SISTER CITIES STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

The Sister Cities Student Exchange Programme is a cross-community programme that has been running from 2000. It aims to provide Antrim and Newtownabbey's young adults with an opportunity to travel to Gilbert, Arizona to develop an understanding of a different country, its culture and people through a family living experience.

Making the world a better place by bringing people together one friendship at a time was the dream of President Dwight D. Eisenhower 47 years ago when he introduced the Sister Cities concept. The program coordinates cultural, trade, educational, and sports programs that promote international and intercultural knowledge and understanding. The Newtownabbey link with Gilbert was established on November 17, 1998 and was a first for both areas.

Gilbert is a young, affluent community in central Arizona. Incorporated on July 6, 1920, it is a relatively new community that has seen tremendous growth during the past three decades. Gilbert has experienced a rapid transition from a historically agriculture-based community to an urban centre and suburb in the Phoenix Metropolitan Area. In the last three decades, Gilbert has grown at a pace unparalleled by most communities in the United States, increasing in population from 5,717 in 1980 to over 242,955 in 2015.

The Programme

Four students will be selected to participate in the programme, two from Antrim and Newtownabbey and two from Gilbert. Antrim and Newtownabbey students will be matched with a student partner in the USA and will spend the duration of the programme with that student. The programme lasts approximately six weeks with half the time spent in Gilbert and half in Antrim and Newtownabbey.

The first part of the programme involves the two selected students from Antrim and Newtownabbey travelling to the USA to spend three weeks being home hosted by their

matched student. They will be given a wonderful opportunity to learn about their hosts' local cultures and customs in ways not available to a casual visitor.

At the end of the three weeks, the Gilbert students will return with the Antrim and Newtownabbey students to be home hosted in Antrim and Newtownabbey. During their stay, they will have a chance to closely experience a new culture and make lifelong friends by living with the family of their exchange student.

During the Exchange, Antrim and Newtownabbey students will be asked to send a weekly blog to the Council officers, which will be shared through the Student Exchange webpage.

Prior to the Student Exchange, the successful Antrim and Newtownabbey applicants are required to take part in a social benefit project, details of which will be discussed during the interview process.

Eligibility

Each applicant must:

- be an EU citizen,

- live in the Borough of Antrim and Newtownabbey,

- be in Year 13 and

- be in good health (and, upon request, be able to supply a doctor's statement of verification)

Travel Dates

It is expected that the exchange programme will commence around the last week of June and finish the first week of August. The dates are dependent on school exam timetables and we will set the dates to suit the selected students.

Cost

- Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council shall pay for travel to the USA including insurance costs.

- Students must provide their own spending money.

- Families/students will be expected to home host their exchange student for three weeks.

- **Families/students will be expected to provide trips/activities for their exchange student for three weeks. These will typically aim to show the exchange students the sights in Northern Ireland, as well as to allow the student to take part in the life of a**

teenager in Antrim and Newtownabbey; for example cinema, sport or cultural activities.

- Additional activities may be organised and paid for by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council during the Antrim and Newtownabbey hosting period.

Responsibility of Parents/Guardians

- Parents/guardians are required to home host the foreign exchange student for approximately three weeks. You should have adequate space to ensure everyone is comfortable.

- Parents/guardians will be expected to invest time with the students during their approx. three week stay in the Borough.

- Parents/guardians are required to participate in activities organised by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council.

- It is an essential element of the programme that families make contact prior to students travelling; this can take place via email, social media or phone contact.

Passports & Visas

Obtaining a passport and the required visas is the responsibility of the delegate and his/her family. It is recommended that delegates apply immediately, if required, following their selection. Please note passports must be valid for 6 months for USA travel.
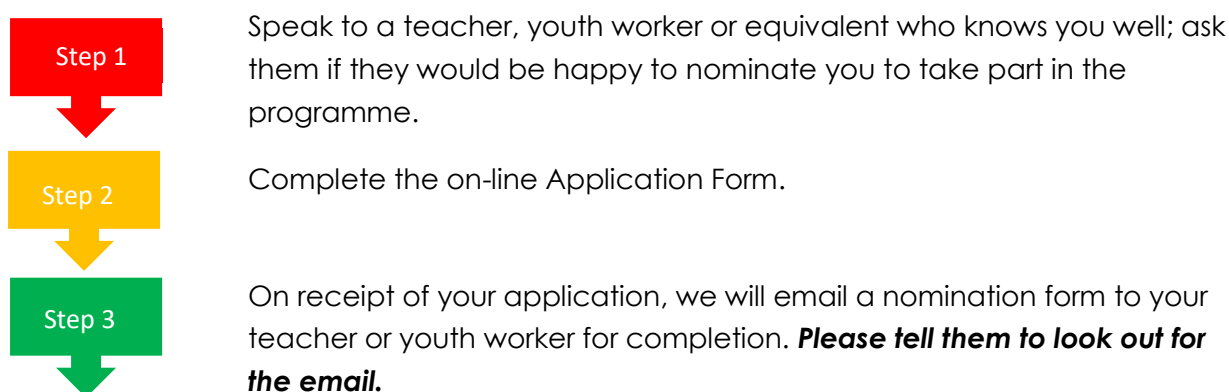
The application process for this programme is currently closed.

HOW TO TAKE PART

To take part in the Student Exchange Programme you must be nominated by a teacher, youth worker or equivalent.

Applying to take part is a two stage process which includes the following:

- Completion of a Student Application (including Access NI Acceptance)
- Completion of a Nomination Form – this must be completed by a teacher, youth worker or equivalent. **Please note: if nomination is by anyone other than a teacher, further references may be required**.

Step 1 — Speak to a teacher, youth worker or equivalent who knows you well; ask them if they would be happy to nominate you to take part in the programme.

Step 2 — Complete the on-line Application Form.

Step 3 — On receipt of your application, we will email a nomination form to your teacher or youth worker for completion. ***Please tell them to look out for the email.***

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1 — All application and nomination forms must be received by the stated closing date and time. **4pm – 4th February 2019**

2 — All applicants must meet all of the stated eligibility criteria (please see eligibility information above).

3 — All applicants must have parental or guardian approval to apply.

4 — If short-listed, applicants and parents/guardians must attend for interview.

Apply
Now