



EXCHANGES FOR
CULTURE, EDUCATION,
AND LEADERSHIP



CLASS OF 2013-14 DISCOVERS AMERICA

Exchanges for Culture, Education, and Leadership (ExCEL) seeks to enhance our relations by promoting strong ties between a new generation of young Lithuanian and American leaders through scholarships to cover one year of academic study in the U.S. Recruitment is competitive: 1 out of 8 students are awarded a scholarship, during which the student lives with an American host family and attends high school.

ExCEL was created by the U.S. Embassy in Lithuania and the Lithuanian Ministry of Education in cooperation with American Councils. It is a direct result of the vision and initiative of American Ambassador to Lithuania Anne E. Derse, along with the support of several generous donors.

01 sharing CULTURES

AUGUSTĖ OF VILNIUS (in white in photo) has been recognized as a winner of her U.S. History class' speech contest and as an exceptional runner in her cross-country division. Her algebra class participated in the "Adopt a Family" project by donating money and items for Christmas to make a huge difference with simple goods. Augustė has toured the sights of St. Louis and even volunteered with its Lithuanian American Community. She presented on Lithuania to a Girl Scouts troop and already has a few good ideas from her American school experiences to offer to her student parliament



back home. Augustė says, while school can be "a little challenging," the greatest rewards of the program for her are "increased confidence, public speaking, and English, as well as new friends and experiences."

Lindbergh High School
St. Louis, MO

02 making FRIENDS



BARBORA OF PLUNGĖ paints and draws in her school's Art Club, which provides space for young artists of the school to come together and work in a collaborative environment. She also has musical talent, as the only person able to contribute strings to the school's orchestra for the musical "Hairspray," as a violinist. She has exceeded her minimum 30 community service hours by completing over 100. Her many projects include presenting on her country at a "Lithuanians in Texas" event and serving food at a Lithuanian church. Barbora has also volunteered at a

family support center of a school for disabled students.

She says, "I got to see the reality behind mental health problems. I also started thinking that someday I'd like to be the kind of person that my host mother is; I'd like to help families who need that support and children who are struggling with various disorders."

Seekman High School
Imperial, MO

03 forming TEAMS

DOVILĖ OF VILNIUS won her first tennis match while on program and still finds time to volunteer at the YMCA and at tutoring sessions. Her local coordinator says, "She changed her way of looking at each day. For example, her family eats together, goes to church regularly, and celebrates occasions as a family." In fact, Dovilė is fond of saying, "My host family is not a host family; they are my second family." They do not treat her like a guest, but as one of them, teasing and all. She loves the relationships she has with teachers in the U.S., too, and wants to bring that to her



school in Lithuania. Dovilė also wants to help future ExCEL winners prepare for their exchange experience. She has become more proud of Lithuania because she has come to understand some things that make it unique.

Edwardsville High School
Edwardsville, IL

04 *building* SKILLS



GINTĖ OF DRUSKININKAI is passionate about speech and debate, and it has been central to her exchange year. She won first place in novice oratory three times, as well as in novice dual interpretation. A few topics she has covered include mathematics as art and Alice in Wonderland. She also won American Councils' International Education Week PowerPoint Presentation contest by leading the audience on a hypothetical trip to Lithuania, in which she explained the everyday differences they might notice. Gintė observes the speech tournaments here are very different from

those in Lithuania, and thinks having more laid-back, fun contributions might be the key to reviving her own school's team. In the U.S., she says her team members "are a lot like a close family—amazing friends, who help you improve and achieve your goals. I always look forward to practice and the people I get to meet there."

*Mountain View High School
Vancouver, WA*

05 *expanding* BOUNDARIES

PAULIUS OF VILNIUS recently represented his high school at the Math Olympiad hosted by a local junior college. He maintains a 4.0, too, even while completing homework for his school in Lithuania. His local coordinator writes, "Paul has made a lot of friends here by being friendly, smiling, and working very hard in sports." Before coming to the U.S., he had never played golf before, but now he has already lettered in it as a member of the varsity team. Paulius is currently playing basketball and wants to learn baseball. In addition to working the concession stand at school



events, he also volunteers with the Future Business Leaders of America and at an animal shelter, having "a good concept of the power of one" and being able to "articulate it very well."

*Rocky Ford High School
Rocky Ford, CO*

06 *practicing* LANGUAGES

JUNDA OF KAUNAS comes from a family of architects and shares their more artistic inclinations. In Lithuania, she attends art academy in addition to high school. Here in the U.S., a local arts fair recognized her talents by awarding her first and second places for nature photographs she took back home. Junda also won American Councils' International Education Week essay contest last fall and used the giftcard to buy her sister an American souvenir. She has used her exchange year as an opportunity to try new things, including participating in the Spanish Club, joining the community



choral group Cantorium, and serving as stage manager to her school's production of "Death of a Salesman." Her local coordinator writes, "People here will remember Junda's charm, intelligence and high abilities."

*Kennett High School
Kennett, MO*



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