

Host Family Recruiting Strategies

The following recruitment strategies were brainstormed and discussed at the Area Team Hosting Coordinator Training on December 9-10, 2006 in Portland:

- Define your network and encourage other volunteers to do the same – who do you know collectively – what groups are you connected with – what like-minded organizations might you tap into
- Tap into the existing AFS network – current students, returnees, past and current host families, natural families – lists are available from your regional service center
- Grow your network – go out to new groups/organizations
- Create an e-mail list of “maybe next year” families or other interested families – invite them to events such as holiday parties and welcome picnics – get them connected with current students and families
- Target specific types of families – families with one child, families with similar interests, neighbors and friends of current exchange students
- Target specific communities – cultural background groups, Peace Corps volunteers, gay community, religious organizations, corporations
- Develop an “everyone ask one” campaign for current host families and students
- Keep good records of anyone who has expressed interest in hosting
- Find someone with an established listserv who is willing to use it on behalf of AFS
- When using e-mail, make sure to follow regulatory guidelines – do not use words like “urgent” or “emergency” – do not pair students’ full names and pictures in promoting hosted students
- Forward “The International Living Room” monthly newsletter from the Info Center to families in the area – include a preface appropriate to the audience
- Send “student of the week” e-mail to targeted audiences
- Invite students and families from other exchange organizations to AFS events
- Invite school officials to AFS events
- Read local papers and find out more about local organizations – identify key leaders within the organizations - record their contact information and get in touch
- Utilize small local media for feature stories, letters to the editor, advertisements (ad slicks are available from regional field staff)
- Publicly thank current host families in letters to the editor or publish student thank you notes to their communities
- Utilize church newsletters or newsletters of other community groups
- Continually talk about or mention AFS in your interactions with others
- Talk, talk, talk, and then talk some more
- Make one-on-one connections with potential families
- Be a speaker or bring a student to speak at events, luncheons
- Keep in mind the needs of the community – AFS might be able to volunteer for another organization
- Make presentations to students in classes or clubs – ask regional field staff to schedule trips and presentations at targeted schools
- Go to PTA meetings, home school associations, school diversity councils, international nights to discuss hosting

- Visit websites to find contacts within organizations, schools, newsletters, media
- Build awareness with t-shirts, luggage tags, bumper stickers, flyers, other visible objects with AFS logo
- Establish an area team website with promotional information
- Have info booths at local events, parades, festivals, college fairs
- Ask school if AFS can do hosting presentations or intercultural presentations
- Bring awareness to schools with younger students – middle schools are especially good for presentations – middle school teachers often have networks with high school teachers too
- Make sure to provide high quality support for schools – schools appreciate, reward, and assist exchange organizations that support their students
- Send thank you notes and small gifts to schools
- Encourage local volunteers to use recruiting strategies that are new to them but have worked in other communities
- Give hosting volunteers a list of tips or a calendar of recruitment activities
- Ask people to do non-hosting tasks first – aunt/uncle families, liaisons, interviews, orientations – then work up to hosting