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Dear Hosts,

You are about to begin one of the most exciting experiences of your lives. You will be sharing The Friendship Force experience – giving of yourselves and receiving in exchange the love and friendship of people from another country and culture. You will be helping to spread international peace and understanding between countries.

The Friendship Force of Greater Des Moines encourages all members, and many like-minded friends, to be involved in Inbound Journeys (formerly called Exchanges). They may Home Host, Day Host, Dinner Host, serve on the planning committee or join in some of the week’s activities such as the Welcome Dinner or the Farewell Dinner.

We appreciate your efforts to host Ambassadors and we hope you enjoy the whole experience of Hosting. Your experiences as a host will be valuable when you, in turn, become an Ambassador in someone else’s home.

In friendship,

name

Journey Host Coordinator

xxx-xxx-xxxx home

xxx-xxx-xxxx cell

**HOME HOSTS**

This will be an opportunity to learn about differences and similarities in your lifestyle, have a person-to-person exchange of ideas by hosting Ambassadors from your own or another country. Your Ambassador will be living in your home, taking part in your daily routine and meeting your family and friends.

Your responsibility will be to spread goodwill, be understanding, kind and friendly. Our hope for you is an experience that will be meaningful, comfortable and rewarding as you share your days with new friends.

**DAY or EVENING HOSTS**

Day Hosting gives Des Moines Club members the opportunity to share the friendship of, and responsibility for, a Friendship Force Ambassador. It is sharing with a Home Host in all but the actual sleeping accommodation. It doubles the excitement and pleasure with many more of our members being fully immersed in the exchange.

A Day Host could be prepared to:

* invite their Home Hosts and Ambassadors for a meal, (completely separate from the normal Small Group Dinner which is part of the official program).
* take full responsibility for the ambassador on at least one day
* could accompany Home Hosts and Ambassadors to planned events
* be available to offer help in special circumstances.

This all needs to be negotiated in a friendly manner with the Home Host.

**SMALL GROUP DINNER HOSTS**

Hosting a dinner is an opportunity for members, friends, and family to participate in an exchange. It is recommended that all Des Moines Club participants in the dinner provide food to share including the dinner host. The dinner host will plan the menu and ask the guests to bring items like dessert, salad or appetizers. Dinner hosts need to be aware that it may not be possible for the Home Host or Day Host to cook something before they attend as they may have been out and about all day.

The shared dinner is an important time in the exchange as it provides a relaxing way for the Ambassadors to mingle in an informal atmosphere and spend quality time with more members of the club.

##### HOME HOST INFORMATION

**PRIOR TO THE EXCHANGE**

Establish email contact as soon as you are informed of your Ambassador. This will help you get to know your guest a little better, their interests and any special needs.

**PREPARING THE ROOM**

**Items that may be provided for your guest’s comfort.**

* Light treats or snacks in the room such as fruit, nuts, candy, or bottled water
* Small laundry basket or hamper in the room or bathroom for their use
* Stationery and/or local postcards, pen and stamps.
* Brochures and books on local sights or attractions; city and state maps; leisure reading materials, magazines, newspapers.
* Extra pillows and blankets
* Night light
* Arrange for drawer and closet space with several empty hangers
* A small TV and/or radio is nice and a clock with an alarm. Your may need to acquaint your guests with how to work these appliances
* If toddlers are present, encourage guests and other household members to keep things out of reach: things such as razors, medicines, edibles etc.
* Hair dryer. If you plan to loan your hair dryer to your guests, instruct them how to use it. If they bring their own, check to see they have the appropriate adaptors and converters.
* A small bouquet of flowers is a nice touch. Be aware though that the colour, number and species of flowers mean different things in different cultures.
* Soap, linens, towels, facial tissues etc.

**WELCOMING GUESTS INTO YOUR HOME**

When your guests arrive, they will probably be tired and will appreciate a quiet time – perhaps even a nap. After showing them their room and helping get their things in, you could offer refreshments in keeping with the time of day and suggest they get settled and rested.

Remember, they’ve done lots of travelling by the time they arrive and everyone will be ‘running on borrowed energy’, brought on by the pleasure and excitement of a new experience in your home.

When you communicate speak slowly, use simple words. But don’t forget to **LISTEN.**

Thoroughly familiarize your new friends with their living quarters, including bathroom facilities (pointing out clean towels, etc). If your guest room is temporary (i.e. child’s room, multi-purpose room, etc) clear it ahead of time so it can be as private for the guest as possible. Point out closet hanging space and instruct family members not to enter the room unless they ask permission of your guest. Keep such interruptions to a minimum.

Offer a tour of the house and be prepared to answer questions they may have.

Demonstrate the operation of windows and any heating/cooling appliances as well as any home security devices.

At the earliest opportunity, introduce your guest to your entire family – including children and pets! Make time to talk and take time to clarify such things as the use of a refrigerator, availability of house keys (if appropriate), meal times and laundry procedures. Negotiate Internet usage and consider taking them to the library if your home has restricted Internet access.

Ask about religious practice. They might want to attend a service, however honor their wishes.

Ask about their home, their furnishings, car, politics, culture, television and music, etc. It may prompt a question they may want to ask you about your culture.

Make it easy for your guests to be alone at times should they indicate in the slightest way that they need a break. Translating can be a strain – so can unusual surroundings.

**FOOD**

Your guests expect to share your lifestyle, so prepare the same foods for them that you do for yourself and family. Introduce them to how you eat and drink and ask them about their typical meals. Recognize that attitudes concerning guests vary. For example, some are not accustomed to the informality of other cultures and may not respond quickly to expressions such as ‘make yourself at home; or ‘help yourself to the refrigerator’. You may want to discuss your guest’s eating habits and any special needs they may have.

It is the responsibility of the host family to provide breakfast each day and other meals that you may want to offer your guests. Let them know of your interest in sharing meals with them. When dealing with foreign ambassadors on issues of food, the best rule is:

**Discuss, compromise and adjust! Have fun!**

**The guest may even want to cook for you.**

**HELPING IN THE HOME**

Your guest is not in your home to be waited on at all times, but to participate as much as possible in the daily activities of the family. While some will be hesitant about helping with household tasks, others will be eager to be helpful. Don’t be shy about household duties; let your guests know they are welcome to participate in any of your activities. At the same time give them the opportunity to decline graciously if they wish.

Accept any offers of help when you can as this often helps a guest feel comfortable and ‘at home’. If he/she perhaps feels shy about entering your kitchen invite him/her to watch you prepare food and explain how your household appliances work.

**TELEPHONE, COMPUTER and INTERNET USE**

Most guests have their own Mobile/Cell Phones and are able to communicate with family and friends whenever they want. However, should a telephone be installed in the guest room, remove it prior to your ambassador arriving if you are concerned about unauthorized usage. Be familiar with how to make a collect call in order to assist your guest with making calls. If you expect your guest to pay for long distance calls s/he makes, learn how to request call costs from your telephone service provider so that payment might be requested immediately following the call.

Negotiate the use of the computer and the Internet. If your Internet usage is restricted check out local facilities (the local library) where your guest may download messages and access the Internet.

**SAFETY**

Don’t forget to tell your guests about the voltage of our electricity as being 110 - 120 volts. Some countries have power supplied to homes at a different voltage and will need to bring a converter or adapter. Some information about smoke alarms and the method of calling emergency services may be helpful. Smokers should be asked not to smoke in the home.

**THE PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES**

**Planned Program**

The Des Moines Club Journey Committee has planned activities about which you will be aware. The program will outline some meals and entertainment which have been arranged. Familiarize yourself ahead of time with the costs, which will be provided in the program or host material. Talk with your guest about the program of activities that the Exchange Committee has planned.

It is your responsibility to ensure that your Ambassadors attend all the scheduled activities except activities described as optional.

Otherwise, hosts and guests are free to do as they wish. Guests will be interested in participating in your regular family activities. It is usual for your Ambassador to take their Host(s) out for a meal. Keep a time free for this to happen. Please ensure that you suggest an affordable place to eat.

**Other Activities**

Discuss various options or any special activity with your guest. Reviewing this early during their stay may help plan meals and time around activities.

Discuss things your Ambassador may like to do in the free time spaces of the planned program. Suggest activities to your guests that previous guests, and you, enjoyed. Try to do what your Ambassador would most like to do but remember no one has time to do everything.

It is also desirable to discuss potential activities related to your guest’s occupation or hobbies. For example, on a free day a journalist may like to visit a local newspaper, an art lover may want to visit an art show or gallery.

The simplest things can sometimes make the best memories – a visit to a grocery store, chatting with a neighbour, learning slang language, walking the dog, or what a toy is and how to use it.

Ask if other Ambassador friends are staying in another host home close by. Perhaps they would like to share some activities with them.

If you attend a particular religious congregation, invite your guests along. They may go, or may rather attend a congregation of their own choosing. If you go regularly and they choose not to, let them entertain themselves while you go.

Many guests will enjoy the opportunity to shop. Discuss whether they would like to go alone or prefer to go with you. If they choose to go alone, be sure to discuss transport and time details and make sure they have your address and telephone number.

Some Hosts give their Ambassador a small gift. This is an entirely personal choice and is not a requirement. If you do want to provide your guests with some souvenirs, choose something small to make it easy to take back to their home.

**A HOSTING SITUATION THAT POSES A REAL PROBLEM**

Before you panic in any situation remember that Friendship Force Hosts are expected to possess and exercise a great deal of **TACT** and **DIPLOMACY** in solving problems which may arise between Ambassador and Host. Please think about this and call for help only when serious problems occur.

Do try to communicate with your Ambassador about problems, which may be resolved with minor alterations and still respect your guest’s situation. When all else fails, then quietly telephone the Journey Host Coordinator for help in a manner which is respectful of your guest. Don’t cause them to ‘LOSE FACE’.

For some hosts, this will be their first Friendship Force experience. You are not only acting as a host but as a salesperson for The Friendship Force. Remember that many problems will work themselves out with time or tact and it is only for a few days. Many ‘problem situations’ can be attributed to jet lag or culture shock and are often the basis for amusing stories when your guests depart and you are a bit more relaxed.

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