



FACT SHEET

AFS HISTORY: AFS Intercultural Programs (formerly the American Field Service) is a worldwide nonprofit organization that has been a leader in high school student exchange for 60 years. During World Wars I & II, young Americans volunteered as ambulance drivers in the American Field Service evacuating the wounded from battlefields. When these brave, forward thinking individuals returned home, they founded a movement to promote understanding and peace through international student exchanges, known today as AFS Intercultural Programs. The AFS Founders believed—as AFS believes today—that the way to build a more just and peaceful world begins when people from different countries and cultures meet, learn together, and better understand one another. In 1947, for the first time ever, AFS exchanged 52 young people from 11 countries formerly at war, establishing a legacy of hope for future generations.

Today, AFS exchanges more than 11,000 students each year among a partnership of more than 50 AFS Partner Countries. AFS proudly acknowledges an alumni network of more than 300,000 individuals who have studied abroad on an AFS Program. Former AFS Students live in more than 100 countries around the world. As one of the largest volunteer-based organizations of its kind, AFS has 30,000 volunteers worldwide and more than 5,500 in the U.S.

AFS-USA MISSION: AFS-USA works toward a more just and peaceful world by providing international and intercultural learning experiences to individuals, families, schools, and communities through a global volunteer partnership.

AFS-USA OVERVIEW: Each year, AFS-USA sends more than 1,500 participants abroad for year, semester, and summer exchange programs (including programs that focus on language study, community service, sports, and adventure), and welcomes more than 2,800 exchange students and educators from other countries into the U.S. During an exchange to the U.S., foreign students study in local high schools and live with host families to learn what it is like to live as a member of a family and community in America. As the premier intercultural exchange program, AFS is constantly striving to broaden our scope of programs and participants. A suite of 18+ Programs are geared specifically for high school graduates and older individuals interested in making a difference through community service or University Study programs throughout the world. AFS-USA's Global Educator Program grants educators from the U.S. the teaching opportunity of a lifetime—living and teaching abroad—and engages U.S. schools in bringing the skills and talent of outstanding educators from other countries to their own classrooms. Staying true to the Founders' message of spreading peace and understanding through intercultural exchange, AFS has always initiated innovative programs to spur international dialogue. In the last decade, AFS-USA's work with the U.S. Department of State has enabled hundreds of participants to exchange between the U.S. and predominantly Muslim countries. This has opened the door to communication between the young people of these nations and their families.

AFS-USA PROGRAMS:

- Sending Students Abroad: AFS-USA has year, semester, and summer programs abroad for high school students ages 15-18 and special programs specifically tailored for high school graduates

and older individuals (18+) and educators. Choosing a destination country is just the beginning of an AFS experience. Students concentrate on language study, community service, arts and culture, the environment, sports, or adventure during the program. A language requirement is not necessary for most AFS-USA programs.

- **Working with Schools in the U.S.:** The relationship between AFS-USA and schools in the U.S. is of the utmost importance to the life of our international student exchange organization. AFS-USA Staff and Volunteers work with U.S. schools to provide them with outstanding students from abroad who contribute greatly to academics and community life. The staff and volunteers of AFS-USA also work with students and teachers in their U.S. classrooms through “It’s Your World,” a multimedia, interactive classroom lesson that promotes intercultural awareness and communication, and deals with topics like stereotyping, prejudice, and fear.

- **Building a Global Community:** Building a more just and peaceful world is the root of AFS’ Mission, and AFS-USA’s Staff and Volunteers work with individuals who want to contribute to this same goal. AFS-USA works with a variety of individuals who are interested in an intercultural experience, be that studying or teaching abroad, or through hosting an international exchange student or educational professional in the U.S. Volunteers work with students, families, schools, and community organizations illustrating the benefits of an intercultural educational opportunity. Host families provide students with a bed, meals, and the same care they give their own family. Host families and students receive ongoing support during the process from AFS-USA Staff and Volunteers; however, there is no monetary compensation for hosting an AFS Exchange Student.

- **Special Programs:**

- In 2003, the U.S. Department of State announced AFS-USA as the recipient of a \$2.95 million grant under the **Youth Exchange and Study Program (YES)**. This is the largest single grant ever received by AFS-USA. Under the YES Program bridges of understanding are constantly being built through the more than 1113 scholarships AFS-USA has provided to date to high school students from Egypt, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Turkey, and the Philippines to study in the U.S.
- The **Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Program** provides scholarships covering a year of study between Germany and the U.S. Established in 1983, and jointly sponsored by the U.S. Congress and the German Bundestag, the program has exchanged more than 13,000 students between the countries. Students attend high school and live with a host family.
- The **Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX)** was established in 1992 as the centerpiece of the Eurasian Secondary School Initiative under the FREEDOM Support Act. Funding is provided by the U.S. Department of State. The goal of the program is to provide the students with the experience of living in a democratic society for the purpose of promoting democratic values and institutions throughout Eurasia. The FLEX Program is a U.S. government-sponsored program for secondary school students from the 12 republics of the former Soviet Union (Eurasia). The program provides scholarship funding for students to travel to the United States, attend a U.S. high school for a full academic year, and live with a US host family.
- Since 1972, AFS-USA has made it possible for international educators from other countries to live, work, teach, and learn in the U.S. and for U.S. teachers to teach abroad, for either a semester or a year. The **AFS Visiting Teacher Program** is for people who work in the field of education—outstanding international teachers who come to work with K-12 schools in the U.S.—at no charge to the host school. Through the AFS Visiting Teacher Program, participants expand their knowledge of other cultures and educational

- systems and exchange teaching methods, all while acquiring first hand knowledge of what it's like to live in another country.
- In 2005, the U.S. Department of State granted AFS another outstanding opportunity to build bridges of understanding between predominantly Muslim countries and the U.S. through AFS' **Arabic Language Institute in Egypt**. Already in its second year, this summer language program will continuously foster new, peaceful dialogue between the U.S. and the Middle East.
 - Through a recent grant from the Fulbright Commission, the **Global LEAP Program**, in collaboration with AFS-Bolivia, AFS-Ecuador, AFS-Venezuela, the Idaho Human Rights Education Center, and the Center for Civic Education, brings secondary school administrators from Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela to the U.S. to provide participants with the knowledge and skills needed to evaluate and address the needs of their own students and schools within their home communities. This three-week program focuses on curriculum development, and once the program concludes with a final visit to Washington D.C., participants continue with follow-up activities upon their return home to their countries. Relationships established among the participants from Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela, and the United States throughout the duration of the program are utilized long after to keep communication and collaboration open.

AFS-USA DIVERSITY: In order for AFS' vision of peaceful coexistence to be a reality, people of all colors, races, creeds, and ages need to be included in the global perspective. This is why AFS is a national leader in student exchange program diversity, expanding opportunities for participation by members of diverse populations, especially students of color and students with disabilities.

AFS-USA SCHOLARSHIPS:

- AFS-USA awards approximately \$1.5 million in financial aid and scholarships to students each year.
- Approximately 40 percent of AFS-USA Participants receive some financial assistance each year including scholarships.
- AFS-USA grants \$200,000 to outstanding high school students each year who are nominated for the Awards for Excellence Scholarships. Full and partial scholarships are provided on the basis of academic merit, community service, and an ambassadorial spirit.
- The first student exchange instituted by the American Field Service involved American and German students following WWII. In keeping with the founding spirit of AFS, each year AFS-USA administers approximately 50 Congress-Bundestag Scholarships for students who live in select areas. Students are awarded a full, merit-based scholarship to study abroad in Germany for a year.
- In addition to specific, merit and financial-need scholarships, AFS-USA also gives away scholarships for country specific programs like Austria, Brazil, and Japan.

Please note: This is a partial list of scholarships and financial aid.

For more information, please visit www.afs.org/usa or call 1-800-AFS-INFO.