



IAPA Au Pair of the Year Award 2007 Finalist



Au Pair

Name of au pair: Emilie Terryn.....
 Nationality of au pair: French
 Age of au pair: 21.....
 Start date of au pair placement: 09/22/06
 Finish date of au pair placement (if applicable)*:09/22/07

I confirm that I will be able to attend the IAPA 13th Annual Conference, 15—17 March 2007, in Riga, Latvia. 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. YES-KATI SPANIAK (please tick).

Host Family

Name of host family: George and Kati Spaniak.....
 Address: United States

IAPA Member

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

Country: USA.....



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I have never been more excited in my life than when I received a call from EurAupair International telling me that I had been chosen as one of the five finalists for Au Pair of the Year. Three weeks earlier, Kati Spaniak, my host mom, gave me a copy of the letter that she submitted for the award. These were the nicest words that anyone has ever said to me. I cried all the time. I read the essay and re-read it. I sent it to friends and translated it for my family. My award was the letter that Kati had written. I didn't need anything else.

So now that I am being asked to write a letter about my experiences, I don't know what to say. How can I say that I am "Au Pair of the Year"? There are so many other thousands of girls that could be like me. Why didn't they get nominated? The real truth is that they weren't nominated because they don't have the same type of relationship that I have with my host family. I cannot be the "Au Pair of the Year", without my host family being the "Best Host Family of the Year".

So this letter is about the relationship that I have with my host family. I believe that it is unique and special. These five people are truly part of my family. This is what I feel when I think about them. This is why they have made my year a wonderful experience.



FATE: My being here can be called FATE. Kati Spaniak sent me an email the day I was ready to say yes to another family. I had been talking to the other family for so long that I told Kati right away it was a no. Nevertheless, I kept her email and the picture of her three girls. Two days later, I took a look at the picture she sent me and completely fell in love with her wonderful girls. I couldn't say no to them, I needed to know more about this family. (This is the picture Kati sent to me.)

My experience as an au pair is – by far- the most wonderful experience I have had. It has not been easy to leave my well- planned and easy life. But I didn't think it would change the way I see the world, the way I interact with people or my views about life.

By living here, I have received a lot. I enjoy myself all the time, I have learned a lot. Kati and George are two extraordinary people that are really, really important to me. What I like about them is their honesty. If something is wrong, they won't keep quiet. They are open and talk about everything. The conversations are easy, and I have never had any problems talking about my feelings with them. George has taught me a lot, he knows so many things that it is a real pleasure to talk with him. His knowledge has helped me discover the U.S in a very different, practical way. This is much different than what I learned in books.

Kati is like my angel. She is the one I talk to the most. I could spend hours listening or talking to her. I have had questions about my future. She is always trying to be objective. I really appreciate that. She has shown me more possibilities and enlightens my future and my choices, whatever they are. She makes me dream. She never puts me down, but on the contrary, Kati helps me find what is special about me, and she helps me focus on it.

These are just a few of the most wonderful moments I have had with my host family. They may seem



small, but they are events that I will remember for the rest of my life.



- One afternoon Kati and I went to lunch and shopping together. It was so special because it was just the two of us, and we talked about very personal issues that you only share with your closest friends.
- At Thanksgiving, Kati made a toast in my honor in front of her whole family. Not only did she tell me how much she liked me, but she told everybody else. She wanted everyone to know how important I was to them and how special our experience was.
- George told me that the girls have never been happier since I came here. This was something that really touched my heart. How can someone in five months make these girls happier than they were before? I felt like it wasn't possible that I could have made them happier. I guess I never understood the impact I have had on other people.
- One morning Kati, George and all three girls hid under the covers of their bed. They were playing hide and seek and wanted me to find them. I really felt like I was a member of the family. It was important because it reminds me of when I was young and when I did that with my parents all the time. I will always remember Ava saying "Come Find Me" in her tiny voice. I will always smile.

What other au pair can say they have had the same type of relationship with their host family?

Every moment I share with the Spaniaks and with Kati is fantastic. We are living in a magical time which will stay etched forever in my heart. What I want to say is that, not only do I love the girls but I also have a deep affection for George and Kati. Sometimes, I feel they are like my parents, that I love them as much as I love my real parents.

And this is why I only talk about them and not about me; because I cannot be "Au pair of the year" if my host family is not the best ever.

Let's talk about my experience with the girls. Well, I can say that our relationship is unique. First, I thought they were wonderful. Then, behind every sweet face, I have discovered a strong personality. This experience has been kind of a challenge for me: I didn't know if I was capable of being a mother, and so I wanted to experience it on a daily basis. I wanted to know if I would be able to be a mom one day. This experience is exceeding my expectations. Lisa (5), Leia (4) and Ava (2) have taught me what life is all about. If I had something to say about each of them, I would say this:

Lisa is an exceptional child. She has a lot of qualities but she also has to work on her emotions. Her tantrums have helped me to create rules and to follow them. When she is acting out of control, I have to work hard on my impulses. It is never easy. I take a new look at myself with her. But at the same time, I have spent unbelievably wonderful and incredible moments with Lisa. Watching her grow up has made me believe in the future; I have told myself that if the future is full of people like Lisa, then I want to be part of this future. Seeing Lisa cry because she misses her sisters deeply touches me. Hearing her talk in French melts my heart. Watching her excitement when she knows she has pleased me makes her an adorable little girl. Her volition to do things perfectly has made me believe that she will succeed in life.

Leia is a child which "joie de vivre" is an example to follow. I just need to look at her and a big smile shows on my face. If there were only one thing that has made my experience a unique one it would really be her. Leia is gifted, and it is an honor to teach her French. She has had a hard time going to school because she seemed unhappy. Why did such a talented girl hate school so much? It was really hard to watch her suffer. We all discussed it and decided that school was too easy for her. She is the kind of child that needs a challenge. So at the beginning of January, she moved up a grade. Leia has been transformed since then. I admire her determination. Not only is Leia happy, but she is also really funny. She has regularly made me laugh more than most of the grown ups I know. She is theatrical.



Ava is still very young. It is not easy to know who she will become. However, she already has a strong character and knows to assert herself. Before I came to America, I thought I knew a lot about child development. Thanks to her, I have discovered more childhood stages that were unknown to me before. She is very challenging and at the same time, she is an adorable little girl that I love to cuddle and give kisses. She is cute, and we would love her to stay a baby so that we can take her in our arms and cuddle her all the time.



Something would have been missing in my life if I never knew Lisa, Leia and Ava. They transformed me, and I am proud to say that my life will never be the same anymore without them. Someday I will leave, and it will kill me if they become just a souvenir.

There are still millions of things to say about the Spaniak. But I will add only one thing: I would never have thought that you could love people so much that you have only known for five months. Thank you, George, Kati, Lisa, Leia, and Ava. I love you.

Respectfully submitted,
Emilie Terryn

