

Denmark to Detroit: Sophomore's Americanizing

Sophomore Simone Bendix (center left) is originally from Denmark, but she's here for 10 months to experience the American life and bond with her new host family.



By Brigitte Smith
INTERN

She didn't want the credit. She didn't want the fame. She just wanted the first-hand experience. That's why sophomore Simone Bendix traveled 4,080 miles from her home in Denmark to study at North. Even though this school year will not count toward her school credits back home, Bendix wanted to experience what the real American life was like.

"You see all these American movies and have all these ideas about how it is, and I just wanted to go and see how the American culture really was," Bendix said. "It's not always like in movies. It's a big country, and I wanted to experience what it really was."

Even though it's difficult for her family, they're ecstatic that Simone has this opportunity to discover the 'real' America.

"It will do a lot of good for Simone. We have been travelling a lot in Europe and by that learning a lot about other cultures, but America is different from Europe, and by living with an American family and going to school, Simone will learn quite a lot about America and American culture," Simone's mother Tina Bendix, said.

With her family's support, Bendix submitted her name, photo and essay with her interests to the website of the foreign exchange program, Youth for Understanding. After that, all she could do was anxiously wait for a family to choose her.

"I was excited to know, but we were told that we could end up with a single mom or single dad, or we could end up

with somebody that could be grandparents, that don't have any children, or you could end up in a family with many children, so I was kinda prepared for everything or anything," Bendix said.

She was selected fairly early by the Meyers family who has a daughter, Shayna Meyers, who is in the same grade as Simone.

Also, because of the extra time they had, the two families were able to Skype to familiarize themselves and to see what they were getting themselves into. Both Simone and the Meyers agree that Skype definitely helped the transition.

"It just gave us a good base of what she was interested in and just to know the sound of her voice and just to know her personally," Christy Meyers, Bendix's host mother, said.

Bendix's host father, Todd Meyers, agrees. He feels that it allowed them to understand the life Bendix was coming from, which soothed everyone's nerves.

"I would say we kind of had a feel for her culture she grew up in, and I think it put everyone more at ease," Todd said. "(It helped) her parents too. I think if we were sending our daughter to Europe for 10 months, it helps to see and hear from the people that are going to be hosting your daughter, to give you some degree of comfort."

When Todd Meyers was in eighth grade, his family hosted a foreign exchange student from France. He said that this time, with Skype, it was much different. All the connection his family had to the student before he arrived was a couple of phone

calls, and then next thing they knew, this stranger was living at their house.

"You kind of picked a person blindly," Todd said. "The first time you really had a conversation with the person was when you picked them up at the airport."

Once Todd had kids of his own, he was eager for them to have the same experience.

After giving it great thought as to whom they would choose, the Meyers selected Simone because she seemed to fit into their family the best. They wanted a European girl who had siblings and a similar lifestyle to make the transition easier.

After reading her profile and noticing all the similar activities that she enjoyed, the Meyers knew that Simone was the one.

"She's a great kid, and I think when you're going into it, you don't know, I mean you Skype with them, and you email with them but you don't really know until they're living in your house for a month if it's gonna work," Todd said.

According to Youth for Understanding, about 25% of the exchange students end up switching to another host family for various reasons.

"We got really lucky because she fits in our family really well, and she likes being here, so I think she got lucky in that respect," Todd said. "So far, it's been a blast."

The eldest child of the Meyers, Shayna, has had to give up her personal space and share a room with Bendix. She says that at first she was nervous that they wouldn't get along, but this hasn't been a problem

at all. After getting over her initial anxiety, she has enjoyed her time with Bendix.

"She's really easy to talk to, and I feel like she's my sister," Shayna said.

Bendix has also enjoyed sharing a room with Shayna. Even though it's different for her as well, coming from a family with two younger brothers, she sees a reflection of her family back home in her host family, which has been comforting.

"I don't feel like I have changed because the family here reminds me a lot of my family in Denmark, so it was easy to come here," Bendix said. "I talk to this family every day about the same stuff I would talk to my family in Denmark about."

Todd has cherished this, too. When Simone has to leave in June, he said this is what he will miss the most.

"(I'll miss) just having her around and hearing about her at the end of the day, or dropping her off at sports. It's not so much the extraordinary stuff, it's just the everyday things."

It's those everyday things that Bendix wanted to experience. It is for that reason that she was willing to gamble her normal life and sacrifice a year's worth of credit to gain a true American family experience. If Bendix hadn't taken that risk, she and the Meyers family would never have met.

"I hope that she has the sense that she has an extended family now because I want her to feel that she can always come to our home and that there is always a place for her," Christy said. "She's part of our family now. I hope that she misses us like crazy and wants to come back."

BRIGITTE SMITH

SHOWDOWN: ANDROID VS. IPHONE



By Lauren Semack
EDITOR

IN THIS CORNER: ANDROID

STATISTICS:

- Android came out Oct. 22, 2008 originally for \$179 with 1GB default but users can purchase 8GB
- No Android Market until March 2009
- 2,300 apps originally on Market, currently over 700,000

"Android is better than Apple because you have more freedom with an Android device than with an Apple device and for a lot cheaper. They do essentially the same thing for a fraction of the price, and they don't break nearly as easily," senior Ryan Sparks said.

Ryan's app of choice:

"My favorite app for Android is definitely Gamboid. It's an emulator. I can download full video games to play on my phone, wherever, whenever I want, at the press of a button, absolutely free. Does Apple have an app for that?"

IN THIS CORNER: IPHONE

STATISTICS:

- iPhone came out June 29, 2007 originally for \$599 for 8GB and \$499 for 4GB
- No App Store until July 2008
- Started originally with 900 apps available, currently 700,000

"Android is upping their game because they have to if they want to survive! It's unfortunate that there's such a huge Apple market because it doesn't seem like Android will be surpassing them anytime soon. On a very superficial level, I just prefer the layout and design of Apple products," senior Cameron Day said.

Cameron's app of choice:

"My favorite app is the Fab.com app. Fab.com has the coolest, most random products on sale at prices that are reduced for a couple days or so, and then they have new sales!"

300 WORDS: A SERIES

Halfway across the Earth: Yena Berhane



KRISTEN KALED

Freshman Yena Berhane proudly holds the flag of her native country, Eritrea which she moved from in 2000.

By Audrey Kam & Gabby Burchett
STAFF REPORTER & EDITOR

country by herself, makes me so grateful," Berhane said.

It's been 12 years since freshman Yena Berhane was deported from Ethiopia, immigrated to America and came close to death.

During wartime between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 2000, the Berhane family got deported from Ethiopia because her family was from Eritrea. During deportation, Berhane's family was forced to take a long, cramped bus ride into Eritrea, where Berhane skirted death as the temperature rose, causing dehydration. After the horror of deportation, the Berhanes decided to immigrate to America.

Berhane's father, Dr. Berhane Seyoum, grew up in extreme poverty and was attending a medical conference in America when the Berhanes were deported. As soon as he heard of the family's deportation, he got the necessary paperwork allowing him to stay in America; then got a house and prepared for his family when they immigrated.

"I feel extremely blessed. To know that my mom was able to take her three kids back to our

Berhane's father worked his way to becoming an endocrinologist at Detroit Medical Center and hopes that his children will take advantage of the resources America provides them.

"Although I was born in a different country, I grew up in America. So I know what goes on," Berhane said. "My parents have high expectations for me regarding my future. They want me to take advantage of all the opportunities I'm given here."

But, her parents don't want her to forget her roots. At home, Berhane speaks Tigrinya, the official language of Eritrea. Her goal is to be able to be literate in Tigrinya as well. She also connects with her homeland by visiting family that still lives in Eritrea.

"It's like nothing else to be reunited with them since I only see them every two or three years," Berhane said.

Editor's note: 300 Words presents glimpses of everyday life that often go unnoticed. There are exactly 300 words. You can count them if you want.