

Love Doesn't Stop At The U.S. Borders

How our experience hosting ETC exchange students changed our hearts and minds

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[/EINPresswire.com/](http://EINPresswire.com/) -- We are the Marez family - two parents, one dog, and 5 children. We learned about hosting through a friend who posted about the

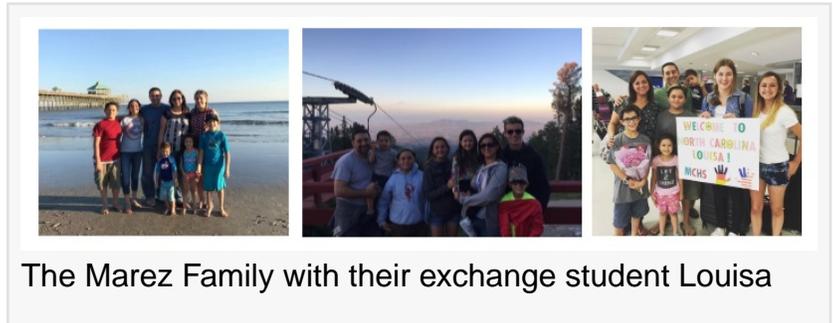
need for host families on Facebook. One of my close friends from my junior year in high school was a German foreign exchange student, and I was immediately excited about the opportunity. Although my husband thought I might be crazy, we love having a house full of kids. So, we jumped in with 9 days left to find families for our school district. We ended up choosing a German son named Lukas. We

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Cassie Marez, ETC Host Mom

couldn't tell by his application how he would blend in with our family, but he ended up being a perfect fit. His sense of humor fit right in with our family's, and he brought a new sense of adventure to our home. We were stuck in the monotony of day to day life, soccer and water polo practice, scout meetings, PTA meetings, work etc. Lukas coming into our home opened our eyes to appreciate little things we took for granted about being American and about living in what we thought was a boring city.



The Marez Family with their exchange student Louisa

When Lukas left in June that following year, we felt a piece of our family missing. We thought we could never “replace” him and were hesitant to host again. It would never be that good again, right? We ended up relocating from Albuquerque, New Mexico to Charlotte, North Carolina that summer and were contacted about hosting again. We thought we would play it safe with a six-month commitment (we ended up wishing it was a full year) and decided to go forward with hosting Louisa from Germany. We took the plunge again and somehow hit the jackpot twice in a row! Although Louisa fit in with our family perfectly, it was in a very different way than Lukas did. Her differences were what made it great. Louisa didn't, in fact, replace Lukas, she just added to our international family. After hosting Louisa, we were hooked and have hosted another girl, an Italian named Francesca. Again, a perfect fit for our family, just in a different way. Just like our own children, whom we love equally but in very different ways, we have learned to love these children as our own. Hosting has been a blessing to our family and something I can't recommend enough. We have learned about Germany, Italy, and several other countries by being a part of the ETC community. But most importantly, we have learned about love.

About [Education](#), [Travel](#) & [Culture](#):

Education Travel & Culture is a non-profit [501(c)(3)] educational exchange organization. Its purpose is to promote international understanding and goodwill by providing high quality educational and cultural exchange programs in the United States and abroad. ETC provides inbound program opportunities for high school students throughout the world to study in an American high school and

live with an American family.

For more information, FAQs, or to apply to become a host family, visit www.edutrav.org or email Field Director, Brenda Ferland at bferland@edutrav.org

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