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Twenty-one Monroe Students to study abroad this Summer

Twenty-one students from Monroe County High Schools are preparing for their adventures overseas in July. These students are participating in the Experiment In International living cross cultural experience. Fourteen of these high school students are in the Take Stock in Children (TSIC) program and will travel abroad in a cultural immersion program within three hemispheres and 13 nations.

Take Stock In Children students from Key West, Marathon and Coral Shores high schools were notified this week that they have been awarded grants from Experiment in International Living (EIL) to pursue cross-cultural education in 13 countries. This unique opportunity for high school students in Monroe County is the result of EIL's local partnership with the Monroe County Education Foundation (MCEF), lead agency for TSIC in Monroe County.

All Monroe students will leave the U.S. in small groups at the end of June, joining approximately 1,000 other U.S. high school students in EIL's annual program of cultural orientation via local immersion. International living experiences involve three to five weeks of language learning, individual home-stays and community involvement in 27 different countries.

Students are now beginning preparations to study abroad in their assigned country. Their individual destinations include: Argentina, Australia, Chile South, China, Costa Rica, France, Mongolia, Morocco, South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, Thailand and Turkey.

"Our students worked hard on their applications and are very excited about this chance to be citizens of the world," said Jim Hall, TSIC Program Coordinator for Monroe County. He noted that MCEF president John Padget and other board members have provided pivotal support for what is arguably a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for international learning.

"I believe strongly in the effectiveness of interactive learning," Padget said. "The EIL program offers one of the best frameworks for responsible development of young minds and hearts. Students see from new perspectives, respond to unfamiliar challenges and solve problems with initiative and good judgment. It's life-learning that tests their assumptions and broadens the mind."

Since Padget and MCEF initiated the EIL partnership in 2006, 67 TSIC students and an additional 18 other high school students totaling 85 Monroe students in the last five years have become Ambassadors in international culture and study.

This year's EIL/MCEF grantees in cross-cultural education are:

- Key West High School: Marco Gonzalez, Thailand; Vanessa Lundi, France; Cameron Malcolm, Mongolia; Yanaiz Morales, Argentina; Taylor Park, Australia; Pria Soni, China; Shelbi Swanson, South Africa.
- From Marathon High School: Trevell Beckford travels to Chile and Cassidy Burgos will study in Turkey.
- From Coral Shores High School: Nilya Cortez, Morocco; Catherine Guinovart, Costa Rica; Bertha Mayo, Tanzania; Nancy Quezada, Spain; Elizabeth Roa, France.

“We are proud of the initiative and drive which these 14 students have shown in seeking international study,” said Hall.

Padgett added that study abroad creates distinct opportunities for leadership development as students participate in the culture, economy, language, traditions and arts of communities around the world. “We want our students in the Keys to understand that their vision and mission in life is not bound by the length of a bridge or the edge of an island. Our kids can connect countries with their actions and their ideas.

About The Experiment in International Living

Founded in 1932, EIL has become the leader in cross-cultural education for high school students. Each summer, 800 to 1,000 students from across the United States participate in 3, 4, and 5-week EIL programs that include cross-cultural orientations, home stays, language training, arts, ecology and/or community service components. There are programs in 29 different countries, plus the Navajo Nation here in the U.S.

High school students from around the United States come together to form travel groups and meet at three gateway airports: New York, Los Angeles, and Miami. These 10 to 15-member groups travel and live together during the entire program, guided by a trained adult group leader.

EIL has sponsored more than 70,000 participants over its 75 years . Its purpose is to challenge young people to open their hearts and minds to the world.

For more information about The Experiment in International Living visit:
www.experimentinternational.org or call (800) 345-2929.