

A little piece of world peace



JASON BRIDGE | VALLEY NEWS DISPATCH

Harenski shows off portraits and graduation photos from the 14 foreign exchange students she has hosted at her house in Harrison. Harenski serves as the American Field Service's liaison coordinator for Western Pennsylvania, recruiting students to go abroad and families locally to host incoming students. One of her main goals is to ensure students have someone they can count on locally.

Foreign exchange host maintains close relationships with students

HARRISON

By TAMARA GIRARDI
FOR THE VALLEY NEWS DISPATCH

Kathy Harenski has been giving back to the organization that sent her to Germany for her senior year of high school ever since she got home. In 1966-67, the Har-Brack High School student was a foreign exchange student sent to Osnabrueck, Germany, as part of a post-World War II program aimed at creating cultural understanding and world peace.

The program was founded by the American Field Service (AFS), an ambulance corps that served in both world wars. After WWII, the drivers had some donations left over, and asked themselves what they could do to promote peace — and possibly keep from getting back to the same battlegrounds.

They decided the only place to start was with youths.

"Having high school students live with host families and go to school immersing themselves in a foreign culture is one of the best ways to promote peace," Harenski said.

So the program began, mostly sending students

from Germany to the United States. "It really did pave the way for the kind of relationship we now have with Germany," Harenski said.

Locally, Har-Brack hosted its first student in 1959-60. It was a boy from Switzerland.

Now, there are 47 participating countries, and a sophisticated web of students traveling all over the world, learning about different cultures.

After having spent a year in Germany, becoming fluent in the language, Harenski maintained a close relationship with her host family.

She was saddened when her German parents recently died, but she still has her German "sister." Over the years, they have exchanged Christmas presents, and when her German sister came to America to study, they visited again.

"That's what I love most: the long-lasting relationships that are still maintained," Harenski said.

When she came home from Germany, she quickly volunteered locally, recruiting students to travel

"It's like having a member of the family you may not talk to but once a year, but you still have a strong relationship. They're still a member of the family."

KATHY HARENSKI

ON THE FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENTS SHE HOSTS

through the program. Then in the 1990s, Harenski graduated to volunteering with the Western Pennsylvania regional office. She serves as the liaison coordinator for Western

Pennsylvania, recruiting students to go abroad and families locally to host incoming students.

One of her main goals is to ensure students have someone they can count on locally if they need anything.

"AFS prides themselves on having a superior support network as opposed to other organizations that don't have as many local volunteers," she said.

She and her husband, Michael, who is retired from Highlands School District, have hosted 14 students in their home.

They have visited those students in their home countries and in other areas of the United States. One lives in San Francisco and another in Texas.

"It's like having a member of the family you may not talk to but once a year, but you still have a strong relationship," she says. "They're still a member of the family."



CITIZENS FAMILY HEALTH CLINIC

Specializing in Family Medicine
including Women's Health

- Appointments Available
- Accepting all Major Insurances
- Convenient Location
- Payment Plans Available
- Walk-ins Welcome
- Free Off Street Parking

Receive Quality Health Care
Regardless of Ability to Pay

Phone: 724-335-0181 for Appointments

251 SEVENTH ST., SUITE G
NEW KENSINGTON, PA 15068

Open daily 9:00AM to 5:00PM
with evening hours available

citizensfamilyhealthclinic.com

1481327



If your pharmacist doesn't know your name, get to know ours:
Medicine Shoppe

Medicine Shoppe pharmacists take time to listen, time to help. We make sure you understand the medicines you take, how they work, and what to avoid while taking them. Visit your Medicine Shoppe pharmacist today and ask about Medicine Shoppe's other special benefits.



Bob Ingoldsbury, RPh

The Medicine Shoppe

www.medicineshoppe.com

Midway Square
2606 Freepoint Rd.
Natrona Heights, PA 15065
724-224-7111

Denisa Firoiu, MD