The Philippine Youth Leadership Program is a project funded by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.
Homestay Handbook

Overview

The NIU International Training Office developed this Homestay Handbook to help prepare American families to host the participants of the Philippine Youth Leadership Program (PYLP) from Mindanao, Philippines. This handbook contains cultural information, guidelines, and helpful tips for hosting these youth and adult PYLP participants in your home.

PYLP Year 11-Program Overview

The theme for the program is “Environmental Leadership in the Philippines: Developing Youth as Agents of Change and Ecological Activism”. NIU, through its partner institution in the Philippines – the Filipino Foundation selected 24 Muslim and non-Muslim youth and 4 adult leaders from the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and surrounding areas. This intensive four-week U.S. exchange program focuses on the central themes of civic education, leadership, respect for diversity, and community engagement. The sub-theme is environmental education and advocacy. PYLP Year 12 will develop a cadre of leaders with a strong sense of civic responsibility and commitment to community development, with specific understanding of the global importance of environmental advocacy and the role of youth as agents of ecological change. The program not only provides new knowledge and experience for the 28 participants but also prepares them for a lifetime of leadership and community service in Mindanao. It will empower them to become catalysts for social change. Besides their time in DeKalb, the participants will visit Chicago, other IL communities, and culminates with a 3 night stay in the Washington, D.C. area visiting memorials, museums, the State Department, the Capitol and the Institute of Peace.

In Case of Emergency

The participants have Health Insurance through the U.S. Department of State’s Accident and Sickness Program for Exchange Students. The participants are instructed to keep their insurance card with them at all times. In case of serious injury, please follow your family’s protocol for hospitalization and emergency care needs. Contact the ITO program officers (listed below) to make them aware of the situation. A $25 copay is required of the participant up front for each visit. ($75 for emergency room visits.)

NOTE THAT YOU HAVE A COPY OF THEIR PARENT SIGNED MEDICAL RELEASE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Home</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Lina Davide-Ong</td>
<td>753-9547</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Susan Russell</td>
<td>753-8577</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leslie Shive</td>
<td>753-9546</td>
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</tbody>
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Discuss with your participants any food allergies, dietary restrictions, and all other medical needs they may have. Impress upon them that it is important to share that information with you so that you can attend to any medical or dietary needs they may have. The participants have been instructed to be up front about any medical conditions or food allergies they may have for the same purpose. You have a copy of their medical release form to take to any medical facility the student needs to visit.
Required Work

1. The students who participate in PYLP are required to develop an ACTION PLAN they will implement in their respective communities when they return to Mindanao. The training at NIU provides them the tools they need to effectively develop, initiate, execute, and then evaluate their own projects.

2. Each participant is assigned 3-5 days where they will submit a formal journal. They are encouraged to journal their experiences every day, but not required. The participants have access to campus computer labs at NIU where they should complete these entries. Encouragement on the part of the host parents to do this daily work in a timely fashion is appreciated.

3. The final phase of the program is the implementation of their projects in Mindanao. They are expected to participate in follow-on activities where they report and update NIU and the U.S. Department of State on the project implementation.

Family Visits-This information is given to the participants.

- Visits are allowed only in the evenings when there is nothing else planned on the calendar of activities.
- When with host families, visits from relatives and friends are strictly off-limits.
- Five days prior to a relative/friend’s visit, you have to request permission from Dr. Sue by email to srussell@niu.edu.
- Include the names and contact info of relatives/friends who wish to visit you and/or take you out to dinner.
- “No travel during the program” policy is strictly enforced!

Homestay Handbook
The Hosting Experience

The International Training Office wants you to know that your family is an integral part of the PYLP experience. The homestay time is an opportunity for both the Filipino students and your family to learn about each others’ cultures and customs. Being a host family offers the students a unique view into the daily routines of American life. For the host family, it is a chance to cultivate relationships with people from different parts of the world and have a greater sense of this “global village” in which we live. We encourage you and your family to treat your guests as members of the family, offering them a realistic introduction to American life. Our primary goal is that you and your new “family members” have a pleasant homestay experience.

When we select our host families, we look for the following qualities:

- A sincere interest in learning about other cultures.
- A willingness to treat the participants as members of the family.
- A willingness to spend time with the program participants, to engage them in conversation and include them in family activities.
- An openness to accept students from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds, cultures, and religions.
- Flexibility, understanding, patience, and the ability to effectively communicate with the participants to avoid misunderstandings.
- A willingness to cooperate and communicate with the NIU International Training Office and Leslie Shive, the Host Family Program Coordinator.
**Group Profile**

- The participants of PYLP are selected through a competitive application and interview process. All have outstanding academic credentials, are leaders in their communities in some capacity, and are fluent in English.

- The participants represent the ethnic and religious diversity of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and surrounding provinces in the southern Philippines. ARMM is comprised of five provinces and one city: Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, Sulu, Maguindanao, and Marawi City.

- The participants are interested in learning about the cultural similarities and differences between the United States and the Philippines, best accomplished through the host family component of the program, and meeting with American peers and other individuals who represent the diversity of American society.

2. **SALAH** (compulsory prayer) is offered five times a day. It is a practical demonstration of faith, and keeps a believer in touch with her Creator. The benefits of Salah are far-reaching, long lasting and immeasurable. It develops in a believer the qualities of self-discipline, steadfastness and obedience to the Truth, leading her to be patient, honest and truthful in the affairs of her life.

3. **ZAKAH** (welfare contribution) is a compulsory payment from a Muslim’s annual savings. It can only be spent on helping the poor, the needy, and the oppressed, and for the general uplift of society. Zakah is one of the fundamental principles of Islamic economy, which insures an equitable society where everyone has a right to contribute and share.

4. **SAWM** is the annual obligatory fasting during the month of Ramadan—the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. A Muslim, every day of this month, refrains from eating, drinking, smoking, and sex, from dawn to sunset. Sawm develops a believer’s moral and spiritual standard and keeps him away from selfishness, greed, extravagance and other vices. Sawm is an annual training program that increases a Muslim’s determination to fulfill his obligation to the Almighty Lord.

5. **HAJJ** (pilgrimage to the House of Allah) is an annual event, obligatory on those Muslims who can afford to undertake it, at least once in their lifetime. It is a journey to the “House of Allah” (Al-Ka’bah) in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, in the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar. Hajj symbolizes the unity of humankind; Muslims from every race and nationality assemble together in equality and fraternity to worship their Lord.
Islam, the religion of over 1.2 billion in the world, provides humankind with a unified view about the purpose of our creation and existence, our ultimate destiny and our place among other creatures. It is a way of life that is in complete conformance with nature, and with reason, logic and science.

The Arabic word Islam means voluntary surrender to the will of Allah and obedience to His commands. Allah is an Arabic word, the proper name of God. Muslims prefer to use the word Allah rather than God. A person who freely and consciously accepts the Islamic way of life and sincerely practices it is called a Muslim.

**Five Pillars of Islam**

Islam has five pillars or basic foundations of action. Acting correctly and sincerely on these foundations transforms a Muslim’s life into one that is in harmony with nature and thus in conformity with the will of the Creator. Faithful practice of these duties inspires her to work towards the establishment of justice, equality and righteousness in society, and the eradication of injustice, falsehood and evil.

1. **SHAHADAH** (testimony), the first of the five basic foundations, is the declaration knowingly and voluntarily, of: *La ilaha illal lah Muhammedur rasulul lah*. “There is no god except Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah”. This declaration is the basis of all actions in Islam,

It is important to discuss house rules and expectations with your guests on the first night of their stay. Instruct them on how to operate appliances and electronic media that are available for their use. Encourage participation in your family’s activities as well as assisting with household chores, such as preparing meals, setting/clearing the table, kitchen and general cleaning tasks, and/or gardening. Their participation in everyday family activities is a vital component of the homestay experience. The two free weekend days should represent a typical weekend for your family. It is not necessary to do anything out of the ordinary.

As part of your family, your guests will be expected to respect family house rules and follow them. Be clear about your expectations. The next few pages include a checklist of items that you and your family should discuss with your guests based on feedback from past host family participants. This should only serve as a guideline; please discuss with them any rules that apply to your home.
**Homestay Handbook**

**Important topics to discuss**

**Use of Kitchen Appliances & Kitchenware**
- Refrigerator access
- Microwave usage & limits
- Dishwasher use or dishwashing procedure
- Pantry access
- Which dishes are microwavable & what dishes they are allowed to use.

**Use of the Shower/Tub and sinks**
- How to turn the water off and on; how to work the shower
- How to turn on the hot and cold water!
- Bathing schedule (shower in the morning or evening, once a day)

**Use of the Phone**
- Appropriate times to make and receive calls
- Contact Numbers (Please prepare a list they can carry with them at all times; include your address.)

If you allow them to make international calls, please make sure they understand that they are to use **phone cards**. If their families wish to call them, remind the students that their families should NOT call collect and understand the time difference.

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**Cultural Notes**

**Directness:** When first offering something to your guest, do not take no for an answer. Your Filipino guest may refuse what is being offered at first, but will most likely accept it after a second or third offer. This is just a nuance of Filipino culture. Do not feel that your guest is not enjoying your hospitality if offers are refused the first time.

**Customs:** Participants may seem at a loss as to what to do at the table or around the house. Take the opportunity to explain American customs and traditions. Demonstrate how particular foods are eaten if they seem uncertain. Forks and large spoons are the preferred utensils.

**Rice:** Rice is a staple food in many Asian countries and the Philippines is no exception. If the students have a choice, they may choose rice **with** every meal. Keep this in mind when shopping and/or preparing meals. (They also like pasta that is noodles.)
Bedroom—Each participant has a room with a bed. They may share a room with their fellow participants. A desk and chair for studying and a bureau or closet to store their clothes are helpful but not required.

Transportation—During their stay with their host families, the PYLP participants are expected to fully participate in the scheduled workshops and fieldtrips of the program. Host families provide transportation to campus, except on free days, to attend these events. Drop off guests at or before 8:00 a.m. and pick them up at 5 p.m. unless alternate pick up times have been pre-determined. There may be times when programs run late; in that event, the host families will be notified as quickly as possible to reschedule pick up times. Refer to “Pick up and Meals Schedule”

Kitchen/Meals—The participants are expected to join their host families for breakfast and most dinners during their stay with you. One full weekend with the host family is free from program events to allow families to spend quality time with their guests. Host family provides meals on those days. Let participants know ahead of time if and when they will need to prepare their own meals, including breakfast. During the homestay, some participants may want to prepare a traditional Filipino meal for your family. Let them know if you are willing to let them use the kitchen to cook for this purpose, and other times.

Food: Be aware that participants may be reluctant to tell you about specific foods they like or dislike. Encourage them to talk about any dietary or religious restrictions and/or food allergies they may have. Muslims do not eat pork. We are encouraging them to take advantage of this opportunity to try many new things!
**Homestay Handbook**

**Important topics to discuss**

**Use of Laundry Facilities**
- How to operate the washer/dryer
- Where the detergent, bleach, etc. is located & how much to use with their laundry
- Appropriate times to do their laundry

**Having Friends/Guests Over**
- Asking permission
- Appropriate times to have guests over

**Household Chores**
- Keeping their bedroom neat & clean
- Helping around the house
- Helping in the garden/outside area

**Other Family Expectations**
- Morning & Evening Routines
- Bedtime
- Wake up time (alarm clock?)
- Transportation Schedule/Routine
- How to handle daily program updates
- Weekend Routines
- Emergency procedures
- Religious views & practices
- Family Activities
- How they are to refer to family members
  - Parents
  - Siblings
  - Family
  - Other Relatives
- Treatment and handling of family pets