

# Ulster Project DuPage County

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**The following are commonly asked questions and answers.**

### **When did Ulster Project start?**

ANSWER: Ulster Project started over 25 years ago in several cities in the United States. Ulster Project DuPage County has been operating continuously for over 23 years ago.

### **Why Ulster Project?**

ANSWER: Ulster Project allows teens from Northern Ireland to come to the United States for one month and live with host families. The local program organizers match the teen from Northern Ireland with a local teen. The mission of the program is to break down the religious and political division between the Catholic and Protestant population in Northern Ireland. The teens participate in daily organized activities and service projects that help focus on creating an environment for international understanding and tolerance. The long term goal is to see peace in Northern Ireland.

### **Who runs Ulster Project DuPage?**

ANSWER: A group of local adults from the western suburbs of Chicago are responsible for overseeing the operations of the organization. Taking guidance from the national organization, these adults volunteer their time to plan activities and raise money for the program to operate. Ulster Project DuPage is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization and is managed by a Board of Directors.

### **When is the Ulster Project held?**

ANSWER: The teens from Northern Ireland arrive during the last week of June and return to their homes during the last week of July.

### **What type of supervision is provided to the teens?**

ANSWER: The teens from Northern Ireland are accompanied by two adult counselors from Londonderry/Derry. Ulster Project DuPage uses four to five young adults from the area who volunteer their time to be counselors for the group. These young adults are in college or recent college graduates. Many participated in the program as teens.

### **How many teens participate in the Ulster Project?**

ANSWER: There are 16 teens from the Londonderry/Derry area that are selected to participate in Ulster Project DuPage. They must be between 14 and 16 years old when

they arrive in Chicago. They are matched with 16 families with host teens that are participating in the program.

### **How are the Irish teens selected?**

ANSWER: The teens from Londonderry/Derry are selected through an evaluation process. They are recommended by their teachers and religious leaders. Of the 16 teens, 8 will be girls and 8 will be boys. Half of those selected will be Catholic and half will be Protestant. Each of the teens has been recognized for their leadership qualities.

### **How are the host teens selected?**

ANSWER: The teens from the western suburbs are also evaluated in a similar fashion as the teens from Northern Ireland. The host teens are between the ages of 14 to 16 years old. Host teens are allowed to participate in the program twice. While the teens come from the western suburbs, they attend a number of different high schools. The program opens up a whole new group of friends to associate with when the program is complete.

### **When are the host teens selected?**

ANSWER: The local recruiters for the Ulster Project DuPage accept applications up until February or when the program reaches capacity. Each teen must complete an application and the family interviewed by the recruiters. Irish teens are selected during the months of January and February and meet several times prior to making the trip to Chicago.

### **What types of activities are the teens involved in?**

ANSWER: There are planned, organized activities for the teens every day except on the Family Weekend which is an open weekend. There are several days when two activities are planned, while most days have just one. Activities may be full day events, or shorter activities that last just several hours. Some of the group activities include: A tour of downtown Chicago; Brookfield Zoo; Cosmic Bowling; A trip to Great America; Chicago Fire Soccer Game; Laser Tag; Magic Waters; Whirlyball; Shopping at Woodfield Mall; Kane County Cougar Baseball Game; as well as pool parties, cook outs and pizza parties. The group will also participate in several service projects and fund raising activities, including: Soup Kitchen for the Underprivileged; Adventure Sharing; Nursing Home Visits; Car Wash and Wheaton and Glen Ellyn Parades.

### **How are the host families involved?**

ANSWER: In addition to providing room and board for the teen from Northern Ireland, host families are expected to be involved in many of the Ulster Project events. While the majority of the events are limited to the teens, there are a number of events that include activities for the entire family. The host family becomes a surrogate family for the Irish teen while they are away from home.

### **What is financially expected from the host families?**

ANSWER: Ulster Project DuPage has not charged families to participate in the program. Expenses are covered through organized fund raising events. During the program, and when the teens are not involved in the planned activities or events, the host family is expected to include their Irish teen in regular family activities. Any related expenses are the responsibility of the host family. Since Ulster Project DuPage is a not-for-profit organization run by volunteers, each family is expected to help in any way by chaperoning in several of the planned activities or events. The organization relies on the financial support of past and current host families. Each March, the organization holds its annual Saint Patrick's Day Dinner and Silent Auction. This is the major fund raiser for the organization. Participation and support from past and current host families is necessary for the program to continue.

### **Can my child participate if they are attending summer school?**

ANSWER: Host families are expected to have their Irish and host teen at every organized program and activity. This is part of the commitment to the success of the program. If it is scheduled, it is mandatory that the teens attend. There are several acceptable excuses for missing a scheduled activity, including illness or a family emergency. If there is a conflict with summer school, the councilors must be made aware of the conflict prior to starting the program. It is highly recommended that sport camps and other school related activities be scheduled after the Irish teens depart in late July.

### **How do I learn more or meet with a recruiter?**

ANSWER: Complete the Host Family Application and return it to Sarah Antas at the address provided on the application. After receiving the application, Mrs. Antas will be in contact with you to set up a time to meet and discuss the program, the commitment and to answer all your questions.