

Hosting Best Practices

The following ideas were submitted at the Hosting table during the NVA Marketplace on April 8, 2011.

Be religious about keeping notes about each lead and refer to them each time you contact the lead. I've made a spreadsheet for our chapter.

Ask current host families to recommend leads.

Use notes from your leads spreadsheet to help tailor bios to send to prospective families to help win over reluctant spouses.

Pam Wong, San Francisco Bay

The idea is to put AFS into the minds and awareness of people. This is a marketing/sales idea.

It takes ____# of times for a person to hear a name before they will remember it.

Contact #1 - Kristy created a general survey to ask people during calls – people formerly associated with AFS. The questions on the survey aren't as important as the contact. Maybe 5 general questions.

Contact #2 - Ask if they could be sent literature to place in the area (work, school, library, etc)

Contact #3 – sending each contacted person the literature and flyers from marketing.

Barb Guerra (survey idea from Kristy Strawn), NW Ohio Unaffiliated Chapter

Planting the seeds when potential host siblings are in elementary & middle school by having currently-hosted students/volunteers do classroom visits and school presentations.

Carol Mattes, DelMarPa

Ethnic Restaurants – Got 3 leads which turned into 2 placements the following year from ad posted at Italian pizza place. Owner liked AFS and although she didn't host, she did help find these leads. We are trying this at Thai and other authentic places that cater to people from other countries.

Deborah de la Cruz, San Diego

Have a lot of "hosting assistants" that each work in their specific locales.

Gerty Bonam, Colorado Rockies

Lots of fun chapter activities with hosted students and host families to build an AFS community – people want to belong. Hosting is one ticket to the fun! :->

Sharon Held, Michigan

Having participation at a college or community college International Day.

We participated at our local community college International Day Festival. We got several students interested in volunteering and hosting.

Elaine Gunter, Carolinas Piedmont Triad

Go to schools for their parent/teacher conferences. Set up a table with Hosted or Sent students. Bring along country artifacts from previous students to decorate tables.

Tina Turner, Heartland

Sending out weekly updates on placement progress for new families to area volunteers featuring a certain group of kids in the Regionally Available pool featuring key interests that they may connect with – music, pets, sponsored program, age – including benchmarks and goals to date.

Karen M. Nelson, Milwaukie

Weekend orientation – gives both family and AFSers a break.

Sally Armontrout, Missouri Gateway

Be sure to have families do that Student/Host Family questionnaire within the first week of arrival and then again mid-year (at a minimum). If the student doesn't speak English yet, draw pictures. This really helps avoid support problems since it opens up communication.

Allison Barton, California Central Coast

Split the volunteer efforts into small, manageable tasks so that no one person is over-worked. One group likes to do host family interviews. I am working on developing a group that will review student applications, and another that will track PAF's, and another to track host family paperwork.

This makes the work less daunting and more people with AFS present enough in their lives to help with outreach to their friends and acquaintances.

Gail Braten, Alaska

My goal is to have families come to us because we are the quality experience people seek. We work hard to keep AFS present in the community. This year, we participated in a large community ski race wearing AFS signs, participated in international events in the community, took students from one community to another to give presentations and stay with potential future host families. Recently, an organization approached us that wants to work with us in hosting and supporting students from "hot spots" in the world. It inspires us to approach other organizations that want to promote world peace.

Gail Braten, Alaska

Gather on Excel sheet all of your archived leads. Using a mapping interface, these leads can be geo-coded (points in a map). Then overlay schools attendance zones (or ISO's) and now you can concentrate in recruiting those leads in targeted schools, districts, clusters.

Eric Lomeli, San Antonio

While currently hosted participants are still here – before mid-June – take the captive-family-audience challenge!! Find your MOST eloquent exchange student. Identify a school-wide event in which parents are in the audience (year end concerts, plays, etc). Have exchange student ask the program director for 1 minute at the podium to say THANK YOU to school, counselors, to community for opening their doors and hearts and homes to them. Watch the tears flow, watch host family leads pour in.

Patti Davis, New York