



Exchange Student from Germany

Lena Hesemann, a sophomore at Treynor, is a foreign exchange student from near Dusseldorf, Germany. She is living with the Livengoods.

Lena came here with Education First (EF). In fifth grade she decided she wanted to be an exchange student. When she was in 7th grade she convinced her parents to go to a monthly meeting held by EF as an informational meeting. She went another time to sign up to go.

Lena filled out a 20 page

application form. Later they talked to her and had her correct some things and add pictures. That was then sent to Boston to match her with a school and parent family. Ten days before she left Germany she finally found where she was going. She came to the United States and spent 10 days in a cultural camp in Pennsylvania, learning about the U.S. culture and language.

Lena has one brother. She has enjoyed living in a family with five children, including her. She also likes living in a small community like Treynor. Her school had 1000-1500 students. They had an exchange student from Brazil and no one talked to that person, so she had enjoyed Treynor where everyone talks to her.

She started learning English in third grade. She now knows French, German, English, and some Spanish that she has learned in Treynor. There is no English TV available in Germany, unlike Netherlands, where all TV is English, French, or German.

In Germany, High School is 5th through 12th (or 13th) grade. There are three different types of High School, Gymnasium, Realschule, and Hauptschule. Gymnasium is the most advanced, emphasizing academic learning. Realschule is the middle and Hauptschule is the lowest and goes from 5th to 9th (or 10th) grade. The school Lena went to includes all three types. (Note: Germany considers a U.S. High School diploma like a Realschule diploma.)

Lena said that her father works for an Audi car dealership and her mother works for a farmer. This is her first trip overseas. Her grandfather on her father's side of the family is from Switzerland. Her mother's ancestors were Dutch.

German High School is more like college. Classes are 45 minutes with a 10 minute break between classes and an hour for lunch. There are no school activities, only club sports. Club sports are expensive.

You have to pay to go to church in Germany. It is expensive and if you go without paying, they will have you pay.

Lena wants to go to college. She is thinking of majoring in Hotel Management. When asked about Syrian refugees, she said that some of them live in her High School gym. Youth can go to bars and drink wine and beer at age 16. You can ride motorcycles at 15, get a driving permit at 17, and drive alone at 18.