

French students land in Bristol

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BY FREESIA SINGNGAM, STAFF WRITER

BRISTOL — Students from France are here experiencing America, staying with Bristol families as part of the Bristol Central High School French exchange program.

French teacher Amanda Robustelli-Price said this is the eighth cycle, or fourth year of exchange. BCHS students go to France in the fall, and French students from La Queue lez-Yvelines in France are here for nearly two weeks in the spring.

On Thursday, the host families, BCHS students and 28 French students met in the cafeteria for a potluck dinner to plan their activities for the next week. They have some scheduled activities, like a visit to New York City, but this gave the families a chance to decide what else to do, with some opting to visit New York City twice.

The dinner attendees were welcomed with signs reading “Bienvenue au diner a BCHS.”

Every parent involved brought a dish to share, including a big salad, casseroles and cupcakes for dessert.

Robustelli-Price said the potluck and exchange adds to camaraderie between the groups.

“I can’t begin to describe what an amazing community event this is,” she said. “Students love it that they can speak French.”

Ann Marie Meehan, whose son Craig is a sophomore taking French at BCHS, is hosting Thomas Laridam, who is the equivalent of a sophomore in France.

“We’re getting along great,” Meehan said. “The whole family is learning from it.”

Craig agreed. He and Laridam found that they have some of the same interests — video games and guitar.

Laridam called the experience “wonderful.”

His friend, Thomas Strauss, agreed.

“I wanted to see it with my eyes,” Strauss said about America.

Marika Poitow said there are a lot of things that are different in America.

“It’s bigger,” she said. Just a few days before the potluck, all the exchange students visited New York City.

Axelle Ponthieux said the classrooms and school day are different.

“Teachers are friendly,” she added.

Richard Lemieux, whose daughter Kara Lynne is a student at BCHS, said the French school schedule goes from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m..

“It’s fun,” he said about hosting a student. “They’re starting to open up. They have a busy schedule.”

Before they all started eating, Robustelli-Price made sure to thank the parents and families for their support in the program, noting that they couldn’t do it without them.

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