



Zhuldyz B. from Kazakhstan

Nominated by the Young family in California

Zhuldyz is more than we could have ever asked for. We can tell that she truly loves our 1-year old daughter, and our daughter very clearly loves her back. She spends all day with our daughter, walking the streets of San Francisco. They visit the Ferry Building, the Embarcadero, Golden Gate Park, and Lombard Street. She is also the only person who can convince our daughter to take a nap in the middle of the day. When my wife and I try, all we get are tears!

Moreover, Zhuldyz has dived head first into her American experience. Her first week in San Francisco, she adopted the "American" name of Jess, and quickly made friends with some people her age in our apartment building. She even traveled with them to Hawaii and Las Vegas! She has plans to go with us to New Orleans and Chicago as well, and we are always grateful to have her around (and so is our daughter) and show off our country to her.

Jess has shown to us that she loves our daughter just as much as we do, and that is a quality that is so important to us. She truly cares about our daughter's well-being, going above and beyond to make sure our daughter is developing properly - and even accelerating. Jess ensures that our daughter interacts with other children, older and younger, introduces our daughter to new foods and she has even started teaching our daughter to respond verbally to nursery rhymes! Jess even concerns herself with our daughter's health on her days off, and we often exchange ideas about how to approach the next phase of development. I have come to think of Jess as a partner in our home and someone I have full trust in.

There are many reasons why we think Jess is an exceptional au pair, but there was one thing she did for us that made it clear to us that she is something special. Jess helped us set up a traditional Kazakh ceremony for our daughter when she turned one year old. In this ceremony, Jess tied a rope around our daughter's legs. Then, a respected elder (my wife's mother in this case) cut the rope, to symbolize our daughter's ability to walk. Afterwards, my wife and I helped our daughter to walk along a felt rug, at the end of which laid several objects, which symbolized our daughter's future career. Among a guitar, some jewelry, a phone, and some food, our daughter selected a doll, which signaled a creative/design profession. It was a fun experience, and we were glad that Jess could share it with us.

We have been extremely impressed with Jess' tenacity and ability to make friends in a new place. When she first arrived, it was clear that she was uncomfortable in English. But after a few months of English classes, she is incredibly confident and outgoing. We often enjoy activities together on weekends and evenings, including involving Jess in a community soccer league. She even has great instincts on the field, even if she doesn't speak the "lingo!" This only goes to show how dedicated Jess is to any task she takes up, be it as important as taking care of our child to simply playing soccer. We believe Jess is a prime example of what an Au Pair should be and deserves this recognition.

Jess is an integral part of our family, and we are lucky to have her with us. She is a gracious guest, an attentive caregiver, and a thoughtful friend.