



Creating Friendships for Peace, Inc.

TEEN FAMILY HANDBOOK

People UNITED in countries divided

CFP is a volunteer grassroots organization whose mission is to promote and strengthen friendships between teens from divided communities and extend those friendships to their families and friends. The friendships are developed through home stays with American families. Each family hosts two teens – one from each side of a conflict. The teen pair shares a bedroom and learns about each other, understanding their different perspectives and realizing that friendships can develop despite significant political and cultural differences. With friendship, an atmosphere is created that allows for mutual respect and understanding – a key ingredient for peace.

Welcome to Creating Friendships for Peace (CFP)!

This document will provide the information you need to know about Creating Friendships for Peace before applying to the program. We hope it will be very clear that CFP is not a travel agency! We are an all-volunteer peace building and leadership training program 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 mutual respect. Teens applying to the program should want to meet and become friends with members of the other community. Teens accepted to the program promise to

spend at least a year, and hopefully more, working on bi-communal efforts through CFP.

Creating Friendships for Peace is a wonderful opportunity for teenagers to learn about the other community and about themselves. Through CFP activities, CFP teens learn new skills and try new challenges. They begin to consider things from different perspectives and focus on what unites people rather than what divides them. They realize that each one of us can make a difference and that together we can accomplish much.

Background:

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

Creating Friendships for Peace is modeled after the Children's Friendship Project for Northern Ireland (CFPNI), a U.S. based all-volunteer peace and friendship building program 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.

CFPNI volunteers then began the bi-communal Cyprus Friendship Program in 2009 as a pilot program 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 program and manage the program in the U.S. In 2018 the U.S. organization changed its name to Creating Friendships for Peace as a way to recognize its growth to become a global peace building organization. The program 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 Israel & Palestine

In Israel and Palestine, CFP partnered with Jerusalem Peacebuilders in 2018 and 2019. CFP's contribution to the partnership was the opportunity for pairs of youth, one from each community, to become better acquainted with

each other through living with an American family for two weeks. Our experience in Northern Ireland and in Cyprus, as well as in Israel and Palestine, has shown that this home stay usually results in stronger friendships

between the teen pairs and that these friendships often extend to their parents and friends as they interact with each other as a result of the friendship of their children.

CFP has multiple hosting areas where American families will host the teens. Each area has an Area Coordinator who selects the host families and organizes group activities that will be an extension of their camp curriculum. The group activities include social events and work projects on community service and the environment – both topics that bring us together as people who care for each

other and for our planet. Cypriot teen pairs will also be living with American families in the same areas, providing opportunities for sharing viewpoints and perspectives.

American hosting areas include Maryland; New Hampshire; San Francisco, CA; Portland, Oregon/SW Washington state and Houston, TX. CFP determines where teens will be located based on multiple factors. Teens and/or their families cannot request a specific area. Also, not all areas may be used each year.

CFP in U.S.

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

Creating Friendships for Peace does not receive financial support from nor is it dependent on any political party. It does not receive any funding from governments. All program funds are donated by individuals, charitable foundations or Rotary Clubs.

HOW THE U.S. PROGRAM IS OPERATED

The Board of CFP Inc. elects a CFP Executive Director who, for two years, coordinates the operations of the U.S. program. The current Executive Director is Betsy Small, who has served our program since our involvement with Northern Ireland. Each region has an Area Coordinator who recruits the host families and organizes the group activities. The U.S. Coordinators are always looking for new areas to add to the program. While some areas are rural and others are cities, regardless of where

the teens go, the general program 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 demonstrated commitment to making a difference in the world for peace
- A politically and religiously neutral home
- A safe home with daylong adult supervision
- A bedroom for the teens to share
- A willingness to continue the relationship with their teens

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 Area Coordinators who then match each pair of teens with a host family in the U.S. The matching is done using criteria like gender,

common interests and hobbies, comfort levels with pets, etc.

Once a match is made between the pair and an American host(s), the families will receive contact information from the Area Coordinator, the pair's American host, and the Executive Director. Both the families in Israel and Palestine 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 teens and their parents. At this point, the American hosts and the teens and parents can start communicating by email, telephone or social media.

While the 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 program 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 program is for peace building and leadership training, not entertainment.

While in the U.S., the hosts cover most everyday living expenses of the teenagers. There will be times when teens will have to pay for their own activities, e.g., a movie they attend, 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.

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. 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 other cultures. 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. While families will want to expose the teens to highlights of their region, 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 family is a bit different, so it is with the U.S. hosts.

TRAVELING WITHIN THE U.S.

All the teens travel with experienced chaperones who are usually American CFP Coordinators. The great team of volunteers in the U.S. includes our two transportation coordinators, Kim Bell and Dianna Cook. During the journeys 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 CFP staff who, in turn, inform the parents by email. The same monitoring and messages are done for the teens' return flights.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE U.S. HOMESTAY

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 in each area. The group of teens in the same area meet for activities that are meaningful, educational and also great fun! Since 2019, the teens will be engaging with teens from another country or countries who

are part of the US organization. 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 program. The host families are informed about all the rules and expect the 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 teen guests break the rules.** The host families make a massive commitment to CFP by opening their home 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 their home countries. So, if the teens break the few but important rules they have agreed to follow, they are reflecting poorly on themselves, their country, those who have donated to support this program and the CFP Program as a whole. The conditions of participation in CFP are designed so that everyone involved has a wonderful experience. Host families and U.S. 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 result in consequences up to and including returning home and removal from the CFP program.**

Money matters

Each teen can only bring to the U.S. a maximum of \$300 (U.S. dollars). This amount

has been enough in the past for CFP teens to purchase gifts for family members and extras for themselves, as well as pay for some of the optional activities in their areas. 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 teen has more spending money than the children of the host family. Needless to say, **credit/debit or gift or prepaid cash 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 reflect poorly on 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. So, 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 home!**

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

Communications with 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 teens who will be in the same area and to enjoy the uniqueness of peaceful coexistence which is so rare back home. For this reason it is important to put some reasonable limits with communication back home and the use of the internet. At the same time the CFP team respects the right and concern of the families 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 home to tell their parents they arrived.
- Once a week, the teens can communicate with their parents via videoconference for 60 minutes each.
- CFP encourages both sets of parents to meet to videoconference together with both teens and suggests that the parents follow the call by having a meal together.
- The use of YouTube may be allowed but **only** as a social event between the teens and the host family and only with permission from the host family. The teens can participate in online activities according to the host family rules. For example, if host family teens watch YouTube videos, then so can the CFP teens. Often times, the host families and teens sit down together and use 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 back home).
- If families are at any time concerned and need more news, they can communicate directly with the host family by email or other means.

What is NOT allowed:

- **Mobile phones are held by the host parents during the home stay and can be used for the weekly calls to parents and as a camera on outings without connection to wifi or internet. They will be returned upon departure.**
- **Use of Facebook and other social media.**
- The teenager is not permitted to use other **electronic devices whether it can be connected to the internet or not** (ipods, tablets, android devices, mp3-players and so on). These, too, should be held by the host parents and returned upon departure.
- Depending on the severity, failure to comply with these rules may result in consequences, including not awarding the CFP graduation certificate.

These rules may initially seem hard for teenagers (and their families). The teens who have already been through the program will testify to the fact that, once in the U.S., the CFP teens will be happily busy with all the activities of their group and with their host families that they will not miss any of these devices. Furthermore, parents who are worried that 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 Program Works

- Teenagers from both communities, age 15 to 18 years old, apply to participate in the program.
- 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 to the U.S. since the selection process is completed by April. It is strengthened during their month abroad and continues after their return home.

- 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. 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. We hope the same will happen in Israel/Palestine.
- In the summer, each pair of teenagers lives with a host family (it is possible the family consists of a single man or woman with or without children as well as a married couple with or without children) in the United States, sharing a bedroom to

themselves for a four-week residential stay.

- 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. Most often, that bonding occurs in such informal settings as watching a movie together or when teens are casually talking in their room prior to falling asleep.
- Another important aim of the home stay is to further advance leadership and peace building skills which had been promoted during the in-country workshops. This is done through four formal program activities during the home stay (team building, conflict resolution training, community service, and environmental awareness).
- A few months after the U.S. Residential, a CFP Graduation occurs. After graduating, each participant is encouraged to continue to participate in CFP bi-communal activities.

Contact Information

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