship of mutual regard, information sharing, and appreciation, and to help build intercultural understanding at a time when the world needs it most.

Mention the group's interest, mission, or business here, and explain how the members' perspectives can be enriched by establishing a relationship with an AFS Exchange Student.

How does it work (What do we have to do?)

Simply select a student (or one will be matched with you based on your group's particular interests) who will be your "Friend" during his or her year in the U.S.

Activities may include:

- Sending a welcome greeting upon their arrival in August/September;
- Helping them celebrate birthdays and special U.S. holidays with cards or invitations to special events;
- Inviting them to your group's meetings, having them speak at one of them;
- Providing the student with an enrichment experience sometime during their stay (a trip to a historical monument, park, cultural center, or other).

What is the student's role?

- Attending meetings with the FriendShare partner, as invited;
- Speaking at one FriendShare partner's meeting during his or her stay in the community;
- Responding to the FriendShare partner with written thank yous for the enrichment experience;
- Sending the FriendShare partner a mid-year progress letter.

Summary. You could say something like:

"If it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a community to support a foreign exchange student! I hope that (group name) will take advantage of this unique chance to impact the life of a young person from another country, and learn something new in the process. I'd like to open up the floor to any questions you might have about AFS or FriendShare."

Question & Answer Period

Next Steps: How to get started if they are definitely interested, or when you should check back to see if they have made a decision to participate.

Other Resources: AFS Fact Sheet, AFS Website

FriendShare Sample Partner Activities

- Send a letter of greeting in August or early September to the newly arrived student.
- Invite the student for periodic lunches and/or dinners with members of the partner group.
- Invite the student to speak to the group or organization (in spring, when language skills are stronger).
- Give invitations, tickets, and/or provide transportation to community or cultural events.
- Send birthday greeting cards and holiday greeting cards (both for U.S. holidays and holidays in the student's home country).
- Help with prom expenses (i.e. tux rental).
- Give souvenirs of the partner groups, or of the town or city.
- Co-sponsor an international dinner as a fundraiser for the AFS chapter and the community organization.
- Help pay for non-academic school expenses, such as activity fees, yearbook, class ring, photos, senior trip, etc.
- Correspond with the student's natural family in his or her home country.

Some Potential FriendShare Organizations include:

Service Clubs: Optimist Club, Zonta International, Lion's Club, Kiwanis, Jaycees (Junior Chambers of Commerce), Shriners Club, Elks Lodge, American Association of University Women (AAUW), League of Women Voters, Junior League, Hands On Network.

Houses of worship and their groups and clubs.

Youth Groups: Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, 4-H, Campfire Boys and Girls, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA.

Interest Groups: Sierra Club, Audubon Society, Garden Club, Hobby Clubs, city-league athletic clubs, The General Federation of Women's Clubs.

Civic Education Groups: Americans for Informed Democracy, The Community Leadership Association, The Federation of State Humanities Councils.

Cultural/Ethnic Groups: Danish-American Association, Japanese-American Society, Sons of Norway, Swedish Council of America, Hispanic Society of America, Urban Leagues.

International Groups: Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (local groups located throughout the U.S.), The World Affairs Council, Sister Cities International, Coalition for American Leadership Abroad (member organizations).

Retirees: AARP, senior living centers.

Government: Fire stations, police stations.

School: College/university clubs and groups, high school clubs (key club, chess club, etc.).

Local chamber of commerce, businesses and/or volunteer groups in large corporations and union groups.

