



*IAPA Au Pair of the Year Award
2008*

NOMINATION FORM

Host Family

Name of host family member submitting nomination: Grace and Genro Tiscareno-Sato

Name/s and age/s of other family members: Milagro, 6; Kotomi, 3; Kiyoshi, 1

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

IAPA Member

Name of IAPA Member Agency: (please circle: Sending/Receiving): **Cultural Care Au Pair**

Country: USA

Au Pair

Name of au pair: Linda Falter

Nationality of au pair: German.....

Age of au pair: 22.....

Start date of au pair: July 14, 2006

Finish date of au pair (if applicable): July 14, 2008



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“Everything happens for a reason.” Last year as we were saying goodbye to an au pair that wasn’t right for our family, a family in a neighboring city was changing their mind about having an au pair at all. These two events happened the same week and the result was that our family received Linda into our home, making six people very, very happy.

My oldest daughter Milagro is visually-impaired. She has a 3 year-old sister and I was pregnant at the time of Linda’s arrival with baby #3. We knew we needed an au pair with the extraordinary patience it takes to care for (and teach life skills to) a very smart little girl who doesn’t see. We also needed a highly creative person who could successfully juggle a newborn, a very active/talkative 3 year-old, and of course, our oldest daughter with her special needs who just needs a bit more time to get things done. When we met Linda, an early childhood development student and preschool teacher in training from Germany, we knew we had hit the jackpot.

Here are some highlights of what Linda has brought to our family:

1. Linda has taught herself to read and write in Braille. We provided the tools, typewriter, books and basics of Braille that we had learned ourselves, and Linda, with her natural curiosity, learned it. She has a Braille alphabet screen saver on her laptop and regularly writes notes with my daughter about what they did that day. How’s that for extraordinary devotion?
2. The gift of the German language for our children. Linda’s parents have sent “Biene Maja” musical books, games, candy and other wonderful things to introduce the kids (especially Kotomi the 3 year-old) to a favourite German animated character. Now, Kotomi regularly sings “Biene Maja” songs in German from the musical books, approximating the pronunciation so well it surprises even Linda!
3. Linda has taken Milagro rock climbing. Our oldest daughter, Milagro, has been in gymnastics since she was three years old. She is very, very physically fit and has tremendously upper-body strength. Linda loves to climb and joined a climbing gym immediately after joining our family. She introduced Milagro to this sport and Milagro is absolutely in love with it. She loves to find the finger and toe holds, loves to kick off the wall and hang on the rope and calls it a “spider rope”. It’s an activity Milagro only enjoys with Linda and something that is truly an excellent, enriching experience for her.
4. Linda, as a preschool teacher in training, has taught our daughter who is blind many important concepts. Although Linda has had no formal special education training, she is truly a natural teacher. She figures out how each child learns and successfully teaches what they need to know. For example, Milagro was working on learning long, longer, longest at school. Using one of those snake toys that grows in water, Linda marked the original length of the snake on paper with puff paint that dries as a raised set of dots. Then they soaked the snake and checked the length every 24 hours and marked the new length on the same paper, talking about the fact that it was now longer. When the snake reached its longest length three days later, they wrote a Braille note together on the Braillewriter called “Our Snake Experiment”. When I found the note on the kitchen table, I was speechless and amazed, another moment of realizing how lucky our family is to have Linda in our lives.
5. Linda has brought her U.S. family together with her German family and created friends for life. Her parents recently visited us in California for ten days and we all found a way to communicate despite the language barriers. There is family in Western Germany who we consider good friends. We hope to visit next year and introduce our kids to Germany.



We have had a fabulous year with Linda as our au pair. The children truly love her and tell her they do, as does she to them.



As a family, we have received so much from her that we truly appreciate. We have also given back to her in many ways to show our appreciation because we want her time here to be very special.

Because she will be a preschool teacher when she returns to Germany, we made a point to expose her to two different preschool models here: a special education preschool (where Milagro learns Braille and gets her white cane training) and a parent “co-op” nursery school, where parents are teachers alongside the preschool director. Linda has gained a deep understanding of these educational environments which she will take back with her when she starts her own career.

We’ve entered our fifth year as a host family; Linda has extended her stay! Without a doubt our time with Linda has been THE best and we look forward to our second year with our au pair extraordinaire!