

My exchange year started in Chicago with the Greenheart Welcome Program. It was a mix of preparation for the exchange year and sightseeing. I got to see nice parts of Chicago and we did some fun volunteer work. We made a mosaic in a neighborhood that wasn't too nice. I met many nice people and had a lot of fun.

My host parents picked me up on the morning of the fourth day. I thought the first contact would be a little bit awkward but it wasn't and I was really nervous. The chemistry between us was really good from the beginning.

Three days in Chicago

We stayed very central in Chicago in an Airbnb apartment. My Host parents Tom and Terry Green lived in Chicago for 15 years, so they could show me the best places. We ate at great places and my favorites were the "Original Pancake House" and a German Restaurant where we had a great lunch. My highlight was a boat tour through the Chicago River and a magic show we watched. Chicago is a beautiful city with a lot of high risers and right next to Lake Michigan.



We drove 2 days from Chicago to Edmond and made a stop in St. Louis. When we arrived, I was impressed by the house. It is huge and really nicely designed.

We had a few days until school started, so we got to know each other a lot better and had a lot of fun.

The first schooldays

I was really excited and a little bit nervous before my first school day, but it worked out pretty good. The school is much bigger than what I'm used to, but I met many nice people. I signed up for football and I was a little bit lost during the first practices, but the other players helped me and I met many people and made a lot of friends through the football team. Football takes a lot of time, but I'm really happy I joined the football team. My entire schedule changed during the first week, but it worked out great. First, I made a lot of friends on the football team, but after a few weeks, I made friends in all of my classes.

My normal school life

My first-semester schedule is:

First hour: Football Weightlifting
Second hour: Environmental Science
Third hour: Spanish IV
Fourth hour: US. Government
Break: Lunch
Fifth hour: Algebra II (Math)
Sixth hour: English III
Seventh hour: Football

The biggest difference in school for me is the size. I come from a Montessori school with a total of 400 students from first to thirteenth grade. My school here in Oklahoma, Edmond Memorial High School, has around 2400 students. It took me a while to get used to a school of that size. Another difference is that you're with different students in every class and that you have to change your classroom every hour.

A typical day starts at around 6:30 am with breakfast. My host dad prepares things like Bacon and eggs almost every morning. My school starts at 7:20 am with weightlifting and ends at 2:30 pm. In the first three months, I had Football practice after school until about 5 pm. After I get home, I have dinner with my host parents. We often watch TV or we play cards after dinner.

On the weekends I had to go to school during the football season and watch the film from the last game. But after that my weekends were really relaxing. On Saturday I watch college football and on Sunday NFL. Besides that, we play a lot of cards or meet with friends.

The First Football Game

Our first home football game was one of my highlights. The atmosphere was crazy. It was the first game in the new stadium and we played our rival school Edmond North. The Stadium was filled with fans from both teams and you could really feel the High School spirit. It was a very close game and unfortunately, we lost by one point. In my opinion, playing for your school is just so much more fun than playing for a club. Players really identify themselves with their school and all the students who don't play cheer their team on.

Speaking of highlights the meals I get every day are definitely one of them. My host dad Tom cooks almost every day and it is really delicious every time. My favorite meal he made was Steaks with baked potato.



When I found out that I will live in Oklahoma for a year I honestly didn't know anything about Oklahoma. I even had to look up where it is. A friend who lived in the States for a few years told me that Oklahoma is a real American state. Another friend told me that I will probably come back as a cowboy. I just laughed about it and didn't even think that part of it could be true. Well, I was wrong. Oklahoma is an old Western State. To see people walking around wearing cowboy boots and cool belts is very common. We went a few times to a small part of Oklahoma which is called Stockyard City Main Street. It is a real western atmosphere in that area. There are a few stores that sell western wear, they have cow auctions once in a while, and there are some really good restaurants.



We drove a few times to Norman, had lunch, and looked at the University of Oklahoma campus. It's a huge college with a really nice campus. I can imagine coming back to study there for a semester. And they have a really good College football team.

Road Trip to the Buffalo's

During a long weekend, we made a trip to the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, which is in the southwest of

Oklahoma. Even though it was very hot, the trip was fun and we got to see a lot of nature. The lakes were beautiful and we even saw a few buffalos.

I met a big part of my host parent's family and I enjoy spending time with them. They are all really nice. During the first weeks, my host mom's niece Christine got married, which of course was a big deal to the family. Her husband is a really nice guy. He is a Jiu-Jitsu fighter and he gave Christine Jiu-Jitsu lessons. That's how they met each other.

Church

One of my friends from the football team invited me to go to church with him and I am still going. It is always fun and we talk about interesting topics. The people there are really nice and always in a positive mood.

The last Football game

The last football game was very emotional, especially for all the seniors. Every player including me was kind of sad and at the same time glad that the football season was over because it is just such an intense time.

After the football season was over, I needed a small break, so I just relaxed for a week and didn't do any sports. The following week I started with soccer practice. Soccer is the sport I grew up with and it felt really good being back on the soccer field.



Fall Ball

The first school dance, the “Fall ball”, was at the beginning of November. My date was a pretty girl from Italy. We went with a bigger group of students, seven of them were exchange students and one of my friends from the football team was with us, too. We had dinner at a restaurant near the dance. At the entrance to the dance were a few of my friends from the football team hanging around. As soon as they saw me coming, they started screaming my name and welcomed me, which was very funny. The whole dance was really fun. I didn’t recognize all the songs they played but we still danced to all of them. After the dance, our group of exchange students went Sarah’s house and we had a sleepover.

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving was coming up and we had a full week of holiday. I went Christmas shopping and bought some presents for my family in Germany because of the long delivery time. The next day we started watching the Star Wars series and just relaxed the whole day. The following day we started preparing all kinds of food for Thanksgiving. I prepared „Spundekäse“ with Brezel’s which is a typical snack in the area I live in. We were 18 people on Thanksgiving and we had way too much food. My favorite food was a sweet potato casserole but everything was just delicious. I haven’t celebrated Thanksgiving before. It was a great experience and I had a lot of fun.

During the last 3 and a half months many people asked me: “why did you decide to do an exchange year?” I think the main reason is that I wanted to experience being away from home on my own. Also, I wanted to experience the American culture and improve my English skills. So far, it has been the right decision and a great time.