Experience, Knowledge and Friendship

Friendship Family

International Student Information Packet
Friendship Family Program

What is the Friendship Family Program?
Friendship Family is a successful program run by the International Student Services (ISS) that links international students with local St. Thomas families. Founded on the conviction that we should learn from each other, the program provides cultural experience for community members and helps international students experience true Minnesota culture in American families. Our goal is to make St. Thomas community a home away from home for international students!

How do I join?
The first step in joining this program is to fill out an application that can be found on the ISS website. Once you have filled out the application we will do our best to match you with a local family according to the preferences listed on your application.

Before you arrive at St. Thomas we will share your information with your friendship family so they can arrange your arrival. Having a friendship family is very helpful in your initial adjustment to St. Thomas. If possible, they will pick you up from the airport and have you stay with them at their house for the first few days before the residence halls open.

If I join, what will I be doing with my friendship family?
When you first arrive, your friendship family will strive to create a smooth adjustment for you by showing you around the St. Paul area- showing you where to shop and helping you move into your residence hall. Throughout the year your friendship family will invite you over for family dinners, holidays, and other various social activities. The main purpose is to create a sense of home for you at St. Thomas while also providing local families a wonderful opportunity to bring a different culture into their home. ISS will also be in communication with you throughout the year to check in and invite you to special events.
Expectations & Guidelines

International participants of Friendship Family are expected:

- to maintain regular communication with their friendship family - returning phone calls, emails and other forms of communication in a timely manner
- to meet with their family at least once a month
- to respect traditions, religious and political beliefs of their friendship family
- to facilitate a cultural exchange
- to be flexible in perception of another culture
- to complete participation surveys/ evaluations

Local Families participating in Friendship Family are expected:

- to attend the Friendship Family orientation at the end of the summer
- to maintain regular communication with their student throughout the year - returning phone calls, emails and other forms of communication in a timely manner
- to meet with their partner at least once a month
- to facilitate the student’s adjustment to a new cultural and academic environment
- to introduce the student to an American culture
- to participate in special events organized by ISS
- to be excited and open to learning about a new culture
- to respect religious and political beliefs of the student, as well as his/her cultural traditions
- to complete participation surveys/ evaluations
For more information contact:

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