



*IAPA Au Pair of the Year Award
2005*



NOMINATION FORM

Host Family

Name of host family member submitting nomination: Lauri Rush

Name/s and age/s of other family members: Serena Rush - 2 years.....

Address: United States

IAPA Member

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

Country: United States

Au Pair

Name of au pair: Mariela Poveda.....

Nationality of au pair: Ecuador

Age of au pair: 22.....

Start date of au pair: 8/03.....

Finish date of au pair (if applicable):



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Our au pair, Mariela Poveda, is truly deserving of the IAPA Au Pair of the Year Award! She is a bright, responsible and caring woman who has truly become a part of our family and helped us through some difficult times. She has definitely won our hearts. When Mariela joined our family, I was a single mother with a 10-month-old daughter, Serena, who had serious medical problems. She was fragile, on oxygen, and had feeding problems. I was sure I wouldn't find an au pair willing to care for an infant with such serious medical needs, and I was particularly anxious about leaving my precious baby with someone new.

Then miraculously there was Mariela. Immediately after meeting her, I knew she was the right person. I felt at ease with her at once. Mariela has a quiet, calm presence and although she initially was nervous about caring for Serena's medical needs, she took on the challenge in a determined conscientious manner. She quickly learned how to care for her expertly. She was so gentle the first time she taped the oxygen tubing to Serena's face that I nearly cried. Mariela willingly participated in additional training in CPR and first aid and met with Serena's Physical and Occupational Therapists each week to learn how to work with Serena. Each day she responsibly worked on the exercises the therapists assigned. Serena's excellent progress (she was soon able to eat normally and began to gain weight) was possible only because of Mariela's loving and diligent care.

Last Christmas we wanted to travel from Maryland to California so Serena could meet her Grandfather for the first time. This became possible only because Mariela accompanied me. Traveling with a child with medical needs is not an easy feat, but with Mariela's help, we were able to gather the mountain of baby and medical supplies and made it safely to California. During the next few months, Mariela continued to provide her with loving consistent care. But Mariela's remarkable contribution to the family did not end there.

This past August, we discovered that Serena had become profoundly deaf. Throughout this ordeal, Mariela was by my side. She helped me keep Serena up the night before the audiology test (she was required to sleep during the test), and accompanied me to the audiologist's office. She held my hand and cried with me when we got the results. Of course, I became concerned about Serena's language development, given her hearing loss, and I knew how challenging this could be to an au pair. I asked Mariela if she wanted to stay with us given this recent news. She would have to learn sign language, learn to care for hearing aids, and keep them on Serena, etc. I would have understood if she decided to go with another family, but I was hoping desperately that she would stay. She stated, "I can't believe you are asking me that! Of course, I want to stay. Serena is the same wonderful baby today as she was yesterday." This statement demonstrates the depth of her fine character and her deep love for my daughter.

Rather than being daunted by the experience, she became excited about this new opportunity to learn another language and culture. Mariela attends American Sign Language classes at Serena's school and has learned over 200 signs. She already is able to communicate in sign language with Serena's deaf teacher. But taking sign language classes is not all that she is doing for Serena. Mariela also attends the Parent Infant Program at Serena's school and continues to learn more about deafness and how to help Serena develop as a deaf child. The teachers have commented on how wonderful she is with Serena and what a great team and family we make. I could not agree more!

Not only is Mariela a wonderful au pair, she is a fine person as well. Soon after joining our home, she



talked to me about attending church. We found a Spanish-speaking church and she quickly became involved in its youth group. She spent her first Thanksgiving feeding the homeless with her church group. This is just one example of her altruism and commitment to helping others. Mariela also has helped several new au pairs arriving in our area and has been active in au pair meetings and events.



Mariela is definitely deserving of this award and I ask that you grant her this highly-esteemed recognition. Mariela is a dependable, loving, delightful young woman who plans to return to Ecuador to continue her college education in psychology. I know my daughter, who is now a happy, bright two-year old would agree wholeheartedly with this nomination. One of the first signs Serena learned was the sign for Mariela. Her face lights up when Mariela walks in the room. We owe Serena's continued good health and remarkable development to the loving care that Mariela has provided. She is without a doubt Au Pair of the Year.