

BRT



BLOG

Editor's note: Following is the first segment of Katie Coleborn's blog as she and fellow students of The Ridings High School in Bristol, United Kingdom, spend six days experiencing Virginia.

After a sleepy start at 5:30 this morning, we drove to London to catch our eight-hour flight to Washington, D.C. We were surprised at the extensive security checks, where two of our students received full body x-rays, although we all managed to enjoy the long but comfortable journey across the Atlantic.

We were greeted warmly by our American hosts shortly after arriving; however, we could not depart immediately as one of our students was detained at customs. Luckily, someone bought a rugby ball, so we proceeded in introducing our American friends to the popular British sport during the hour-long wait. The yellow school bus which came to collect us amused a lot of the British students, having only seen them in films or on TV, and a few posed for photographs



Katie Coleborn

in a typical tourist fashion.

I was surprised, after having slight concerns about what my host family would be like, by how friendly and hospitable they were considering we were basically strangers, supplying us with everything we needed including Gar-Field clothing, I was relieved to be in such good hands.

Although normally a 6 o'clock start would have filled us with a sense of dread, especially after a day of traveling,

the five-hour time difference helped us adjust and we began shadowing our hosts in their lessons at 7:30 a.m. There are many differences between Gar-Field and The Ridings, but the thing that struck me the most was the sense of camaraderie between the teachers and students. Whereas in Britain the teachers have less of a chance to interact with their students on a more personal level, the American teachers take full advantage of their opportunity to do so.

When school finished, we drove to Annandale High School for a Just World Festival, where we attended seminars and workshops on subjects such as refugees, consumerism and slam poetry. I found the seminar on consumerism particularly enlightening because of the positive and pragmatic attitudes people had towards the environment coming from a country that is often portrayed as being reluctant to address environmental issues.

We ended the day by spending time with our host families and new friends.