

# **BRING HOME THE WORLD!**



## **THE 2008-2009 OHIO 4-H/LABO JAPANESE YEAR-LONG EXCHANGE PROGRAM**

- ❖ The Labo Foundation, founded in 1966, is an organization in Japan dedicated to the educating and exposing Japanese youth to other cultures and languages. Labo members attend weekly meetings and classes with Labo tutors, and may apply for homestay exchange programs with other countries. English is Labo's most popular language program and the United States is its most popular exchange destination.
- ❖ Since 1972, Labo has been conducting month-long summer exchanges with 4-H Clubs of America. Ohio 4-H has been participating in these **month-long** programs since **1980**, and since then, has been able to place more exchangees than any other 4-H state program in the country. In **1989**, Ohio 4-H began participating in the **Year-Long** Labo exchange program. **In the past 18 years** we have hosted **167 year-long students**, again, more than any other 4-H state program in the nation. During 2008-2009 we will welcome 6 year-long exchangees to Ohio.
- ❖ Exchangees live with their host families for 11 months over the academic year. The 2008-2009 exchangees will arrive at their Ohio host family's homes on July 31, 2008 and will return to Japan in mid-June, 2009.
- ❖ Each year-long exchangee has previously completed a successful month-long 4-H/ Labo exchange in the U.S. They are carefully screened and selected, and because so many apply for the program, only those of the highest caliber are chosen.

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- ❖ Exchangees attend the local school in their host family's area, and take the usual course offerings for their grade level. In some cases, they will receive credit for these courses upon their return to Japan.
- ❖ Exchangees typically have 60% proficiency in spoken and written English when they arrive in the U.S. They participate in a 10-day intensive English language and culture course upon arrival. Many are on the honor roll by spring semester, and all are fluent by the time they return to Japan.
- ❖ 4-H covers the cost of exchangees' orientation, medical insurance and expenses, 4-H camp fees if available, a mid-term gathering, and a year-end tour and de-briefing in San Francisco. Exchangees bring their own money for personal spending and school fees and events.
- ❖ The Ohio 4-H State Office provides support to host families, exchangees and schools through orientation programs, school contact and communication, monthly-checkups, home visits, a mid-point meeting in Columbus, communication with Labo in Tokyo, and intervention when necessary. Compared to other organization's exchange programs, the Labo/4-H Exchange remains small, so that families and exchangees receive more personal care.
- ❖ The County 4-H Office provides any necessary additional support to schools, host families and exchangees, through either a volunteer International County Coordinator (ICC) or the County 4-H Educator.
- ❖ Host families are asked to provide room and board, including any meals and trips outside the home which they would normally provide for their own children. Prior hosting experience is also not necessary. Families do not have to be 4-H members upon application, but automatically become 4-H members upon participation. We do ask that families assist their exchangee with 4-H participation in their community.
- ❖ A major objective of the homestay is for 4-H/Labo exchangees to experience everyday life in America as a family member, rather than as a guest – so special vacations and out-of-the-ordinary plans are not required. In fact, one of the major benefits of the year-long program is that families can relax and enjoy their exchangees in a more natural setting, as they fully integrate into family, community and school life.
- ❖ It is not necessary for year-long host families to have children of their own. Single people, couples, and large and small families have all successfully hosted in the past. The main requirement is love and flexibility in opening your heart and home to someone of a different culture.
- ❖ Although it is difficult to let an exchangee go after having been a member of your family for a year, remember that the experience lasts a lifetime. You will always have a "son" or "daughter" in Japan, who is anxiously awaiting your visit to see their beautiful country! And, many exchangees return to Ohio to visit again and again over the years.

