

Erin Dunn
Community Comment
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This is Erin Dunn of the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce with a Community Comment.

I'm just now getting my feet under me. The event that happened in Charlottesville last week put me off-balance and caught me off-guard. I was reeling from my own disbelief that such an abhorrent situation even happened. That kind of racist rally and behavior is not what the Americans I know consider to be the ideals of the United States.

And that was on top of the war of words with North Korea we had to listen to last week. Scary stuff for anyone who reads the cage rattling rhetoric of the two leaders.

It's enough to make you wonder what has happened to our world.

And then, you get to be a part of a special gathering, and you know our world has a chance.

My partner and I are hosting an exchange student from Finland this fall. We are so lucky to have her be part of our lives, even for this brief time.

On Sunday night, we had the other Rotary exchange student who just arrived in Fortuna from Germany, and three Fortuna students who have recently returned from their exchanges in Denmark, Italy and Taiwan. It was a mini-United Nations finding common ground over pizza.

That kind of kinship of the world was just what I needed to see on Sunday night. It was a reminder that for all of our differences, we all want the same thing—peace on earth and an understanding of how we fit together in this world.

Well, except for the racist bigots that gathered last Saturday in Charlottesville.

But I digress.

Hosting exchange students over the years has changed my own perspective of the world. I joyfully embrace diversity. And I love celebrating and sharing my own culture with the kids that come here too.

These kids are so brave. They come half-way around the world and trust that the adults that are taking them in know what they are doing and will protect them.

Imagine starting in a new school, with all new people, not to mention classes in a new language. Our exchange student had her first day of high school yesterday. She was overwhelmed but kept it together. She had to navigate new buildings, new teachers, and even a new locker. Everything that we take for granted as common place, is different to her.

And different is exhausting. Talking to new people, eating new food, always having to listen twice as hard because people talk so fast in a language you studied for years but have never had in surround sound.

I am as proud of her as I would be my own daughter. And watching her at the mini-UN at our house on Sunday evening made me the most proud. She will be part of a world that comes together in peace and understanding. And maybe pizza.

This has been Erin Dunn with a community comment.