

The Cooper's host exchange student Yu-Ting Chen from Taiwan

By Katie White

The Town of Pelahatchie has increased in population - at least for this school year - when the Cooper family decided to become a host family for an exchange student.

The Cooper family consists of J.T. Cooper, Angel Cooper, and the couple's two daughters, Ainsley, ninth- grade and Arlie, first- grade. Yu-Ting Chen, a tenth-grader, has traveled to Pelahatchie all the way from Taiwan. Chen speaks Chinese and some English. In fact, learning to speak better English is one of the reasons she decided to become an exchange student in the U.S. Chen is attending Pelahatchie Public School along with Ainsley and Arlie.

The family was searching for ways in which they could be accommodating in aiding a child. They learned about the student exchange program from the Rankin County School District. The exchange program is called International Cultural Exchange Services (ICES). After learning more about the program, the Coopers decided that hosting an exchange student would be educational and a good fit for the entire family and Chen.

ICES will allow you to select the gender, age, nationality, and interests of a participating student. The Coopers knew

they wanted a female because they have two daughters, and one of their daughters is the same age as Chen.

Chen has a F-1 Visa. The F-1 Visa allows an exchange student to enter the

experienced is the difference in Taiwan meals and southern American meals. Taiwan meals are usually very simple - rice or noodles with meat or vegetable in a soup. Americans may have a meat side

Seeing a cow in a pasture was also new for Chen. In Taiwan, she has only seen cows in a zoo. She also wanted to walk to school or other places - a standard practice in Taiwan - but the family explained why it was different here.

A translator app was added to Chen's phone so that she can better understand her teachers in class. Chen can be messaged in English, and she will receive the message in Chinese.

She is participating in graphic design and art at school. She also plays the piano. Ainsley also enjoys graphic design, art and playing the piano. These similarities in interests are a few reasons Chen was selected to be hosted by the Cooper family.

One of Chen's hurdles is trying to find time to speak to her friends and family in Taiwan. When it's night here, it's daytime in Taiwan.

School hours in Taiwan are much different. There, Chen will attend school from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. At 6 p.m., they have cram school, where they study for entrance testing until 9:30 p.m.

Chen hopes to improve her English and experience different cultures. Her family encouraged her to participate in the exchange student program. Her mother is an English teacher, and her father is an engineer.



Photo by Pelahatchie News

Pictured (l to r) are, Arlie Cooper, Angel Cooper, Yu-Ting Chen, J.T. Cooper and Ainsley Cooper.

U.S. as a full-time student at an accredited college, university, seminary, conservatory, academic high school, elementary school, or other academic institution or in a language training program.

Chen is learning a lot about how the culture in Mississippi is different than where she is from. One of the things Chen has

along with vegetable sides or legume sides and sometimes dessert.

J.T. and Angel have also offered to purchase and prepare foods that Chen would prefer to eat, but they also encourage her to sample some of the dishes in Mississippi - for the culture experience. Chen has been very apt to try new things.



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