

WEST AMERICA AREA

FEBRUARY 2014



Bina Antarbudaya
The Indonesian Foundation for Intercultural Learning

Assalamualaikum.Wr.wb

Special speech from editor...

Assalamualaikum



First of all, I would like to say thanks to Allah SWT and to our prophet Muhammad SAW. And also thanks to Bina Antarbudaya, AFS/YES 2013, all my friends that want to spend their time to making the stories for the second newsletter, and for my partner in this newsletter. In this past couple months we already feel a lot of American cultures as our experienced in USA. The cultures combined together as our holiday season in USA. That is why we choose "Holiday Season" as our theme for the second newsletter. We experienced Halloween and probably all of us did trick or treat, we also celebrated thanksgiving and have a wonderful winter break, and there are a lot of things that we did in our exchange year. All of the events are include to American cultures and we want to share this culture to everybody. Sharing cultures is always be the one of our missions as exchange student and young ambassadors from Indonesia. Finally, I want to say sorry if I did something wrong before and I appreciate all of your efforts to make the second newsletter launch on time.

Warmest regards,

Fitria Adine Yasmine Belinda

NAME : SAMTO NG SAPUTRA WONGSO
CHAPTER : MEDAN
HOSTING PLACE : EUREKA, CA



PROUD TO BE A MINION



What is your favorite month of the year? In Humboldt Country, most people answer October. In October they like the cool weather, beautiful fall leaves, and Halloween. At the beginning of the month the local stores begin to sell Halloween decorations. People decorate their houses with spider webs, ghosts, giant spiders, pumpkins and more. “Haunted” spots and festivals flourish.

I was surprised to learn how important Halloween is to Americans. It was totally a fun month of celebration for me as an exchange student who had never considered Halloween a big event. Halloween gave me an American experience I had never expected.

My first Halloween experience was pumpkin carving. I had no idea how people make jack o’ lanterns from big pumpkins, so when a school club invited me to do pumpkin carving, I was excited to join them. Carving a pumpkin begins with cutting the top part of the fruit and getting rid of the seeds and hairy part inside. It is not an easy work since the slimy, hairy part sticks to the pumpkin meat. Extra muscles are needed to take it out.



After the inside is clean enough, then it’s time to carve. Because I did not know what should I drew on my very first pumpkin, I decided to carve “THIS IS MY FIRST PUMPKIN” and some simple emoticons below it. It took me about an hour to finish it. Although it was not as beautiful as others but I was proud with my first pumpkin. There was a certain feeling of satisfaction when I finished the artwork.

Costumes are an important part of the Halloween celebration. My host family and I had been talking about this for more than a month. I said to my host mom, “ Well, I think I am okay to dress up like everything except wearing a costume that related to spider.” We decided that I am going to dress up like a minion, an adorable yellow capsule-like creature in the movie “ Despicable Me”. It wasn’t easy to find a plain yellow hoodie or beanie. After we looked at many stores, I ended up by buying yellow t-shirts and styrofoam helmet. In order to look more like a minion, I learned to make the minion’s goggles from the internet. My host mom added pipe cleaners poking through the hat for hair as a final touch.

Dressing up for school is always fun for me. On Halloween morning, I was ready with my cute minion outfit. Madi was ready to rock the day with her awesome self-made “Iron Man” costume.

Halloween transformed the school into Disneyland. Students with costumes were everywhere in the school halls. I enjoyed the times when I was walking through the halls and random students would say, “OMG, that is so cuteeeeeeeee....”. I was super happy when some of my friends said that I was the best minion they had ever seen. Many people gave compliments to my goggles and my yellow styrofoam helmet hair.

It is not Halloween without trick-or-treat. When the day gets darker, children with their costumes knock on doors from one house to another, asking for candy. My host family already prepared a full bowl of candy bars. It was always such magical moments when we opened the door, because nothing is sweeter than children with their cute costumes, pails full of candy, and innocent shy face waiting in front of your house door saying “TRICK OR TREAT”. The most hilarious moment was when a preschooler girl showed up with her fairy knight princess ninja costume. She wore a pink princess tutu dress with wings at her back and a ninja turtle eye mask. I think her parents knew the exact strategy to make their daughter got tons of candy. Madi was hysterical when she saw the girl, and she ran directly to report this adorable little girl to Mom. They nominated it as the best costume of the day.

I am a little sad to know that October is over now. No more spider webs, pumpkins or any spooky stuffs showing up in houses' front yards. The Halloween celebration makes me feel too impatient to wait for other big days to come. I can't wait more until Thanksgiving and Christmas. I believe each celebration will give me many different and unique American experience that I have never thought about before.



Name : Tophan Putra
Chapter : Surabaya
Hosting Place : Bakersfield, CA



The Dry Christmas and Horse Head Mask



Hi everybody we met again. These past 3 months has been fabulous for me because of the holiday. I'm so glad that I came here and experience all the holidays that I've never try before. The Holiday season so far that I liked is Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas also the New Year's eve. Many fellow american friends that I had liked these holiday because of "No School" which that means no study.

Let's start with Halloween, the scariest holiday. On the halloween, I dressed up as a cowboy with a horse mask. My hardwork to get that mask was paid of in that night. The Halloween party was such a blast, with the fire and trick or treating. Its my first time to try to knock on random neighbour and trick or treating, wish that could happen in Indonesia. After we are done with that, we hangout near fire and eat some roasted marshmallows. My first halloween is such a good time.



The second American holiday season that I experience is Thanksgiving, "The Day of Overweight". I must say that I love eating and I recommend if you love eating, you should celebrate thanksgiving too. In thanksgiving day we had so much food wich make my eyes green as leaves on the summer. We had all the family members came all around the United states, and we ate all together. I must say that this is my second best holiday in US because of the food they had.

Third, is the Christmas. Most of my friends at school always talked about christmas even when thanksgiving was still aroud. Christmas is the best holiday ever that I celebrate in here. Its no wonder that most of kids and teenagers liked this holiday because they got many presents from their parents. I shop for my host family too. I bought a couple of presents for them. I got a broncos beanie and hat which I really loved. Im a broncos fan since I got here. Eventhough it's a small presents I really love it. I nominate Chirstmas the best holiday.

Last but not least is also New Year day. I don't consider this as a holiday but I somehow I like this New Year eve because we celebrate it for my American friend that had a birthday that day. We dance all night long with a 80's costume. It was so much fun to celebrate with your bestfriend. Also we did a polar bear plunge. Basically we jump in the pool which its really cold. But it was fun !

All this experience is fabulous, I like all of them. Im really glad that I went here and experience all of this. I hope some day I can still experience all of it. Thanks to all people that help me until I get here.



NAME : FITRIA ADINE
CHAPTER : MEDAN
HOSTING PLACE : ONTARIO, OR



A Piece of Heaven in My Life

Assalamualaikum(:
Holiday seasons! That's the best sentence to describe my story in the second newsletter.

Start from Halloween, I never celebrated Halloween before and it was my first Halloween. I did trick or treat which was I think kind a cool because I got a lot of candies and chocolates.

Next thing was celebrating thanksgiving with my host family. I never celebrated thanksgiving before and so, it was my first time to celebrate it in USA. We had family gathering and I had so much fun with my family. There were a lot of pies and food and of course TURKEY! One day before thanksgiving I made pies with my mom and we made about 6 pies. Pumpkin, lime meringue, blackberry, banana cream, and coconut cream were the kind of pies that we made. All I can is say I love thanksgiving!

After thanksgiving guess what is coming? Of course, Christmas! I think December is the month when everybody feels so happy in USA. I had a lot of activities in these past few months especially in December. My local coordinator has tradition with her kids every year. She brought us to go shopping in Boise town square and so, we can buy our presents to our family. This presents for me was my thanks presents to my host family.

And then, we had bowling Christmas party with all of exchange students in the next day. For the first time I played bowling I made 2 strikes and got 102 scores. I love bowling! My school day ? Of course being so busy. My time for community service ? Of course I got a lot in this month. I was so happy to study in USA because there was not final examination, all we have to do was just finished all of the assignment and do some tests but it depends on the teachers. And so in the December 20th I was saying happy holiday to everybody because that day was the beginning of winter break! Last night my host family did their tradition which is open presents and I got a lot stuffs



that I want. I got almamater T-shirt, pajamas, training clothes, 2 long sleeves shirt, headset, family photo album, watch, and many more. I was so grateful because I have them in my life. My African friend, Koudy Diallo, gives me Betsey Johnsn's watch and it was so beautiful. I love her so much! And when Christmas is coming everybody is happy. I was celebrating Christmas Eve at my aunt's house with all of my family and we had gifts exchange.



In the next day, CHRISTMAS was coming! My big family came to my house and we had dinner together. It was very good to see everybody was happy. I got a lot of presents from my big family too. After Christmas party was over and now it's time to relaxing. I spend a lot of my times with my family, reading books, watching movies, hot tubing, shopping and so much fun stuff that I did in my winter break.

In January I went to Disney World Florida for my mid year orientation. I had so much fun! I went to Epcot and Magic Kingdom Theme Parks. I was very happy in the happiest place on earth. There were a lot of magical attractions and beautiful places in Disney World. we did some workshop in the hotel and it was really fun! And in the next couple days, I had trip to McCall Idaho with my Local Coordinator and all of my foreign friends. We went to the ice-

skating ring, sliding, and feel the festival of Ice. Festival of Ice was one of the traditions in McCall Idaho when we can see all of the sculptures that made from ices. There were a lot of people came to McCall. I had so much fun! And when we walked through the festival I found a Chocolate & Candy's factory shop, it was homemade and it was so good.

All I can say in this holiday season was perfect and I couldn't ask for anything else. I was so grateful and thankful for Allah SWT, Both of my family, Bina Antarbudaya, AFS/YES 2013-2014, AYA/AIFS, Chapter Medan, and everybody that makes my dreams come true. Everybody that gives me chances to feel a piece of heaven in my life. I couldn't be more thankful and grateful than this. THANK YOU SO MUCH!



NAME : ADINDA CLARASATI
CHAPTER : SAMARINDA
HOSTING PLACE : ELK, WA

Yay Its Holiday!



School day off, christmas songs everywhere everytime, discounts, crowded traffic, family gathering. nothing more wonderful than that!:) the most beautiful time of the year, people said.

Winter wonderland

Eventhough not too much snow this year but i'm still so grateful to experience this white things that come from the sky which is sooo much fun, being freezing, went skiing, sliding and ice skating, but still time for eating icecream!

Sing for America

I do love singing so much, and so happy i got the opportunity to do christmas caroling in the elementary school and seeing those little kids with their excitement seeing foreign people. that was so adorable! and i also went to nursing home, got to meet elderly, although they have disabilities, they still could sing together and gave the best smile ever. that was really touching my heart. i also did duet with my placement sister from thailand at christmas concert and LDS church. we sung "O Holy Night" and found out my hostmom cried and also some other people.. that made me soo speechless. and the last one recently is on the assembly for Martin Luther King Jr, i got a chance to sing "Man in The Mirror" by Michael Jackson. that was one of the best day in my life ever!



Goodbye Crosscountry,hello basketball

Sport is so awesome! i'm not the athletic-type girl but in here i found out so many wonderful things with sport. yep, i never did any sport before. it is sooo sad that cross country season has ended, but i'm really excited for this basketball season! friends, coach, motivation, spirit, teamwork, games and many more!

Family

In the Spackman family, we have a lot of traditions. for christmas everyone will gather to the house and do fun stuffs. we do secret santa game, exchange gift, and my favorite one is mystery dinner. so, we have a list from appetizer to desert but in christmas ornament name, and then someone fill the list for us, that's what we get for dinner. it was fun!

I can't wait to share another experience with you all!

Love from Washington,

Dinda



Name : Anggia Aryandita
Chapter : Bandung
Hosting Place : Phoenix, Arizona



The End of 2013 and the Beginning of 2014

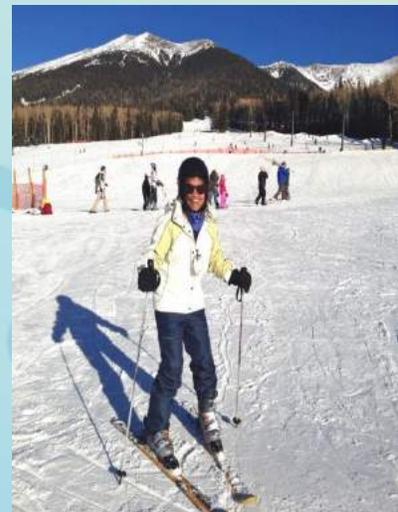
Who doesn't love holiday? I personally love this 2013 holiday season so much. It started with my very first American Christmas. At first, I was thinking my American Christmas would be similar as in the movies. It would be winter with a lot of snow, or so called white Christmas. Apparently I was wrong, there's no snow in Phoenix. Although it didn't match to my expectation, my Christmas was even so much better!

The day before Christmas we had dinner at my neighbor 's house, Elizabeth. It is a tradition for Goode Family to spend Christmas eve with Elizabeth family. Because we live in Arizona, Mexican food is a must. For desserts, we had many delicious choices. No wonder they were delicious because Mom and I were the one who made them. We were busy cooking in the kitchen from 11 and finished just right before the dinner. The cake as seen in the picture above was one of our masterpiece called "Little Santas Army", aren't they adorable?

After dinner, we went back to our house for the moment that I've been waiting for which was "Opening Presents" We sat on the sofa and Liz, my elder sister, distributed the presents to each of us. Surprisingly, there were a lot of presents for me! I didn't expect to receive that many, I was so happy. The Last time I got that many presents was probably on my 7th birthday. So we finally opened our Christmas presents and all of a sudden the living room turned to a complete mess, wrapping papers covered almost the entire floor! I got some Indonesian souvenirs for each of them. And then my very first Christmas ended perfectly, I feel really blessed!.

On Dec 28th my family and I went to Flagstaff, around 2 hours driving from Phoenix. We plan to go skiing there. On our way to Flagstaff, I saw snow for the first time! I was so excited, my dad stopped the car and let me out of the car to touch the snow. we went to the ski place on the next day. Because it was my first time to go ski, my parents suggested me to take a lesson. I took the lesson for 2 hours long. It was very helpful, I learnt how to use ski equipment properly, how to slide down and also how to stop. After I got the lesson, I was confident enough to ski with my brother John and my friend Lea. I fell several times, but that's the part of learning right? I was sweating even though the temperature was very cold. John, Lea, and I had sore all over our body the next day, but skiing was so much fun!!

On Dec 31st dad, mom, and I went for a roadtrip to California. It was one of my Christmas present. We went to Pasadena to see the Rose Bowl Parade. My new year's eve was just fine, but on January 1st we went to the parade and it was amazing! There were bands and floats. The bands were really good and their costumes



were lovely. It is a big honor to participate in the Rose Bowl Parade so the bands that got a chance to perform there must be really good. There was even one band came from Japan! The floats were just incredible. They were made of flowers, seeds, and barks; everything had to come from natural plant materials. Surprisingly, there was one float from Indonesia and it won an award! The float was so beautiful and colorful.



Indonesia's float in the Rose Bowl Parade

After the Rose Bowl Parade we went to Santa Monica. On our way to there, first we went to the famous Hollywood sign. I couldn't believe that I got a chance to be there and see it on my own eyes. Santa Monica has a beautiful beach. We walked around it and saw a beautiful sunset. The next day we went back to Los Angeles to see the Hollywood walk of fame. I was so excited when we got there, as how everyone else there. While I was walking there, I looked down to see the names written on the streets. To be concluded, my 2013 ended very nicely and I started 2014 with amazing experiences. My wish for this year, I hope I would be a better person and also have a great exchange year!



NAME : DENISA AMELYA KAWURYAN
CHAPTER : SEMARANG
HOSTING PLACE : LAS VEGAS, NV



Unforgettable Moment

We wish you a Merry Christmas. We wish you a Merry Christmas. We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Winter break, the best holiday that I ever have in my life.

Meeting new people, knowing each other, learning new things and absolutely exploring more about United States are really awesome. When the first time I heard about Mississippi river, I never imagine for going there one day. I never imagine to see directly what I watch about forest and snakes in United States. But, Now in the 31st of December 2013 at 12. 21 AM, I am sitting in front of computer, staying safely in the house surrounded by pine trees and green grass all over the place.



big

Las Vegas, the state where I am staying, is 98% different with **Mississippi**. Las Vegas that's popular with amusement place and hot weather is completely different with Mississippi that has humanity weather and countryside view. It has a ton of trees and cows. Finishing my last school day in 2013, made me really happy and thankful to the God. "Merry Christmas and Have a good holiday" is sentences that always I heard from people who passed me. Every people looked very happy and excited about long holiday that usually we called "winter break ". And, So am I ☺



Friday night my holiday was started, My family and I watched Ballet Performance in Lutheran High School in Las Vegas. My sister is one of the dancers in the show that we usually called "The Nutcracker Performance". She did amazing job. We gave her some red roses after finishing her show.

In Monday morning, we open our Christmas presents. I thought I will just get one specific gift from my host family, but I am definitely wrong. I got a lot from them. I got chocolate, sweater, Indonesian Bible (alkitab), new charger, t-shirt, Nutella, and so on. I gave them 2 materials and some souvenirs from East Kalimantan as a Christmas present. I also wrote my thank you cards for each of them. I am really happy, they like them so much. Although what I gave is not many as I got, but I hope that things will always help them remember about me and my country.



After lunch, we started our journey to Mississippi. We flight to [Utah](#) and [New Orleans](#). Aunt Becky, The coolest aunt in this family, picked us up in the airport at 10.30 in the night. Unfortunately, we did not stop just in the airport, we had to drive for 4 hours to go to where my host grandparents live. We arrive in their house in the morning. When I got up, " [Oh My God That's freaking cool](#)", I am staying in the middle of the jungle. That what's I thought. I saw another side of United States that I think just full with high building and businessman.

Although I have to do adaptation again with all the things around me, but I tried my best to know more about them and learn many things that can I get. Blessed me, they are really nice people. I got more Christmas present from them. [We did fireworks in Christmas eve, we had big dinner in Christmas day, We ate Catfish in the best place in our region, we watch Hobbit in the movie, we played game together, we went to Gulf Mexico, we drank the best Ice Cream that I ever had, we played softwar with fake gun that made me really nervous and many more.](#) Although sometimes when I was seeing them together, I missed my family but I learnt many things from my holiday. Although I am new member in their family, but they are really kind to me. They told me anything that I don't know, they use their holiday time as well as possible with the family, maybe that's why American more success than many country in the world. Most of them is really nice to each other. I hope I will be a great person that also can give good value to many people around the world.



Amin

NAME : GWENDA PRAYA KINANTI
CHAPTER : SEMARANG
HOSTING PLACE : DINUBA, CA



Déjà Vu

Holiday~~! One of those super duper fun moments I've been waiting to experience! There are a lot of holiday here, American people really love holiday, I guess ;)

Halloween, Thanksgiving, and.... Christmas! I love all the things I've done on those holidays, but if I have to pick only one, then I will say it will be Christmas.

Don't get me wrong, I'm a Muslim here. But I really enjoyed Christmas, despite it being the religious



day for some people, I found it very warm and nice holiday when family come together, sharing moments they don't get to share when they were apart. Reminds of Idul Fitri. Early in the November, stores have been cramped with Christmas decoration, gifts and all Christmas-things stuffs! It made me even more exciting (even though my host dad was freaked out. How come they sell Christmas stuff in November, he said. LOL)

I was happy I finished my first semester with a pretty good grades, and on the last day of school, (it was Dec 20), I gave out gifts for my closest friends and teacher at school. Look who's playing Santa here. I felt really good that I gave them something to remind them of me. (Why does it sound narcissistic?). But it was good.

That's how I gave finishing-touch on my first semester. With a super duper exciting feeling of holiday spirit!

My dad's son came from Colorado that holiday, and I'm happy that for the very first time in my life, I have someone to call "big brother". Although of course he was not my real brother, but still, it was an awesome feeling. We spend the vacation pretty much at home, my dad with my brother caught up on whatever left from the last time they met. I got a new friend, my own niece! (I wonder if I can call my brothers daughter as my niece.) I got to know Merlin and Cookie (their super hyperactive dog and grumpy angry cat). And the feeling of home in this vacation blasted to me--it was exactly like my family, as in we knew each other for forever.

I wish I could see snow that vacation, but since my host dad has this obsession about burying me in the snow, and sadly there is no snow in Dinuba unless I go up to the mountain, and even if I go up to the mountain, the snow is not piling up--yet. So we decided to wait, and spending the Christmas vacation at home.

Spending vacation at home--sounds boring, huh? But surprisingly, I loved it! I got chance to pick a Christmas Tree and decorate it. That was my first time having Christmas tree at home, and decorated it, and actually celebrating Christmas. I was having a great time. Got a lot of presents too. Delicious foods, fancy but cozy dinner--I even helped my sister-in-law cooked the dishes! (It's me, the trouble maker at the kitchen). But as for me, that's not the point. I saw how American people celebrate their Christmas, and how my family celebrating our Christmas.

To be honest, my host family is not the religious type, my host dad even joked about celebrating Christmas just because he's hosting an exchange student who is eager to experience every single little thing about America, especially the holiday. But I know he embraced the Christmas moment, since on the Christmas Eve, his family was gathered at our house and having a really good time together. Somehow this made me miss my family--not that I don't miss them already.

One thing I realized, and I think I should've known this already--I believe I did, that, people living in different country might have different culture, different way of celebrating things and stuffs, but basically, human is human. People around the world value the same thing, graceful moment with their dears, spending time with their family, wishing for a good time to come, happiness and sadness, all those things are all the same. I celebrated my first Christmas, but I knew the warm feeling I felt was not the first time.



Name : Rachmad Iqbal Bhayangkara
Chapter : Mataram, Nusa Tenggara Barat
Hosted in : Phoenix, Arizona



What Americans are good at Holiday!

October until January is what Americans called “Holiday Season”. Why? Because on those months there are countless holidays! Halloween, Thanksgiving, Hanukah, Christmas, and New Year! These are the bulk of American Culture, where you gather with your family, start giving to each other, and just have fun. In this newsletter, you will know about what Americans are good at, which is celebrating holidays, and I will tell you my experience, celebrating in this holiday, so let’s go!

1. Eid Al Adha

Now you might be surprised of Eid as being an American holiday. America is not a Muslim majority country like Indonesia, but, there are a lot of Muslims here, in Phoenix. A lot of you probably know about the story of Eid. Celebrating Eid in America is a little different than in Indonesia. First of all, there are not many Mosques here in Phoenix, and if there are one, it’s both small, and located in Downtown, which is like, far away from where I live in Northeast Phoenix. Second, Eid and all of the Religious holiday in America, is not a National Holiday. Meaning, you still need to go to work, school and day to day life. So a lot of the people just go to Eid prayer and just pray. There’s no goat or cow sacrifice, because it’s hard to buy a goat or a cow, unlike in Indonesia, so people just donate money. Because it’s not a national holiday, the celebration is kind of short. Most people just pray, and leave, no long preach and anything like that, because people need to go to work.



On 2013, I celebrated Eid in America on Monday, October 13th 2013, which technically, a school day. But, I called in because of Eid. My host parents can’t take me to downtown because they have to work. I celebrated Eid with my brother, Oguzhan, my friend from Bangladesh, Nazib, and an Indonesian YES student placed in Phoenix but from chapter Bandung, Anggia. We prayed and surprisingly met people from different ethnicity. There are Arabs, Kurds, Turks, Pakistani, Africans, Indians, and many more. Its far more diverse and a little shock to find it. I’m glad that I can celebrate Eid in America.

2. Halloween



Halloween is one of the best holiday there is. Because in that day, or, night, we can dress up, and get candies! Yes free candies! Now this was not my first Halloween, but this was the most memorable. During the Halloween day, on October 31st, I still need to go to school. But this time, the school is different, why? Because everyone dress up during that day! People dress up as a ghost, rock star, demons, police officers and many more. The school is full with colorful things that can resemble the Halloween season. Pumpkins decorate the wall, and some teachers even dress up on Halloween. It was shocking for me to see people are into this Halloween thing so much.

I used this opportunity to dress up in my Sasak Traditional costume. I think, what better way to introduce my culture, and tradition, than in Halloween, where everybody dress up. My host parents and host brother’s reaction was a little shocked. They’ve never see me with the costume. They all complimented me, saying it’s a good thing to wear that to school and introduces my culture to my school. Arriving at school that day, is kind of scary for me, personally, even though everyone dresses up, but you’re the one that dress

'different' if you know what I mean, and the people, from the parking lot to my first hour class are all looking at me. But when I arrived in my class they was all shocked! They clapped their hand and scream "way to go Rachmad!" to me. My history teacher then asked me what that shirt means, and why do you wear it, so I explained. The entire day was fun, a lot of people want to take pictures with me. Halloween allows me to embrace American culture, while sharing mine.

The Halloween night, I wanted to be different though. This time, I want to see the American way only. So I dressed in a ghost costume, and with my Family and friends, we went trick or treating, and tradition of American kids during Halloween, to walk around the neighborhood and get free candy. It was fun and I sure do get a lot, and I mean, a lot of candy! :D

3. Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is America's number one holiday. To make my point clear, Thanksgiving is a multicultural, multi religious celebration that is only celebrated in the United States and to some extent, Canada. That means weather you're White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, Christian, Atheist, Jews, Muslim, and many more, people who live in America, celebrate Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is a holiday based on the old times, when the first European settlers came to America they were nearly starved to death, until the Native Americans, give them food, to which the settlers give thanks, hence, Thanksgiving was made. This year's Thanksgiving, was also the same date as the start of Hanukah, a Jewish religious holiday. Thanksgiving is always celebrated on the fourth Thursday in November, in 2013, that's November 28th.

My school district have an entire week of day off for Thanksgiving. So on the day off, I and my host family go to many places and try new food, like Irish food, Chinese buffet, and basically wasted 3 days, until its Thanksgiving Day. When the day finally comes, my host family have a tradition. A Thornton tradition, they'd called it. In the morning, we will go to the Phoenix zoo, and basically walk around and see the animals, also, to make us hungry, then we will have the awesome thanksgiving lunch, instead of dinner. Why? Because the lunch, was held in my aunt's house, in Chandler, way south of Phoenix. That is what we ended up doing. It was fun too! Thanksgiving lunch is also tasty, we ate turkey, of course, and many more traditional dishes like pumpkin pie. Thanksgiving was a great holiday, and a filling holiday.



4. Christmas



Finally! It's Christmas! America's favorite holiday! Christmas have always been the fort runner of American traditional holidays. Santa Claus, the snowman, and many more of those myths, came from the United States. Americans, gave a big deal of Christmas, like Halloween, they decorated their houses in Christmas decorations. People have begun Christmas shopping, in fact, since August, to make a point of how important Christmas is to Americans. For me, celebrating my first Christmas is a new experience. I already thought about what to give on Christmas for my Host Family.

We started by decorating our house. Putting the Christmas tree, and Christmas decorations all around the house. Some of our neighbors have gone crazy! Spending tens of thousands of Dollars on Christmas decoration. We also started the tradition, of listening to Christmas music all December long. My favorite song is Night Devine. On December, the cities and communities lighten up, trees and buildings was given Christmas lights to make them prettier. There's also

many events about sparkling lights, such as Glendale Glitter and Glow, and Zoo lights, which I went to of course.

I'm always know for my Procrastination. Which is awful. To make a point, I started Christmas shopping, on DECEMBER 24th! A day before Christmas! However, I knew what I am shopping for who. Which I did. My Family's tradition of Christmas is that on Christmas eve, we will have a dinner, and open up presents, and on Christmas day, we will go to my aunt's house and have Christmas lunch. Christmas is a wonderful holiday. Even though I am not a Christian, the idea of giving is a universal idea, which I learned in Christmas too. I experienced an American Christmas mass, in Arizona's largest Church, CCV, and experienced American's Christmas.

Holiday season is a season full of new things, full of experience and love that I'll never forget.



Name : Premira Arifatul Khorida

Chapter : Yogyakarta

Hosting place : Richland, Washington



Holiday: Snow is Sweet

Hi, my name is Mira. I am an exchange student, an amateur artist, and a dreamer. I am not smart, but I always want to be a good friend for everyone. I love to go outside. I love the sky, trees, animals, and I like to smile. I want to make everyone happy. So, when you read this story, I recommend you to smile first, because this is part of my happy story.

Thursday, November 28, 2013.

Thanksgiving Day. I spent my thanksgiving day with an exchange student from Thailand; Bew. On the night before thanksgiving, Bew's host mother told us about thanksgiving and how people came to America at the first time. It's a big family dinner time! I ate turkey, of course, and pumpkin pie, and many other stuff that made me so full that night. Next things that I did were watched Catching Fire, played games, and shopping! I really hope everyday would be a thanksgiving day!

Next paragraph, next story. Guess, what happened on my last day of school before winter break? I was waiting at the cold-and-dark 7a.m. when the school bus came. At first, everything went with the same rhythm as usual. But I got a surprise on my third class. As I entered my class, I could see outside the window that there were something white felt from the sky! Snow! First time ever! I said to my teacher I wanted to go outside.

"Is it your first time?" she asked me.

I nodded, then she looked at the clock. I was so excited though I knew it was impossible to go outside during the class period just to play on the snow. But suddenly my teacher announced something to the entire class,

"Hi guys, this is the first time Mira sees the snow and she wants to go outside. Does anybody want to go with her?"

And, three minutes later, all of the class members were outside playing with the snow! Well, that was sweet, for me.



Trees, gifts, lights, decorations. Christmas! First, put the tree near the window. Then, decorate it with lights and Christmas decorations! We did Chinese exchange gift-we put our gifts in the middle of us and each person could take one of them or steal the gift from other person which is so fun- before gave the real Christmas present. The funniest thing was when I took a gift from the middle, someone stole it from me and every time I took another gifts, someone stole them again until the last time- - that what made it so fun, anyway.

My favorite thing about Christmas was when my host father took me and my host sister went around the town to see the Christmas lights at nights. Many people decorated their houses with interesting lights. Some of them put Santa Claus, reindeers, stars, dragon, snowman, or Mickey Mouse or even Spongebob in front of their houses. But my favorite lights was the music lights. They decorated the whole yard with lights that were operated by computer thing and were connected to a radio station. So, when you tune to the station, you could hear the songs and saw the lights dancing in rhythm with the songs. That were very cool and neat!

And by the way, when I went to my friend's house after Christmas, I was so surprised and so happy because they put a little craft from batik -that I gave them before- as their Christmas decoration on their Christmas tree.

"We thought it is so pretty so we put it there,"

Ulala, thank you! I was so glad to hear that.

Now, it's time to close your old calendar and change it with the new one. Five, four, three, two, one, Happy New Year! Yes, on New Year Eve, I went downtown, where people counted down for the new year and they had big fireworks there. Before midnight, we watched many shows. Magic show, hypnosis comedy show, music performances, and many other free things! I also painted my face with make up and took a lot of pictures there. Fun fun fun!

You know what? I hope being an exchange student is like that wonderful firework; we fly to the sky, stay shine bright though just for a moment to learn and see the world, and leave the happiness to the people around us.

Too bad, there was no school on my birthday this time. But that made me happy too, because my host family and I went to Portland, Oregon, where I could see the different place of America. I went to Portland Art Museum and saw "Three Studies of Lucian Freud", three paintings by Francis Bacon which are so famous,

Nama : Gregorius Rangga Wisnu Pradipta
Chapter : Padang
Placement : Weiser, ID

and many other paintings and photographs from all around the world, from the old one till the modern one. After that, my host mother took me to Wahkeena Falls and we did a little hiking there. That was my favorite thing to do. I had some quality time with her!

Okay, that's my stories. Not all of my story, of course, just parts of it. I hope you can learn something because I have learned a lot of things from there.

Happy New Year !! =))

Love,

Mira ♥



Turkey, Snow, and Disneyland!

Hi Indonesia!

Rangga here and I'm dead freezing, hahaha. It is winter here and Holiday Season just passed! I got to enjoy most of the holidays and overall, the holiday season was amazing (and to be honest, fattening). First, Halloween. Well, I didn't have time to prepare for my costume because the Cross Country season just ended a week before Halloween. So, instead of enjoying the holiday by trick or treating, me and my best my best friend, Ubaldo Arana and I, did a community service at the Weiser Community Halloween event. It was really great. We ran the *Ring a Pop* booth, where the kids basically got three chances to throw a ring to get a can of

soda. It was fun to see the costumes these kids wore and the pizza after that was amazing! My favorite costume on that event was the Minion Costume from the *Despicable Me* movie. It was so cute!



Next, thanksgiving. Last year's (2013) thanksgiving was on November 28th. My school's thanksgiving break was from November 27th through November 29th. Before that, we had a canned food drive in Weiser High School where we brought canned foods, other foods, and any other edible stuff to be donated to the poor so they can enjoy Thanksgiving dinner and Christmas Dinner. The funny part about the canned food drive is that most of the students brought Ramen Noodles to be donated. I was going to donate my Indomie, but NO! That's my survival kit, hahaha. Anyways, Mrs. Gonzales' 2nd Hour Class won and overall, it was amazing. Then, there was a Thanksgiving assembly, in which we recognized the fall sports teams' achievements, wished the best luck for the winter sports athletes, and announced the winner of the canned food drive. It was a great assembly and I wish I could have stood in front of everybody with the other members from the cross country team, but I was only on Junior Varsity. Oh well, I can't have everything I want, can I? Then, the break began. First day of the break, I was so happy because my right knee was finally healed and I was cleared to go running again! I haven't run for about a month on that day, so I slowed down for a bit. Nevertheless, I could finally miles again, yeah! I still run until this day to stay healthy!

Second day of the break, IT'S THANKSGIVING DAY! Wow, it was an amazing day! First, in the morning, I... ran about 2 miles for morning practice. Then, instead of cooking, me and my host family went to Golden Corral to have our Thanksgiving Dinner (or Lunch, actually)! The foods were all amazing! The turkey was delicious, the pies were magnificent, the mash potato was.... Just like any regular mash potato, hahaha, and all the desserts were just pure 'heaven on earth'. How much weight did I gain? Well, not much actually, just 2.2 pounds (which is 1 kg). After that, it got really interesting. I still had enough savings from Indonesia and Black Friday happens after Thanksgiving. So, I decided to go to Pre-Black Friday shopping, instead of going to Black Friday because I would literally be killing myself if I went to Black Friday. I got some cheap electronic device and video games, because I'm a game lover. We shopped until we dropped and I enjoyed it so much! Now I know how Black Friday feels like!

There was also the *Cross Country Banquet* two days before thanksgiving break began. It was the best moment of all the moments I had with the Cross Country team! We ate a lot of pizza, we talked like there's no tomorrow, and we received our own awards and certificates for our hard work on the Cross Country team (and the seniors got special recognition too). I literally almost cried because that was the first time I was awarded in a sports team, as I have never been in a sports team before. I almost cried because the Cross Country team has become one of the biggest part in my Exchange Year! I'm glad that I joined that team and I wish the best luck for next year for the team.

Of course, the last one (but not the least) is Christmas! Weiser was pretty festive (for a small town). There was a Christmas parade on December 6th and it was amazing. It was held together with the Festival of Trees, where trees are decorated for a competition. The Christmas light was on and on December 7th, snow finally piled up for the first time in Weiser, Idaho! Made my first snow angel and it was really cold. Then after finals, Christmas Break came, yaaaaaaay! On December 21st, there was this famous volunteering event called the Ho-Ho express, where high school kids volunteer to help little kids from the Elementary School to buy their own Christmas Present at Walmart. It was really fun, I took care of two kids. Michael, a 1st Grader and Carlos, a 3rd Grader. The toy section was in full craziness mode on that day. Michael bought a bunch of stuff and Carlos bought an Xbox Controller. Overall, it's fun to see these kids have fun and I hope they had a wonderful Christmas. Then, on Christmas Eve, my host family and I had Christmas Dinner. There were Casserole, Chicken Cordon Bleu, Mixed Veggies, and the Million Dollar Salad for our Dinner that day. It was amazing and we talked about things that had happened that year. After that, I went to Church at 10 PM to celebrate Christmas in a Bilingual Mass! It's not just a regular, English Christmas Mass but there's Spanish in it too! It's so unique. I went to the mass with my best friend Ubaldo and his girlfriend Vanessa (who's a good friend of mine too). Then, I slept early, because....



HERE COMES THE DISNEYLAND TRIP, BABY! December 25th, my host mom and I flew to Anaheim, California to start the most epic Christmas vacation ever! We flew from Boise, changed flight at Las Vegas, and then finally arrived at Anaheim. Anaheim's a beautiful city. We met with my host sister Kari and her children, Zander and Marleigh there. The funny part about the first day of this trip was that we got to the wrong hotel, thanks to the Taxi Driver. Then, the first day of Disneyland came! OH MY GOD! I couldn't believe that I was really in the Happiest Place on Earth! The theme park itself is amazing! So many people and the lines are excruciatingly painful, but we got fast passes, so we didn't have to wait long in the lines. That day, I watched the Star Wars show, rode the Star Tours, Nemo Submarine, Matterhorn Bobsled, and a small roller coaster at Toon Town. I also took a picture with Pluto, a statue of Walt Disney and Mickey, and in front of the Castle of Dreams! The first day was tiring but it was worth it!

Second day at Disneyland, I ran around to get fast passes in the morning, and then I rode the Indiana Jones, Splash Mountain, Star Tours (again), the monorail around Disneyland Resorts and last but definitely not least, my favorite ride of all, Space Mountain! I went shopping for souvenirs for my family too, of course and spent my saved two months stipend on most of it. There was also the parade too! That they ended with the Holiday Fireworks show, above the Castle of Dreams. That was my true New Year's holiday, and it was truly the best vacation ever! Thanks Mom, Kari, Zander, and Marleigh!

I didn't go to any party in New Year's Eve because I was still tired but that didn't stop me to start the year epicly. On New Year's Day, Ubaldo and I went on a New Year's Day run for

about 3.5 miles (5.6 km) on the Snow. We talked about our plans in the future during the run, and joked a lot. That was an epic way to start a year.

Overall, I love this Holiday season! Of course, what's a life without ups and downs, right? That's why I enjoy all the great things and the troubles I had to overcome in this season! I'm seizing every moment I have right now and I will give my all to the rest of this Exchange Year! See you soon Indonesia!

NAME : Aziza Nadia Razanti
CHAPTER : Jakarta
HOSTING PLACE : Washington



THE FROZEN BEACH

Winter. Probably the season most exchange students from a tropical country awaits. They're expecting hunch of snow covering the streets so then they can shovel it to school, wearing an artic jacket, making snowmen and snow angels... yeah, not for me though.

Puyallup is a rather funny one, (almost) no snow for the winter, only freezing fog and gloomy typical Western Washington sky. "Well, Western Washington isn't always like that," my host Dad said to me that morning at school. He's my teacher – and my new host family. I was about to move that day, supposedly on Thursday, but I moved it to Saturday "for convenience". "You've never seen the real Washington. Seattle is, but there are more to this Evergreen State. That's why, Reed [my son] and I are going to the Olympic Peninsula for a hike."

I have no idea what has gotten into my mind that day, but as if it was a struck of lighting, my mouth opened and half-screamingly said: "count me in for the hike!"

10.46 am, we just got ourselves to Kitsap, a two hour ride from Puyallup. We eventually hit the road at 8 and I was already tired! I didn't like my outfit: bright-red tight turtle neck long-sleeves t-shirt, a long john underneath my short pants, and my hair braided. I definitely look like a hobo! My host Dad said that it is the necessary to keep the cold out from the hike. Not only that, I have to wear this astronaut-like hiking boots with gators (feet protector), a huge vest, an anti-vapor jacket, a winter hat, and a pair of gloves.

We went to Kitsap to pick ANOTHER stuffs, *as if my bag isn't full enough* "what did you say, Raz?" my host Dad asked me when I sighed as I put more food, a sleeping bag, and tarps into my bag. He then added more kitchen stuff, and my bag is now very stuffed and very compressed.

We've finally arrived in the Olympic Peninsula hiking site known as the Norwegian Memorial or the Dead Crow. After 6 hours total of ride to the most northwest part of Washington, I was hyped yet very exhausted from the road trip. My host Dad decided to repack (again) our stuff, and definitely put even more stuff in my bag. He then told me to strip down to just my boots, gators, long john, pants, t-shirt, and winter hat. "So, how can I fit my other clothes?" I shouldn't have asked that as my host Dad tied me with the rest of my clothing, making me hard to move.

Hiking bag is a funny kind of bag, you can really fit anything and strap anything to bring everything. The one thing that you really have to know is that the bag's mass is divided into 30% on the shoulders, and 70% in the hips. So, without further ado, I really look like an astronaut, only, I have a battle with gravity.

After 20 minutes of hike, I realize that the lights are getting dimmer and dimmer. So, the rest of the hike was lighted only with headlights. Through the darkness, under the trees, above the mud pools, we've finally reached the beach. IT WAS FREEZING COLD! The next thing we did was to make a tent, and, yes, no fire.

12 hours later, I woke up from my tent in front of a mossy forest. The wind blowing from the beach was freezing, Reed told me that the water is only 4 degrees Celsius in temperature! After struggling with fire and had a legendary breakfast of egg muffins, Reed decided to give me a tour around the beach. There, I saw humongous rocks just like the ones in Belitung, sea corals shown from the low tide, anemones, fishes, colorful shells, and mussel-bed!



Around noon, we head to the obelisk that is meant for the Norwegian sailors who stranded in this beach, and along the way, I saw ginormous spruce tree that has been rooted out from the soil and dragged across the ocean, suggesting that this ocean is nothing but chaos, my bones squeaked in chills. Then again, I found the beauty of this place. There were many sea otters, sea lions, seals, seagulls, and bald eagles around our camping site, too bad they could only be seen with binoculars.

We got home Sunday night extremely tired, saturated with sweat, and smiles carved on our faces as not only that my host family able to do their annual hiking, but also there's hint of satisfaction in me! The feeling of achievement is what makes me in love with winter holiday :D



NAME : Salma Zakiyah
CHAPTER : Yogyakarta
HOSTING PLACE : Sitka, Alaska



Can I?

Before I start, can I consider you as Abby, my dear friend? I take that as a yes, thank you.

Time: 11 pm Alaska time

Dear Abby, it is January already. It means I have celebrated most interesting holidays here in the United States. But Abby, a lot of people already talk about that. And Abby, I know how it feels to read stories with same themes over and over again. And I don't think I can write an interesting story about holidays since, you know, Abby, I am not a good writer.

But I would love to tell you that my Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas were all really fun. And what made me really proud, Abby, I made my own Halloween costume. I actually sewed. And here, I have the photo. But don't scream, it's just me behind the white face paint and a wig. Oh, and Abby, if you asked me what I got for Christmas, I got fat. And Santa didn't give me slimming pills. But that's okay, Abby, all of my holidays were still fun.

Dear Abby, you know that the longer you spend with people, the closer you are with them. And that is true, Abby. This second semester, I feel like I have more close friends although the first semester seems okay to me. But what makes me sad, Abby, second semester is the last semester you're here. And it's closer to your death. I mean, you departure to home.

Abby, honestly, I do feel jealous with my friends who get to go to other states. And I am stuck here in Alaska. But Abby, I don't feel sad. Because although I can't go outside Alaska, I (maybe) the only one who get to fly every once a month. Well, that is unique, I think. So, Abby, I bet you're curious why do I get to fly every month. And here's the story....

In my school, there is a club called Drama/Debate Forensics. And we always have competition every month in another city in Southeast Alaska. And the only way to get out of my town is by plane. In Debate competition, obviously we have to debate other teams from other school. And my partner is another exchange student from Russia. Our latest debate topic was "Supreme Court rightly decided that Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act violated the Constitution." It's okay if you don't know what that is, because I didn't know either. But if you ask me about that now, I can explain to you as long as you can. And I won't lie because I have a lot of evidence to show you. In Drama competition, we have to do pieces from book or a play. You can do Humorous or Dramatic Interpretation, and Solo. For example, you want to do a Solo from the play August Rush, you can do that. You just have to memorize the play and perform with deep expression. And Abby, you can do it alone or duet or even more! And if you don't want to talk, just do a mime! what a fun, eh? In Forensics, we don't dissect frog. We gives speeches. And this last meet, I got second for expository speech and fourth for extemporaneous commentary which basically means I have to draw a topic in the library and prepare in 20 minutes for a 2-5 minutes speech. Can you say I am cool, Abby?

Dear Abby, like I said before, the closer you are with your departure, the closer you are with your friends



and community. For example, in January 11th there was an International Grind in my city. It is a talent show with the theme of International. And Jeff Bud, the committee, immediately called me to be an MC in that Grind. Well, it's not only me who got the chance to be MC. But it's still fun to speak in front of a 100 meter square room full of audience. And to be honest Abby, I never actually hosted an event before. But after the Grind everyone complimented me and my other exchange friends for our MC-ing. And that time, Abby, I finally got the chance to actually dance traditionally. Although I forgot most of my movement, I made it up, and everyone still loved it. You know Abby, I feel so proud being Indonesian. Why? Abby, there are 5 exchange students in my city. And I am the only one who actually show our tradition. And I was the only one who dressed traditionally. Don't you think Indonesia is really cool, Abby? Oh and Abby, do you still remember the Drama/Debate Club I talked before? We have a sweatshirt uniform. My teacher ordered it from one of the States here. But you know what, It's made in Indonesia. Don't you feel proud, Abby?

Dear Abby, school is getting more fun and fun. I take art and design 2 (which you actually can't do without taking art and design 1 first. But since I am an exchange student..), Digital Video, Theater Production, and Alaska Naturalist, Science and Technology, AP Calculus, and American Government. If you ask me what's my favorite, Abby, I will choose theater production (TP) and Alaska Naturalist. In TP, I am actually in props and setting, but since I am not needed for now, they switch me to costume. I have never actually sew something nice before. But here, with a really fancy sewing and serger machine, I learn how to sew a dress. And now, I can sew a long skirt with 5 panels in only 20 minutes. Isn't that amazing?

Dear Abby, Alaska Naturalist basically means biology. But you know what Abby, in this class, I actually can see, touch, and dissect an Alaskan animal. I have a photo to show you. And that is amazing. I have never done that before. I think my knowledge is being stronger since I can actually how hearts, lungs, liver, and other organ looks like, not only from text books.

Dear Abby, it is nice to talk to you again. Oh Abby, one more thing, I'll be gone to Anchorage, the biggest city in Alaska next month. By planes. And that's Abby, makes Alaska special. Just like I am. So Abby, talk to you soon!



NAME : TIFANI DIAHNISA
CHAPTER : SEMARANG
HOSTING PLACE : BUCKLEY, WA

It was called Happy Holiday!

Halloween



"Boo~ Pumpkin is everywhere! I see a black cat on the top of that house! And oh my God, there's a witch's flying on the sky!"

Excuse me, but that was my imagination about Halloween before I went here. Hahaha. I thought that everyone will be dressing up with something really scary outfit such as ghost, witch, or vampire until my host mom explained it to me, "No, sweetie. Now, Halloween is kind of a party for little kids. It must be fun. Kids can wear anything they want."

I had really great experiences in Halloween. I had some parties with my exchange student friends in my placement organization, Ayusa and with my friends in Key Club. At the party we made cookies, carved pumpkins and did many fun games. In Key Club, I had very special Trick or Treat with White River High School Key Club. It was called Trick or Treat for UNICEF. That was kind of community service from key club for

UNICEF. If usually Trick or Treat is to collect tons of candies, but what we did need to do was to collect food can or money from people for donation to UNICEF. At the end, we did collect more than \$100 cash and more than 200 foods.

So I was so glad that my Halloween experience was not only fun but also very did benefit for the community 😊



Thanksgiving



Thanksgiving morning we were really busy that we cooked a lot of foods. My host mom bought 24 pounds of Turkey! That was really huge! I helped her to clean and cook it. We made roasted turkey with stuffing in it. Mom also made mashed potatoes and cheese cake which was the best cheese cake ever all over the world! :D

Our big family came for dinner at that day. There were about 12 people. All of them brought some foods too. Grandma had shrimp salad, my host sister had green bean casserole and turkey asparagus, her friend had apple pie and broccoli casserole, and my host brother and his wife had pumpkin pie.

And finally, yes, those were a lot of foods.

My favorite part was when I said "Thank You" to all of my host family members for what they did to me not as a foreign exchange student but as their family member 😊

However, I learned that Thanksgiving is not only about Turkey or foods, it is an annual Americans tradition to have special dinner with family as we really



grateful for everything in our life (not only for harvest like what Thanksgiving was about at the first). Thank you! ☺

Christmas

This is the special time of the year that most Americans are waiting for. This is also my first Christmas because I never celebrated it before.

At the end of November, we went up to the mountain for picking up Christmas Tree. The next day, it was time to decorate the tree! Then mom started to wrap presents for Christmas and did put that under the tree. Oh my God, it was not even December yet and I had already seen many gifts under the tree with my name on some of them. This was really annoying. Hahaha. I mean you had to see them every single day and obviously you wanted to open them but you couldn't because you needed to wait for 4 weeks. My host family literally laughed when I was saying that.



It was really cool when I had Christmas Parade in Enumclaw. It was kind of vehicles with lights decoration parade at night. My host family and I were taking a part for that. We were with our jeep club, "The Redneck Jeep Club". Anyway, although we used to ride car, jeep or truck, I was walking all the time the parade because I was in charge for the candies for little kids who were watching us. It was pretty tiring and freaking cold (17 degrees F) but it was very fun and very interesting new experience!

I had a lot of parties on my first Christmas. As my host family said before that it would be really crazy month that we would be so busy on December. I had Christmas Parties in Jeep Club, AYUSA, grandma's house, and my school clubs such as FFA and Choir. I met Santa Claus too! Yeay! :D I got also tons of Christmas Presents from the party. Alhamdulillah ☺ Not only party, we did also many fun activities such as going to Fantasy Light in Spanaway and Zoo Light in Tacoma. Then, I had also a Christmas concert with my Choir Class.

Then, December 25, 2013, the Christmas day! In the morning we were opening our stocking and our Christmas Presents. FYI, we saw the tree was puking a thousand of presents! Hehe. Alhamdulillah I got a lot of presents which were so cute, so pretty, so adorable, and how did they know the things I really wanted? I am so lucky that I have the best host family with me ☺ Still on the same day, we had also a special dinner. Mom made the best roast beef, wonderful mashed potatoes, green bean casserole and the best cheese cake ever!



My first Christmas was totally awesome; sharing love and happiness with people and realizing that there are many people who love me very much ☺

New Year

New Year's Eve, my local representative, Cindy invited me to have NYE Party at her house in Tacoma. She also invited some exchange students too. We had fun time there! We were doing some board games such as Smart Ass and Pictionary. They were so fun. We also were doing karaoke and everybody just said that I had really good voice :3 hehe.

Generally, the most interesting from NYE Party is the count down at the midnight. That's what we did, too. Guess what? Although didn't have trumpet or firework (probably because they were so mainstream lol), we had cooking stuffs like pan lids, spoons, spatulas and many more that could make noise. We went outside with those and yelled "Happy New Year!" That was so much fun! Then we gave New Year Hug for each other which was really sweet!

Jan 1, 2014, first day in 2014, we walked down to Titlow Beach, Tacoma which was really close to Cindy's house. That was really beautiful beach! We were having a really great time there. Yeay! 😊

Name : Qurrata A'yuna Adrianus
Chapter : Padang
Host placement : Vancouver, WA



Happy Holiday: Happy Choco-Day!

Living in America is still such a dream for me. I've never thought before to live with an American family, speak English all the time, go to school without using any uniforms or anything else. But it is awesome. It teaches me so many things that may be I can always learn everywhere. Yeah, sometimes we have to live our comfort zone to learn a new simple thing.

Some people might think that I'm here for holiday instead of studying. Well, it's quite true. To be exact for learning by doing. Doing what? Doing everything. I go to school to learn school stuffs, to get experiences with friends, teachers, everyone. Besides of learning from school, I'm also learning from doing stuffs with community such as passing out water for the walkers in the rain. I had been thinking that people don't really need water when they are walking in the rain, but the fact says no. People still need water even though they are walking in the rain. What else did I learn? Well, I also learn something from holiday which is "holiday doesn't always mean to go somewhere out of the town, but also having fun with family.

Talking about holiday, my holiday is always about chocolates. That's why this essay is titled *happy Choco-day*. My liaison, Susan Knowles-berry who has the same first name as my host mom, usually came to the house with a box of See's Candies. The first time she came was on my birthday on the first week I was here. She came with a bucket of flower and a box of chocolate. Well, I'm actually a chocolate monster, but I had never eaten those many chocolates in once. It needs about 3 weeks for me to eat them all.



It was Halloween. Besides the other chocolates from Susan, I also got more chocolates from trick or treat. It was a cool night. I and my host family went around the neighborhood with costumes. I wore just a simple one. But my host sister, Teresa, wore a dress of Indian-American. My host mom says that it was a global dress since I painted Teresa's face. Halloween is also famous because of the creepy pumpkin carved. Yeah, for the first time, I got to carve my pumpkin. It was so hard because it has some stuffs on it and I had to take those things out before I carved it. So, the result was not that creepy but good enough.

Thanksgiving is an American holiday to give thanks or blessing of harvest and preceding day. I also got a box of See's candies in this day. That's not the important thing but having family time. We ate lunch together and there were so many option of foods, usually people have turkey.

Christmas is an important holiday for my host family. "Christmas is not about gifts or snow, but family." Said Teresa. It's true. My host sister, Anna, who goes to university of Hawaii and doesn't live with us, came back home for Christmas. Also Isabel, my host sister who lives in the apartment. So Christmas was fun because we were all in the house having fun. It's also true that there is not always snow on Christmas Day. I live in Vancouver, Washington State which is just about 170ft of elevation. So, it's kind of hard to find snow in this area during winter. So far, I've only experienced snow once. It was on school day and the



school didn't closed. Snow was beautiful but was not really accessible. I was getting trouble to go from one class to another because it was cold and I couldn't roll my chair. But I was so happy, because in the next day I went to Seattle with my basketball team, Portland Jr. Wheelblazers for a tournament. So I didn't have to roll in the snow anymore.

It's 2014 already which means that this chance is going to be done soon. Let's keep learning new things, experiencing more stuffs, and enjoy everything. Because this year is just going to happen once, then it turns to be a history that will never be happened again.



Name : Nurani Wahyuning Aprilia
Chapter : Surabaya
Hosting place : City of Driggs, Idaho



It's the most wonderful time of the year

Whooooaaa.....!!!! Holiday was coming! I wanted those free days so bad. free from school, free from get up early in the morning and free from homework. how was that ? it sounded awesome for me. every morning of regular school day, my body was always lazy to get up at 6.30 AM. but no matter what, my clock would ring and bothered my sweet dream. oh well, holiday was coming and it was one of the holiday that I've been waiting for since I've been here. it was thanksgiving holiday. I thought that every American would celebrate it with huge dinner and had turkey, mashed potato, stuffing, apple pie and cranberry sauce. i asked my host mom if she would love me to help her cook for those kind of meals, unfortunately, she would not make thanksgiving dinner because it was the same time for her to move her work to her new shop. but, my other host family, Erica Tremblay, invited me to have Thanksgiving Dinner in her house. Of course I said YES! I came to her house early at 3 PM in order to help her preparing the meals. When I got there, there was her son and the her son's girl friend. They greeted me as if I was their own family. It was my first time to meet Erica's son. His name was Cooper and he was a chef. So, he helped Erica cooking and preparing the table. He told me everything about their last exchange student. It was Selina and she was from Germany. They said it was great to have an exchange student and shared culture, knew each other better and gained understanding among nations over the world.



At 5 PM, we started eating. It was really huge meals. Before we ate, as a tradition, we needed to say our thank to God. I got the first chance. At that time, I thought of many things. But, here was what I said, "Dear God, I am grateful for everything in my life. I love my life so please always give me a wonderful time. I am grateful for both of my family, my biological family and my family here. I have no word to say how much I love them both. I am grateful for the amazing people that you have sent to help me pass my life. Overall I am grateful to be myself." Ok, time to eat. We started with salad. They called it veggie salad but I was wondering because there was an apple on it. They explained to me then, that it was kind of tradition to put apple on it. After salad, we continued with the main course. As usual, it was turkey, mashed potato, stuffing and some other foods that I did not even know the name. But, we still had an apple pie that we needed to eat. There was no one ready for the pie. We all were so full. So, we took Max on a walk. Oh ya, I forgot to tell about Max. He was Erica's old and lazy dog. He was 15 years old and he would spend most of his time laying down on his big fluffy bed. It took 20 minutes before we came back and ready for the pie. It was super delicious. Every time I remembered that dinner, I would be always hungry. Everyone enjoyed the dinner and we talked a lot. At 7.30 PM, Erica gave me ride home. At that night, I slept really well with my full tummy. When I woke up in the next morning, I realized how much awesome things I had but never really appreciate that.

Well, I told my host family about the dinner and my host mom felt guilty because she could not make Thanksgiving dinner because it was such as a big experience for me in USA. So, she took us to the Driggs Senior Center to have Thanksgiving Lunch. So, the member of the Senior organization always held lunch everyday for raising their fund. And because it was Thanksgiving, they held a special lunch withal Thanksgiving meals but without

apple pie. It was really good. Everybody who ate there had to pay \$8 for the meals. Although we did not have Thanksgiving dinner, we had a good time on our Thanksgiving lunch.

We got home and after that, we took a nap. When I woke up, I was surprised that my host dad prepared our Mexican-Thanksgiving dinner. He did not tell us that he made a dinner because he wanted to make surprise for us. I called it Mexican-Thanksgiving dinner because it was for Thanksgiving but all the meals were Mexican meals. So, as a summary, I had two Thanksgiving dinner and one Thanksgiving lunch.

After a week off of school, we got back and studied. But, it was only for three weeks because we would have Christmas Break after that. Christmas Break was two weeks off and lovely holiday. My host parent asked me if I wanted to cut the Christmas tree and decorated it. My answer was absolutely yes. I told them that we in Indonesia usually used a fake tree since there was not much pine trees. We cut it on the forest and then decorated it in the same day. I was totally exhausted, but never mind, decorating Christmas Tree was worth it. Voila! After an hour decorating, we finished our Christmas Tree and it was beautiful.

For Christmas, we would have Christmas Eve dinner with some friends and Christmas dinner at friend's house. Then, on Thursday, 26th of December, we would go to Ogden, Utah to celebrate the birthday of my host dad's brother, his name was Mike and his wife was Debra. Not only to celebrate that, we would actually have holiday there. OK, let's start with Christmas Eve dinner.



In the morning, we were so busy to prepare the foods and the place. We united two tables into one table because our dining table was not big enough for ten people. Everything was ready at 6 PM and our guests would come at 7 PM. The foods were chicken, bacon, sweet mashed potato, potato double-baked and beans. My host sister and I got duty to make centerpiece that would be in the middle of the table. I gathered leaves and branch from the trees around our house. And when we were done, my host mom was so happy because she said it was beautiful. We did not eat the main course first. There were many appetizers. My host mom made a French appetizer called bread with fuagra because she is French. Fuagra was a food product made from duck liver that has been fattened. She got the fuagra originally from France. At first, it tasted weird, but now I like it. The other appetizer that I like was vegetable such as carrot and celery with artichoke dip. It was healthy

and delicious. We talked a lot at that time. There were three French people they were my host mom and her two friends. Sometime they talked in French and the rest of us would laugh because we had no idea what they were talking about. Ok, it was time to eat. We ate like crazy. Everyone ate as much as they wanted to. Again, it was huge meal. But, everyone seemed to have good time. We were laughing, joking to each other but never felt irritated and talked about many things from our neighbours until the way my host parent met. My host mom said that Christmas Eve dinner was a formal dinner and there would be no other activity except eat and talking that we could do. But, it was not for us. At 9.30 PM, my host sister got her disco ball and we danced. Not all of us danced tough, but it was fun and everyone went home at 10.30 PM. There was a rule to open Christmas present for me. So, I could open one of my Christmas present in that night. Only one present. So, I opened the biggest present I got. It was from my host sister's grandmother. She lived in Arizona. It was big because there were 6 presents inside it. So, I got a cute doll, mini pillow, earring, jewelry bag, Arizona spoon (spoon with word 'Arizona') and post it note. In the morning, we started to open our present at 8. After an hour, I knew all of my presents. So, I got I am Malala novel, slipper, head scarf from France, 40\$ gift card of sport shop called Peaked sport, watch, chocolate, knit stuff, candy, whoopee cushion, phone voucher, hand warmer and special goggle because I already wear glasses so it needs to be special goggle that cover all of my glasses. On December 26th, we went to Ogden, Utah. We went there at 2 PM and we arrived at 6 PM. After took a short rest, we went to Ogden Christmas Village. It was a city park with the decoration of Christmas. There was a lot of lights and small houses that represented Christmas from Santa House until a giant ginger house. I was able to take some pictures although it was freezing. We got a cup of hot chocolate and enjoyed the night through the car otherwise every part of our body would be freezing.

The next day was Friday and I planned to go to mosque. There is no mosque near where I lived. So, I went to a small mosque at 12 in the afternoon. I met very different kind of people. There was a girl from Pakistan, a lady from Syria and there was an American lady who became a muslim. I spent about an hour and a half there. When I got home, there was nothing to do, so I just took a nap. The next morning was Saturday and Mike took me and my host sister, Lia to go to Golden Spike National History Site. It was a place where two railways met when they built it.

One came from California and the other came from New York. We were able to see the demonstration of Union Pacific locomotive and listened to short history about the history of railways in the US. At 3 PM, we went home to prepare everything for the party. The party went well, but because it was 'adult' party, there was not very interesting activity except talking.

The, sledding was the plan the next day which is Sunday.



We went to a canyon near Ogden and we were sledding. I learned how to sled safely and I was able to sled with my belly he hee. Well, honestly, I did not want to go home, but we needed to go home. I enjoyed it too much until I dreamed about it in my sleep.

The last day of our stay in Utah, we went to Salt Lake City. There was no specific reason that we went to Salt Lake City other than shopping and refreshing. I was in the mountain for 5 months, and when we went to Salt Lake City which was a big city, I was so

excited. I was happy to see a lot of people, tall building and I was happy to see the traffic. I saw the longest train I've ever seen. We went to Utah State Capitol and of course, I took a picture there :D

Well, it was really good holiday and I would never forget about that days. Thank to god that He sent me to such a beautiful place like Driggs, and gave me an awesome family who know me so well since we first met. I would talk a lot to my host mom and my host dad about everything. They would make fun of my accent and when I said something in wrong sentence. But, that is the way I learned English without be mad because people sometimes did not understand what I am talking about. And I realized one thing, I LOVE AMERICA!!!!

Name: Pricillia Paramitha R
Chapter: Padang(subchapter Batam)
Hosting Place: San Francisco Bay Area,California

Cheers from the Bay!

Hi whatsapp Indonesia?how are you guys doing?Doing good?i hope so.

So it's been 5 months since the day when I first stepped both my feet on the united states soil and this is my second newsletter for y'all.

I can't believe that the time flew *hella* fast.so by that I told my self not to count the days I have left in united states before coming back to Indonesia,but instead,I have to make each days count!

2013 has been a total roller coaster to me,I've experienced so many ups and downs,dari yang senang karena bisa berangkat ke amerika,sedih karena harus pisah sama temen,yang galau karena *homesick*,suka duka cari temen dan beradaptasi di negeri orang,sampe yang asik-asik karena diajak jalan-jalan sama hostfam semuanya udah dilaluin.di pertengahan Desember Aku juga sempet sedih banget karena jadi kandidat cadangan untuk BUBW,padahal udah usaha semaksimal mungkin untuk banyak-banyak presentasi,but afterall presentasi nya kan juga buat Tanah Air dan sudah memang tugas ku untuk mengenalkan Indonesia ke orang banyak,so NO REGRETS GUYS BECAUSE #YOEO YOU ONLY EXCHANGE ONE!!!!

Sekarang saatnya membuka lembaran baru di tahun 2014!! hope you guys have a great year ahead.

2014-ku dan Host Family diawali dengan menonton pesta kembang api di San Francisco Pier 39,menyaksikan pesta kembang api di malam tahun baru dengan latar belakang Bay Bridge dan Gedung-gedung pencakar langit di San Francisco itu adalah salah satu pengalaman yang tidak bisa aku lupakan,Oh ya aku juga sempet ketemu sepasang suami istri asli dari Amerika,Alice dan Jack.Mereka kagum banget sama Indonesia,kami sempat ngobrol-ngobrol sedikit tentang Indonesia dan dia bilang dia ingin sekali kembali ke Indonesia,karena Indonesia itu "one of the most beautiful place I've ever visited,I love Indonesia!"That's what they said!sayangnya aku ga sempet foto bareng mereka karena gak lama setelah kami ngobrol pesta kembang api nya mulai.

Pengalaman ku menghabiskan malam tahun baru di san francisco gak sampai disitu aja,Jalan hamper 25 blok,ditambah sempit-sempitan di BART(kereta bawah tanah-nya san Francisco)rebut-rebutan masuk kereta,malam itu benar-benar rame sekali karena semua orang memilih menggunakan BART ketimbang harus memakai mobil pribadi,karena jalanan macet total dan banyak orang-orang yang mabuk.But after all it was an unforgettable moment

By the end of January after I'm done with my finals,aku diajak berlibur ke Los Angeles dengan host family ku,aku senang banget,karena itu seperti mimpi,I've always dreaming about being in Los Angeles and ofcourse seeing the infamous Hollywood Sign!Perjalanan dari San Francisco ke Los Angeles memakan waktu 6 jam,pemandangannya luar biasa bagus banget!

Hari pertama di Los Angeles aku diajak makan Bakmi Ayam di salah satu restoran Indonesia,maklum karena aku udah kangen banget sama makanan Indonesia!Hehe,sehabis makan kami kembali ke hotel dan beristirahat karena malam harinya kami menonton konser salah satu band favorit host mom ku!! was really close to them,walaupun itu bukan band favorit ku tapi aku tetep histeris,I never seen someone famous that close,like really close!The concert was a blast.

Besoknya di hari kedua,aku diajak ke Universal Studios Hollywood,Just like Miley Cyrus's song Party In the USA,"This is all so crazy everybody seems so famous".



Di universal studios aku mencoba paling favorit itu Transformers universal studios dan universal city ke Staples Center karena grammys



hamper semua jenis permainan,tapi yang Ride!Setelah puas main seharian di walk,aku diajak makan malam dan mampir akan diadakan disitu.

Di hari ketiga alias hari terakhir,sebelum Francisco,paginya mereka mengajak ku pastinya Hollywood Sign,sehabis itu makan siang sebelum akhirnya memulai 6 jam perjalanan!Sepanjang perjalanan aku hanya tidur,I was totally exhausted,but it was all worth it,thankyou to my hostfam,I love them so much for letting me have that kind of experience!

aku dan host fam ku pulang ke san untuk melihat Hollywood Walk of Fame dan kami mampir sebentar ke Koreatown untuk

Di awal februari nanti aku akan mengikuti serangkaian Mid-Orientation stay di salah satu camp site,rumornya sih tempat yang akan kami pakai nanti adalah bekas Rumah Sakit Jiwa,doakan gak ada kejadian yang aneh-aneh ya guys:DAku juga excited banget untuk urusan sekolah,walaupun jadwal pelajaran ku sedikit overwhelming,tapi itu semua kalah sama rasa semangat aku buat berbagai Senior Year Activities,rencananya prom dan graduation day kami akan bertempat di Disneyland Anaheim,DUUUUH!One of the most happiest place on earth,no wonder I'm so happy!

Last but not least,aku baru aja berulang tahun yang ke 17 desember lalu,and it means aku udah punya hak pilih di pemilu nanti!Host fam ku membantu ku untuk daftar diri di Posko Pemilu San Francisco dan sekarang aku sudah terdaftar menjadi pemilih!Senangnya!Pemilu pertama ku di luar negeri!Hehehe

Segitu dulu ya cerita ku di newsletter ku kali ini,.Plus aku punya quote dari Abraham Lincoln nih buat kalian

"In the end it's not the years in your life that count,it's the life in your years"

Name: Rizkina Aliya (Nina)
Chapter: Jakarta
Hosting Place: Ewa Beach, Hawaii

The White Sandy Essence of Christmas

Winter was descending fast on the islands, and yes, we *do* have winter. Winter in Hawaii manifests itself in great whitecaps on blue sheets of ocean rather than white snowcaps (except on certain elevations on the Big Island.) Winter in Hawaii meant that sperm whales from Alaska are migrating down towards the pacific to

warmer waters. It also called for the annual visit of President Barrack Obama, and the repercussions towards traffic that it entailed. Winter also means Christmas.

Most of my exchange friends experienced the joy in a white Christmas (or in the very least, a somewhat cold one) while I experienced the joy of a Hawaiian one, which means Santa in an Aloha shirt, and Mrs. Claus on a surfboard. It also means Christmas palm trees alongside our traditional fir trees. Oh, and it means glinting flying pigs on the eaves of houses.

Even with the major differences, Christmas is such a universal holiday in the US that the atmosphere it brings is so... so... magical. Yes, this seventeen year old high school senior is going to use the word 'magical.' People are just generally nicer, and they have an excuse for it.



"It's the holidays."

Around a week before Christmas Eve, I was at a store shopping for Christmas presents with my host sister. I, the klutz that I am, miscalculated the amount of cash I had brought along with me and found that I was short half the amount I needed to pay by the time I reached the till. I was ready to start picking out the items I needed to buy immediately before the cashier started, "Hmm, let's see what I can do for you."



A couple of clicks and clacks and I walked out

of that store with a fifty percent discount.

I can hardly imagine anything more heart-warming than a fifty-percent discount, but the Christmas spirit continued to surprise me. The emotional relationship that I began with my family four months prior truly mounted up to that point during Christmas day when we helped out with the homeless and came back home to a present-filled living room. I have always underestimated the act of gift-giving, but the gifts I received along with the thoughts that people had put into them truly made me realize the meaning of gratitude.



I have a loving host family who supports every single thing I attempt to do during my year here. I have an amazing natural family back home who patiently waits every single day for me. I have friends all around the world who are sharing my experiences right now and understand the turbulent waves that comes with being an exchange student. Truly, I think as I list all that down, the best Christmas gift I received have been spread over the year of 2013 and was given to me by God.

Christmas is a very big deal in the United States of America. A lot of people hold different views, from Christmas as a religious holiday to it as a big marketing occasion. However people want to see it, what I believe is undisputable about Christmas in America is that it is an important cultural and familial event. It is the day where families come together and share, and it is the time of the year when the cynical, sarcastic, skeptical Scrooges in me go into hibernation. It is the time when I have to acknowledge the beauty of family and gratitude that the amiable warm air of Christmas brings about.

