



FLEX STUDENT DISCUSSES HER TENURE WITH UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE JUDITH McHALE

PAX/FLEX STUDENT: MARIYA SOLODILOVA, RUSSIA

PAX CLUSTER DIRECTOR: DOLORES SIIK, NEW HAMPSHIRE



Chelmsford's Marie Webb jokes with exchange student Mariya Solodilova of Russia during Under Secretary of State Judith McHale visit to Chelmsford, MA families who host exchange students, Friday afternoon at the Dawson Family Home.

PAX/FLEX student Mariya Solodilova does not only get the opportunity to be hosted by wonderful host mom Sue Dawson, she also had the opportunity to meet Under Secretary Judith McHale.

Mariya and Anna (her exchange sister), along with Dmitry Palov of Russia and Cecilia Reynoso of Mexico are all seniors at Chelmsford High School. On January 22, 2010 they all had the chance to chat with Under Secretary of State Judith McHale about living and learning in America. Secretary McHale was in Massachusetts for the dedication of the Madeleine Korbel Albright Institute for Global Affairs at Wellesley College. She stopped in Chelmsford to talk with the students and their host families.

Left to right: Dmitry Palov, Cecilia Reynoso, Mariya Solodilova, Under Secretary of State Judith McHale, Anna Kowalczyk and host mom Sue Dawson pose for the camera after meeting to discuss the foreign exchange program that brought the students to Chelmsford.



Mariya said exchange programs were created after the Cold War to help improve relations between the former Soviet Union and the United States. “Being part of the program is honorable. It enriches a person a lot and changes a person’s life. It’s already changed my life,” Mariya said.

“What surprised me most was having the freedom to be special and to be a unique person,” Mariya said. “Even if you are not the same as everyone else, you are not judged. Here you can express yourself in many ways.”

Enthusiastic with all the experiences she is taking in with her host mother and fellow host sister Anna from Poland, Mariya enjoys being in the Theatre Guild. This just proves there are many more similarities than there are differences between American teens.

*Excerpts taken from the Wicked Local “Exchange students discuss their tenure in Chelmsford”
published on February 1, 2010*