**PARTICIPANT PLEDGE (or how to have a successful year!)**

1. **I WILL BE ATTENTIVE TO COMMUNICATION SENT TO ME BY THE VOLUNTEERS.** Volunteers share important information with students throughout the year via email, phone, text, etc. We expect that students share their preferred form of contact with their volunteers and respond in a timely manner. Some examples may include, “I received the email, I plan to attend, I need a ride” .. This is to ensure that communication flows between volunteers and students
2. **I WILL SAY THANK YOU.** In the U.S., saying “thank you” is an important way to express appreciation, respect, and to show someone that you are listening. I will show appreciation for things done for me by my host family, volunteers, and school. I will say “thank you” again and again. This year, ‘thank you’ will become a big part of my vocabulary!
3. **I WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO SPEAK ENGLISH.** This is the year for me to be fully immersed in speaking, reading, writing, and improving my fluency. If I use my native language at home, school, or AFS activities, Americans and other exchange students may not understand me and may feel excluded and not feel welcome to socialize with me. I will intentionally focus on using English.
4. **I WILL REMEMBER, “IT’S NOT GOOD, IT’S NOT BAD, IT’S JUST DIFFERENT.”** I will notice many differences living with a new family in a new culture. I will try to embrace American culture and the culture of my host family and my school. I will keep an open mind and be curious to new experiences. If I disagree with something, I will ask questions and invite conversation. I will contact my host family and/or my liaison if I feel uncomfortable about anything.
5. **I WILL BE HELPFUL** at home by doing chores without having to be asked. If I don’t know what needs to be done, I will ask, "How can I help?"
6. **I WILL ASK FOR HELP.** When challenges arise, I will talk to my host family and to my liaison. AFS has 70+ years of experience with student exchange and is available to provide support to its students at all times. Part of the AFS experience is turning challenging situations into learning opportunities.
7. **I WILL MAKE SAFE CHOICES.** I will let my host family know who I am with and where I am. I will speak with my host family and/or volunteer to create a safety plan(s), so I understand what steps to take to remove myself from an unsafe environment. I will keep a local emergency phone number handy in my cell phone (this can be a local AFS volunteer, member of host family, etc). AFS and my host family want me to be safe, but I am also responsible for my safety.
8. **I WILL FOLLOW LAWS AND RULES.** I will follow national and state laws, AFS policies and rules, and my host family rules. If I have any questions or concerns about the stated rules, I will speak with my host family and/or liaison.
9. **I WILL NOT TRAVEL OUT OF TOWN ON MY OWN** unless I have all the required permissions from my host family, liaison, support coordinator, and AFS-USA. I understand that my AFS year is not a travel year. Independent travel is highly discouraged and approved only in rare circumstances. I will not plan on traveling without my host family. I
10. **I WILL NOT ASK MY NATURAL FAMILY OR FRIENDS FROM HOME TO VISIT.** AFS is an immersion experience, which means I will immerse myself in a new language, new culture, and with a new family. AFS experience shows that natural family visits are very disruptive to this process. I will not plan on having my natural family visit while I am here.
11. **I WILL LIMIT CONTACT WITH MY NATURAL FAMILY AND FRIENDS FROM HOME**. I will be mindful that excessive communication with home can negatively impact my AFS experience. AFS experience shows that students who limit contact with home adapt more quickly, get through homesickness sooner, and engage more fully with their American families and friends. I will use my host family and/or liaison as my first contact if I have any questions or concerns, rather than my natural family.

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