



POSTED ON **SEPTEMBER 4, 2018** IN RUSSIAN

My Second Family in Latvia

Halle is from Baltimore, MD and participated in the 2018 Russian summer program in Latvia.

Before I came to live in Latvia for six weeks I knew that I wanted to live in a host family with siblings. I wanted to get the opportunity to bond with someone my age from a different culture than my own. Luckily, I got matched up with a wonderful family with 3 daughters. I'll never forget the time when I met the youngest of three host siblings, the 2 year old named Veronica, who looked at me with as much surprise as I had to see her. Although I was older than my three host sisters, I often felt like the youngest one. At the beginning of the program I had trouble comprehending my host family and I felt like could express myself as well as the 2 year old in the household. But, everyone was so patient with me even at times when I didn't understand. If I needed any help at all they supported me just like my family would back home. Even when my host family was as busy as any family of 5, they always made sure I was taken care of.



My host family made me feel included every second of the way. My host mom never missed a chance to invite me to every family gathering including Veronica's 2nd birthday party. I even got to visit their relative's house where they showed me a photo album with baby pictures of my host sisters. I never felt like I wasn't a part of the family because they were always happy to bring me along. I loved taking late night strolls with my host family and playing board games until past midnight.



The biggest surprise as of all was on my birthday, July 23rd. Little did I know that my host family planned a surprise party for me. I didn't even know they were aware of when my birthday was and I did not expect a thing. When I got home I was shocked to see large balloons reading 'Happy Birthday' hanging in the apartment. They took time out of their day to make a big meal for me and even gave me gifts so I could feel special. Even though they have only known me for four weeks they made sure that my 18th birthday was a very happy one.

This is just one example of the kindness they have shown me while living with them.

My host family made living in Daugavpils an amazing experience. They always made me feel safe and cared for. I hope that from this experience I opened their eyes to the perspective of Americans in the same way that I have a new insight into the lives of Latvians. I learned that the lives of Americans and Latvians have differences, but we can still sit down and play Connect Four together.