



Cyprus Friendship Programme

TEEN FAMILY HANDBOOK

People UNITED in a country divided

Cyprus Friendship Programme, an organization of volunteers cooperating from both the north and south sides of Cyprus, and the Cyprus Friendship Program, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in the United States, share the mission to promote peace and understanding in Cyprus by bringing together teenagers from both sides of the divide with future leadership potential, encouraging lifelong friendships among them, and extending these friendships to their friends and families.

Welcome to the Cyprus Friendship Programme (CFP)!

This document will provide the information you need to know about the Cyprus Friendship Programme before completing the application form. We hope it will be very clear that CFP is not a travel agency! We are an all-volunteer peace building and leadership training programme for teenagers, promoting bi-communal friendships and activities for them and their families and friends. Through these friendships and activities, fear is replaced by trust and prejudice by mutual respect. Teens applying to the programme should want to meet and become friends with members of the other community. Teens accepted to the programme promise to spend a year, and hopefully more, working on bi-communal efforts through CFP.

The Cyprus Friendship Programme is a major commitment of time, involving meetings and workshops on the weekends, radio and

television interviews, presentations in schools and community centers, and special peace opportunities that arise each year.

The Cyprus Friendship Programme is also a wonderful opportunity for teenagers to learn about the other community and about themselves. Through CFP activities, as well as Euroscola and Junior Achievement, CFP teens learn new skills and try new challenges. They begin to consider things from different perspectives and focus on what unites Cypriots rather than what divides them. They realize that each one of us can make a difference and that together we can accomplish much.

TO QUALIFY, A TEEN MUST:

- **BE AGE 15 BY JULY 1 TO AGE 18, HAVING ONE MORE YEAR IN SCHOOL**
- **HAVE ONE CYPRIOT PARENT**

Background:

From Catholic and Protestant youth to Turkish speaking and Greek speaking Cypriot youth

The CFP is modeled after the Children's Friendship Project for Northern Ireland (CFPNI), a U.S. based all-volunteer peace and friendship building programme that successfully brought more than 2,000 Protestant and Catholic teens in Northern Ireland, as well as their families and friends, together throughout its 21 year existence. CFPNI came to its successful completion in 2007.

The bi-communal Cyprus Friendship Programme started in 2009 as an initiative of a small U.S. non-profit organization called

HasNa in cooperation with a Cypriot team of coordinators. In 2011, the U.S. non-profit organization of Cyprus Friendship Program, Inc. (CFP Inc.) was formed to guide the entire programme and manage the programme in the U.S. The programme in Cyprus is managed by a bi-communal team of Cypriot coordinators. The two all-volunteer groups cooperate harmoniously and are driven by the same passion to promote a culture of peaceful coexistence.

CFP in Cyprus

The CFP programme in Cyprus is year-long and includes many meetings, workshops, activities and opportunities to speak about and for peace in Cyprus. All teens accepted to the programme participate in these. In addition, there are two bi-communal living experiences offered in July – one in Cyprus and one in the United States. Each teen selected for the programme will be offered one of these experiences. Each teen's family makes a financial contribution to cover some of the costs of their child's expenses.

CAMP

CFP has run a bi-communal camp since 2003. Prior camps have been held in the small village of Ayios Nicolaos on the south side of the Troodos Mountains. Located 15 minutes down from Platres and 40 minutes up from Limassol, its inhabitants were Turkish Cypriots before 1974.

The camp programme combines great fun, valuable learning experiences and the creation of a strong spirit of community among all campers. Previous programmes have included:

- Mixed gender and mixed community teams competing in volleyball and basketball throughout the week. If you don't want to play it's OK.
- A professional karate instructor teaching karate for peace!
- Workshops on history and the different ways it is taught in the two main communities in Cyprus.
- Watching documentaries related to peace building.
- Professional basketball coaches from the famous Peace Players International group teaching campers to play basketball and learning how it can be used to promote peace.
- Oral history workshops combined with the guidance of Turkish speaking Cypriots who grew up in the village and a nature walk to the nearby Tzelefos bridge.
- Excursion for dinner at Platres.
- Learning origami, the Japanese art of paper folding, to create the universal symbol for peace – the peace cranes.
- Drama/theatre workshops.
- Campers are encouraged to bring their guitars or other musical instruments as well as CDs with the music they like.
- Campers teaching in pairs Greek or Turkish throughout the week with the support and guidance of professional language teachers.
- Workshops to decide how we can continue the peace building work after the camp, discussing if and how the campers' families might get involved, how we can connect with other peace building groups to promote a peace culture in Cyprus and so on.
- A talent show on the last evening with music, theatre and dancing. Prizes are given to the winners of the team and individual competitions.

CFP in U.S.

CFP creates bonds of friendship and trust among the youth of the communities of Cyprus. For the U.S. programme, each teen from one community is 'paired' with another of the same gender from the other community. Each pair is then hosted in July for four weeks by a family in the U.S.

All the coordinators of the programme in Cyprus and the U.S., as well as the board members of CFP Inc., offer their services on a **purely voluntary basis**. No one gets paid. This also applies for the **host families in the U.S. who cover most of the expenses of hosting the two teenagers**.

The most important costs of the programme are the airline tickets and a health insurance package during their stay in the U.S. These costs are covered from donations from non-governmental organizations (e.g. the Rotary) who believe in the aims of the programme and individuals. There is also a contribution from the family of each Cypriot teen who takes part in the programme. The organisers believe that no teenager should be excluded from the programme because of family financial difficulties. The Cyprus Friendship Programme does not get any financial support nor is dependent on any political party. It does not receive any funding from governments directly related to the Cyprus problem (Greece, Turkey, U.S., UK etc.).

HOW THE U.S. PROGRAMME IS OPERATED

The Board of CFP Inc. elects a CFP Executive Director who, for two years, coordinates the operations of the U.S. programme. The current Executive Director is Don Guziewicz, who has served our programme previously as the transportation coordinator.

Each area has an Area Coordinator who recruits the host families and organizes the group activities. In the past, we have had teens stay in Atlanta (Georgia), Connecticut, Maryland, New Hampshire, Northern Virginia, Oregon/SW Washington and San Francisco (California). The U.S. Coordinators are always looking for new areas to add to the programme. While some areas are rural and others are cities, regardless of where the teens go, the general programme of each area is the same and the host families share an interest in world peace.

To be considered, host families must be able to provide:

- A political and religiously neutral home
- A safe home with daylong adult supervision
- A bedroom for the teens to share

There is an application process for all American hosts consisting of an informational interview, a written application, a criminal background check, and a home visit. Both the Area Coordinator and the Executive Director screen and approve the hosts before they are accepted. American host profiles are sent by the Executive Director to the Cypriot Coordinators who then match each pair of the Cypriot teens with a host family in the U.S. The matching is done by the Cypriot Coordinators using criteria like gender of the pairs, common interests and hobbies, comfort levels with pets, etc.

Once a match is made between the pair and an American host, typically in early May, the Cypriot families will receive contact information for the Area Coordinator, the Cypriot pair's American host, and the Executive Director. Both the families in Cyprus

and the teens, while in the U.S., must keep these contact details with them in case any problem arises. Similarly, the American hosts will receive contact information for the Cypriot teens and their parents. At this point, the American hosts and the Cypriot teens and parents can start communicating by e-mail, telephone, Facebook, and Skype.

While the Cypriot teens are in the U.S., hosts are requested to treat the teenagers as family members, not as tourists on holiday. Teens will take part in their hosts' normal family summer activities. Each pair's experience will vary according to the host with whom they are placed. Teens need to remember that the primary mission of the programme is to experience living with a fellow youth leader from the opposite side of the divide. To be sure, the hosts will want to show them special aspects of where they live, but the purpose of the programme is for peace building and leadership training, not a month of entertainment.

While in the U.S., the hosts cover most everyday living expenses of the Cypriot teenagers. There will be times when teens will have to pay for their own activities, e.g., a movie they attend without the hosts, extra food they may want, optional group trips or shopping. Host families, like everyone else in the U.S., do not get paid for their participation in CFP and teens should not make demands.

Cypriot teens will form relationships with their partner, but they will also form a bond with their hosts. This requires a willingness to commit to learning a new culture for four weeks. Their hosts have opened their homes for a variety of reasons – to participate in a global peace process, to support teen leadership, and to learn about Cypriot culture. The families are not signing up to be tour guides or to offer a vacation to teens

who simply want to visit the U.S. To be sure, families will want to expose the Cypriot teens to highlights of their region, but in general, the teens should be prepared to fit into the families' daily lives and adjust to the hosts' routines and rules. This may involve household chores or participating in family activities. It should be noted that, just as every Cypriot family is a bit different, so it is with the U.S. hosts.

TRAVELING TO AND FROM THE U.S.

All the teens travel with experienced chaperones who are usually Cypriot and American CFP Coordinators. The great team of volunteers in the U.S. includes our two transportation coordinators, Kim Bell and Dianna Cook. During the long journeys to the U.S. and back to Cyprus the chaperones are in contact with Kim and Dianna who are available on a 24 hour basis taking turns to ensure that they are available to help in case any problem arises. Messages are sent to the coordinators in Cyprus who, in turn, inform by e-mail the Cypriot parents continuously from take-off from Larnaca till the final landing in the U.S. and all the stops in between! The same monitoring and messages are done for the teens' return flights from the U.S. back to Cyprus.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE U.S. RESIDENTIAL

In each of the areas where the teens go, the Area Coordinator plans a number of group activities. In addition to the connection between the pairs and their host families there is also the opportunity for strong group connections to be formed between all the teens who go in each area. On average two times a week the group of teens in the same area meet for activities that are meaningful, educational and also great fun! Typically, the activities aim to inspire our teens how to

become leaders in peace building, how to be sensitive and help others less fortunate than us, how to be responsible citizens of the world and care for the environment. Group activities include team building, conflict resolution workshops, community service, and environmental awareness projects.

IMPORTANT CFP RULES AND WHY

A CFP teen is an ambassador for all of us in CFP and for the programme. The host families are informed about all the rules and expect the Cypriot teens to follow them. **In the American culture, rules are taken very seriously and host families would find it very difficult to understand if their Cypriot guests break the rules.** The host families make a massive commitment to CFP by opening their home for a whole month to a pair from a far-away land, cover most of the costs of their stay, take them to special places, treat them like members of their own family so that they will have a great time and make a contribution to peace in Cyprus. So, if the teens break the few but important rules they have agreed to follow, they reflect badly on the CFP programme and all of us. Host families and U.S. and Cypriot Coordinators do not want to have the additional role of policing the enforcement of or negotiating the nuances of these rules. **To be clear, breaking of the rules will mean returning home from the U.S. at the expense of the Cypriot family and removal from the Cyprus Friendship Programme.**

Money matters

Each teen can only bring to the U.S. a **maximum of \$500 (U.S. dollars)**. This amount has been enough in the past for CFP teens to purchase gifts for family members and extras for themselves. This rule must be strictly observed to give monetary equality to all

participants. Problems will be created if a teen brings a much larger amount than his or her pair or if a Cypriot has more spending money than the children of the host family. Needless to say, **credit cards are not allowed**. The teens will have the opportunity to shop at malls, but this is not the reason they are in the U.S. If teens were allowed to bring large amounts of money for shopping, the host families would think they were not here for peace building and were taking advantage of the host family's time and generosity. This could hurt CFP by making Americans not wish to host. **This would be especially true when some hosts have made personal sacrifices to be able to host the Cypriot teens. So, Cypriot teens are not allowed to buy for themselves, or for their friends, electronic devices or other expensive presents they may have been asked to bring back to Cyprus!**

Finally, a great advantage of this rule is that the teens will develop the life skill of making a budget for a month.

Communications with Cypriot family/friends

The main reason for the teens going to the U.S. is to connect with their pair, their host family, and the bigger group of Cypriot teens who will be in the same area and to enjoy the uniqueness of peaceful coexistence which is so rare in Cyprus. For this reason it is important to put some reasonable limits with communication back in Cyprus and the use of the internet. At the same time the CFP team respects the right and concern of the families in Cyprus to have news from their children. To keep a balance between these two objectives some things are allowed and some are not.

What IS allowed:

- As soon as the teens arrive in the host family's home they can make one

short phone call back to Cyprus to tell their parents they arrived, they are tired and will go to sleep. One more telephone call can be made at any time during the four weeks after permission from the host family.

- A couple of days after their arrival when the jet lag is over and they begin to settle, the teens can use Skype to talk to their families in Cyprus so they will all feel more comfortable and relieved from anxiety. Three more Skype communications will be allowed after this point – usually at the weekend or whenever it is convenient for all involved. So, a total of four Skype calls, about once a week, can take place.
- The CFP organisers strongly recommend that any two of the four Skype calls described above are done at a time when the two families in Cyprus can meet and have a meal together – one in one community and one in the other.
- The use of YouTube may be allowed but **only** as a social event between the Cypriot teens and the host family. The teens can participate in on-line activities according to the host family rules. For example, if host family teens watch YouTube videos, then so can the Cypriot teens. Often times, the host families and Cypriot teens sit down together and Google maps of different places or current events as part of their conversations. The crucial factor in this use of technology is that it is part of a social event **with** the host family (not a

social connection with friends/family in Cyprus).

- If families in Cyprus are at any time concerned and need more news, they can communicate directly with the host family by e-mail or other means.

What is NOT allowed:

- **Mobile phones are strictly not allowed.**
- **Use of Facebook and other social media.**
- The teenager is **not** permitted to **bring or use mobile phones** and any other **electronic devices whether it can be connected to the internet or not** (i-pods, tablets, android devices, mp-players and so on).
- If any such devices are found, they will be **confiscated**. Other consequences, depending on the severity of misbehavior may follow, including not awarding the CFP graduation certificate.

These rules may initially seem hard for teenagers (and their families). But once in the U.S., they will be so happily busy with all the activities of their group and with their host families that they will not miss any of these devices. The teens who have already been through the programme will testify to this truth. Furthermore, parents who are worried that, while in Cyprus, their children spend too much time on Facebook and the mobile phone may appreciate that this would be a very healthy break and that the teens will be busy with all kinds of meaningful and also fun experiences.

How the Programme Works

- Teenagers from both communities, 15 by July 1 to 18 years old, having one more year in school, apply to join the programme after presentations are made in schools and youth clubs in both sides of the divided island.
- Interviews are conducted and the selected applicants are accepted into the programme in equal numbers from the two communities.
- A series of meetings, with facilitated workshop activities, take place that focus on leadership, communication, reconciliation and peace building skills.
- At the end of the workshops, each teen chooses one person from the 'other side' of the same gender with whom he/she feels comfortable.
- The relationships of friendship and trust created between the teenagers are typically very strong. They begin to be formed before boarding the plane in July since the selection process is completed by March. It is strengthened during their month abroad and continues after their return to Cyprus.
- The families of each 'pair' also get connected with equally strong bonds. It is only normal that the parents of each teenager would be interested to meet the young person from the other community that their child has chosen to be a roommate for one month. It is equally normal to have the wish to meet the family of this child. Very often the circle becomes bigger with grandparents, uncles and aunts. There are typically many meetings of the two families in Cyprus even during the month when their children are in the U.S.
- In the summer, each pair of teenagers lives with host families in the United States, sharing a bedroom to themselves for a four-week residential.
- It also allows them to experience a country where many differing cultures and religions live together in peace.
- Typically strong bonds of friendship also build between the teens and their host family that last well beyond the summer residential.
- Another important aim of the residential is to further advance leadership and peace building skills which had been promoted during the programme activities that occurred in Cyprus. This is done through four formal programme activities during the residential (team building, conflict resolution training, community service, and environmental awareness).
- The Cypriot coordinators of the programme organize activities and projects for the members all year round. The aim of the Cyprus Friendship Programme is to spread the message that reconciliation is possible and that these young people are living examples of this truth.
- In October a CFP Graduation occurs. After graduating, each participant is required to continue to participate in the CFP bi-communal activities.

Contact Information

Cypriot Coordinators

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U.S. Coordinators

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