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Student excited to be in U.S.

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WILLIAMSTOWN - Sixteen-year-old Sarah Cho is a long way from her home in Seoul, South Korea.

One of several foreign exchange students in Williamstown this school year, Cho is part of The Center for Cultural Interchange, a nonprofit international education exchange organization. The agency is dedicated to the promotion of cultural understanding, academic development and world peace. It was recognized by the U.S. Department of State as an official exchange visit program sponsor.

Based in Chicago, Ill., CCI organizes high school exchanges, short-term group homestays, internships, work, travel and language study programs in the United States and more than 30 other countries around the world. Host families in the program open their homes to students.

Jan Pickering and her mother Betty Lanier are hosting Cho. Pickering said she heard about the program through a CCI representative who attends her church.

"I've hosted before but not with this particular organization. I think it's invaluable in introducing other cultures to this area. To bring in people from other countries, especially from half way around the world, is valuable both for the exchange students and for our students here," Pickering said.

Cho who has been in the country about a week, said she was anxious to visit the U.S. after her older sister was part of another cultural exchange program, staying in North Carolina, and Cho and her mother got to visit.

She admitted to being excited but also a little scared for her first days of school but anxious for the year to get under way.

A violin player, Cho has already joined the school orchestra.

Although she's only been in the country about a week, Cho has been busy. She met other exchange students from Columbia, France and Sweden at a CCI picnic. She played violin with Pickering at a recent Williamstown Woman's Club meeting, played volleyball and cornhole and is learning to play tennis.

"Everything is different here," she said. But she's already found one universal - fast food. "We ate at the Subway and Taco Bell. We have those in Korea too," she said.

Cho hopes to improve her English skills.

"I want to learn about a new culture, living in America, food, activities. In Korea we aren't doing a lot of activities, like sports," she said. "Everything is new. In Korea students stay in class and teachers move, but here we have to move, so I have to be careful not to lose my way," she said.

CCI was established in 1985. The program provides host families for students from more than 65 countries to come to the U.S. to study and live with a host family. The deadline to host students for the upcoming school year is Aug. 31.

For more information on the program, go to www.cci-exchange.com/host.htm, e-mail ayp@cci-exchange.com or call 800-634-4771.

Article Photos



Sarah Cho from Seoul, South Korea is one of the exchange students attending Williamstown High School this year as part of The Center for Cultural Interchange Program. (Photo by?Pamela Brust)

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