

When it comes down to it, Italian student would rather be at home

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son, but I don't know." But in the end, Bertelli said, she'd rather be there than here. "In the beginning, I loved Goodland," she said, "but then I decided it's not what I want." Bertelli lives with Jeff and Nona Mason and their three children, Alyssa, a sophomore; Craig, an eighth grader; and Kerek, a sixth grader. She calls Jeff and Nona, "Mom" and "Dad," and says she has a good relationship with Alyssa and

her brothers. "It's a good match," she said, adding that just like in any family, there can be friction. "Sometimes they make me mad," Bertelli said. "Sometimes I make them mad. But I think we get along really well. They have just been raised in a different way." It's those little American differences, she said, that make her miss Italy. She said when she gets home, she'll describe Goodland as, "a town in the middle of nowhere." Living 20 minutes

west of Venice, Bertelli said, she can drive to Rome in the time it takes to drive from Goodland to Wichita—and there's a lot more to see in between. It's also easier to get around in Italy. "Before," she said, "I couldn't imagine life without public transportation." She said the exchange program doesn't allow students to drive. Living here, Bertelli said, has taught her appreciate what she left behind in Italy. Public transportation, affection, friends, family, living near water. She said Americans seem much

more competitive and afraid of getting too close. She thinks they're so focused on getting the biggest house, the best car and the most money, she said, that they don't have time for others. Basically, said she doesn't think friendship exists in America and she thinks it's sad. People here also seem scared of human contact, she said, of getting too close. She said Italians don't have a problem with hugging and kissing. Alyssa said they laugh off the cultural differences.

"Most of the things we just laugh about," she said. "Sometimes we just say 'It's a cultural thing.'" Alyssa, who has no sisters, said she'll miss Bertelli. "I love it," she said, "I've never had an older sister and now I get one for a year." Though she is homesick, Bertelli said, she has enjoyed her stay in Goodland. Nona Mason said it's been fun watching her learn the language. "She'd come in and say, 'I'm so angry,'" Nona said. "We'd say, 'Why?' and she'd say, 'Because I haven't eaten since lunch.'" Bertelli said her favorite English word is "awesome," and American farms fascinate her. More than anything else, she said, the experience has taught her about herself.

"It's that point when you're not with your friends and family," Bertelli said, "that you begin to wonder whether the person you were in the other place was really you." She said she's become more responsible and has learned how to accept other people for who they are. But, Bertelli added, she's noticed that she's also become more critical. She said she doesn't know why. Nona said she's taught them, too. "I've learned not to take things for granted," she said, "the things we see or talk about everyday." She said Bertelli loves squirrels—an animal she never thinks twice about. "We don't have them in Italy," Bertelli said.

Student had to adjust to Goodland's hot and cold

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she said, but it is pretty flat. She said it rains a lot, but is a very mild climate, so she has had hot and cold weather to get used to while living in Kansas. Her plans are to study international law or accounting, where she can use her newly honed language skills. In Denmark, she said, all kids go to school from kindergarten through ninth grade. Hallas-Junker said 10th grade is optional. Then they have a choice of going to a gymnasium to study subjects like physics or language, a business college, or a technical school where, for example, they can become a baker or a mechanic. She said at a young age, they have to choose what they want to do for a living, but their teachers guide them. "I was only 15 when I made the choice to go to business college," she said. She said in Denmark when you turn 18, you can drink, drive, get married, vote and join the army. But it's expensive to get a driver's license, she said, as it costs over \$1,000. Young people have to pay for driving lessons and their schooling. Hallas-Junker said her family doesn't own a car, so she rides her bike around

Grindsted. Doctor and hospital care is free in her country, she said, and dental care is free until you turn 18. However, she added, taxes are high, with people paying a minimum of 40 percent and maximum of 70 percent. She said she hasn't really missed her parents. She said European kids are raised to be more independent and are allowed to travel when they are 16. She said she's made some good friends with Goodland High School students Rachael Hagerman and Laura Miles and Cristina Bertelli, an exchange student from Italy. She said she was glad to have Bertelli to talk with. She didn't have a problem with English when she came to America as she started learning the language when she was about 4 from her grandmother, who was an English teacher. In fact, she said, some people in America wouldn't have known she was from another country. "Basically, I learned to speak English from TV," she said, as most of Danish television is in English. She said most people speak more than Danish in her country. It's because Denmark is so small and not many people

speak their language throughout the world. Denmark borders Germany on the south. In school, she said, they begin learning English in the fourth grade and German in the seventh. She had a choice of going to the U.S., South Africa or Argentina on an exchange. She said she came to America because she wanted a year to make her English perfect. She said also it was because she watched so many American movies and she didn't feel up for the challenge of speaking a whole new language if she went to South Africa or Argentina. She said in the beginning, it was weird.

"There's not all that much to do in Goodland," she said. Basically, she said you can drag Main, go to the movie theater or watch movies at a friend's house. But she likes the country. "I'm definitely planning on coming back," she said. "I don't know when, but I'll be back." In Denmark, she said, she can take a bus to another city or ride her bike around town. She doesn't like to be so dependent on her family or friends to go places. She said she does appreciate the fact that it's a little quieter in Goodland. "It's like a year off," she said.




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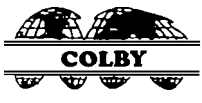
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