

By Karen Krien*karen.k@nwkansas.com*

Two foreign exchange students have been living and going to school in St. Francis this year.

Agathe Bourdon, 18-years-old, and Silvia Bartoli, 17, arrived in August and September, respectively, and will go back to their homes the first part of June.

Agathe, who is French, and Silvia, who is Italian, say they have become the best of friends and are "sisters." They lived with their host family, John and Ginny Larson.

They both spoke some English before coming but sometimes, the translation from their language to English was a little difficult. Agathe said she had some trouble as the "i" in Italian is pronounced like an "e" in English. Silvia had an American neighbor and she talked to her some before coming which helped her better communicate.

They found almost everything in the United States to be different from their home countries. Sometimes, Agathe said, things were good, sometimes it was hard but she and Silvia said they made friends and, for the most part, liked school however, they found it hard to make friends at first. They said that it was good that they had each other.

Neither had ever been to the prom or any type of dance where they had an evening gown. The Larsons and the girls made a trip to Kansas City to pick out the dresses.

They had a cart full of dresses to try on, Mrs. Larson said. In the end, they both took home a dress they liked and said they had a great time at the prom.

In school, they found a big difference in classes. Silvia's education was more advanced in some of the subjects so she took a semester of physics which she had already taken in Italy then transferred to American literature and history.

In St. Francis Agathe's favorite class was American history while Silvia liked chemistry.

They had favorite teachers with Steve Jenkins being the favorite of both. Silvia also thought David Morrow was very nice. They said the teachers knew how to be good teachers and still be friendly.

When I first came to the school,

Agathe said, she was shocked to see students talking and laughing with teachers. They don't do that in France.

They both thought having cheerleaders was fun and they liked the way they supported the teams. They noted that they don't have football in their schools.

Both girls participated in extra-curricular activities. Silvia was on the basketball team and Agathe played "Gold Dust Gertie" in a play.

They found the food to be OK but different. Agathe said in France, the people eat more vegetables. She found U.S. food to be greasy and there was a lot of gravy.

Silvia came to the U.S. thinking she was going to have to eat a lot of salad so she wouldn't gain weight. She didn't like salad but, she found Ranch dressing and it made a difference in how she liked salad. In Italy, most dressings are oil and vinegar.

Agathe said she did not like to cook but Silvia did. She fixed several Italian meals and brought pasta with her. She said that in Italy, they do not put meat in the spaghetti sauce. Mrs. Larson said she didn't think it would be good but it was actually delicious.

Agathe added that, without the meat, the meal wasn't "heavy" but it still filled her up.

Silvia, when she returns to Italy, will still be a student and will be studying philosophy, Italian literature, Latin and math. In the future, she would like to study psychology in college.

Agathe is finished with the high school level of education in France and will be attending cosmetology school.

In both Italy and France, students decide what they want to be when they are junior high age, then they select the next level of schooling which is much like a college to pursue their education.

The girls left family at home.

Agathe was raised by her mother in Toulouse. When she was looking at host families, she wanted a father figure. Her mother, Brigitte, is an unemployment agent, helping people find work. Agathe has an older sister, Sara, who had a baby just before she left and Agathe said she is anxious to get back to see the baby.

Her mother, Agathe said, was very supportive of her coming to the U.S. as an exchange student. Agathe also has a boyfriend at home.

Silvia said her parents had a hard time letting her go. Her mother, Stefania, is a pharmacist and her father, Andren, works in construction. She has a younger brother, Francesco.

Her family lives in a flat in Florence. She said a house like most people in St. Francis live in would be very expensive in France.

The past year has been spent traveling and seeing some of the United States. The last trip they made was to South Dakota where they visited Mt. Rushmore, Deadwood, Spearfish Canyon and the Badlands. Agathe liked the history of Mt. Rushmore and seeing the presidents carved into the mountain. Silvia liked the Badlands because they were natural.

They learned to scrapbook from John's mother, Carol. In fact, they are worried how they will get them home.

Mr. Larson taught them to throw the tomahawk and he said they were pretty good.

World Heritage program

Silvia and Agathe are part of the World Heritage High School Student Exchange program. John and Ginny Larson are host parents and Mrs. Larson is a representative in this area although not the girl's representative.

Both Silvia and Agathe said they have had a good experience and their representative was always there for them if they had a problem.

Mrs. Larson said they were contacted by their representative regularly. The representative, the girls said, talks to each of us separately, then talks to the host

family.

We have enjoyed having the girls, Mrs. Larson said. They were like any member of a family -- there are ups and downs but, it was fun and we will miss them.

The Larson's dog, Tigger, will probably miss them, too. Agathe was afraid of dogs when she came to the Larson's. Today, Tigger follows her and Silvia everywhere in the house and he knows that Agathe has a treat for him in her room.

Host parents are needed

World Heritage is seeking families, couples or single parents (with or without children at home) who are fun-loving, responsible and most of all, caring. Those interested can call Mrs. Larson, 785-332-3414, or another area representative, then complete an application form.

Recruiting for World Heritage host families takes place in the spring and early summer months to ensure enough time for exchanging letters with the student before he or she arrives.

Once the student arrives, the World Heritage representative will be available during the entire stay to assist the student in adjusting to the family and his or her new school, community and culture.

There is minimal cost to having the student. The host family provides meals and a room. In fact, the student may share a room with a child of the same sex who is close in age.

The exchange students pay for their own round-trip airfare and provide their own complete medical and liability insurance. Spending money is also the responsibility of the student and their natural parents.



SCRAPBOOKING — Agathe Bourdon and Ginny Larson design a page for a scrapbook.



MAKING A DREAM CATCHER— Silvia Bartoli and John Larson work together to finish a dream catcher.

Herald staff photos by Karen Krien

You are invited to a
Come & Go Bridal Shower
for **Lori Gohl**

Bride-elect of Dan Closs

Saturday, June 5

1:30 - 3:30 p.m.

St. Francis Equity Meeting Room

Dan & Lori are registered at: bedbathandbeyond.com



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Matthew 7:21-23

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BBQ**

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Tuesday, June 1

thru

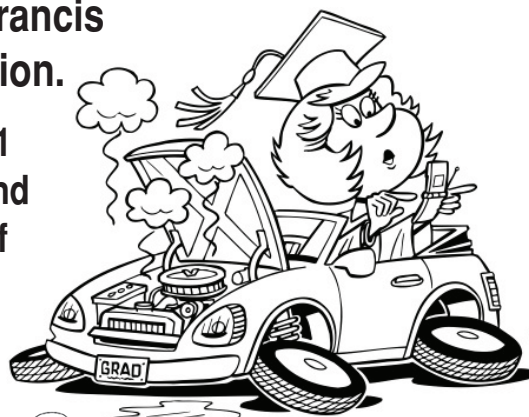
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NOTICE • NOTICE • NOTICE

**Ads and copy DEADLINE for the
June 3**

**The Saint Francis Herald
and Bird City Times
will be Tues., June 1
at 5 p.m.**

**The offices will be closed
on Monday, May 31th.
Newspapers will be
delivered a day later.**