

It was August 15 that I got to America as an exchange student for a year. The first time I stepped into the airport I said to myself, “I am safe for a year. I don’t have to worry or even think about my security.”

As I started my life in America, I went through lots of experiences, which made me learn the real face of life and how to face life. Everyone around me was asking me, “Why did you choose to be an exchange student?” And my answer was always that I wanted to learn more about life and let other people know my country. I also told them we needed to learn how America was built, how the people worked together to build their country, because now Afghanistan need to be rebuilt so we need to learn from the countries who passed this way. We cannot just wait for other people to build our country. We need to get together and put our minds together.

My experience started with my history class. In U. S. History One, we studied how America was found for the first time by Columbus, and the American Revolution, and how people worked together with honesty and strong minds. When America’s election started, it was very important and exciting to me, because it was the first time that I had seen an election. The most important part for me was that the two parties compete. I remember when two candidates debated on TV, I was amazed, and I saw that everybody was working for the country, for the country they love even they are of different parties. But after one became president the people accepted him because they love their country and want it to be peaceful.

School in America was really different from my home school and the things that I learned from school in America I believe that I would not be able to learn anywhere else.

From school in my host country I got to know different kinds of people. I not only learned about other people. I also found myself. I got more confident. I found what my opinions are. I found out what skills I have.

I took Choir, U.S. History, Algebra Two, English, French Two and Chemistry. The system of teaching in America is very different from the school I used to go in Afghanistan. There, we needed to memorize everything from books by reading it over and over, but in my American school we memorize the important parts of the books by practicing and by doing experiments, having debates, and drawing conclusions. After all this, the information gets into your mind very easily because you understand it.

After school, I did basketball, which was really good for me. Being on a team which is united and makes a difference in a little community like a school teaches people to work together.

After my basketball session, I started to do volunteer work, which I found the most enjoyable work in the world. I joined Amnesty international and LEO club (which is for people who can't see). It was in the morning before the school starts. It was amazing for me how much people love each other and care about each other and not only their own selves but other people of other countries and try to be helpful. I found America a country of peace and freedom. The people of America work together not only for their own freedom and peace but also for other people in world.

Girl from Afghanistan YES program 2004-2005