



Au Pair of the Year

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Au Pair: Bernadette Brandl from Austria

Host Family: Kertz family in Minnesota



It is with much delight that we nominate our au pair, Bernadette Brandl, as au pair of the year. Simply put, Bernadette is a blessing! She has been a wonderful gift to our family since her arrival in August 2011 and we are so thankful for the many ways she enriches our lives.

We are familiar with the au pair program and have been a host family for five years. We have three happy, energetic and busy boys. With just 31 months separating them, Andrew, age 6, Thomas, age 4 1/2 and William, age 3 1/2 are charming, creative, fun loving and FULL of energy.

Bernadette graciously joined our family with an intuition about our boys that can be only summarized as a special gift. She immediately captivated their imaginations, focused their energy and showered them with individualized attention and support. With her calm demeanor, she demonstrates time and again her ability to guide and direct them in a loving and kind way.

Bernadette is incredibly creative, thoughtful and full of ideas. Together, she and the kids design yarn animals, create elaborate Lego villages, and design special treasures for each holiday. To celebrate the Christmas season, Bernadette designed a personalized Advent calendar for each member of our family – young and old. Each day was marked by a special story, a new game, a little treat or a note of gratitude. It is hard to put in words the many heartfelt ways Bernadette enriches our lives just by being her.

Bernadette demonstrates wisdom and composure beyond her years. She is proactive in identifying concerns and opportunities as it relates to the kids and is fully engaged in our children's education. Through her own training as a kindergarten teacher, she develops educational games and teaching strategies that transform everyday living into learning. She and the kids create role playing games, go on treasure hunts and visit far-away lands. And while the kids are immersed in their adventure, Bernadette weaves opportunities for learning and reflection. As parents, we observe the "magic" as Bernadette and our children interact with one another.

Bernadette has embraced American culture and tradition, while sharing her own cultural experiences. She's become a sous chef in our home, learning American recipes and cooking techniques, while teaching us some of her family's special meals. She is fully committed to excelling in the English language and takes every opportunity to speak English with others.

Bernadette is taking full advantage of our cold weather climate and is learning to ice skate and snowboard. She is the biggest hockey fan in the stands every time our kids get on the ice for practice or games.

Bernadette has become part of our family – and will always be. Thank you for the opportunity to share our appreciation for her contributions and her important role in our family. I can say with confidence that friendship and bond will be a lifelong one.

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