

Thank you for applying to be a host family for Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee summer camp international staff! Our host families help make the experience positive for our staff and provide a respite and home away from home. This packet will provide you with all of the information needed and expectations we have of our host families. If you have any questions, please contact Heather McCathern at [Hmccathern@gsmidtn.org](mailto:Hmccathern@gsmidtn.org) or (615) 460-0241.

## **Your International Staff:**

International camp staff are from all over all over the world! These might include: Australia, England, Germany, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Columbia, Scotland, South Africa and many more!

As a host family, you will host at least two staff members. This is to ensure that they each get to know another camp staff member in addition to your family. Once an international staff member has been placed with you, we will connect the two of you via e-mail. You will have a chance to get to know them, find out what they might want to do in Nashville and if they have any questions, or any medical or dietary needs. Please let us know if any nutritional needs are difficult for your family to accommodate and if we can help in any way. Camp is used to accommodating a variety of dietary needs and we have knowledge and recommendations for common issues.

## **Preparing Your Home:**

Traveling to a new country is challenging! To help make the transition easier, we ask that our staff have space that is their own. This means that each staff member should have their own bed, futon or air mattress as well as enough bedding. It is not necessary for each person to have their own room, but we do ask that they do not share a bedroom with those who live in your home (sharing with other staff is fine, and welcome!). Basements, guest rooms, game rooms, dens, etc. are all acceptable, as long as all family members respect those areas as staff's space during their stay. Though staff will bring their own toiletries or have plans to purchase them in the United States, it might be helpful to have some small items to share before they can make "the Walmart run."

When your staff members arrive, they will likely be tired and jetlagged and might not be on a "regular" sleep or eating schedule (depending on where they're coming from). A quiet, dark space where they can sleep during the day will be helpful. Additionally, if you are a parent, preparing younger children for the extra rest their new friends need is recommended. Use this opportunity to discuss time zones and how long it takes to fly to Nashville from where your staff members live.

During their stay at your home, we ask that you provide meals for them, including if your family chooses to eat at a restaurant. However, if your staff ask to dine out, that is their cost. If there are any special dietary requirements or restrictions you will be informed ahead of time, and we are always willing to assist with any that your family finds particularly challenging. Keep in mind that international visitors often have different diets than we do in the US, especially in the southern United States. We will prepare our staff for these differences, but we encourage you to also find out what your staff likes and what they'd like to try!

Staff will need access to Wi-Fi so that they can call home and inform family and friends that they have arrived safely and keep in contact during their stay. General Wi-Fi is fine, no need for an international phone plan, etc. Most staff are in touch with their families through apps such as WhatsApp. However, some staff will ask about an American phone. If so, please have them contact their camp director for further guidance in this process.

# Host Family Information Packet

## **Meeting them at the airport:**

Most international staff will arrive in groups and on specific days depending on their positions at camp. When flight information is confirmed, this will be passed along to you. Sometimes we do not have flight times until 24 hours before departure but usually will confirm flights several weeks prior to the arrival date. Flight numbers, confirmation numbers, and arrival times will all be sent to you as soon as we receive that information. If we receive word of a flight change, we will contact you as soon as we know about it. We encourage you to monitor their flight statuses and if there are delays also keep us informed.

Host families will meet their staff members at the airport, either at the gate (sometimes airlines will allow this if you contact them ahead of time) or in baggage claim. Please communicate with your staff member and let her know where you will be, what clothes you will be wearing, etc. We also encourage you to carry signs with her name and Camp Holloway and/or Camp Sycamore Hills on them so you can easily find each other.

Our staff will be packing for 3-4 months away from home, and they may have a lot of baggage. Make sure you have enough space to accommodate all of it and communicate with your staff about how much baggage they might have so that you can plan for that space.

## **The First Few Days:**

As mentioned above, staff will likely be exhausted the first few days they're here. We know that it's tempting to try and take them everywhere to see everything Nashville has to offer, but please be considerate of how they're feeling as well. We recommend that you plan a few relaxing things that can be cancelled if they simply need more sleep or aren't feeling well. Easy meals that can be reheated will be helpful for middle-of-the-night snacks or irregular mealtimes if someone is sleeping through a meal.

When they are ready, we encourage you to collaborate with your staff member(s) to plan their Nashville itinerary! Popular attractions include seeing a baseball game, going to the Country Music Hall of Fame, and walking downtown on Broadway. However, many staff are also interested in hiking, going to see live music, visiting museums, etc.! There is no limit to what you can do. You are not expected to spend hundreds of dollars on tickets or show them around the entirety of the city (1-3 things is enough!), but we do ask that you provide a fun experience for them while they are with you.

Please also plan to take them to Walmart or Target so they can get anything they left at home or planned to buy here (shampoo, razors, snacks, etc.). A shopping trip is at their own cost – you need only provide the transportation. This is often a fun trip! Stores in other places are not quite so large and generally have smaller selections of items to purchase, so internationals are usually in awe!

## **Arrival at Camp:**

In addition to flight information, you will be notified what day and at which camp they should arrive. We might ask you to bring staff to a camp different from where she will be working for staff training. This will be made clear to both you and your staff member when she is placed with you. Please do your very best to drop your staff members off on time! If, for some reason, the time or location doesn't work for your schedule, please let us know so we can assist with alternate arrangements.

## **Support During the Summer:**

We encourage you to stay in touch with anyone that you host via e-mail, text, snail mail etc. Our staff might not receive much mail or have an easily accessible support system during the summer. You are not required to do so as part of being a host family, but we also invite you to welcome staff back into your home over weekends or after camp ends.

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We also are in need of places for our staff to go if they become ill during the summer. It's difficult to recover at camp (even when not working!). If you are available during periods of the summer to host recovering staff, please inform your staff's Camp Director so she can have your information on file. In the event that a staff member leaves camp due to illness, she might need help going to a pharmacy or a secondary visit to a doctor. We will provide as much support as possible. Our staff members carry international travel medical insurance. If you choose to assist in this way, you are NOT required or asked to pay for any medical expenses, only to provide a place to rest, and maybe some OJ and chicken soup!

## **The End of Camp:**

At the end of the summer, some staff will return home, and some will travel for a period of time before returning home. We encourage you to host your staff again and to notify your staff's camp director if you can. Sometimes international staff schedule flights several days after everyone has departed camp. In addition, they often have a last minute "Nashville wish list" of things they heard about or didn't have a chance to do. We may ask for assistance in transporting them back to the airport if it conflicts with scheduled clean up times. Each camp normally facilitates their travel back to Nashville airport if possible.

## **Contacts:**

We thank you so much for volunteering to host some of our internationals staff members. The very first meeting is important to get our internationals' summer experience off to a great start, and we appreciate any and all effort you put towards this. We are grateful for your support of our camping program, staff, and, of course, our campers.

Please contact us if you need anything from us to make this experience successful for you and your international staff members.

### **Camp Sycamore Hills**

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### **Camp Holloway**

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