

February 2018



# Danielle

from Tillsonburg

to

Italy

## *"Dai"*

My motto of these past few months has been "dai" which means 'come on'. This represents my new found sense of adventure, now that the language has stopped blocking me, I can do so much more. I wake up in the morning and think of what I can do. I sometimes just have to remind myself this is my year and only I can make it amazing so I say "dai" and then jump in head first. I also have used this phrase a lot with the other exchange students, I want them to see everything and "dai" seems to be my new motivational speech. It has become a part of my everyday language and part of who I am, I could not be happier.





### HOST FAMILIES

I have just recently moved into my third host family. Through each experience I gained many different necessary skills for life. My first host family was great. They taught me the power, and the steps to make connections. They showed me so many people who have now become great friends or acquaintances, it has helped me integrate into Italy and to speak the language. I also learned that we often say things we don't understand. My mom being an English teacher often questioned English sayings like "cry me a river". I never understood some sayings myself, this led to a deeper understanding of not only Italian but also English.

My second family, was one I wanted to learn nothing from, but it is the hardest experiences that truly allow you to grow. They taught me how to tolerate those who are not friends, and how to make the best experience out of what you have been given. One other important lesson I was taught by this family was that some people are not what they seem at first, in both good and bad. The mother who I originally met was sweet, putting on a show and changed the minute I moved in, but the more profound change was my host sister. She seemed put off and stuck up, but was just afraid of being judged. This lesson has been one of the best and gained me an amazing friend.

Finally the family I have lived in for merely a week. This is a loud house of a young couple and two energetic kids. This family has taught me that what we take for granted is really different from the rest of the world. The kids favourite game is 1 billion questions with your trulys. The things that I found interesting in my life didn't interest them, but the smaller things like how I have a dog, that I like cooking. They were enticed by things that I often cast away as 'boring', or 'normal'. This fact in only a week has given me a renewed sense of confidence.

## ORATORIO

The oratorio is a division of the church in Italy that acts for the community, it is a centre. In which activities are run. This is one of my favourite places, because not only does it hold and start many friendships of the right kind, but also allows me to give back into the community in a few ways.

Giovanissimi and choir have allowed me to meet a large group of amazing people and teachers. They have taught me Italian language, culture, history, and music. As much as they teach they are also ready to learn, about me, my life, what I want to do. These are the friends that are more like family, we celebrate everything together and always have a good time.

ACR is an organization run by the Catholic Church in Italy. It is for children from grade 2 to grade 8. My group is grade 7. We meet every Saturday after school at 2 for two and a half hours. The first hour is activities with our group of students.



Doing different activities that tie together in the end to the overall theme of the year that is photography. We discuss different issues that we face as Catholics and figure them out together. After this hour all the leaders get together for a snack and we do our own prayers. We read the gospel of the day and then

do an activity that helps deepen our understanding of what we have read.

Finally this past week I was in the oratorio for a whole week for what they call "settimana della communita", which is the week of the community. We ate, slept, studied and played together for a week in the oratorio. Starting this past Sunday after mass we all moved in and were there until the next Sunday.



February 2018



A typical day for me started with waking up at 7, then got ready and had our morning prayer at 7:30. After our prayer I ate a quick breakfast with those who were in university as they were the only ones not yet at school. I start school at 9 so I hung out with them until about 8:45 then I walked to the school.



I finish school most days at 12 so when I return I again had lunch with the university kids, as most others had school until 1 or 2. Wednesday and Friday I have swimming so I left for that after lunch, but the other days, they had time set aside for studying. As I do not need to study for my subjects in school me and the other students did an hour of Italian learning for me and then an hour of English for them. Before dinner we would go outside and play soccer or volleyball to keep active and get some fresh air. After dinner we had a prayer with the community and then did different activities, including skating, the carnival, and random Italian games. It was an amazing week to learn Italian and meet so many new, great people.

## LANGUAGE

My Italian has advanced a lot since my last BeaverTale. Although it is still really rocky I can get my point across but in a round about way instead of just saying what I want. I understand most Italian and even understand the teachers when they teach. With the newbies now here I am also helping them with Italian, and using my Italian more in public to help them with simple tasks like ordering. My language is good enough though that often I am mistaken for the Italian in the group even amongst the oldies in my club. I still must learn more tenses though, to speak at a higher proficiency and definitely need to work on my writing.

As for English now it has almost become harder to speak, and I often mix up the languages if I have to speak both. Like when I am with the new exchange students, and am trying to explain something I sometimes start off in Italian and don't realize, also all of my texts I write in Italian and then realize that this person doesn't understand. Even started to write this report in Italian before realizing my error.

## ROTARY

The rotary here in Italy is not as inclusive as the one back in Canada but I do try to do as much with them as possible. I attend one rotary meeting a month and see my councillors one other time when they pay me my monthly allowance. Although because I and the other older exchange students in Valle Camonica have kept asking to be involved we have also gotten to go on some Rotary trips not open to others like the outbound meeting in Bologna. Although Rotary may not keep a close eye on us, I do try to live up to their reputation of being an amazing organization. I often write both my councillors here and at home to make sure I am correctly handling a situation. Even though we haven't done much yet with Rotary coming up is both the Euro tour and our trip to Sicilia.

## SCHOOL

School has been going a lot better and I can actually participate in all the subjects now. My teachers have been very patient and helpful giving me smaller tasks to do through out their lessons which has really helped my Italian. About a month and a half ago I could finally understand everything but history and Italian, but now I can listen and even translate the lessons to our newbies. The other great thing about school is all of the people I have met, from my class and other classes. I have gathered a lot of recipes from my cooking class and cannot wait to bring them all back to Canada.

## SWIMMING

I still attend swimming twice a week for two hours each practice. These random faces have now become friends especially now that I have learned Italian. From Michele's constant comments on the hard practices, to Mattia's jokes that make everyone burst into laughter, these people have become a part of my life. At home I believe the only reason I still swim is the people on my team and for a long time I missed that as I was swimming I didn't get to interact, and they often spoke about me not knowing I could understand. It was nothing bad but I really wanted to join in or correct them but had the obstacle of language. Now though the pool has once again come to life in my eyes with friendships. The team is even hoping to visit Canada for training in the next two or three years and I can't wait to share my home with those I have grown so close to. Although I may not be performing as well, probably because of the decrease in training, I don't care because I love what I do and that makes it worth it.

## ENGLISH

One of the easiest ways for me to help out and give back is to help people with English. It is a part of all schools here in Italy and is a language many people want to learn. I have helped with English in a few ways throughout my stay though. The first way is in my own class at school, my teacher often wants help with pronunciation or the CD player is broken so I read the paragraphs. Also in my class I help the students with simple conversational English which has raised most of the classes marks. With all of my other Italian friends I have also helped them with English. From my swimming friends to the ones from the oratorio I have had no problem helping them with English as they have for me in Italian. It has raised some of their marks as well as improved my experience. Besides people my age I have also helped teach English to my little host siblings and a few university students who are friends of my host parents. Finally with my English I have taught at five different schools, four schools that I did a presentation on Canada and a couple other labs, with those of the eighth grade. These students were excited and I often get texts from the teachers and my first host mom about how they all want me to come back, we are hoping to plan one more lesson before I leave. The other school is a daycare where I take the oldest class with another woman who studied English in university, who is there for insurance reasons. I teach these kids basic English like colours, numbers, and animals every Tuesday for an hour.

It seems that I am in that time of year that is the worst of all. People are starting to talk of next year and I won't be here. I listen to all the plans of my friends, and groups for the upcoming years and it really brings tears to my eyes that I will not be there with all of them. I have also thought of my upcoming year and my mind saddens at the thought that what has become such a big part of me won't be with me anymore. I feel like my body, soul and spirit will always be split in two a part to live in Canada and another in Italy. I will never be whole again because I gave away so much of myself to the amazing people I know I have to leave behind.



February 2018



*Danielle*