

Visitor at Coventry High

Exchange student loved her time with Oakers

Muslim from Thailand wants to stay

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COVENTRY— A Muslim exchange student who has been at Coventry High School (CHS) since August 2013 will be headed back to Thailand with unforgettable memories from her stay in Rhode Island.

Thailand native Anatee Malem has been staying with a host family from the Hopkins Hill area and attended Coventry High School for the school year. Through the American Field Service (AFS) exchange program, she has had the opportunity to experience the Rhode Island culture in more ways than one.

Malem was able to take classes that

revolved around her interests, such as drawing and painting. She explained the difference in school cultures she experienced while at CHS. She kept in touch with her family in Thailand frequently, through social media and email.

“In Thailand, I have to wear a school uniform and I can’t paint my nails or wear makeup,” Malem said. “At home, I have to talk to my teachers like I would my parents and at Coventry, I could relate to my teachers differently.”

AFS is a nonprofit organization and a leader in intercultural learning with more than 80 countries participating

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Student from Asia enjoyed CHS

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in the program. Nancy Stetter, the Greater Providence district representative and support coordinator has been volunteering for the company for seven years.

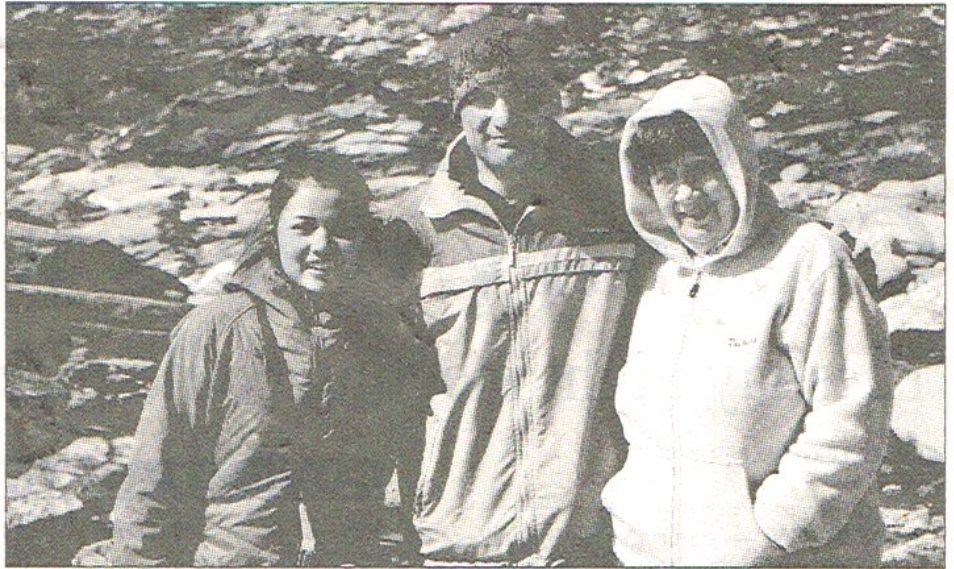
Stetter's role is to manage the students' progress throughout the state of Rhode Island and to help volunteer liaisons make the students' experience the best possible. After her daughter took part in the program as an exchange student in Chile, Stetter wanted to participate with AFS to help other students get the same well-integrated experience.

This year, AFS has 19 students, all between the required ages of 15 through 18, participate in the Rhode Island-based program, Anatee being only one attending CHS. Stetter is currently trying to recruit more host families so they can get more students from other countries to come to R.I.

Her host family of three has given Tee, a nickname Anatee likes to go by, a taste of Rhode Island by sampling foods that are signature to the state. Del's Lemonade is a favorite of Tee's, along with New England clam chowder.

Each volunteer host family gets an extensive federal background check and gets visited by members of AFS to make sure the student will be in a safe environment. There is an application process as well, to ensure students are placed with a family that has similar interests as their own.

Anatee's personal liaison is Karen Bouchard, a volunteer through CHS, and acts as a safety net for any student she



Submitted photo

Anatee Malem (far left) had the opportunity to see the Atlantic coast, a far cry from Thailand.

works with.

"It is my job to work with both sides to cultivate understanding," Bouchard said. "The program reaches beyond the student and family—the student makes friends and shares their cultures that ultimately creates world peace, one student at a time."

Anatee received a full scholarship for her stay in R.I. through the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study Abroad program (YES), which covers the \$10,000 cost to those who send their child abroad in the AFS organization. That fee covers all of the travel expenses, while each student brings their personal spending money

along with purchasing school materials.

"I applied for the scholarship because I knew it would allow me to have this great experience and make friends from foreign countries to me," Malem said.

For each student, they will get taught the same curriculum as the other students in the high school and have the possibility of carrying over their course credit to their home country. Accepting credits varies from country to country. Whether her credits are accepted or not, though, Anatee would prefer to stay in Coventry.

"I do not want to go back home," Malem said.