

## **Students Go To France!**

On November 17, 2006, 16 students from Bristol Central High School boarded an American Airlines flight to Paris to begin a ten day home-stay experience in France. The students and their three teacher chaperones, Dorothy Raviele, Amanda Robustelli and Janice Shea were participating in the second half of an exchange with the Lycée Jean Monnet in La Queue-lez-Yvelines, France. This is the second time that students from BCHS have traveled to France to participate in this exchange program.

Bristol Central had welcomed French students from the Lycée in April and this fall it was our turn to do the traveling. We enjoyed the warmest of welcomes at the entrance to our sister school. All the students who had enjoyed the hospitality of Bristol were there to greet us, wearing their BCHS shirts. We were immediately whisked off to our homes away from home and were plunged into "la vie française."

Le Lycée Jean Monnet is a regional school that brings together students from all over the region of the Ile de France. It is located in a very rural area and all the surrounding towns are tiny villages that date from the Middle Ages. Many of the French families live amid farmland and our students were amazed to see lambs frolicking in their backyards. The teachers all stayed with other teachers from the school and enjoyed many pleasant evenings of entertainment and good food.

Our students learned so much from this exchange; how to eat snails, rabbit and duck; how to maneuver the Parisian metro system and the French regional train system; how to flush the toilet in any number of ways; how to shower without a shower curtain; and most importantly, how to understand and get along in another language, another culture, another high school. We visited châteaux, museums and the beaches of Normandy. We were guests at parties and pot-luck suppers. We danced together, laughed together and, upon our departure, shed a few tears together.

This exchange has changed the lives of all those who participated in it, both students and teachers, both American and French. We have all learned the importance of language study to understand and appreciate other cultures. We have learned that there are other ways of approaching life and that not everything has to be done the American way for it to be good or worthwhile. And we have learned that, regardless of language, clothes or taste in food, we are all really the same. Our goals, ambitions and needs don't differ that much from country to country, culture to culture.

We hope that this exchange will continue to open doors to the students of Bristol Central High School and that many more students will be able to benefit from this once in a lifetime opportunity.

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