



*IAPA Au Pair of the Year Award
2005
Finalist*



Au Pair

Name of au pair: Mariela Poveda.....
 Nationality of au pair: Ecuadorian
 Age of au pair: 22 years old
 Start date of au pair placement: 13/August/2003
 Finish date of au pair placement (if applicable)*: 13 August/2005

I confirm that I will be able to attend the IAPA 11th Annual Conference, 18-19 March 2005, in Prague, Czech Republic. If I am still placed with my host family during these dates I confirm that I have received the necessary permission from my host family to attend the Conference. **X** (please tick).

Host Family

Name of host family: Lauri Rush
 Address: United States

IAPA Member

Name of IAPA Member Agency (please circle: Sending/**Receiving**): goAUPAIR

 Country: United States of America



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When I decided to be an au pair, I was willing to learn a new culture and I had a desire to share a part of me with my Host Family. I was full of high expectations, but I never imagined what an important decision it was, and how it would change my way of thinking and give me a different view of the world. My experiences as an au pair have helped me discover new abilities and allowed me to improve myself as an au pair, person, woman, daughter and sister.

When the day to meet my new family, Lauri and Serena, finally arrived, I felt very excited and it is my most loved moment. I felt very comfortable when I met Lauri. She manifested trust and kindness. Finally, I got to meet the most important person, "Miss Serena," as I love to call her, a little smiling baby. The smiles that she gave me delighted me and I knew from that moment everything was going to be excellent.

Serena had medical needs, so I had to learn special ways to take care of her. At first, I was nervous but with Lauri's training, the physical therapist's aid, and CPR training, I soon felt very comfortable and willing to give the best of me to take care of this smiling little baby.

I had the opportunity to travel to different states to meet members of Lauri's pleasant and kind family. I do not want to exaggerate, but her family is exceptionally kind and generous. It was very important to Lauri for Serena to travel to California to meet her Grandfather. Even though the circumstances were difficult, due to Serena's health problems, it was not impossible. I wanted to help Lauri care for Serena on the long plane trip. In California, Serena and I got to meet the big Rush family. Those moments with the Rush family were very exciting and unforgettable to me.

Everyday Serena was growing and growing, and I felt it happened very quickly that she was not a little baby anymore. She became a happy little girl. That never changed! About seven months ago, we found out that Serena was profoundly deaf and Lauri and I cried after hearing this news. Lauri asked me if I wanted to stay knowing that my job would be more difficult. Absolutely nothing changed my mind after knowing about Serena's hearing loss. Serena was still the same beautiful and gorgeous little child. I was willing with interest to learn everything that I needed to know in order for me to communicate and take care of Serena. A new challenge began for me, full of new information and knowledge concerning Deaf people and their fascinating community. Seeing Serena's enthusiasm, innocence and desire to live, made us really happy and optimistic. It was very amazing for me to see how Serena began to learn American Sign Language in a very rapid way. Without a doubt, she is very smart, healthy, active child. She has the ability to capture everything that is being taught.

Being involved in Serena's school and education, and learning about Deaf culture has helped me in my personal growth and my future plans. It has been very inspiring for me to be involved in this environment and the Deaf community. As a result, I have decided to learn more about deaf people and become serious about it. Someday I will be able to work with deaf people, teaching them in South America.

I feel very content with my host family; Lauri is an amazing mother to Serena and a wonderful host mother to me. She is my private English, sign language and psychology teacher. It is very surprising



how a single mom can do so much. I admire her a great deal. I feel very fortunate and lucky to live with Lauri and Serena.



I have had very good experiences, sharing my customs and time with a small family full of love and happiness. It has helped me to discover new abilities and opened my eyes to a new world. These times I would not change for anything. I have learned how to value my life and family more. I also learned how to improve myself by becoming a better person and to give the best of me to the people wherever I go. I feel happy to have lived all these experiences and to have visited so many places. I appreciate how well I am living and am having fun during my stay here in the United States with my host family, my boyfriend, my friends, the girls from goAUPAIR, and everyone involved in the Program. I thank God, my parents, my host family and goAUPAIR for giving me this opportunity. I hope other young people can have this same wonderful experience.