

# ICYE USA – United Planet

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## Welcome!

Dear Volunteers,

The United States is renowned as the land of the free therefore; the country holds a challenging and often spotlighted position in international affairs. As an international, Boston-based, 501(c)3 non-profit organization; United Planet partners with ICYE so volunteers can address shared challenges affecting our interconnected world. United Planet provides diverse and creative opportunities for volunteers to achieve a more global understanding and mindset.

Boston was the center of the American Revolution; and is one of the most beautiful cities to date. With more universities and colleges than any other U.S. city and a young international population, Boston is an ideal point of entry for exchangeees into the United States. During orientation, exchangeees will have an opportunity to explore and become immersed in this vibrant city. Volunteers quickly fall in love with the charms of historic New England and delight in the region's aura of civic duty and social responsibility. Spend your free time during orientation strolling through centuries-old streets, or soaking up the wealth of knowledge that abounds here in Massachusetts.

Volunteer projects are based in and around our home, Boston, Massachusetts. Because projects are located in different areas of North America, volunteers can see more than they imagined. As a volunteer in the United States you will live with locals, which creates an intimate experience of sharing and learning in an authentic setting. Community service projects include working in farms, teen education programs, disability communities, and more.

We hope that you are even more excited to visit the United States as an ICYE Exchangee with United Planet! This is the beginning of a very fulfilling process both for you and for the people you are helping. You will have the chance to make a valuable difference while simultaneously changing your own life as well! Our mission at United Planet is to promote global awareness and foster cross-cultural understanding and friendship. We are very excited that you will become a part of this mission and are grateful for your involvement with ICYE. We look forward to seeing you soon here in the United States.

Kind regards and best of luck,

The United Planet Team



## Placement & Program Details

### Accommodations

Your project may provide you with accommodations. Different types of accommodations are offered and typically basic but comfortable.

### Meals

Meals are often eaten at the project but in some cases you will receive money to buy and prepare your own food.

### Language Classes

All activities and programming are conducted in English and, exchangees are encouraged to ask questions of the UP Team and take language notes while exploring Boston.

Informal English lessons may be provided, please speak with a coordinator for more information. Lessons will be determined based on your current proficiency level.

### Orientation

When you arrive in the US, you will travel straight to your confirmed project. **Orientation including language and cultural sessions and social activities, sessions based on volunteering and safety (all subject to change) will all be held virtually.** All of these activities are designed to make you feel welcome, introduce North American life and culture, and prepare you for life for your experience.

It is not only important that you learn about the U.S., but it is also important to us that we learn about you and your country. You will conduct international presentations – this is not only a chance for you to tell the group about your country, but also a great way to practice your English. Please bring photos, music, &c that are representative of your culture, so that we can learn as much as possible about where you come from.

Orientation for Short-Term volunteers are TBD.

### Mid-year Camp

This five-day camp is non compulsory and offered for one-year exchangees only and will be held in the middle of your exchange year. With other exchangees, staff and UP volunteer members, you will be able to reflect on your experience thus far. We hope this will help prepare you for the second half of your year in the USA!

### Final Evaluation

The final evaluation is a two-day camp. The evaluation is a chance to discuss your year in the U.S., celebrate your accomplishments, and prepare to go home to your own country. You will also be equipped with concrete suggestions on how to share your intercultural experiences with people in your home communities and to stay involved in ICYE and UP activities.

**Long-Term Programs**  
6 months and 12 months

## Developmental Disabilities

### 1. The Lukas Community, New Hampshire

Lukas is a year-round community of individuals ranging in age from the very young to the not so young. It provides a caring, therapeutic environment for adults with developmental challenges, in which each person is recognized as a unique human being with dignity, freedom and purpose. The Lukas Community derives its name from the gospel writer, St. Luke, who was both a physician and an artist. The community was founded in 1981 by a group of individuals who saw the desperate need for a place where adults with developmental challenges could live full and productive lives.

#### Aims of the Project

To provide developmentally challenged adults with a secure community environment within which one's dignity and life purpose may be realized

#### Activities

Assisting in the personal care and vocational care of developmentally challenged adults

#### Community Context

Forty people of all ages from young children to the elderly, some disabled and some not, share their lives, work and recreation in four extended family households located on 65 acres of farmland fields, forests and wetlands. Rural setting with lots of distance from cities.

#### Volunteer Requirements

- An open mind, an eagerness to learn
- A sense of commitment to the residents
- A strong sense of responsibility

#### Volunteer Tasks

There is some work within the households (personal care of the residents, meal preparation, housekeeping as needed, etc.) and also outside the home in such activities as therapeutic gardening, Eurythmy (therapeutic dance), weaving, music, fitness activities, painting and crafts to name a few.

#### Host Accommodations

Private room within a household

Photos from the Lukas Community



Michelle from Costa Rica on a trip with her resident friends from Lukas.









United Planet.

## 2. Plowshare Farm Life Sharing Community

Plowshare Farm is a life-sharing community where people with diverse capabilities, including adults with special needs, live and work side by side to build an inclusive and sustainable community.

### Aims

To work together to respond to the social, human, spiritual and ecological needs of our times, creating a community environment where every person and every aspect of the natural world can be learned from and valued.

We have found our most successful, and happiest, volunteers to be people who carry strong self-initiative. Who, after an orientation period, can see what needs to be done, and do it out of one's own initiative. We like to be light-hearted and cheerful, even as we are accomplishing tasks, and we enjoy this quality in others. The day is not all work.

We offer a yearlong volunteer opportunity for people who seek experience in the following areas:

- General care and guidance of adults with developmental disabilities, autism spectrum diagnoses, down syndrome, seizure disorders (epilepsy), and other special needs.
- Aspects of organic farming and gardening.
- Therapeutic vocational activities with a focus on traditional trades that include cooking, woodworking, household care, building projects, crafts, baking, and farm work.
- Arts-based therapies, which at various times can include eurythmy, painting, music, etc.
- Intermittent work with children.
- Participation in local community activities such as concerts, excursions, shopping, sports, festivals, and other varied social events.
- Sharing a social life with people with various challenges.

A unique aspect of our work is that most of our “workshops” are actually projects that need to be done in which people with all different abilities and challenges are included and supported to contribute to the best of their capabilities. Through this approach, people with special needs are not the “product” or the “object” of someone else's work, but instead are active participants in the work which needs to be accomplished to support the community. For the volunteer, this method of working allows room for learning new skills,

for becoming involved in projects, for supporting people with special needs to reach for their full potential, and for independent initiative.

### **Community Context**

Our community includes four extended family households, a community building (with community gathering space, performance space, kitchen, bakery, studio space, classrooms, and office), a barn, gardens, some outbuildings, a pond and 200 acres of fields, forest, and marshes.

Our environment is quite different from an “institution”. As nearly all of us live here at Plowshare (instead of coming here for 8-hour “shift work”), we are more like traditional extended-family homes and a shared farm, all of which include people with special needs. Residents (adults with developmental disabilities), co-workers, and volunteers work side by side in completing projects, with the individual needs of each person being considered in the planning of the day.

Our setting is truly rural. The closest real “town” (with 7,000 people) is 15 minutes away by car; the closest “city” (30,000 people) is 40 minutes away by car. Yet at the same time, Boston (a major metropolitan hub) is only about one and a half hours away. The seashore, a very busy and lively place during the summer, is a bit more than an hour away.

### **Volunteer Requirements**

Volunteering at Plowshare Farm is not an easy task. What we are looking for in volunteer candidates is people who are “wide awake” – people who see tasks through to completion, have pride in their work, and have curiosity and compassion for the experience of other human beings.

As a volunteer, we encourage your self-initiative in the following responsibilities:

- Help in some of the various workshops: farming, building, gardening, baking, cooking, fiber arts, etc.
- Help with meal preparation and other household tasks.
- Participation in household and community life such as daily meals, social interaction and leisure activities in the house or outdoors.
- Help with fulfilling hygienic needs of the residents.

### **Volunteer Tasks**

- Live in and provide assistance with daily needs in one of our lifesharing homes where people with a wide range of abilities, including people with disabilities, live together in an inclusive community-based setting. This includes sharing general household activities, supporting others in the household in activities of daily living, and sharing in social time together.
- Participate in 2-3 areas of volunteer service during the day, depending on the community's current need and personal interest, such as wool and fiber arts, woodworking, baking, and biodynamic gardening. Learn about the traditional

- trades of the New England region (woodwork, pottery, metalwork, wax, wool, baking and more).
- Be part of a community that is striving toward ecological sustainability (energy production and heating, growing our own vegetables, getting milk and eggs from our own animals, tapping maple trees for syrup, etc).
  - Ages 17+

### Host Accommodations

Yearlong volunteers have a private bedroom and share meals in the household where they share daily life with residents, householder(s) and coworkers.



### 3. Innisfree Village

Website: <http://www.innisfreevillage.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/InnisfreeVillage>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/InnisfreeVillage/>

#### Aims

- To be a model therapeutic environment with people with intellectual disabilities, emphasizing empowerment, interdependence, and mutual respect of all community members

#### Community Context

- Innisfree is located in a small rural community, near the small city of Charlottesville. We participate in community/regional events throughout the year, as well as selling Innisfree made goods to local businesses year round.

#### Volunteer Requirements

- Must have a current TB (Tuberculosis) screening.
- 21 years of age (others can be assessed)
- One year commitments preferred

#### Volunteer Tasks

- The volunteer serves as a residential caregiver to a small groups of residents
- Facilitates in therapeutic workstations
- Oversees the upkeep and maintenance of the house in which they live, including budget
- Completes written reports
- and participates in other community activities and events

#### Accommodations

- Volunteer caregiver lives in one of the village houses. They are provided room and board. Ask for a job information sheet for more details about other benefits and incentives.





## Transportation

Exchangees are required to pay for their own air transportation within the US since placements are located throughout such a vast geographical area.

Book flights from your home to the US and domestic flights with our partners STA Travel and/or High Point Travel. Both offer discounted rates and payment plan options for convenience.

- <https://highpoint.wufoo.com/forms/united-planet/>
- <http://www.statravel.com/solutions/united-planet.htm>

United Planet, also, recommends the following websites for information on domestic flights:

- Expedia Travel [www.expedia.com](http://www.expedia.com)
- Kayak [www.kayak.com](http://www.kayak.com)
- Student Universe [www.studentuniverse.com](http://www.studentuniverse.com)
- Travelocity [www.travelocity.com](http://www.travelocity.com)
- Southwest Airlines [www.southwest.com](http://www.southwest.com)
- Jetblue [www.jetblue.com](http://www.jetblue.com)

United Planet can provide assistance with booking domestic transportation if requested in advance.

