What is the Kosovo Youth Exchange Program (KYEP)?

The Kosovo Youth Exchange Program (KYEP) is a collaborative effort funded by the U.S. Department of State and administered by the Cleveland Council on World Affairs (CCWA). Now in its third year, the program brings accomplished students from Kosovo who are highly proficient in English to study in American high schools for one year. KYEP focuses on cross-cultural exchange and the development of leadership skills. Students are placed with host families and attend local schools for one academic year.

Students are selected by CCWA and the U.S. Embassy in Pristina, based on their merit, personality, scholastic achievement, motivation, ideas, interest in civic activism, desire to improve their communities in Kosovo and English language proficiency.

What is the Cleveland Council on World Affairs?

The Cleveland Council on World Affairs (CCWA) is a preeminent Northeast Ohio nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that has been building awareness and understanding on world affairs and global issues for over 91 years. CCWA’s mission is to inspire engagement in international affairs through education, public dialogue and citizen diplomacy.

Exchange programs: Intercultural education and engagement is a crucial component of CCWA’s mission. CCWA has programmed professional and cultural exchange programs for students and emerging leaders from a variety of fields from countries around the world since 1948 through various government agencies (such as USAID, Department of State, and the Library of Congress). Today, CCWA’s international visitor programs include professional learning exchanges for adults and long and short-term exchanges for students.

Speaker Series: CCWA builds awareness on global issues and promotes wider understanding of international affairs through a speaker series. These programs provide firsthand account and up-to-the minute perspectives from experts, government officials, and ambassadors on relevant and timely geopolitical topics ranging from foreign policy to world economics and current global issues.

Education Programs: CCWA’s mission has always been rooted in education. CCWA’s education programs engage over 1,200 students from over 40 schools each year through programs such as Model UN and Bridges to the World. CCWA also provides support and professional development opportunities for teachers, allowing them to better develop global competencies of their students.
What are student qualifications?

Applicants must:
- Be a secondary school student in Kosovo who has completed less than 11 years of school and who will have one year of secondary school remaining upon completion of the program
- Be at least 15 years of age, but not more than 18 years of age as of the program start (August 2015)
- Commit to maintaining residency in Kosovo for two years after returning home from the exchange program
- Have a highly proficient knowledge of English, so that applicant can study in an American school
- Be an active leader in his/her school or community and be comfortable with the role of youth ambassador
- Demonstrate maturity, good character, and scholastic aptitude
- Have an open mind and an interest in traveling to the U.S. for an academic year
- Have not previously participated in an academic year or semester secondary school student exchange program in the United States or attended school in the United States on either F–1 or J–1 visa status.

What is covered by the program for students?
- Roundtrip international airfare from Pristina to host city and back
- Domestic U.S. airfare to and from host city
- Housing and most meals with American host family
- Monthly stipend for lunch, necessary school supplies, and cultural funds

What will not be covered by the program for students?
- Travel within Kosovo for interviews, and travel within Kosovo to/from Pristina prior to departure
- Costs associated with the program interview process and pre-departure (April and August 2015)
- Expenses for personal purchases such as gifts and souvenirs
- Additional cultural expenses that go over cultural allotment
What is the structure of the exchange?

In Aug. 2015, up to 20 finalists will fly to Cleveland, Ohio for a four-day leadership training and orientation program prior to starting school. Students will then be divided into groups and sent to different locations throughout the U.S.

Students will be greeted by a local representative and will be given a tour and orientation about their new host communities. Host families will be eagerly awaiting the arrival of their new family member from Kosovo! Throughout the academic year, students will not only attend school, but will also be treated as part of the family in their hosts’ homes. They will be encouraged to take the initiative to meet people and enroll in extracurricular activities. There will be several mandatory assignments that will support the students’ efforts towards assimilation, leadership, and inclusion. Students will also reconvene in January of 2016 in a major American city for a mid-year program. After the last day of the academic year (June 2015), all students will reconvene in order to have a chance to share their experiences, debrief about lessons they learned, and finalize their actions plans which they will implement upon return to Kosovo.

Where will participants live?

CCWA has established a partnership with many reputable Councils of International Visitors throughout the United States. Participants will live with host families during the academic year. CCWA will make every effort to place each participant in the most suitable city, high school and host family for them.

Host families are volunteer families interested in learning more about the world by sharing their homes with a new family member. They open their hearts and their doors to you. Hosting enables families to get to know more about you, your family, your country, and to develop strong global connections. They also act as ambassadors of the U.S. by welcoming and sharing their culture and traditions with you.