

Being a Good Host

By Mary Bryant, The Friendship Force of Lincoln

As a Friendship Force host your visitor's opinion of your club and your community will be based on you and the other club members with whom each comes in contact. Your mission is to make friends for us and for you. Get to know your fellow home hosts, day hosts, and committee members. Give them a chance to know what an interesting person you are. Be open to different ways of thinking, living, and eating. Always assume the best intentions. Expect the unexpected; you won't be disappointed. Changes in plans may have to be made; be flexible. Have a positive, open mind. Mishaps, accidental coffee spills, etc. occur from time to time; reassure your guest that it is no big deal. Relax and enjoy your time together with new friends; you'll remember the experience for a lifetime. Most problems work themselves out with time and tack. If you really need help resolving a problem, call on your Exchange Director.

It is our club's custom to give our guests a small remembrance of their stay in our city/state. We present each individual or couple with a medallion that depicts local scenes. You also might want to give your guest a small memento of their visit

Guest Accommodations: Try the bed you're assigning to your guest. Is it comfortable? Are there enough pillows and blankets? Did you find yourself groping in the dark for a clock, a radio, or a box of tissues, which weren't where you thought they'd be? You might provide a small flashlight near the bed. Was there enough light to help you find the bathroom? Where are the fresh towels, soap, and shampoo in the bathroom? Do the closets have hangers for your guest to use? Are all the surfaces in the bedroom, the tops of dressers, tables, or chests, free of your personal items or photos? Give your guest space for his/her own things. An empty drawer would be helpful. Flowers or a small plant would be nice; maybe a few picture postcards and stamps to go with them, and pad and pen, a glass for water nearby. Consider a map of the area, which you can mark to show them where you're going or where they've been.

Host Responsibilities: As a Friendship Force host you are expected to provide a room, usually one or two meals a day – lunch out is negotiable and some dinners will be part of the program. Meals can be simple, eaten in or out, a picnic, local restaurant, or at the home of family, friends or neighbors. You will also provide transportation to scheduled program activities. If you can't be with your guests, you can arrange or ask the Exchange Director to find a Day Host who will take your place. Your guest may or may not offer to take you out for a meal. If they do, choose a restaurant you know won't strain their resources.

Free Days: A schedule usually includes a free day or half day. You might go someplace you've never been and share the new experience with your guest rather than going to a place, which by now bores you. Take into consideration the types of things your guest enjoys and plan a visit around that interest. You might want to visit an "Open House"; let your guest see the floor plan and decorations of a new house in Lincoln. It should be fun for both of you!

Health Issues That May Arise: If your guest experiences some minor or significant health issues during their stay with you, offer over-the-counter medications, when appropriate. If necessary, drive your guest to a Linc-Care type facility or a hospital emergency room. Remain with your guest since this can be a scary experience in a strange city. Depending on the severity of the situation, notify your Exchange Director.

Final Thoughts: Above all, be yourself. We trust this experience proves to be fun for you and you will have gained a new friend. **Enjoy your time together; make it a time of fond memories and shared experiences.**

A Checklist of Suggestions:

- * Place fruit, nuts or candy in guest room.
- * Provide stationery and/or local picture postcards, pen, and stamps.
- * Provide city and state maps along with assorted brochures of interest.
- Place a night light in an unobtrusive spot that will still provide enough light in the bedroom as well as in the bathroom.
- Place a small flashlight near your guest's bed.
- Provide an alarm clock and show your guest how to set it.
- Establish each evening what time your guest should arrive at the breakfast table in order to participate in the day's scheduled activities.
- Show guest where to find extra pillows, towels, bathroom supplies, etc.
- Have on hand a supply of plastic bags for "accumulation" of goodies.
- Provide a small TV and/or radio. Instruct guest on their use.
- Make sure the bedside clock keeps proper time!
- Offer to wash clothing during your guest's stay.
- Offer the use of a hairdryer and instructions on how to use it.
- Explain any idiosyncrasies of bathroom fixtures/shower/tub/toilet.
- Provide a variety of leisure reading material such as current magazines, book, newspapers.
- Keep a small bouquet of fresh flowers in the bedroom – IF the guest isn't allergic to them!
- If you have a pet, make sure the Exchange Director has not assigned you a guest who is allergic to your particular pet. Tell the ED about your type of pet when you agree to host.
- Explain the appropriate time for arising, eating and going to bed; many of these will be dictated by the planned schedule of activities.
- In the bathroom, put soap and hangers for hand washables, tissues, drinking glass or plastic cups.
- **Relax** and enjoy making wonderful memories with your new friend(s)!

Remember to treat your guest as you would want to be treated.