

# **Mennonite Central Committee International Volunteer Exchange Program Hosting**

The International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP) is a vocational and cultural exchange program. International young adults between the ages of 18 - 30 from approximately 30 countries, come to Canada and the United States for one year, from early August until the following July.

The goals of this program are to:

- Promote international peace and reconciliation
- Help participants understand themselves and others better
- Promote international goodwill, understanding and friendship
- Increase a sense of personal involvement and responsibility in a world of interrelated peoples
- Strengthen bonds of Christian fellowship
- Broaden horizons and views
- Correct stereotypes and misconceptions about other peoples
- Help participants gain vocational skills through a volunteer work placement.

## **About IVEP**

*"It is a peace program that works, not in a big sweep, but one small ripple at a time, each ripple enlarging with every expanding circle"*

IVEP participants from abroad spend a year living in the United States or Canada. Beginning with orientation, participants spend the year (early August until the following July) working in placements that offer training that reflects the participants' professional interest and experience. Hosts are found in the community.

The program is partly self-financing, with some MCC subsidy, and does not generate money for the participant, host, or partner.

Besides the orientation conference at the beginning of the term, there is also a mid-year conference for participants to get to know each other. The year ends with a conference in Ontario before people return home.

Participants are selected by mid-January, so their application process begins up to 6 months before this deadline, depending on the IVEP committee in their country.

## **Host Responsibilities**

- Interested in learning from, sharing with, and attempting to understand the needs and challenges facing international young people.
- Provide a private bedroom for the IVEPer.
- Committed Christians open to discussing large and small issues. Host homes should be free from tensions.
- Serve as a bridge for the IVEPer to church and community, activities and places of interest. If hosting is in an institutional or community house setting, a family or person in the community must be found to serve as that bridge.
- Provide time and opportunity, particularly on weekends, to enable the IVEPer to develop social and cultural contacts in addition to the work experience.
- Maintain contact with IVEP staff through monthly reports
- Be intentional about checking in with the IVEPer
- Treat the IVEPer as a member of the family, joining in cooking, cleaning, activities and events like everyone else.
- Hosts receive \$250 per month from MCC for hosting. This money covers the basics of extra food, basic toiletries and housing expenses, but it's not a formal rent amount.

For additional information, look at [ivep.mcc.org](http://ivep.mcc.org) and our Host Manual

## **What does it really meant to host an international young adult?**

*What is hosting all about?*

1. sharing your lifestyle
  - a. awareness and ability to describe what you value in life and how those values are reflected in how you live.
  - b. taking time to explain things and finding the correct words for understanding
2. providing a helping hand
  - a. culture shock – riding the wave
  - b. cultural advisor: someone who is familiar with the new culture and is willing to help explain the behavior of its inhabitants

*Preconceived ideas about hosting:*

**Out-of-town guests** – everything is cleaned up, done properly and excessively. The guest is treated as royalty.

Problems:

- this is not a sustainable way of living
- this is not a true representation of normal life
- delicate issues may need to be addressed that you wouldn't normally address with a guest

**Family member** – the moment they step in the house, the visitor is treated and expected to act like someone who is part of the family and understands what is going on

Problems:

- it takes time to build relationships and form bonds
- the visitor doesn't know the systems and expectations of the family
- the visitor doesn't want to substitute their own family with a new one they just met

**Neighborhood chum** – the visitor is there to have fun and is the one who is being held accountable for acting "right"

Problems:

- you can't send the visitor home when you're tired of having them at your house
- always having a fun and exciting time is not sustainable
- the exchange visitor is always on edge to figure out if they're behaving correctly

**Housekeeper/cleaner** – an exchange of services. One side provides room and board, the other side provides gratitude and help

Problems:

- this does not foster a personal relationship
- every detail of the hosts life is examined, but then commented on or judged without meaningful discussion

## *Host culture shock:*

### **House of mirrors**

Exchange visitors raise to our faces a life-sized mirror which reflects back our frailties and forces ourselves to look and see ourselves as we really are.

\* What Helps?

- cast your beliefs in something more flexible than stone
- tolerate critical comments without arguing back, apologizing or trying to convert others
- welcome the opportunity to examine what you stand for and why
- delight in difficult conversations and enjoy the intensity, candor and surprises

### **Loss of cultural innocence**

Exchange visitors bring to the front international realities that hosts never learned about or were able to pass over.

\* What Helps?

- learn the history of a new country and its context
- realize that some of your treasured and long-held beliefs will be changed
- realize that the world exists in 1,000 shades of grey, not black and white

Hosting notes, quotes and ideas from: [Host Family Survival Kit book: A Guide for American Host Families](#) by Nancy King and Ken Huff