Frequently Asked Questions: Global Friends Program
Information for Students and Hosts

The Global Friends Program is coordinated by the Office for International Students & Scholars (OISS) at Washington University in St. Louis (WashU). This program matches WashU international students and scholars who are interested in experiencing St. Louis life off-campus with members of the St. Louis community who are interested in helping international students engage with life in St. Louis. The program is a cultural exchange; host volunteers do not provide living accommodations.

Why be a host?
Your participation shows our international students that they are welcomed, respected and included in the WashU and St. Louis community.

WashU is fortunate to host over 3,000 international students from 94 countries. As a volunteer, you not only help students understand St. Louis and U.S. cultures, you also help form impressions of St. Louis and the U.S. that international students will carry with them for the rest of their lives. During a time when they are far from family and friends at home, your care and support means a great deal.

Volunteering is also an exciting way to learn from the student about their home country, their field of study, and get their unique perspective on many issues.

Individuals and families affiliated with WashU are welcome to apply.

Why be a student guest?
By participating in the program, students can learn about St. Louis and U.S. cultures, practice conversational English with supportive conversation partners, and find out what life is really like off-campus. You will also have the opportunity to share with your host your own experiences, traditions and culture. Students can develop connections that transcend borders, and make a new friend!

What activities will we do together?
It’s up to you! One of the most rewarding activities can be a meal at the host’s home. However you are free to arrange any number of activities that you enjoy, see below for more ideas.

Length of Match and Frequency of Get-Togethers
Students and volunteers are typically matched for the academic year. Students and volunteers will ideally meet once per month, so we ask hosts to contact your student once per month to try to arrange a get-together. After the academic year finishes you are welcome to keep in touch if you wish to. We have many volunteers and students who have formed lifelong friendships.
Cost of Activities and Transportation

Hosts should mention the costs of activities you suggest at the start of the conversation/correspondence with your student, and offer your student options so that he or she can select an activity that fits their budget. Volunteers are not required to cover the cost of their student’s participation in activities.

Please also be aware that many students do not have their own car and so you should discuss transportation for your activities.

Activity Ideas

- Hosts can ask their student what he or she likes to do for fun, and what he or she has already had the chance to do in St. Louis.
- Arranging a meal at the host’s home can be a wonderful way to connect and give the student a window into American life that they do not get in the classroom. Introduce the student to your favorite dish and exchange stories about food and home life in your respective countries.
- Students can suggest a restaurant that serves food from their home country and teach the host about their cuisine and traditions.
- Visit a museum, go to a sporting event, go to a local festival or share a favorite book or movie.
- Students can give a “my daily life” tour of campus, showing their host volunteer the buildings/services he or she uses.
- The possibilities are endless!

How do I sign up?

https://oiss.wustl.edu/students/community-connections/

We do our best to match all volunteers and students who sign up; however we cannot guarantee a match for every student or host.

Any time that you have questions, concerns, or feedback, please contact the OISS at oiss@wustl.edu or 314-935-5910.