



Afghanistan

Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program



The Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program advances mutual understanding between the United States and countries with significant Muslim populations by bringing students (ages 15-17) to the U.S. to study at a high school and live with an American host family for up to one year. To date, approximately 2000 students have participated in the program. The 2007-2008 program accommodates 717 students from 28 countries and territories living in communities throughout the U.S. Since its inception in 2004, the YES-Afghanistan program has brought an average of 40 students to the U.S. each year. In 2008, this number will increase to 50.

EDUCATION

YES-Afghanistan promotes international security and peace by teaching American and foreign participants about each other, alleviating misunderstanding, and making for a better informed citizenry able to deal more effectively with international issues. Exchange participants attend classes in an American high school and gain familiarity with the American education system.

EXCHANGES

YES-Afghanistan expands communication between the people of the United States and partner countries in the interest of promoting mutual understanding and respect. Two-way learning is the norm over the period of the exchange, which lasts up to one academic year. These long-term exchanges lead to long-term relationships between participants and Americans and result in a greater understanding of the essence of America.

ENGAGEMENT

YES-Afghanistan helps students acquire an understanding of American values, the qualities of leadership, and important elements of a civil society, including concepts such as civic responsibility and volunteerism, the idea that citizens can and do take the initiative to deal with societal problems, and an awareness of and respect for the rule of law.

Programmatic Snapshots

- YES alumni in Afghanistan organize over 500 high school students, community members, and members of local government in their “Our City is Our Home” clean-up project.
- A YES-Afghanistan participant, while on program, raises over \$22,000 toward the building of the first library in his hometown in Afghanistan.
- YES students in Iowa attend the signing of a proclamation celebrating International education Week with Iowa Senator Beall.
- As of spring 2008, the YES-Afghanistan program has brought nearly 150 Afghan high school students to the U.S.

EMPOWERMENT

Throughout the exchange, students develop leadership skills that they put to use upon their return home. As they share what they have learned, they make a difference in their home communities by initiating activities that build on acquired skills and experiences gained in the United States. Alumni have taken part in beach cleanups, volunteer English language teaching, documentary making, giving presentations on American life and culture, and many other activities that have bettered their communities.

Program Administration

The YES program receives an annual allocation from Congress, which has entrusted the United States Department of State (DOS) with responsibility for

administration of the program. American Councils for International Education, a grantee organization, is responsible for recruitment and selection, placement of students with families and in schools, monitoring of students while they are in the U.S., acting as a liaison with natural families in Afghanistan, and coordination of alumni activities.

For information on hosting, or how you can get involved, contact:

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