

Host Family Recruiting Strategies

Thousands of families have opened their homes to an AFS participant. Being able to identify a pool of potential host families is the key to a hosting volunteer's success. As the hosting volunteer, you have the opportunity to connect families and communities to the global world of international, intercultural exchange. The more families that are asked, the easier it will be to reach your hosting goal.

1. Network

- Write down who you know in the community and what groups are you connected with and encourage other volunteers to do the same.
- Tap into an already existing network: students, returnees, host families, natural families (current and past).
- Grow your network. Reach out to new groups, including:
 - cultural groups
 - Facebook and other social networking sites
 - Peace Corps volunteers
 - religious organizations
 - local businesses
 - PTAs
 - home school associations and school diversity councils
- Keep in mind the needs of the community – AFS might be able to volunteer for another organization.
- Read local papers and find out more about local organizations – and get in touch.
- Visit websites to find contacts within organizations, schools, newsletters, and media.
- Be a speaker or bring a student to speak at events.
- Have info booths at local events, parades, festivals, and college fairs.

2. Stay In Touch

- Keep good records of anyone who has expressed interest in hosting and update those who have records in Global Link.
- Create an email list of “maybe next year” families and other interested families.
- Invite lots of people from your different networks to AFS events such as holiday parties and welcome picnics.
- Invite students and families from other exchange organizations to AFS events.
- Invite school officials to AFS events.
- Make sure to provide high quality support for schools.

- Send thank you notes and small gifts to schools.

3. Get Help

- Get current host families and hosted students to help you find next year's families. Ask them to "Each One Reach One" or "Everyone Ask One."
- Ask people to do non-hosting tasks first (aunt/uncle families, liaisons, interviews, orientations) then work up to hosting.
- Build awareness with t-shirts, luggage tags, AFS banners, AFS shopping bags, flyers, and other objects with the AFS logo.
- Give hosting volunteers a list of tips or a calendar of recruitment activities.

4. Communicate

- Forward *The International Living Room* monthly newsletter from the AFS website to families in the area and include a preface appropriate to the audience.
- Send a "student of the week" email to targeted audiences notifying them that students like these are available.
- When using email, follow the CSIET standards (do not use words like "urgent" or "emergency" and do not pair students' full names and pictures).
- Find someone with an established listserv who is willing to help spread info about AFS.
- Continually talk about or mention AFS in your interactions with others.
- Make presentations to students in classes or clubs.
- Bring awareness to schools with younger students through presentations. Middle school teachers often have networks with high school teachers too.

5. Utilize Local Media

- Drop a line to your local papers and propose feature stories about students (both sending and hosting) and their families.
- Write letters to the editor (thank current host families, other volunteers, or the school and community for welcoming students).
- Have students write thank you letters to the editor for their community and school welcoming them.
- Utilize church newsletters or newsletters of other community groups.
- Establish an area team website with promotional information.

Sample hosting strategies:

- Make a list of people you know: relatives, co-workers, neighbors, people from church, former classmates, etc.
- Hang posters and flyers in your local high school
- Schedule Info Nights (at schools, libraries, Barnes & Noble)
- Make an appointment with your local high school principal
- Put announcements in church bulletins
- Contact Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops, take hosted students to speak
- Write letters to the editor of local papers
- Contact local columnists
- Check with community groups and clubs: sailing, chess, judo
- Ask current families to nominate other families to host
- Ask hosted students to nominate families to host
- Hang “tear-off” flyers with your number on grocery store boards
- Make church announcements, during or after services
- Contact sending families in your area
- Get hosted students out in public, to speak and be seen
- Arrange for staff to do school presentations or do them on your own
- Attend school and college fairs
- Get booths at international festivals
- Get extra copies of bio books and share them with friends and family
- Take sample bios to hosted student farewell and graduation parties
- Ask local radio stations to use our public service announcements
- Visit day care centers, kindergartens, nursery schools to hang flyers
- Ask if you can speak at a PTA meeting
- Start an “Each One, Reach One” campaign: current families find new ones
- Call the foreign language teachers
- Get announcements put in school newsletters
- Develop a media list and use it
- Invite people to become volunteers
- Ask liaisons to consider hosting or recommend others
- Put an AFS bumper sticker on your car
- Do NOT depend on people to call you back

Your own voice is the most powerful recruitment tool you have. Share Your Story!