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512th Airlift Wing, Dover Air Force Base, Del.

Reserve family hosts Haitian child visit

Master Sgt. Veronica Aceveda
512th AW Public Affairs

As part of a program called Fresh Air Fund, the family of Pam Jackson, 512th Financial Management Office chief, hosted a visit Aug. 10-17 from a young French-speaking girl from New York.

The week-long stay was coordinated through the Fresh Air Fund's Friendly Town program. According to the nonprofit agency's website, they provide inner-city children living in New York City's disadvantaged communities the joys of Fresh Air experiences. Most of the children, enrolled in the program, grow up in towering apartment buildings without large, open outdoor play spaces.

Jedvarline Baptiste, 10, who came to America following the 2010 earthquakes in Haiti, knows very little English. She spent the past week experiencing many things she's never done before.

"She loves being outside - swimming, riding a bike and playing with my grandchildren," said Jackson. "My son-in-law taught her how to swing; she didn't know how to make it go."

While the Brooklyn resident loved playing in her host family's backyard, Jackson's daughter, Meaghan Ellwanger, made sure Jedvarline saw some of the places Delaware is known for including a trip to the Rehoboth Beach Boardwalk, Cape Henlopen State Park and Dover Air Force Base.

While visiting the 512th Airlift Wing Aug. 15, Jedvarline toured the largest aircraft in the U.S. Armed Force's inventory, the C-5 Galaxy.

"The plane was cool, and it had lots of buttons," Jedvarline communicated to her host family. "It was so big but looks so little in the sky."



U.S. Air Force photo by Sarah Starkey

Jedvarline Baptiste, 10, gets to see what pilots see during her tour of a C-5 Galaxy aircraft Aug. 15, 2011, on Dover Air Force Base, Del. Jedvarline, a French-speaking girl, toured the plane during her one-week stay with the family of 512th Airlift Wing member Pam Jackson.

Jackson and Ellwanger agreed communicating with her was challenge, but Jackson said they made it work through being silly and teasing.

"I tried to say a few words in French, and she would laugh at me and judge me on how well I did, which was usually not very good," Jackson added. "She's a giggler, and finally she'd say 'no more.'"

During some of Jedvarline's time in the First State, periods of inclement weather kept her and the host family indoors, where she learned to scrapbook, make friendship bracelets and watch the Disney channel.

"She's just a typical kid who deserves the experiences kids in suburban areas enjoy and do things she otherwise would never be able to," said Ellwanger. "To see the excitement she gets from everyday things we take for granted is well worth the experience."

As Jedvarline headed home, she took with her memories of eating chicken fingers and french fries as well as shopping for clothes and flip-flops.

"We decided to do the program to give back," said Ellwanger. "We wanted the opportunity to welcome a child in, spoil her and show her love."

"We plan to have her back next summer," said Jackson.

More than 65 percent of all children who experience country life through the Fresh Air Fund are re-invited to stay with their host family, year after year, and, many enjoy longer summertime visits, according to the nonprofit organization's website.

Because of volunteer host families, like the Jackson family, nearly 5,000 children were able to experience a free summer vacation last year, creating unforgettable memories and future possibilities.

Mission capable in MOPP 4

Staff Sgt. Ralph Petrella, 512th Civil Engineer Squadron pavements and equipment operator, removes dirt from a crater on a runway while wearing a chemical warfare suit and protective mask during an airfield damage repair training event July 22 at a regional training site in New London, N.C. Twenty-nine 512th CES reservists trained on various tasks ranging from water purification to airfield lighting July 18-22 in preparation for the wing's Operational Readiness Inspection in December. Throughout the week, wing members, wearing the full chemical warfare suit ensemble at Mission Oriented Protective Posture 4, had to endure extreme temperatures, reaching 103 degrees.



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Patricia Kerrigan