

Friendly families sought to host international students at holidays_120803

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Friendly families sought to host international students at holidays

By George Henson

Staff Writer

DALLAS—Dallas-area families looking for a cultural exchange this holiday season will find just that through the Friendship International House program at Dallas Baptist University.

For more than 20 years, international students at DBU have shared the Christmas holidays with American host families. The students spend their evenings and weekends with their host families and take part as a group in planned weekday activities. Host families provide a place to sleep, some meals and transportation to activities.



Jim and
Margaret
Gayle pose
with two
international
students who
celebrated
the
Christmas
season with
them last
year through
Friendship
House
International.

Students visit the Sixth Floor Museum, Tuba Christmas Concert at Thanksgiving Square, City Hall, Fair Park, Six Flags and go horseback riding at Camp El Har.

They spend Christmas Day with their host families and attend church services with them.

The DBU program sprang from a nationwide program of the Southern Baptist Convention. That program folded in 2000, but leaders of the DBU program, along with a handful of others across the nation, kept their programs going.

“The students are just incredible,” said Cookie Stokes, one of the DBU leaders. “Most of them have never been in an American home before, and the holidays are about the only opportunity for that to happen.”

Last year, several students from Dallas went to Murray, Ky., to participate in the program there. “Our hope is that we will have enough host families

this year for some of their students to come to Dallas so that we can reciprocate," Stokes said.

Families desiring to participate are asked to sign up as soon as possible, but a Dec. 12 deadline has been established. Call Stokes at (972) 771-3363, ext. 23, or Delores Kube at (214) 391-5511.

"We've had families with children and families without children participate, and it works either way," Stokes said. "These students are in a Christian environment at DBU, but they really enjoy being a part of what they call an American Christmas."

Dallas Baptist Association and various churches fund the program.

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