MERCY AMBASSADORS EXCHANGE PROGRAM:

ARGENTINA 2022-2023

**Program and Process Overview**

Colegio Santa Ethnea is a co-ed college preparatory secondary school with an enrollment of under 300 students sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas in Bella Vista, Buenos Aires, Argentina. In late January/February 2023, a select group of sophomore and junior boys and girls from St. Ethnea’s will travel to Louisville where they will be hosted by and attend school with students/families from Assumption High School and Mercy Academy (girls) and Trinity High School (boys). In June 2023, the Assumption/Mercy/Trinity host students will travel to Buenos Aires, attend Colegio Santa Ethnea in Bella Vista, and live with the students they hosted in January/February. Students at the four schools apply to participate in the program and undergo a careful screening process; because the families of the students who participate are an essential part of the exchange, a portion of the application is also completed by one of the student’s parents; all four participating schools agree to follow the same guidelines and collaborate to set common rules and policies. Beyond that, each of the three Louisville schools runs its exchange program with St. Ethnea independently.

After interviewing the applicants, a selection committee (made up of one or more administrators, Spanish teachers, and counselors), will choose the Assumption students to participate in the exchange program. Personnel at Assumption and St. Ethnea will work to match participating students based on interests to the greatest extent possible. Once matched, students begin communicating with each other. From the time they are selected (usually in October/November), AHS participants begin working together to make plans for hosting their exchange partners.

In addition to the program objectives listed below, participating students develop confidence and experience a sense of achievement as they travel to/from internationally; while traveling with a group, they travel unattended and are not accompanied by adult school personnel.

**Program Objectives**

**For students to:**

* expand their knowledge and experience of the "circle of Mercy"
* further their knowledge of Spanish
* get to know the work of the Sisters of Mercy in different places
* get to know different cultures
* learn to adjust to the lifestyle of the place they visit
* and learn to be a caring host and exhibit Mercy hospitality.

Participant Requirements & Characteristics

1. **Assumption students who take part in the exchange must be in the upper two levels of Spanish when they go to Argentina (completed Spanish III or IV) and should have earned at least a B in their previous Spanish classes**
2. **because they may not have already graduated in June 2023 when they travel to Argentina, only students who will be sophomores or juniors during the 2022-2023 school year may apply; NOTE: students who may want to participate in the Governor’s Scholars Program after their junior year need to apply for this exchange program when they are sophomores**
3. **important note: qualified sophomores are considered on an equal basis with qualified juniors; preference is NOT given to juniors when participants are selected**
4. **they travel for a 4-week period during their summer holidays (June)**
5. **they are hosted by the families of the Argentine students who stayed with them and attended Assumption in late January/February**
6. **they attend classes in the host school**
7. **the student’s family is responsible for obtaining her passport (about $135), airline tickets (typically $1,700-$2,000; may use Delta SkyMiles to purchase), medical and travel insurance (about $125), and spending money**
8. **each student pays a $125 program fee to help defray costs to the schools and purchases exchange program sweatshirts for herself and her exchange student (about $60 total)**
9. **students are good representatives of Assumption High School and live Mercy values in their daily lives**
10. **in order to participate in the selection, students must submit an application form signed by their parents (with a couple of questions also answered by her parents)**
11. **students/families agree to follow the MAP COVID-related requirements and provide the school with needed documentation**
* participating students and families must be fully vaccinated (including boosters if available) to the extent possible
* students will be required to have medical travel insurance that provides coverage for any and all COVID-related medical treatment and associated expenses
* if the exchange student contracts COVID-19 while traveling, the situation will be assessed by personnel from Colegio Santa Ethnea and Assumption in consultation with her parents and host parents; required isolation/quarantine would be in the in the host home
* if a host student or family member contracts COVID-19 while hosting, the situation will be assessed by personnel from Colegio Santa Ethnea and Assumption in consultation with the exchange student’s parents and the host parents to determine how to best handle any required isolation/quarantine and the living arrangements for the exchange student given all the particulars of the situation
* students will abide by all national, local, and school health and safety guidelines in effect (and which are subject to change at any time and without notice) while they are traveling to/from and in Argentina/the United States, including but not limited to, being tested for COVID-19, providing proof of vaccination status, wearing an appropriate well-fitting face mask, practicing social distancing, etc.
1. **because parents are adult volunteers working with students, once selected, host parents MUST submit proof of automobile insurance and copies of their driver’s licenses, undergo a DMV background check, undergo criminal and sexual misconduct background checks, and attend a** Safe Environment Training session sponsored by the Archdiocese of Louisville (offerings are provided during the day and evening and are listed on the archlou.org website)
2. the selection of participants is carried out by a committee made up of one or more administrators, Spanish teachers, and counselors; the committee will review each applicant’s application, school records, and information about the student gathered from the student’s teachers

Criteria considered in the selection of students who take part in the foreign exchange program

* representation of Assumption’s mission and values: faith, compassion, integrity, excellence
* open-mindedness, respect for other people, and the ability to adjust to a new school, culture, ethnic background, and, possibly, religion
* school performance during previous and current year: grades, attendance, discipline
* commitment to a drug-, alcohol-, and tobacco-free lifestyle
* involvement in school and community activities but has adequate time to devote to being a good host
* commitment to the Mercy charism and values in their daily lives
* flexibility when facing new or unexpected situations
* commitment to others, friendliness
* ability to communicate in Spanish and willingness to “stretch” in speaking a non-native language
* interest shown in the program

Hosting the Argentine students

Preparations prior to their arrival

1. exchange team meetings (monthly from time selected-December; twice a month January, March -May)
2. communication with the Argentine student and St. Ethnea school personnel
3. communication to the rest of the school to prepare them to welcome our visitors
4. school decoration (welcome posters with the Argentine students’ photographs and names)
5. exploration of the subject of multiculturalism to gain deeper insight into the significance of the exchange
6. invitation to all the teachers at school to join in with their classes in meaningful class activities

Activities organized by the school during their stay

1. welcome activities at Louisville international airport, at school, and with host families
2. school orientation
3. gift of some school garment (T-shirt)
4. everyday lunch is provided (at no charge) by the school
5. schedule of classes with host students and others as needed
6. participation in school events and service and extracurricular events
7. regular follow-up activities to ensure students’ emotional well-being and their understanding of our culture
8. final holistic evaluation activity
9. lunch with the administrative team to share students’ feelings and comments on the exchange
10. farewell events at school and the Louisville international airport

Visiting Argentina

Activities organized by the school during your stay

1. welcome at Ezeiza International Airport , at school, and with host families
2. gift of some school garment
3. everyday lunch is provided (at no charge) by the school
4. classes in the last years of high school; Spanish classes
5. participation in projects in Kindergarten, Elementary, and High School
6. participation in pastoral service activities
7. everyday follow-up activities to ensure students’ emotional well-being and their understanding of Argentine culture
8. final holistic evaluation activity
9. students-Board of Directors meeting to share students’ feelings and comments on the exchange
10. farewell events at school and at the Ezeiza airport

**Tentative Timeline for 2022-2023**

**Thursday, September 22 Student applications (with parent and student signatures) due via email before midnight**

**October Student interviews and participant selection**

**October/November Student-parent meeting (mandatory), $125 program fee due**

**October/November Host parents provide proof of automobile insurance, undergo various background**

**checks, and attend Archdiocesan Safe Environment Training**

October/November Student pairings announced; apply for passports

January 2023 Student-parent meeting (mandatory); copies of passports due

Late January/February Host students from Argentina

February/March Airline ticket purchase

May Student-parent meeting (mandatory); travel forms & health information due

June Travel to Argentina

**If you are interested but would like more information or have questions,**

**stop by and see Mrs. Baughman in the Atrium during lunches**

**on Monday, September 12.**

**If your parents would like more information or have questions,**

**they may call or email Mrs. Baughman or Mrs. Culver.**

**If you want to apply for this program, email Mrs. Baughman and ask her to send you an application. Applications must be completed and returned via email by midnight on Thursday, September 22.**

**AHS program personnel:**

Cindi Baughman, dean of students, program director (cindi.baughman@ahsrockets.org; 502-271-2503)

Katie Culver, service learning coordinator, assistant program director (katie.culver@ahsrockets.org; 502-271-2597)

Jared Ramirez, Spanish teacher, program assistant