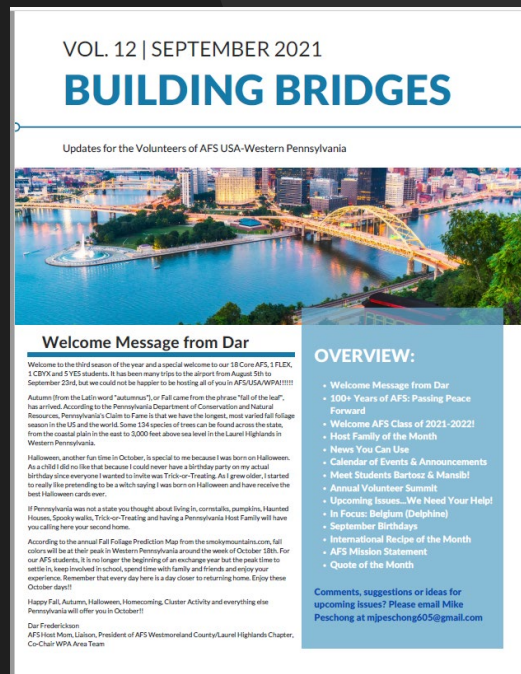


AFS Volunteer Engagement...

Chapter Newsletters!



Why Publish a Chapter Newsletter? The Reasons are Endless!

- Keep volunteers, hosted students, educators, host families & alums **CONNECTED & ENGAGED!**
- **STRENGTHEN** the connection between team members as you learn more about each other!
- Alert team members to volunteer opportunities & events!
- **EDUCATE** team members!
- Learn more about our hosted students & returnees!
- Feature students during the **HOSTING** season!

Potential Features...

- Volunteer of the Month!

AFS Volunteer Engagement...

Chapter Newsletters!



Volunteer Profile of the Month: Mary Osche

By Dar Frederickson

How did you become involved with AFS? I spent the summer of 1982 in Mexico with a wonderfully generous host family consisting of a host mom and dad, 4 host brothers and 1 host sister. It was an amazing experience that allowed me to learn, grow, and appreciate the world in a whole new way. In 1990, while teaching high school in Central PA, I connected with an AFS volunteer in the community who was interested in starting a local chapter. Together we started the Big Spring AFS Chapter, and brought the AFS tradition to our rural area. In 1999 I was visiting a Christmas Barn Sale in Western PA and noticed a woman with an AFS tag on her purse. I introduced myself and told her I was interested in volunteering. That woman was Kathy Harenski, and the rest is history!

How many students have you

hosted? I have been an AFS student, an AFS host mom 4 times, and an AFS natural mother twice! My family and I have hosted 4 exchange students. Tormod from Norway, Sergio from Italy, Karolin from Germany, and Julia from Poland. In addition, my daughter Elizabeth spent an AFS summer in Paraguay, and my son Matt spent a year with AFS in Norway.

Has your AFS experience changed you as a person? Absolutely. How many times as AFS volunteers have we had to explain to both students and host



families that differences do not make someone better or worse? Differences come in infinite forms: differences in opinion, in tradition, in religion, in race, in communication, in food, in time...Being involved in AFS has given me a first hand understanding of the differences that exist among humanity and in how frustrating differences can be. I feel that I have learned to seek out the things that we have in common first, then the differences seem much less significant.

What's one thing your fellow AFS volunteers would be surprised to learn about you?

COVID: A Teacher's Perspective

By Mary Osche



A year ago I never could have imagined that all schools in the state of PA would close.

This has been the most challenging year of my career. First and foremost, the mental health of our students is a tremendous concern, and a burden that teachers still carry. How does one find balance between continuing a quality education while trying not to add more pressure to students & families? In addition, every teacher has had to re-educate themselves on HOW to teach virtually. It is a whole new set of rules, with little research, little experience,

and endless possibilities. The amount of time and energy put into inventing the effective virtual classroom includes a lot of trial & error, endless hours, and a lot of Google searches. In addition, the aspect of having to teach, create materials, and correct materials all online, has been overwhelming for many, many teachers.

My family recently experienced COVID in our home. Thankfully everyone has recovered, and are doing well now...but it was stressful and scary. I have a much clearer understanding of just how easily and quickly the virus can spread. Please wear your masks and wash your hands.

AFS Volunteer Engagement...

Chapter Newsletters!

Potential Features...

- Hosted Student(s) of the Month!

Meet Hosted Students Bartosz & Mansib!

Interviews By: Dar Frederickson

Welcome, Mansib! Please tell us a little bit about you and your family!

Being a family of 5, I am very close to my parents. I am the middle child of the family and have always been the center of attention. I live in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, and have never really been out of that city much. It's where I grew up and it's the biggest city in Bangladesh. Now comes the most significant thing about the city, the CROWD. It's a very densely populated city with approximately 15 million people. Everywhere you go you will see thousands of people, cars, rickshaws, CNGs, buses etc. crowding around. The people, the crowd, the city, the street food, the rain, the mesmerizing rickshaw rides on a windy day and countless other things can be experienced in this city.

Where are you studying this year and who is your host family? How does your school compare to your school at home? Now I am in Greensburg, Pennsylvania and never having been abroad before, it was quite hard for me to get used to the fact that I am thousands of miles away from the place I call home. I live with my host mother, Darlene Frederickson, and my Polish brother Bartek.

Before I came, I was kind of nervous about my school and how the students would behave with me but, to be honest, the students at Hempfield Area High School are the nicest people I have ever met. The school is obviously not like the one back at home, it's huge! I used to study in a comparatively small British school. It's been almost more than a month and I really like it here. I will be experiencing the first homecoming in my life and, surprisingly, I am on the homecoming court! It's really exciting!

What has surprised you the most

about America? The astonishingly disciplined traffic, the almost deserted streets (there are no people on the street, only cars), the beautiful roads, planned architecture, the people and the red, blue and white US flag hanging everywhere made me realize that I am actually in the USA! A slight chill ran down my spine.

Any thoughts on what needs to happen for this year to be viewed as a success? I am really grateful to have such a lovely host family and amazing school. Hopefully my whole year will be a blast and something that will be a fabulous memory for the rest of my life.



Welcome, Bartosz! Please tell us a little bit about you and your family! Hi, my name is Bartosz from Poland. I live in a small town in the western part of Poland called Gora. It is a beautiful and peaceful place. We have many sports complexes and a forest with a river nearby which enables us to be as close to nature as possible. I have lovely parents (Honorata and Grzegorz), bright brother Szymon and amazing pets (two dogs - Chelsea and Draco, two cats - Evee and Trixi and two tanks with fish and shrimps). We love to spend time together, touring in new places or playing games at home!

Where are you studying this year and who is your host family? How does your school compare to your school at home? This year I am studying in Hempfield Area Highschool and living in Greensburg with my host mom and a double placement brother from Bangladesh - Mansib.

School differs a bit from that in Poland. The biggest advantage is definitely sports that students take part in. It is amazing that being in a school team can generate ties between people and increase allegiance to school. I have already experienced it because I have joined a soccer team and it was one of the best decisions so far.

Who (or what) inspired you to study abroad? My friend Ada who also won a scholarship influenced me to get out of my comfort zone and try something that some people would have never done.

What has surprised you the most about America? I have already experienced a few differences between Poland and Europe in general versus the USA. But the most important thing for me is to stay open minded and absorb as much as possible while I'm here. Remember, not better, not worse, just different!

Potential Features...

- Host Family of the Month!

AFS Volunteer
Engagement...

Chapter
Newsletters!

Host Family of the Month: Meet the Judy Family!

Interview By: Dar Frederickson

How did you become involved with AFS? It was the end of the AFS placement season and a plea had been made to all AFS contacts asking for potential host families. A very good friend of ours called us and told us we would be perfect as a host family and we should do it. We had an extra bedroom and so we decided to give it a try.

How many students have you hosted? We are on our fifth student now. We hosted Mattia from Italy, Lara from Sweden, Orlanne from France, Burak from Turkey and this year it is our pleasure to host Mohannad from Jordan.

How has your AFS experience changed your family? Simply put, our AFS experience has grown our family. Every year these kids have become like an additional child, brother or sister, grandchild, cousin, etc. Every student has been different and grown close to various members of our family. No matter what the specifics of our year though, we have a broader view and respect for the people of the world. We try new foods and learn about new traditions. It really enhances our family time as we introduce all of our activities to someone new. It is always exciting to show them Halloween, haunted houses, carving pumpkins, trick or treat, Thanksgiving and Christmas, making gingerbread houses, decorating the tree, Streeleer games, the city of Pittsburgh, fast food restaurants, malls and vacation trips. It is most special when we have the privilege to visit their homes and meet their natural families. My children would not have passports and the experience of leaving the United States if they didn't have their international siblings.

What's one thing we would be surprised to learn about your family?

I don't know if there is anything very surprising about our family. We are typical. My husband is a Christian pastor and we have hosted Muslim students? I learned how to speak Italian so I can be conversational and travel alone with my first international son's mom? We had three dogs, a tortoise and a rat as pets (at the same time—it's way too many!)? We once chose a student because they stated that they struggle with depression and so do members in our family?

What had you coming back to host again? Some years we returned to hosting due to the enthusiasm of our oldest son. He was 10 years old the first time we hosted. He has encouraged us to get another student even after challenging years when my husband and I would have chosen to take a break. We have never regretted any of our students. They aren't perfect. We aren't perfect. We have learned to solve problems. It has been surprising to see bonds between some of us strengthen even after a student returns to their native country.

What needs to happen for this year to be viewed a success? Seeing our students make real connections with people is what I consider a success. The more connections they make the more success I see. Of course, improving English language skills can be vitally important to a person's success in the business world. But to me, this only scratches the surface of what is precious about the exchange experience. We are a global community. By being together and overcoming our cultural misunderstandings we see the worth of people. Exchange students become more open minded as well as all of the people they connect with. There is a hope that the AFS experience will help people accept diversity and seek peace and unity.



Potential Features...

- Special Features (Prom & Homecoming)

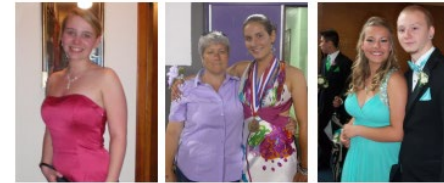
AFS Volunteer
Engagement...

Chapter
Newsletters!

The Glam Life

Because there are few things more uniquely American than Prom & Homecoming...

Earlier this month, **Building Bridges** reached out to volunteers and past host families. We asked them to dust off their photo albums, take a walk down memory lane and send us their best prom & homecoming pictures! Oh, to be young again...



Photos: (left to right) 1. Marie (Germany)-Chartiers Valley HS 2008-2009 2. Jana (Germany) & host mom Maureen getting ready for Chartiers Valley HS prom while at WPIALs (track) 3. Hedda (Sweden) & date-Chartiers Valley HS prom, 2014



Photos: (left to right) 1. Cami (Chile) & Sasha (Ukraine), 2011 Mt. Lebanon homecoming 2. Tehreem (Pakistani), 2019 Highlands HS prom 3. Sofia (Germany) & Julia (Austria), 2013 Mars HS homecoming



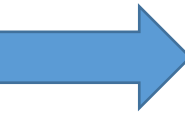
Photos: (left to right) 1. Max (Ghana) & date, 2017 Mars HS homecoming 2. Hassan (Gaza, Palestine), 2019 Mars HS prom 3. Julien (Canada), Alessia (Italy) & dates, 2016 Mars HS homecoming



Photos: (left to right) 1. Alessandra & Alice (Italy) with dates, 2015 Mars HS prom 2. Sophia (Germany), center, with host siblings, 2015 Mars HS homecoming 3. Ethan Kelley (CBYX from Mars HS), Winter Dance in Hof, Germany with host brother Lorenz Muller, December 2019

AFS Volunteer Engagement...

Chapter Newsletters!



Potential Features...

- Educational Articles (written by AFS Students)

In Focus: Pakistan!

By: Rameen

Pakistan, officially the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, is a country in South Asia. It is the world's fifth-most populous country with a population exceeding 212.2 million, and has the world's second-largest Muslim population. Pakistan is the 33rd-largest country by area, spanning 881,913 square kilometres.

I consider Pakistan the most beautiful country in the world because people from all over the world come to see the beauty of Pakistan. It is mesmerizing to see the beautiful and high mountains of the country. The northern areas are like another world or simply you can call them "heavens" where if you go once, you won't ever forget it. Northern areas like Swat, Naran Kaghan, Gilgit, Hunza, Skardu and many many more are worth visiting.

Each and every big city of Pakistan holds a great importance. Lahore, which is called the City of Gardens is a great part of the country. Karachi is also a big city and is called the City of Lights.

Islamabad, the Capital, is the Beauty of Pakistan. It represents the country well. The people of my country Pakistan are really welcoming and whoever visits here loves Pakistan.

If you ever visit Pakistan, consider it your own country and experience the love and lovely people here.

Editor's Note: A YES Youth Exchange & Study scholar, Rameen will attend Pine-Richland High School during the upcoming 2021-2022 academic year.



Skardu, the Land of Giants



Islamabad, Pakistan's Capital City



Village in Northern Pakistan

Our Mission & Quote of the Month



AFS-USA empowers people to become globally engaged citizens by delivering meaningful intercultural experiences that provide the knowledge and skills needed to help create a more just and peaceful world.

"If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children."
-Mahatma Gandhi

Potential Features...

- Updates, Events & Announcements!

AFS Volunteer Engagement...

Chapter Newsletters!

News You Can Use!!
Keeping You Connected to Your Western PA AFS Team!

Join us on Facebook!
If you haven't done so already, please take a moment to join our private Western PA AFS Facebook group for this year! Thank you to everyone who has already shared their photos of arrivals, last day of school, family adventures and more. If your students (and your significant others) have Facebook, please add them also - I don't always have the correct emails for the kiddos.
Just a few simple guidelines to remember about this group:
1) This is a private space for fully-screened AFS Host Families, Students and Volunteers. Please do not add mutual families, friends, etc.
2) This is a not where we share support related issues and concerns. Please direct those conversations privately to your liaison and/or support coordinator.
3) Participate! The more everyone participates and shares, the more we'll feel the FAMILY!
Thank!
Renee Hayes
Regional Field Specialist
Eastern Lakes Region

Adopt-A-Pineway!
Earlier this year, AFS of Western PA partnered with Pine Township as a participant in their Adopt-A-Pineway program.
Our second cleanup is scheduled for Saturday, October 9th and we need your help! We're meeting at 9:30a and should be done by 11a at the latest.
Who AFS volunteers: students, families (must be older than 12) & members of the Mars AFS Club & Pine-Richlands Global Relations Club
Where: Meet at Wierford Elementary School
Gloves, bags, safety vests & DONUTS will be provided!

AFS Podcasts!
Episode 4 Advice from Us to You
The latest episode provides advice for AFS participants beginning their program abroad. AFS-USA staff were surveyed with two questions. What piece of advice would you have for new participants, and what's something that surprised you about your time abroad?
Guests: Tard Hoffman (AFS-USA President and CEO), Akemi Akaiwa, Julie Bait, Ken Davory, Lesly Garland, Melvin Harmon, Scott Hartz, Paula Zhang
*The AFS Exchange Podcasts can be found at www.afsusa.org/podcasts/ and are also available on Spotify & iTunes.

AFS Trip to Castle Noel (Medina Ohio)
Just a reminder that payment for the Nov. 13th bus trip to Castle Noel is due no later than Oct 15th.
For additional details, check out the attached flyer or contact Alan Winters (alanwinters@gmail.com)
www.castlenoel.com

Castle Noel
America's Largest Indoor Year-Round Attraction

Potential Features...

- Alumni Profiles!

AFS Volunteer Engagement...

Chapter Newsletters!

Catching Up With Art (Kosovo)

By Dar Frederickson

My name is Art and I come from a small country in Europe called Kosovo. I was an exchange student hosted in Greensburg, PA during the 2017-2018 school year. However, I became an exchange student through some different circumstances. I participated in an exchange program called the "Kennedy-Lugar Youth, Exchange and Study Program", or the YES Program for short. This is a program funded by the US Department of State. It was first established by US Senators Ted Kennedy and Richard Lugar in October 2002, in response to the September 11, 2001 tragedy. This program provides scholarships to high school students from different countries of the world to live with American host families, attend an American high school, and engage in community service and civic education activities. It also provides scholarships to American students who want to do an exchange year abroad. The YES Program achieves its mission by working with different exchange programs, one of them being AFS. That is why at first, I did

not know about AFS; I learned about it through the YES Program.

I loved everything about my exchange year. I was hosted by my host mom Darlene, together with another YES/AFS student, Moneer, from West Bank, Jerusalem. This double placement particularly was one of the best experiences throughout my exchange year, since there were 3 different cultures living in the same household. We were constantly having talks and discussions about our cultures, teaching each other and learning from each other in the process.



Living away from home really impacted me. The exchange experience made me escape my comfort zone. I had to go out there and immerse myself into the American culture and society. Being alone, in a new place where I did not know anyone, really helped me grow as an individual; because of it, I am now more independent, better at making my own decisions, better at communicating with people, and better at understanding others.



Attending an American high school was definitely one of the highlights of my year. It was a bit tough in the beginning, because I did not know anyone and I knew I was an "outsider". But that helped me grow as a person, since I had to put my shyness away. I became more outgoing as I was constantly introducing

Upcoming Events & Opportunities



**December 03, 2020-8:00P
ET Western PA Volunteer
Meeting:**

November's meeting will be virtual! Following a brief Area Team Update, we'll play Virtual Bingo, get to know each other better, and have some fun! Keep an eye on your inbox for the Zoom meeting link!

Virtual Hosts Needed!

AFS-USA is looking for volunteers interested in facilitating virtually-hosted Student Hangouts. Your role would be to welcome students, conduct an ice breaker with the group, facilitate student-to-student connections, and generally just hang out!

- One-hour commitment on a select Wednesday night at 8pm EST
- Brief prep call with Support staff in advance of your date

For more info and to register, visit: <https://myafsnews.afsusa.org/call-for-volunteers-virtual-student-hangouts/>

Potential Features...

- Returnee Profiles!

AFS Volunteer
Engagement...

Chapter
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Returnee Profile: Mia Ola (Mars PA to Germany 2019/2020) By Sue Adams

How has your AFS experience changed you as a person? It has enabled me to try new things without any previous experience. I learned so much about myself, such as how to react when faced with challenges and how to overcome them. I also learned how to embrace right now and not to worry about the future so much. I only had 8 months until I wouldn't be there anymore, so I needed to live in the moment.

What surprised you the most about your time abroad? I was really surprised by the public transportation in Germany! I know everyone says that it is better in Europe, but it was so easy to get from place to place if I couldn't walk! I could take a bus from right outside my apartment to the train station, then a train to Hannover, then a subway to a stop within 2 blocks of my language school. For me, it was

truly incredible that I could travel that far without ever taking a car!

Advice for students considering a year abroad with AFS? Do it! It was the most incredible experience I've ever had, and probably will ever have! I miss it so much every day, and I just wish I could be back there. If you are even considering it, you are strong enough to do it!

Favorite memory? My trip to Munich in January...I got to see all



the people that were in CBYX language school with me in the first month and we got to tour the city. Munich is such a gorgeous city with a rich history!

What do you miss the most? The people I met. I miss my host family and my friends in my host community so much. Even though I still talk to them, I would so much rather be there. I also really miss the other exchange students, as we grew incredibly close. We are all on different continents now, but we still stay in touch. The hardest part about being an exchange student is having to separate from all the incredible people you meet!

In Focus: The Netherlands

By Julian Gloudemans (Current AFS Student at Pine-Richland)



Hi! My name is Julian and I am from the Netherlands. The Netherlands is a pretty weird country which I call home. We're super small: 42,000 sq. km in comparison to America's 9,840,000 sq. km, which makes us about 0.4% of the US. Still we have 17 million people living here which is pretty crazy! We love our bicycles. We have about 23 million bikes in our country. We are famous for our tulips.

clogs, stroopwafels, dikes and our port in Rotterdam, which is the third-largest in the world and the largest port in Europe.

All in all we somehow find a way to fit so many crazy things and different cultures in our tiny country!

AFS Volunteer Engagement...

Chapter Newsletters!

Potential Features...

- Special Features!

From Student to Teacher: Six Decades of the AFS Effect

By Jill Brethauer

Happy New Year, All!

My name is Jill Brethauer, and I am an AFS Returnee, AFS Volunteer, and former Host Mother. For this issue of *Building Bridges*, I thought that it might be interesting to look at my experience as an AFS student in the 1960s and as a host parent many years later and to draw some conclusions that could apply to most or all of the AFS exchanges.

Background: When I was a high school junior, the American Field Service exchange program was less than 20 years old. The exchange program was the outgrowth of dreams, brainstorming, and hard work of some of the men who had volunteered as ambulance drivers with the American Field Service during World War I and/or World War II. Having seen the atrocities of war, they envisioned a more just and peaceful world that could result from an exchange program that captured the volunteer spirit and brought families and students together. My father had been an American Field Service ambulance driver during World War II and was enthusiastic about the exchange program; and, through my school, I had come in contact with a number of exchange students. Because of these experiences, I wanted to be an exchange student so bad that I could almost taste it! And so, I applied for the 10-week program being offered during the summer of 1965. I was studying German and hoped that I would be sent to Germany. (At that time, applicants agreed to go wherever they were sent.) In early June, my parents and I each received a letter stating that I had been accepted into the program. I also received papers announcing that I had been placed with a family in San Pablo City, which was located about 43 miles southeast of Manila in the Philippines. The family's three-page

application indicated they were: affectionate, closely knit, happy, lovely and obedient.

Less than two weeks later, I was on my first-ever plane flight, headed to San Francisco, then to Hawaii, Midway Island, Wake Island, Manila. (Lots of stops for re-fueling!) Among the gifts to my family that I crammed into my suitcases: boxes of "cook 'n' serve" chocolate pudding and popcorn in aluminum containers that expanded as the popcorn "popped". Ten incredible weeks followed! My host family-and the Filipinos I met



everywhere-were outgoing, kind and compassionate. Everything about the Philippines excited me: my wonderful host family, their large extended family, the crazy traffic, the songs by the Everly Brothers and the Beatles that boomed everywhere, and the many traditions, customs, foods, native dances, and places of interest that Mama and the rest of the family made sure that I experienced.

Since 1965, I have returned twice to the Philippines. My host brother became a physician, and he and his wife settled in the U.S., raised a family, and live near Chicago. Mama and Papa visited my host brother in the U.S. multiple times, and we often managed to get together. Sadly, both Papa and Mama have died. But 55 years after becoming an exchange student, I still count my AFS experience in 1965 as life-changing, and my host family members-and their cousins and offspring-as part of my



family and among my closest friends. Of course, I made sure that Kunal and my host brother and family got to meet when Kunal was here as a student, and I still enjoy seeing that they are Facebook friends.

From 1965, fast-forward 45 years, during which I volunteered with AFS in various minor capacities. In the summer of 2010, I submitted paperwork to place the student of a local family at Pine-Richland High School. My thoughts then turned to an upcoming vacation. The next thing I knew, the Western PA volunteers were reminded that we still needed to place the YES student from India. The previous year, my husband and I had visited India, where we had enjoyed the scenery and food and were impressed with the sincerity and diligence of the people we met. How could I leave for vacation knowing that, without a host family, a student might miss out on his YES scholarship? I studied the student's application carefully. The applicant was sincere in wanting to live with a host family and study in the U.S. he was well-prepared academically, and it seemed as if he would fit well in this household. Thirty-six hours later, Kunal was called out of his orientation in New Dehli to be told that a family in Western PA would welcome him. Soon, he would be on his way to the U.S.; whew! And I was on my way out of town, knowing that life when I returned would be quite different. One week later, I met Kunal at the Arrival Orientation camp, and a few days later we concluded that Kunal would stay with us for the entire year. Shortly after that, Kunal started at Pine-Richland High School. Nine+ months and many adventures later, we joined other host families to bid a tear-filled farewell to Kunal and the other AFS students. More than ten years after that, Kunal still is an important member of this family, as are his brother and his parents.

Conclusions: Two quite different experiences.

Continued Below...

AFS Volunteer
Engagement...

Chapter
Newsletters!

Potential Features...

- **Holiday Memories!**



Holiday Memories from a Year Abroad in America...

Former AFS Students share their favorite holiday memories!

"Ugur Sen (non-pictured)-Turkey: "It all looked just like the Christmas movies! All the decorations, gifts, tree, movies (Daddy the Elf is the best), cozier and of course pajamas. Since we don't celebrate Christmas in Turkey, it was an unforgettable experience for me."

"Golia Deganowshi-Italy: "The best memory I have is spending Christmas with my host family and my friend Rihannon from school."

"Alexander Pedersen-Italy/Denmark: "Christmas morning was a totally new thing for me and therefore one of my best memories. My host brother and I woke up early just like we were 10 years old again and started to open presents. In my country it is the 24th of December and mostly at night Christmas is celebrated."

"Nasrallah Dabouj-Kyrgyzstan: "For the family Christmas card, my host family posed with the Argentinian soccer jerseys I had brought as presents for them. It was a really sweet gesture to make me feel included and to show the merging of our two cultures."



Our Mission & Quote of the Month

AFS-USA empowers people to become globally engaged citizens by delivering meaningful intercultural experiences that provide the knowledge and skills needed to help create a more just and peaceful world.

"I truly believe the only way we can create global peace is through not only educating our minds, but our hearts and our souls."

-Malala Yousafzai

Potential Features...

- Educator Perspectives!

AFS Volunteer Engagement...

Chapter Newsletters!

In Depth: A Conversation with Josh Destein

By Mike Peschong

How did you become involved with AFS?

I first became involved with AFS in 2017 when my former co-worker (another Spanish teacher) asked me if I knew of anyone or any family willing to host a boy from Spain. This co-worker is a former AFS student herself and she was helping promote AFS and to find host families. When she asked me that question, I jokingly said I could host! Her eyes lit up and became excited. I had no idea what was involved to be a host parent, nor did I even know anything about AFS at that time. My life was about to change for the better. I am a single guy, with two spare bedrooms. Also, I speak Spanish and I lived in Spain for one year. I could do it!

During my junior year in college, I spent that year living and studying at the 13th century University of Salamanca, in Spain. I lived with a host family myself and had the greatest experience. My host family consisted of a mom, dad and three brothers. I had a particularly good understanding of what it is like as both a host student and a host parent. I was so fortunate to have had a wonderful host family in Spain. I hoped to become a wonderful host parent myself. My concern was being a single guy. I imagined most AFS students would want the traditional family experience. I did not think I would be able to offer my future host students the family experience. As a former study abroad student myself, I experienced so much of the culture shock, homesickness, happiness, and even sadness that is all part of living abroad.

I first hosted 15-year old Sergio, from Spain, during the 2017-2018 school year. He attended Deer Lakes High School as a sophomore. He was a member of the boys' soccer team and swim team.

I then hosted 18-year old Emil, from Finland, from February to June 2019 (AFS placed him with me for half the year because his previous host family had to leave the country for some

time). Emil attended North Catholic High School as a junior and played on their hockey team. He eventually transferred to Deer Lakes (where I teach). I then hosted Sergio's 15-year old little brother, Jorge, from Spain, during the 2019-2020 school year where he also was a sophomore at Deer Lakes (Sergio's parents in Spain requested that I host their other son, Jorge! That was a true honor). Jorge played on the boys' soccer team, also. In addition to Jorge, I also hosted 15-year old Miklas, from Germany. I had two host sons together! Miklas,



unfortunately, had to attend North Catholic High School. It was quite a challenge having my two host sons attend two separate high schools and me being a single parent. In the end, I feel it was actually a good idea that both boys had their own school and friends.

How has AFS impacted your life and what has the experience meant to you?

My life has positively changed in so many ways. I have learned new perspectives of the world as seen through the eyes of teenagers from various countries. The conversations at my dinner table were amazing as we all talked about our diverse cultures, world politics and history, our diverse education systems, fashion, the environment, social issues, the role of the family in each of our countries, foods, entertainment, and so much more. I have always been a single guy living a highly organized, punctual, structured, clean, and somewhat meticulous life.



Boy, that all changed once I became a host parent! First, before I began hosting, I just imagined that these students coming to America were going to be just "perfect" in every way. I do not know why I felt that way. Maybe they felt that way about me too before even meeting me. I have learned of my many imperfections after hosting each of my four students. I will never forget Sergio's first soccer practice when a parent called me saying "Senor, I think you forgot to pick up your host son"! I panicked and hurried up to the soccer field. That was my first moment when I realized the challenges of being a parent (since that moment, I have a large calendar hanging in my kitchen noting every important moment of their daily life so I don't forget!) I have also come to accept that a messy room is okay, an overflowed toilet will happen, milk spilled on the curtain will happen, muddy shoes in the car will happen, a trip to the ER will happen, the kids getting sick will happen, them wanting to date will happen, them being sad will happen, one of them throwing away your good piece of silverware will happen, a big dent in the closet door will happen, and them pranking you will happen! Despite all of this, it's worth it. I would not change it for anything. I will never forget tying Miklas's tie for school every morning and then eventually teaching him to tie his own tie. What a proud moment for me and for him. These experiences of hosting Sergio, Emil, Jorge and Miklas have changed my house into a home that is now full of wonderful, warm and unforgettable memories.

As a Spanish teacher, you play a direct role in facilitating & promoting multiculturalism. Tell us about some of those experiences.

I am a high school Spanish teacher (20 years now). I have taken many trips to various Spanish-speaking countries with my students. Because of the expense, only a

AFS Volunteer Engagement...

Chapter Newsletters!

Potential Features...

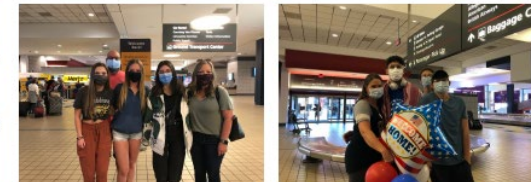
- Special Features & Photo Montages!

Welcome to the United States of America, AFS Class of 2021-22!

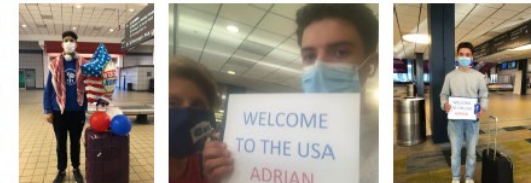
You will never be completely at home again, because part of your heart will always be elsewhere. That is the price you pay for the richness of loving and knowing people in more than one place."



Earlier this month AFS welcomed our remaining five students to Western Pennsylvania. Adrian (Sweden), Mavi (Argentina), Mohannad (Jordan), Zainub (Pakistan) and Marcell (Hungary): Welcome to the United States of America and to the AFS Family! We're excited & honored to have you here!



"Ten months of your exchange student's life will be with you forever."



"My exchange year will soon be over, and I will leave my family & best friends, to return to my family & best friends."



AFS Volunteer Engagement...

Chapter Newsletters!

Potential Features...

- Educational & Historical Features!

100+ Years of AFS: 'Passing Peace Forward'

Editor's Note: The following excerpts have been 'borrowed' from a number of sources, including the AFS Archives (www.afs.org/archives). Additional historical background comes from Wikipedia. A recording of JFK's address to AFS students in 1963 can be found on the AFS website.

By the time WWII had ended in 1945, an estimated 2,200 AFS ambulance drivers had rendered assistance to more than 700,000 wounded soldiers & civilians.

After bearing witness to the carnage of two world wars, Stephen Galatti returned home more determined than ever to promote understanding among cultures.

In 1946 Galatti, as AFS Director General, formed AFSIS (AFS International Scholarships). The program—designed specifically to Pass Peace Forward—welcomed its first scholarship students to the United States from France, Norway, Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands, England, and Syria in 1947.

One year later, and driven by a desire for the visiting students to experience America beyond the classroom, AFS launched its first ever bus trip. Riding a bus donated by Greyhound, 32 AFS students embarked on a 24-day, 5,500 mile road trip during the summer of 1948. The group visited 22 states, stopping in 19 cities between New York and the Rocky Mountains.

In addition to allowing the students an opportunity to see America, the bus trip proved invaluable for AFS as it inspired communities, families and schools across the country to support intercultural exchanges through hosting. AFS staff member Dorothy Field later remarked "we were halfway between DC and NY when suddenly I realized that that was the moment the AFS scholarships were really born".

By 1950, AFS Returnees (mostly in France) had created the AA (Americans Abroad) Summer Program. The program saw 9 American students spend a few months in Europe (primarily in France). A year later, the program had expanded to seven countries across Europe and, by 1957, the program was offering classroom experiences across Europe.

Stephen Galatti would continue to lead AFS until his death in July 1964. AFS, though, remained steadfast in its mission, earning accolades from leaders like President John F. Kennedy. Kennedy lauded the organization's contribution to diplomacy, directly praising those AFS students & volunteers working to promote global peace & understanding (the 5 minute-long audio clip of Kennedy's 1963 White House address to AFS students is absolutely worth listening to).

Today, more than 70 years later, AFS has cemented its status as the premier facilitator of international student exchanges, offering study-abroad programs in more than 45 nations. The United States alone hosts secondary students from more than 90 countries.

And, true to its roots, AFS has retained its spirit of volunteerism and its commitment to making the world a more just and peaceful place. Worldwide, AFS boasts more than 50,000 volunteers, with more than 4,000 of those located in the United States. I am honored to be one of those volunteers.

Photos (top to bottom): President John F. Kennedy addressing AFS students at the White House in 1963; International students celebrating the Centennial of AFS at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris (2015); Participants of the first AFS bus trip in the United States (1948)



AFS Volunteer Engagement...

Chapter Newsletters!

Potential Features...

- Student Profiles During Hosting Season!



Returnee Profile: Kenzie Hughes (Mt. Lebanon High School to Germany: 2019-20)

How has your AFS experience changed you as a person? Being away from my family and everything that is comfortable forced me to step out of my comfort zone and what I really liked. It was challenging and rewarding all at the same time!

What surprised you most about your time abroad? I never realized how big the AFS community was! At any given time, there would be at least 5 other exchange students with AFS close to me that could relate to me and take my mind off the homesickness.

Any advice for students considering a year abroad with AFS? Do it! If you want to learn another language or immerse yourself in another culture, this is the best way to do it. Nothing is more authentic than living in the country, being in that culture and speaking the language.

Do you have a favorite memory? I got to go to my favorite German band's (AnnenMayKantereit) concert with another AFS student. We had so much fun!

What do you miss the most about your time in Germany? Nothing compares to the German public transportation system. It is elite! I miss being able to hop on the bus or take the S-Bahn into the city with my friends and go shopping. Also, doner (a German-style kabob)!



You Could Host Martin from Paraguay!

Martin from Paraguay is an active and involved 16-year old who competes on a national level in swimming. He plays soccer and basketball, is a skilled horesback rider, and more recently has spent time gaming and working out during the pandemic.

Martin had an earlier interest in drawing and painting and the electric guitar. His mother describes him as intelligent, cheerful, and independent. At times he is a bit quiet but keenly observant.

His teacher presents Martin as a pleasant and respectful young man with a positive attitude. Martin is eager to arrive in the U.S. and begin his exchange year!



Potential Features...

- Global Recipes from Hosted Students & Volunteers!

AFS Volunteer
Engagement...

Chapter
Newsletters!





September Birthdays!
Happy (Belated) Birthday to the following Volunteers...

- Sue Adams
- Julie Battle
- Angela Waldeck
- Nichole Smith



Global Recipe of the Month!
Pamphile's French Vinaigrette

Ingredients:

- 2 T Vegetable Oil
- 1 T White Wine Vinegar
- ½ tsp Dijon Mustard
- Salt
- Pepper
- Red Onion, Finely Diced (optional)
- Green Leaf Lettuce
- Cucumber (optional)
- Avocado (optional)



Instructions:
In the serving bowl, mix oil, vinegar, mustard until emulsified and well mixed. Season with salt and pepper. Add red onion. Add lettuce shortly before serving, mix.



*A native of Strasbourg, France, Pamphile is currently a senior at Pine-Richland High School and a member of the school's ice hockey team. Pamphile is hosted by the Adams family.

AFS-Recipes From Around the World
Looking for something fun to do with your family or hosted student? Did you know AFS has an amazing collection of great recipes from around the world? Simply go to <https://www.afsusa.org/explore/recipes-from-around-the-world/>. Search by region or submit a recipe of your own!



Our Mission & Quote of the Month

AFS-USA empowers people to become globally engaged citizens by delivering meaningful intercultural experiences that provide the knowledge and skills needed to help create a more just and peaceful world.

"Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing."
-Theodore Roosevelt
*Photo by Rebecca Peschong

AFS Volunteer Engagement...

Chapter Newsletters!

Getting Started...

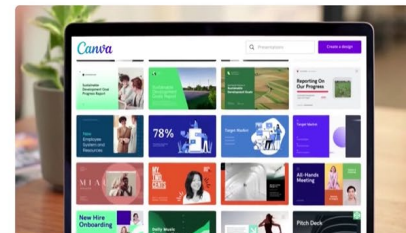
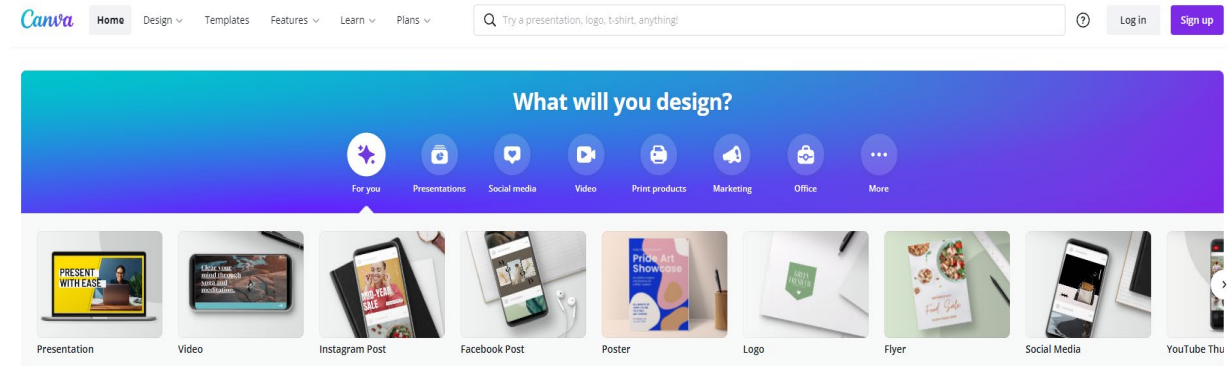
- Decide on a frequency-monthly or quarterly-that best fits your chapter!
- Encourage Committee Chairs to provide a brief update for each issue!
- Share content & ideas with other chapters in your region & across the country!
- Decide on a publishing program (there are hundreds to choose from!)

AFS Volunteer Engagement...

Chapter Newsletters!

Getting Started...

- The Western PA Team uses Canva as a publishing tool (www.canva.com)
- Free platform
- Thousands of templates to choose from
- Highly customizable & intuitive
- Canva Pro is available for \$13/mo and provides access to thousands of professional-grade images & photos (highly recommended)



Start inspired

With thousands of professional templates, images and quality content to choose from, get a headstart on bringing your best ideas and work to life.

AFS Volunteer Engagement...

Chapter Newsletters!

Getting Started...

- Canva allows you to:
 - Easily download pictures & images from your files
 - Newsletters can be saved & sent as PDFs or as hyperlinks
- Western PA Area Team utilizes the Blue & White Monochrome Parent Newsletter template

VOL. 12 | SEPTEMBER 2021

BUILDING BRIDGES

Updates for the Volunteers of AFS USA-Western Pennsylvania



Welcome Message from Dar

Welcome to the third season of the year and a special welcome to our 18 Core AFS, 1 FLEX, 1 CBY& and 2 YES students. It has been many trips to the airport from August 5th to September 23rd, but we could not be happier to be hosting all of you in AFSUSA/WPA!!!!!!

Autumn (from the Latin word "autumnus"), or Fall came from the phrase "fall of the leaf", has arrived. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Pennsylvania's Claim to Fame is that we have the longest, most varied fall foliage season in the US and the world. Some 134 species of trees can be found across the state, from the coastal plain in the east to 3,000 feet above sea level in the Laurel Highlands in Western Pennsylvania.

Halloween, another fun time in October. Is special to me because I was born on Halloween. As a child I did not like that because I could never have a birthday party on my actual birthday since everyone I wanted to invite was Trick-or-Treating. As I grew older, I started to really like pretending to be a witch saying I was born on Halloween and have received the best Halloween cards ever.

If Pennsylvania was not a state you thought about living in, cornstalks, pumpkins, Haunted Houses, Spooky walks, Trick-or-Treating and having a Pennsylvania Host Family will have you calling here your second home.

According to the annual Fall Foliage Prediction Map from the smokyMountains.com, fall colors will be at their peak in Western Pennsylvania around the week of October 28th. For our AFS students, it is no longer the beginning of an exchange year but the peak time to settle in, keep involved in school, spend time with family and friends and enjoy your experience. Remember that every day here is a day closer to returning home. Enjoy these October days!!

Happy Fall, Autumn, Halloween, Homecoming, Cluster Activity and everything else Pennsylvania will offer you in October!!

Dar Frederickson
AFS Host Mom, Libben, President of AFS Westmoreland County/Laurel Highlands Chapter,
Co-Chair WPA Area Team

OVERVIEW:

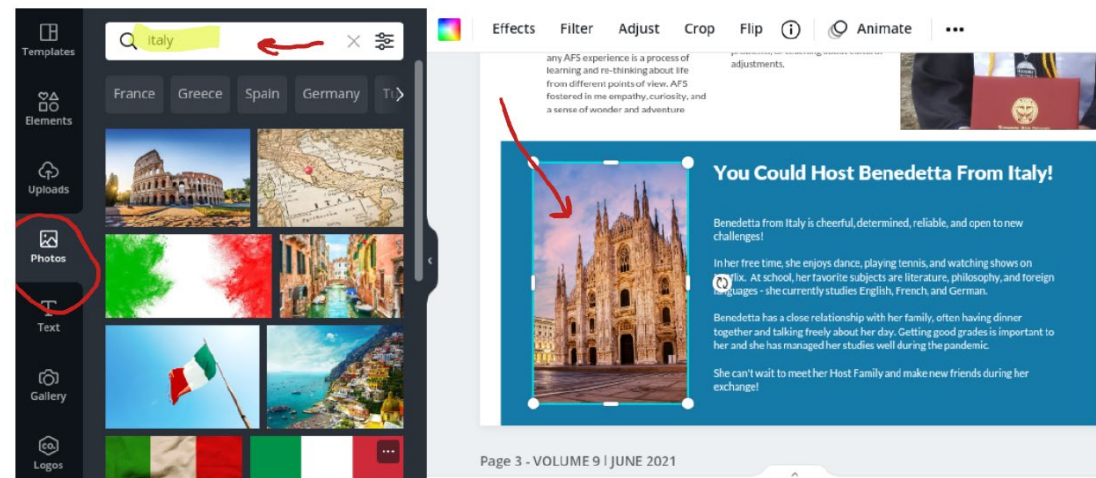
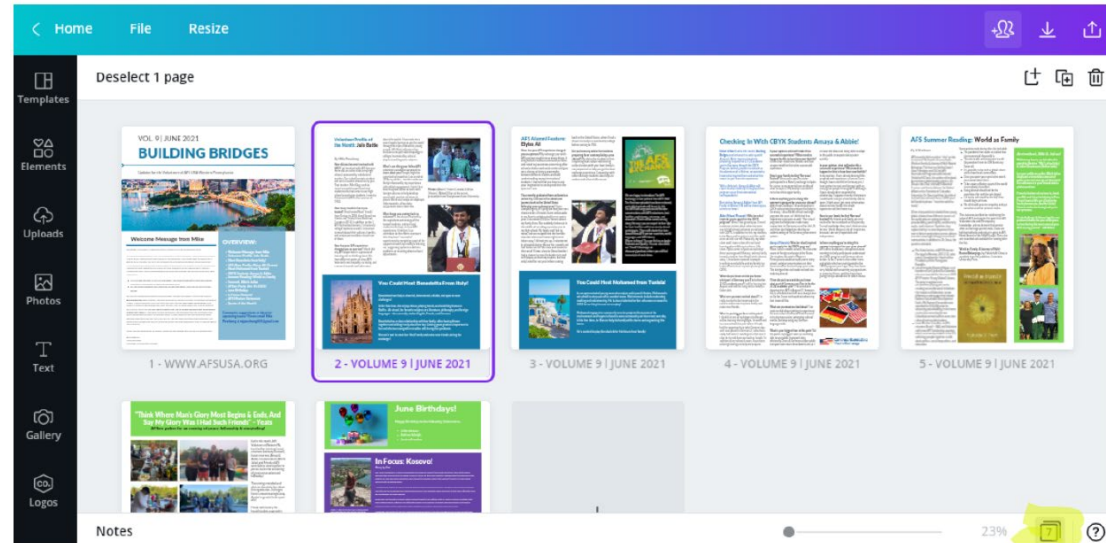
- Welcome Message from Dar
- 100+ Years of AFS: Passing Peace Forward
- Welcome AFS Class of 2021-2022!
- Host Family of the Month
- News You Can Use
- Calendar of Events & Announcements
- Meet Students Bartosz & Mansib!
- Annual Volunteer Summit
- Upcoming Issues...We Need Your Help!
- In Focus: Belgium (Delphine)
- September Birthdays
- International Recipe of the Month
- AFS Mission Statement
- Quote of the Month

Comments, suggestions or ideas for upcoming issues? Please email Mike Peschong at mjpeschong605@gmail.com

Getting Started...

AFS Volunteer Engagement...

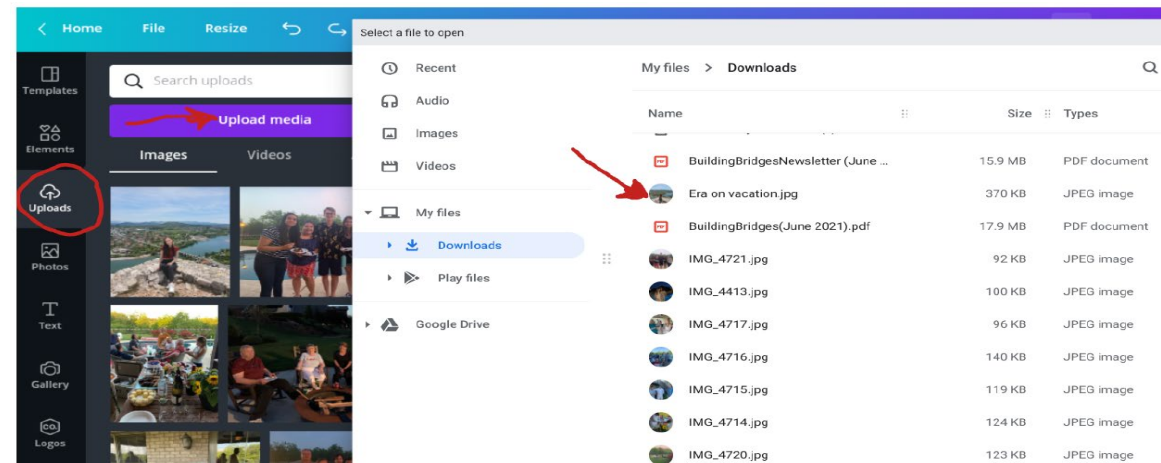
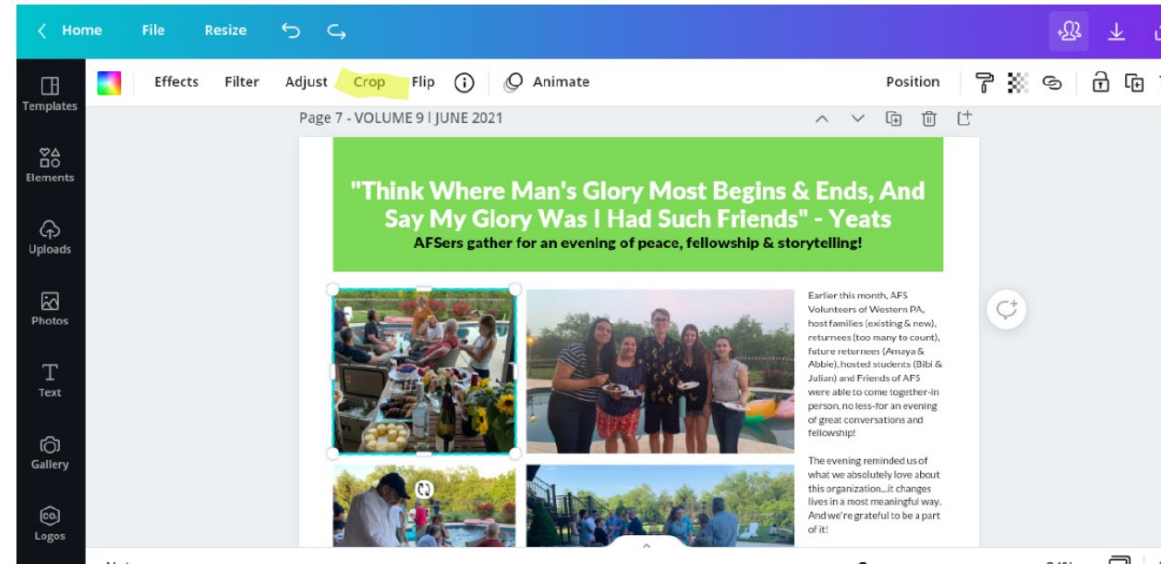
Chapter Newsletters!



Getting Started...

AFS Volunteer
Engagement...

Chapter
Newsletters!



AFS Volunteer Engagement...

Chapter Newsletters!

Wrapping Up...

- Newsletters are a simple way to keep your team connected, engaged & up to date! And they require no in-person contact or effort!
- Platforms like Canva offer thousands of easy-to-use (free) templates!
- Customize the newsletter to your Team as the options for content are virtually unlimited!
- Interested in starting a newsletter? Contact the AFS Volunteer Engagement Advisory Group today! We're happy to help you get started, share ideas & examples and collaborate on future material!