

## Reed College Host Family Program

### The Host Family Program

Every fall Reed welcomes nearly twenty degree-seeking international students, approximately ten foreign exchange students, and eight language scholars to campus.

These students and scholars come to Reed to learn and grow from experiences in the classroom and on campus. Many, however, also want to learn about U.S. culture through personal experience with the politics, economics, geography, culture, and people of the local community.

The hospitality of a local family can provide a multidimensional view of life in the U.S., temper loneliness for the newcomer, and help overcome the isolation of life on campus. These experiences outside the classroom and beyond the dormitory can be an illuminating and unforgettable part of an international visitor's stay.

The host family program, coordinated by International Student Services (ISS), offers the possibility of a mutually rewarding relationship between an American family and a foreign visitor, giving each the opportunity to learn from the other.

### Expectations

The term *host family* can be somewhat misleading. Reed's international students and language scholars live on campus and therefore there is no expectation that host families will provide room and board.

Instead, host families act as a liaison between international visitors and the community. The first interaction typically occurs at the airport, where families welcome students and scholars to Portland by picking them up, bringing them to campus, and helping them settle into their dorm rooms.

During the school year, ISS organizes three structured on-campus events for host families. The first takes place soon after students arrive, during International Orientation. There are also fall and spring meals that bring student and families together at Reed.

Outside of these structured activities, the program allows the relationship between a student or scholar and a family to develop organically. Each family and student pair forges a unique relationship. The only request is that families connect in person with the student or scholar monthly. The kind of connection each pair chooses to make is up to them. Typical activities include:

- inviting the student or scholar over for dinner early in the first semester;
- sharing holiday celebrations during the fall and/or winter; and
- introducing the student or scholar to many of the wonderful activities that are available in Portland and the surrounding community throughout the year.

There is no one “right” way to be a host family, but making contact on a regular basis and simply spending time together is an important part of having a successful hosting experience.

### **Matching Students with Families**

Finding a good fit between a family and an international students or scholar is an important first step in a successful relationship. The process begins in early summer when International Student Services collects information from both host families (number of family members, interests, international experiences, etc.) and students/scholars (academic interests, family preferences, hobbies, etc.).

ISS creates a list of student bios, which is then sent to families. Host families are asked to provide the office with the names of students or scholars they feel would best connect with their family.

Using this information and the information provided by students and scholars, ISS matches visitors and families. Families are provided the name and contact information of their student/scholar during the summer and are asked to make a connection prior to her/his arrival in Portland.

### **What Host Families Have to Say . . .**

*We just had our first Reed international student (Germany) come back for his 10th reunion. He and his wife stayed at our house . . . Another one of our Reedies, from India, graduated from Lewis and Clark Law School last year . . . she has all of her holiday meals (and more) at our house. Another German student of ours, sends me an email every year on my birthday. It goes on and on. It was a great experience for us.*

*Hosting [a student] has been a wonderful experience. He is basically a member of our family now.*

### **More Information**

To obtain a host family application or learn more about the program, please contact David Rivera at the International Student Services office.

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