

# How COVID-19 Made a Family Bond Stronger With Their Exchange Students

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO, UNITED STATES, September 24, 2020

/EINPresswire.com/ -- There is always a little bit of good in the bad. We all know that in March of 2020, everyone's world was flipped upside down when we learned about Corona Virus. We were so unsure of how it would change everything including the foreign exchange industry. Unfortunately, we had to see a lot of our students go home before their exchange year was over. However, we also got to see how our AMAZING host families stepped up in a pandemic and got the opportunity to create an even stronger bond with their exchange students.



One of our Field Managers told her story, and let me tell you, it is incredible to hear. Michele Avila is a Field Manager at ETC and has been with us for about 6 years. In those 6 years she has hosted 13 foreign exchange students (obviously that math doesn't even come close to adding up, so you can tell she has a passion for it) but she never could have predicted that this year would be so different. She hosted 2 exchange students; Lukas from Brazil & Bao from Vietnam. They were in America for about

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*Michele Avila*

7 months before the pandemic started. Unfortunately, Bao was called back to Vietnam for safety reasons. A few other things happened and before Michele knew it she was hosting 3 exchange students in the midst of a pandemic; Malena from France, Safer from Switzerland & Lukas. “One thing I did not panic about was having exchange students. I thought thank God we have exchange students; it is like visiting friends, but they are here & we get to quarantine with them. No one will be bored, and it will only be fun times.”

Michele had so many good things to say about being in Quarantine with her exchange students. They worked on new projects around the house, hosted ZOOM cooking classes & even held the

Quarantine Olympics with all her exchange students in New Mexico. She would send them all a list of challenges and they would record themselves doing it on video & keep track of everyone's time. Her exchange students and her kids were together constantly and always thinking of new things to do each day. They created such a strong bond because of it. "The exchange students want to experience American life, even if it is American Quarantine."

Even though our exchange students had to miss out on things like Prom & their graduation, they still had amazing experiences with their host family & go the opportunity to create amazing bonds that might not have been possible without quarantine. Our students still got to experience the American, traditional life and had an incredible exchange program.

Michele thrived through quarantine with her exchange students. Here is her advice to any family looking to host:

"I feel like we did better because we had this stronger family bond. I have hosted in a tiny apartment, while my boys were young, while I was pregnant, right after I gave birth and now a pandemic. Any situation that comes up you just have to roll with the punches. If you have a positive outlook on things, your kids will too. These exchange students don't stay strangers for long, they will end up being a part of your family. My exchange students don't feel cheated (on their exchange year) even with a strange end to their year but they feel like they got to experience American culture still in our home. There will never be the "right" time to host but it can always be a GOOD time to host, you just have to be ready to take the leap."

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