



IFYE® Association of the USA, Inc.
Peace Through Understanding

IFYE UPDATE – August 2026

Global Connections Blossom: IFYE Delegates Kick Off 2026 Exchange in Washington D.C.

During orientation from June 3rd to June 8th, the IFYEs participated in a variety of activities designed to prepare them for their international experiences. Throughout the week, participants focused on leadership, communication, cultural awareness, and travel preparation.

As part of orientation, outbound IFYEs Josh Francis, Natalie Calfo, and BaiLee McMillan spent a day on Capitol Hill, visiting their U. S. Senator offices before taking a tour of the new National 4-H headquarters.



2026 IFYEs at Capitol Hill.

On another day, the inbound and outbound IFYEs visited the USDA, where they met with Russell Laird, Nicola Sakhleh, and Jim Suits to discuss international trade, foreign agricultural affairs, and the Foreign Agricultural Service. Afterward, the group explored Washington, D.C., through a scavenger hunt that included visits to the Library of Congress and a Smithsonian museum.

The week also featured a variety of classroom sessions with guest speakers who helped prepare participants for their experiences abroad. Topics included a photography workshop, strategies for managing stress while traveling, cultural immersion, communication styles, navigating difficult conversations, and language labs.



2026 IFYEs on the subway in DC.

Together, these sessions and activities helped the IFYEs gain valuable skills, knowledge, and confidence as they prepared for their international experiences.

Stories from the Field

Hear directly from our IFYEs as they share their experiences, adventures and reflections from summer. *(Note: Our IFYEs have returned and these were written while with their host families.)*

Juliane 2026 IFYE from Germany to USA

I have been in the USA as an IFYE for six weeks now. So far, I have had four wonderful host families who could not be more different from one another.

Every host family welcomed me warmly, and I have already experienced far more than I ever dreamed of.

I got to take part in the families' daily lives, ride horses through the amazing landscapes of Colorado and Wyoming, see small towns and big cities, visit museums, cook American recipes, share stories about Germany, and so much more. I also visited five rodeos!

I am looking forward to the next four weeks.



Dr. BaiLee McMillan Nebraska IFYE to Switzerland 2026

My time in Switzerland has been incredible! During my exchange, I've learned so much about Swiss culture. One of the most surprising things is how such a small country is home to four national languages and a rich diversity of traditions. Each of my host families welcomed me and introduced me to new experiences, making my time even more meaningful.

I've also learned that many meals are prepared simply and quickly, which allows more time to gather around the table and enjoy each other's company, especially during holidays.

The agricultural side of Switzerland has been fascinating as well. Animal husbandry plays an important role, and I was surprised to see that farms typically have much smaller herds than those in the United States. It has been interesting to learn about the different farming practices and how they fit into the Swiss landscape and way of life.

I'm excited to continue learning, exploring, and making unforgettable memories in Switzerland!



Welcome Inbound IFYE from Kenya to North Dakota

We were excited to welcome Raymond Cheruiyot, our new inbound IFYE from Kenya to the United States during our debrief with the outbound IFYEs. Raymond will be spending the fall in North Dakota. As part of his orientation, he had the chance to meet the outbound IFYEs and join them for a baseball game in Washington, D.C. It was a fun opportunity for everyone to connect and make some memories together before the outbounds headed home and Raymond made his way to North Dakota.



L-R: Bailee McMillian, Josh Francis, Raymond Cheruiyot, and Hannah Nordby

Raymond has hands-on experience in agriculture, including livestock handling, sheep management, and crop maintenance.

Farm Bill Update

Jan Wood

There is good news on the 2026 Farm Bill!

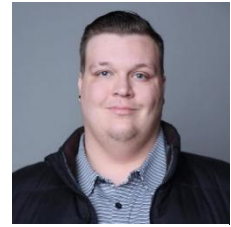
You already know that the U.S. House of Representatives passed a Farm Bill in early May. On Tuesday, June 23, the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry released its discussion draft of the 2026 Farm Bill. The International Agriculture Cultural Immersion & Exchange Program is included in the language! However, during the week of August 3, the Senate version of the Farm Bill was defeated by one vote while in Committee and was not forwarded to the full Senate for a vote. Staff of the Senate Farm Bill have informed us that while the Senate is in recess until mid-September, they will be working on another draft. We will let you know when it is time to reach out to the Senate members of the Ag Farm Bill Committee to be more effective with our request.

You will soon be hearing from us requesting that you contact your Senator and encourage them to support our program. We will first contact the Senators who serve on the Senate Agriculture Committee and then reach out to all Senators as the legislation moves closer to a full Senate vote.

The process has been slow, but we are still in the fight. Stay with us! Thank you.

Introducing the IFYE USA Alumni Communications Committee Chair

One of my goals as your IFYE USA Alumni Communications Chair is to create more opportunities for alumni to stay connected and engaged, regardless of where they live or what year they participated in IFYE.



Michael Conger

Over the coming months, I'll be working to establish an Alumni Communications Committee made up of IFYE alumni representing multiple generations and exchange years. Whether you traveled abroad decades ago or just returned home, your voice and experience have the power to inspire others.

Committee members will serve as communications ambassadors, helping share the IFYE story in a variety of ways. Examples of opportunities to get involved may include welcoming new alumni, sharing "Where Are They Now?" stories, liking, commenting on, and sharing official IFYE USA social media posts, creating occasional videos or testimonials, and helping celebrate the people and experiences that make the IFYE community so special.

The goal is simple: strengthen our alumni community, preserve our shared history, and inspire future generations through authentic storytelling. If you would like more information or are interested in joining the committee, please email mconger@ifyeusa.org.

Welcoming Meghan O'Reilly to the IFYE Board



Meghan O'Reilly

We are excited to welcome **Meghan O'Reilly** to the IFYE Board of Directors!

Meghan is a 2023 Ohio IFYE alumna who represented the United States in Taiwan and Zambia. She was a United Soybean Board (USB) scholarship recipient. Meghan gained firsthand insight into the global soybean supply chain, following the journey of her family's soybeans from their Ohio farm to international markets. Her IFYE experience provided her with a unique opportunity to see agriculture from a global perspective through hands-on, boots-on-the-ground learning.

Meghan transitioned into agricultural marketing, where she combines her passion for agriculture with visual storytelling and communications. She currently serves as Marketing Manager at Norden Manufacturing, a hay equipment manufacturer, where she leads the company's branding, marketing strategy, product launches, and digital communications.

Meghan brings a unique combination of agricultural experience, international perspective, marketing expertise, and a deep connection to the IFYE program. We are excited to have her serve on the board.

Save the Date!! National IFYE Conference: June 23rd - 26th, 2027

Crossroads of Culture – IFYE in the Heart of it All

Sheraton Inn Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio
Lad Harrison, Conference Chairman

On Thursday we have three exciting educational tours lined up for you to choose from:

Tour 1: You will visit the Ohio Agricultural Research & Development Center and The Ohio State University Ag Technical College. Lunch is at Ma Yoder's Kitchen buffet in the middle of Amish Country. Next, we head to Behault Cyclorama to learn about Amish/Mennonite Heritage, a visit to an Amish one-room schoolhouse and Amish-built barn. We will top it off with a trip to Lehman's Hardware before finishing at Varian Orchards for dinner.



Tour 2: It's not Sunday night football but on Thursday you will visit the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton along with a trip to the National First Ladies Museum and the MAPS Air Museum before finishing your day at Varian Orchards for dinner.

Tour 3: Cleveland is where Rock & Roll started and this tour will give you six hours to divide among the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, Cleveland Science Center, where you can see the Apollo 11 capsule, and The Walter Mather Maritime Museum before finishing your day at Varian Orchards for dinner.

See you in Ohio!

Ways to Give

Have you made your 2026 contributions to IFYE yet?

IFYE now accepts in-kind gifts of stock. Take a look at your portfolio. If you own non-retirement assets with a low-cost basis, consider gifting some shares to IFYE. [IFYE Stock Donation | Ways to Give | IFYE](#) details the transfer instructions your financial advisor or custodian will need to facilitate the gift.

Qualified Charitable Distributions from your IRA are another tax-efficient gifting option. See [Donate from Your IRA to IFYE®](#)! For more details.

