



Cyprus Friendship Programme

TEEN FAMILY HANDBOOK

Cypriot Version

2024

People UNITED in a country divided

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

Welcome to the Cyprus Friendship Programme (CFP)!

Before completing the application form to participate in the Cyprus Friendship Programme (CFP), you will find that reading this Teen Family Handbook provides most, if not all, the information you need to know.

CFP is an all-volunteer peacebuilding and leadership training programme for teenagers that promotes bi-communal friendships and activities not only for the teens themselves but for their families and friends. We hope that through these friendships and activities, trust and mutual respect will replace suspicion and fear.

Teens applying to this unique two-year programme should want to meet and become friends with members of the other community. When accepted, they promise to spend a year, and hopefully more, working on bi-communal efforts through CFP. The first year involves participating in a Peace Camp in Cyprus and then in year two, teens will be eligible for a Residency Experience in the U.S.

CFP is a major commitment of time for teens, involving meetings and workshops on the weekends, radio and television interviews, presentations in schools and community centers, and special peace opportunities that may arise each year.

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

TO QUALIFY, A TEEN MUST:

- **BE AGE 14 (BY JAN. 1) FOR YEAR 1**
- **BE AGE 15 (BY JULY 1) TO AGE 18 FOR YEAR 2**
- **HAVE ONE MORE YEAR IN SCHOOL**
- **HAVE ONE CYPRIOT PARENT**

Background:

From Catholic and Protestant youth in Northern Ireland to Turkish- and Greek-speaking Cypriot youth

The Cyprus Friendship Programme is modeled on the Children's Friendship Project for Northern Ireland (CFPNI), which was a U.S. based all-volunteer peace and friendship-building programme that successfully brought together more than 2,000 Protestant and Catholic teens in Northern Ireland, as well as their families and friends. After a 21-year existence, CFPNI ended successfully in 2007.

Building on this success, a core leadership group of CFPNI started in 2009 the Cyprus

Friendship Programme with a Cypriot team of coordinators as a pilot program under a U.S. non-profit organization called HasNa. In 2011, the U.S. non-profit organization of Cyprus Friendship Program, Inc. (CFP Inc.) was formed to guide the entire programme as well as to manage its operations in the U.S. In 2018 the US organization changed its name to Creating Friendships for Peace to recognize its growth into a global peacebuilding organization. The programme in Cyprus is managed by volunteer bi-communal Cypriots.

CFP in Cyprus

CFP in Cyprus is a two-year programme that includes many meetings, workshops, activities and opportunities to speak about and for peace in Cyprus. All teens accepted to the programme begin their first year by attending the Cyprus Peace Camp. Teens who apply for a second year will have an opportunity to live with a teen from the other community in the United States.

Each teen's family makes a financial contribution to cover some of the costs of their child's expenses.

YEAR 1 – CYPRUS CAMP

Since 2013, CFP has run a bi-communal camp in Cyprus in the Troodos Mountains.

The camp programme combines great fun and valuable learning experiences that create a strong spirit of community among all campers. Here are some of the activities that previous camp programmes have included:

- Mixed gender and mixed community teams compete in volleyball and basketball throughout the week. (If you don't want to play, it's OK!)
- A professional karate instructor teaches karate for peace!
- History and the different ways it is taught in the two main communities in Cyprus is discussed in a workshop.
- Documentaries related to peacebuilding are screened.
- Professional coaches from Peace Players International teach campers how sports can be used to promote peace.

- Turkish-speaking Cypriots who grew up in Ayios Nicolaos share their oral history.
- Campers take a nature walk together to the nearby Tzelefos bridge.
- Excursion for dinner at Platres.
- Origami, the Japanese art of paper folding, is taught to campers, who then create the universal symbol for peace – the peace cranes.
- Drama/theatre workshops.
- Campers are encouraged to bring guitars or other musical instruments as well as their favorite CDs.
- Greek or Turkish pairs work together throughout the week to teach languages, with the support and guidance of professional instructors.
- Workshops address how campers can continue building peace after the camp, discussing if and how their families might get involved, and how we can connect with other peacebuilding groups to promote a peace culture in Cyprus.
- Last but not least, a talent show takes place on the final evening, with music, theatre and dancing. Prizes are given to the winners of the team and individual competitions.

YEAR 2 – RESIDENCY EXPERIENCE

Teens applying for the second year will live with a self-selected teen of the same gender from the other community in the U.S. for the month of July.

CFP Residency in U.S.

The opportunity to live with a Cypriot teen from the other community for an entire month in the home of an American family has proven to be a life-changing experience for most CFP teens. They gain confidence and skills that better prepare them for adulthood. They develop understanding of different cultures and genuine friendships with their “pair” and their American family that often last for many years.

Like the Cypriot Coordinators, all those involved in the U.S. program are volunteers. Parents and teens should be especially aware that American host families are not paid to provide a home during this time.

The most significant costs of the programme are the airline tickets and a health insurance package covering their stay in the U.S. These fees are covered by donations from individuals and organizations who believe in CFP’s mission and goals. Families of each Cypriot teen who takes part in the programme also make a contribution, but CFP will not exclude a teenager because of family financial difficulties. The Cyprus Friendship Programme receives no governmental financial aid nor is affiliated with any political party.

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 Betsy Small for more info go to: <https://friendships4peace.org/us-team> In the past, teens have stayed in Maryland, New Hampshire, Northern Virginia, Oregon/SW Washington, San Francisco (California), and Houston, Texas. Our U.S. Coordinators are

always looking for new areas to add to the programme. While some areas in the U.S. are rural and others are cities, the general programme in each area is the same and host families all share an interest in world peace. Its important to note that hosting areas in the US can change from year to year.

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

- A politically and religiously neutral home
- Daylong adult supervision in a safe environment
- A bedroom for teens to share

There is an application process for all American hosts that consists 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., 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(s), the Cypriot families will receive contact information from 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, and videoconference.

TRAVELING TO AND FROM THE U.S.

All teens travel with experienced chaperones who are usually Cypriot and American CFP Coordinators. The U.S. transportation coordinators monitor the flights from takeoff to landing and keep both U.S. and Cypriot Coordinators briefed on progress. The Cypriot Coordinators then inform the Cypriot parents. Should any travel problems occur, they will be managed by the transportation coordinators and the CFP travel agency. At no time are the teens left unsupervised and the parents uninformed.

LIVING IN THE U.S.

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 must remember that the primary mission of the programme is to experience living with a fellow youth leader from the opposite side of the divide. The purpose of CFP participation is for peace building and leadership training, not a month of entertainment.

While in the U.S., 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, extra food they may want, optional group trips or shopping. Remembering that host families (and volunteers) do not get paid for their participation in CFP, teens should not make demands.

Cypriot teens will form relationships with their partner, as well as with their hosts. This requires a willingness to commit to learning a new culture for four weeks. 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. They 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, teens should be prepared to fit into the families' daily lives and to adjust to the hosts' routines. This may involve household chores or participating in family activities. Just as in Cyprus, each family in the U.S. is a bit different!

FOLLOWING THE RULES IS CRITICAL

A CFP teen is an ambassador for Cyprus and for all of us in CFP. The conditions of participation in CFP are designed so that everyone involved has a wonderful experience. Host families are informed about all the rules and expect the Cypriot teens to follow them **because in the American culture, rules are taken very seriously. Families will find it very difficult to understand if their Cypriot teens break the rules.**

These families make a massive commitment to CFP by opening their home for nearly a full month to a pair of teens from another country. They cover most of the teens' living expenses and treat the teens like members of their own family to make a contribution to peace in Cyprus. 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 programme and the CFP Programme as a whole.

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 the rules will result in consequences up to and including returning home from the U.S. at the expense of the Cypriot family and removal from the Cyprus Friendship Programme.**

ACTIVITIES DURING THE U.S. STAY

In each of the areas where the teens go, the Area Coordinator plans group activities. This provides the opportunity for strong group connections to form between all the teens in each area. On average, one time a week the group of Cypriot teens in the same area meet for activities that are meaningful, educational and also great fun! The teens will also be engaging with American and CFP teens from other countries with conflict. The activities are designed to inspire our teens to become leaders in peace building, to be sensitive to others, to be responsible global citizens and to care for the environment. Group activities include team building, conflict resolution workshops, community service, and environmental awareness projects.

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 are 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/debit or gift or prepaid cash cards are not allowed nor is any type of electronic money transfer such as**

Apple/Google Pay, Zelle/Paypal or Venmo. Additionally, 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!

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 might think they were not here for peacebuilding and are 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 the Cypriot teens.**

Finally, an added bonus of this limited finances policy is that the teens will develop the life skill of making and managing a budget for a month.

Communications with Cypriot family/friends

The main reason teens go to the U.S. is to connect with the other teen of their pair, their host family, and the bigger group of Cypriot teens who will be in the same area and enjoying the uniqueness of peaceful coexistence that is so rare in Cyprus. For this reason, it is important to have limits on communications to 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 they are going to sleep. Teens are allowed to make one daily call for a maximum of 30 minutes. Please be respectful of both host family and programme schedule.

- Once a week, the teens can communicate with their parents via videoconference for 30 minutes each.
- Should both sets of parents meet to videoconference together with both teens, the call can last 60 minutes. CFP encourages this at least once and suggests that the parents follow the call by having a meal together.
- The use of YouTube may be allowed **only** as a social event between the Cypriot teens and the host family and **only** with permission from 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 Cypriot teens can watch with them. Often the host families and Cypriot teens sit down together and use Google maps of different places or current events to enhance their conversations. The crucial factor in this use of technology is that it is part of a social event **with** the host family.
- If families in Cyprus 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:

- The teenager is permitted to **bring a mobile phone** but no other **electronic devices whether it can be connected to the internet or not** (ipods, tablets, android devices, mp-players and so on). If any such devices are found, they will be **confiscated** by the host family and not returned until the return flight to Cyprus. Depending on the situation, other consequences may follow, including not receiving the CFP graduation certificate.
- **Facebook and other social media cannot be used.**

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 social media and the mobile phone may appreciate that this would be a very healthy break, and that the teens will be busy with meaningful and fun experiences.

CFP's Timeline

- Presentations about CFP are made in schools and youth clubs on both sides of the divided island.
- Teenagers from both communities who reach age 15 (by July 1st) to 18 years old and have one more year in school, can apply for the programme.
- Interviews are conducted and the selected applicants are accepted into the

programme in equal numbers from the two communities.

- A series of meetings (half in the North and half in the South) with facilitated workshop activities takes place. They focus on leadership, communication, reconciliation and peacebuilding 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 after the selection process is completed in March and continue through boarding the plane in July. It is strengthened during their month abroad and continues after their return to Cyprus.
- The families of each 'pair' also become connected with equally strong bonds. It is only normal that the parents of each teenager would be interested in meeting the young person that their child has chosen from the other community to be a roommate for one month. They also would normally 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 during the month their children are in the U.S.
- 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.
- Their stay in the U.S. 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. Most often, that bonding occurs in such informal settings as watching a movie together.
- Another important aim of the residential experience is to further advance the leadership and peacebuilding skills that had been promoted during the programme activities that occurred in Cyprus. This is done through four formal programme activities during the U.S. stay (teambuilding, 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, CFP Graduation is held. After graduating, each participant is required to continue to participate in the CFP bi-communal activities for that school year.
- CFP Alumni are encouraged to actively participate in the Alumni Association.
- Parents and Friends are encouraged to actively participate in the Parents and Friends Association.

Contact Information

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