

We welcomed Antonia Dorsch into our home in October 2021. To put in simple terms, Antonia has been truly exceptional. She has seamlessly integrated into our family and passionately explored her new culture in our hometown and throughout the United States. Our children have certainly come to love her, and it is with our greatest enthusiasm that we nominate her for the Au Pair of the Year award.

Antonia is an Au Pair Extraordinaire, and from the moment she entered our home, it was easy to see she had ample experience with young children. She effortlessly won my 4-year-old son's respect when she asked permission to enter his room, and she has maintained patience through our toddler's potty training and tantrums. Antonia uses her own education to offer suggestions for challenging situations while simultaneously adopting our parenting style; she often echoes word for word our responses and makes consistency among the three adults in our home appear easy. She is responsible for getting the boys ready in the mornings, transporting them to and from school, preparing meals, and spending a few hours with them in the afternoon. Each weekday, she develops a new after school care plan to entertain and educate them: going to a playground, participating in the library's adventure club, baking cookies while doing math, working on a craft project or playing ball at home – we always feel she has our children's best interest at heart. She shares pictures and videos of our kids to a digital photo album where our family gets to see their great-grandkids grow day to day and we, as physicians, can pause for a smile during our stressful work. She often spends her free time playing family board games, going on walks with us, and cheering for our son at soccer games; she has participated in our children's parent-teacher conferences at school. She takes our dog around the neighborhood and tends our home as if it is her own. Our son draws Antonia into every one of our family portraits – she cares not only for our children, but for each of us, and we will not be complete without her.

In the summer of 2022, our family experienced a significant challenge when we moved across the country from Seattle, Washington to Nashville, Tennessee. Antonia offered to extend an additional six months with our family to help us re-establish life in a drastically different part of the country. This could have been an incredibly stressful transition as our whole world literally changed overnight. We divided our family for the relocation, and the kids took the red-eye flight from one city to the next. Their father was driving 2,500 miles while their mother immediately started in a new and demanding position; Antonia and the kids were temporarily displaced without belongings. Through many sleepless nights and big emotions, Antonia fully threw herself into helping us make this easier and became an anchored shelter for all of us. She watched the boys full time while we navigated our new jobs and awaited new school enrollments. She embraced the change by exploring our new city during the sweltering hot summer, taking the kids to multiple public libraries, swimming at the local pool, and playing hide and seek at a variety of playgrounds; at home, she unpacked and organized a new space while creating and establishing a new routine. Simply put, she made our children feel noticed, loved, and safe during a colossal adjustment, and we really could not have made this move without her.

Antonia has embraced her new culture and fully stepped outside her comfort zone; she is from a very small town in rural Germany and had never flown before boarding the plane to start her Au Pair experience. She attends all the cluster events and has made friends from all over the world. In her short time in the US, she has taken a solo trip to Alaska, been surfing in San Diego, skydiving in Hawaii, and ice skating in New York City; she plans local outings, and if a friend is not available to join her, she goes on her own. Antonia has traveled for vacations with us to Northern California, the Gulf Shores, and the Smoky Mountains; seeing her joyfully experience a new place or activity warms our hearts. In addition, she has shared her home culture with us as well. In Germany, St. Nicholas visits children one night in December to leave candy and toys in their shoes, and our kids were surprised to have their little shoes filled with such treats. She sings German nursery rhymes and teaches them phrases; she bakes bread and brings home German treats from the store.

Antonia has a healthy curiosity for the world and actively participates in cultural exchange while simultaneously respecting and honoring her childcare duties; she truly embodies the spirit of the Au Pair program, and we are so fortunate to have her in our family. This year has given her confidence to adapt to new situations and prepared her to excel as an early childhood educator. She is undeniably an exceptional Au Pair, and has without a doubt, earned the Au Pair of the Year Award!

With sincerity and gratitude,

Kacy and Tammy Ruth