

September 21, 2011

Dear AFS-USA Volunteers,

We are excited to share the Belo USA programs being offered to AFS participants in the 2011-2012 program year. And we are especially excited to be sharing this information with you *first*.

Some of you may remember the past when AFS students spent many days together on ships like the ss Groote Beer or the ss Ryndam crossing the Atlantic on their way to or on their way home from their AFS experience. Many more of you will remember the days when AFSers spent as many as 24 days or as few as 3 together on their AFS Bus Trip prior to returning home. These trips were fun, they were educational and perhaps most importantly they helped foster a sense of living within a world community. Certainly, for those that took part, it made for lifetime memories and was an integral part of the overall experience that changed their life. In my mind, the Belo experience is a way for AFS to offer our students a chance at the same fun, education, sense of world community and incredible memories that our prior trips did.

Belo USA Travel is an American travel operator specializing in cultural, educational, and tourist trips for international exchange students. They have worked successfully with AFS Partners and other exchange organizations for more than 16 years. Overall, the feedback and evaluations we have received from AFS students, participants, chaperons and staff has been extremely positive. You may visit at:

[http://www.belousa.com/members\\_area\\_afsusa2010/index.htm](http://www.belousa.com/members_area_afsusa2010/index.htm)

Please note:

- AFS USA does not share the email address of our volunteers or host families.
- Belo USA has updated the username and password for their website. **This year's username and password are: username: AFS2011 password: ADVENTURE**
- AFS USA will post Belo Tours information on the Wiki in October.
- A communication will be sent out to our AFS Partners, later this month, and include specific information regarding independent travel and the Belo USA trips.

Because AFS USA believes in the value of Belo Tours as an enhancement to our programs, the AFS USA National Council has voted to amend the AFS Independent Travel Policy in regard to Belo Tours:

- Travel waivers will be required for all trips.
- Host siblings will be invited to join the trips.
- AFS USA will recruit chaperons for these opportunities. All AFS volunteers will have the opportunity to apply for one of these trips. Additional information to follow.
- Belo will continue to provide a trip coordinator and monitors for each trip.

- Student travel must be approved by the host family; the host school if any school will be missed, as well as the natural parents and AFS-USA via the travel waiver. Students should not purchase tickets until they have the approval from all the concerned parties.
- With the approval of the host family, natural family, host school, and AFS-USA, students would be allowed to miss up to 5 days of school to attend a Belo Tour.

With the additional emphasis on the programmatic value Belo Tours bring to the AFS Program; it is no longer permissible to issue a blanket statement refusing permission for students to attend. Travel with Belo may be refused on an individual basis if it is not in the best interest of the student at that time. Examples for refusal may be, conflict with host family plans, AFS obligations, school requirements or a student having adjustment or behavioral problems.

We are pleased to offer this special opportunity for our students. If you have any questions about the Belo programs, please contact Belo USA at 1-877-BELOUSA or via email at [afs@belousa.com](mailto:afs@belousa.com). For AFS specific travel and program policies, please contact your Regional Office Support Team at 800-876-2377.

Best regards,

Andrew P. Smith  
Director of Participant Support  
AFS-USA