



### To Louis

"Just that," said the fox. "To me, you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I have no need of you. And you, on your part, have no need of me. To you I am nothing more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me, you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world...." *Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, The Little Prince*

High-trust and deep relationships are extremely important to live a meaningful life. I and my students built one with you. You truly inspired us to change and grow! Teaching and learning with you was a new, exciting and valuable experience. Your in-depth presentations captured our attention and motivated us to go deeper into a subject. We will miss our lively discussions and deep conversations with you, your enthusiasm about your job and hobbies. You proved that a smile can be a powerful tool to teach and learn. Your passion and devotion for the English debating club is invaluable for the students: you taught them to think critically and voice out their opinions to make a difference. And thanks to you we understood how important is to balance home and work life.

It is my hope that you will continue to be an English teacher for my students: everything is possible in the age of advanced technologies. It is my hope that you will treasure our relationship

forever. It is my hope that you will reach for the stars and make the world a better place. It is my hope that one day you will come back. Will you?

"Goodbye," said the fox. "And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye." *Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, The Little Prince*

Sincerely,  
Rita Meškienė  
A teacher and a friend



A special thank you to the U.S. Embassy in Lithuania and the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant program for the exceptional school year with a great teacher, cultural ambassadors for the U.S., inspiring leader and true friend - Louis Higuera. Thank you on behalf of the entire community of Mazeikiai Merkelis Rackauskas Gymnasium.



Special  
Edition

## With Louis Higuera

### Editor's Corner

The news about a teacher coming from the US to work at our gymnasium I found out from an English teacher Rita Meskiene. Although it was a joyful moment, there were anxious thoughts, too. Someone is coming from such a gigantic country to our tiny town! How are we going to ensure his decent free time? Will he meet like-minded people? How are we going to interact? Luckily, as soon as I saw Louis, I realized that this young, energetic and innovative thinking person is a great gift to our teachers and students.



Dear Louis, I am grateful to you for the debate club, integrated lessons, cooperation with our school partners, your warm and cheerful smile and for always being in a good mood. Thank you that after a year spent in Lithuania you are thinking of BECOMING A TEACHER. I am extremely glad that I had a chance to meet you and I am deeply thankful to the US Embassy in Lithuania for this opportunity. Thank you, Louis, for the fantastic and meaningful year together.







## LOUIS HIGUERA

with Aistė Usorytė and Evelina Leščinskaitė

### Exclusive Interview

#### What's your most memorable moment in this school?

-My most memorable moment at MMRG was probably when I was invited by the student council to do the fireside interview. It was so nice seeing all the students come after hours to chat with me and

the picture of the students picking me up in front of the Christmas tree will always be one of my favorites even though I didn't think it was the best idea at the time.

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#### What are the main differences among Lithuanian and American students?

-These days with access to social media, Netflix, gaming, etc. teenagers across the world are more similar than ever. I was surprised when I first came that there was not much of a difference between American and Lithuanian students. There may be more talkative students in the US, but the extroverts in Lithuania more than make up for the quiet ones. Sports I think are more integrated into American high school life while they aren't as much of an identity for students in Lithuania.

#### What are your plans for the future? Are you going to keep teaching?

-This year made me realize that I genuinely do love interacting with students and being in an educational environment. I think proper education is the most important part of a person and society's development, so I would love to continue working in this field somehow, but not necessarily as a teacher. I am currently looking for jobs at schools as a program coordinator, admissions, study abroad, among other positions, and at nonprofits and government offices for international development, youth development, and education policy.

#### Would you ever come back to Lithuania? If yes, where exactly?

-I would love to come back some day! This year was so important in my own growth as a person and young professional. I have made so many memories and lifelong friends here that I will have to come visit in Mazeikiai, Kaunas, and Vilnius. With the ability to work remotely now and the several issues we are facing in the US (unaffordable, lack of healthcare, gun violence, rise of authoritarianism, etc.), who knows, I might end up coming back to live, at least somewhere in Europe.

#### What did you like the most during your stay in Lithuania? What was difficult for you?

-I think I liked most about my stay in Lithuania are the people I got to meet and call true friends. So many helped me feel welcomed to their country and community and it made my stay so much easier. I also loved the ease and affordability of travel within Lithuania and around Europe! It was a bit difficult to be away from my friends and family for so long, but that is why it was so important for me to meet such great people here.

#### What Lithuanian tradition/holiday did you love or was the most memorable to you?

-I really loved Christmas time in Lithuania. It feels more meaningful and magical here than it does back home in the US. I loved learning about your traditions of Christmas Eve and was warmly invited to spend Christmas Day with teacher Meskiene and her family.

#### What final advice would you give for the students you have taught in our school?

-Be open to possibilities that you might normally look past or think you have no shot at achieving. I never had one plan in life that I stuck to, but I gave myself options by taking risks, being adventurous, and not being afraid to fail. When one door closes, a whole bunch more open up and it is not about which one you choose to go through but putting your whole heart into it and not looking back because you can change course at any time as long as you have put in the effort to set yourself up for success.



#### What snack are you going to miss the most?

-Every new school I visited or event I took part in I was always gifted a bunch of chocolate. I have a whole bag at home of everything I have accumulated over the year, so I have definitely developed a sweet tooth. It will be hard for me to go back to all the plain American sweets back home.



## Entertainment



In September our community members visited Tauragė. We participated in the theatricalised workshop - meeting with the Frontier Control Centre in Smalininkai, where a strict teacher, Marta, took us to the XIX century lesson and educated Louis and us on the history and geography of Lithuania in Karšuva wood.



Exploring Lithuania with friends



Enjoying white Christmas in the Lithuanian countryside



We Are the Champions!



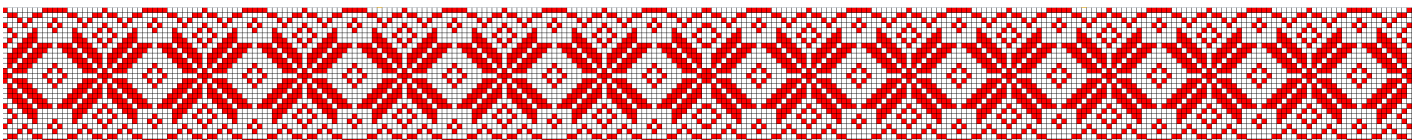
The Fulbrighters - friends forever!



Meeting the famous people of Lithuania



Discovering the best nature spots of Lithuania





## Opinion

I enjoyed every minute of your lessons as well as your marvelous sense of humor. I always knew that your presentations were going to be not only informative and interesting, but also well-organized and clearly presented. The time and effort invested in by you were mindboggling. I appreciate your contribution to making the workplace a little bit brighter and a whole lot of fun. Thank you for being such a good teacher and a colleague. Thank you for being a breath of fresh air and thank you for everything you have done. May you have a lot of success in your future professional life.  
*Vaida Petkevičienė, a teacher of English*

Thank you, dear Teacher Louis, for your kindness and help. I appreciate your tips on speaking English and your help with the public speaking competition. Also, a big thank you from the student council for giving us an amazing opportunity to speak with your school's council in the U.S. *Vytautė*

Thank you for being an amazing teacher and giving us more insight about American culture. The most interesting thing that I have learned from you is about the political system of America which I did not know about and your lessons about it were really interesting and thought-provoking, making me more interested in understanding the political system of my own country. I wish that you keep being the excellent teacher that you are and that you keep educating people all over the world. *Gytis*

It was so nice having you here. You brought a whole new experience this school year. I have never spoken to a native English speaker before so it was a great opportunity to practice my English speaking skills. *Fausta*

Dear Teacher Louis, I thank you for the time you spent with us and for sharing a little of your home. You made the everyday feel refreshing and brought a lively brightness to the classroom. May your travels lead to soft beds and warm smiles, may your adventures be many and woes be few, and may good health and fortune follow you always. Best of luck from the students of 3e! *Nedas*

Thank you so much for being so dedicated to the debate club and our whole school! All of your lessons were really informative and interesting, especially the one about the American school system. However, I liked the first debate of the year the most. It was an unforgettable experience. I wish you all the best! Don't ever give up on your dreams and stay positive! *Konstancija*

Dear Louis,  
Thank you for being with us for a whole year. I appreciate the fact that you have brought national diversity to us, and shared your traditions, daily life with us. I hope that we left a good impression on you, and I hope that you will remember us. You were one of the best teachers in school, always interacting with people, having interesting and unique lessons that we have appreciated, you made the atmosphere feel comfortable. We will miss you a lot! *Karina*

Dear Teacher Louis, we are beyond grateful for having you at our school. We thank you for your interesting and informative lessons, also for widening our horizons, when it comes to your country and traditions. We wish you to continue growing as a person, creating your dream career and to never stop being this kind. We hope that this is not your last stay at a foreign school and other adolescents will be as lucky as we were and get to meet you. *Auksė*

Dear Teacher Louis, I would like to thank you for being in our school, for teaching us about not only the English language but also about different traditions and customs in the USA and among Jewish people. Your lessons were especially interesting and understandable, also you have a very good sense of humor. I wish all the best for you. We hope that you liked it here. We hope that maybe someday you will come here to visit our school. And again, thank you very much for being that awesome, cool teacher. *Edgaras*

I am writing to thank you for your effort, smiles, enthusiasm, and endless laughter during the lessons. You are our inspiration and your unconventional lessons have taught us a lot of important things about different traditions and cultures. I am glad that we had a chance to meet. You will never be forgotten. I hope you don't forget us either and you don't quit teaching because it suits you infinitely. I wish you the best of luck! *Austėja*

Dear Louis, I want to say the biggest Thank you for visiting our small Lithuanian town - Mazeikiai and especially our Merkelis Rackauskas gymnasium. We were so glad to have you. We enjoyed every moment with you. Thank you for your lessons because they were so interesting and it was so nice to escape from our teachers and have lessons with you. Thanks to you I have learned some facts about the United States, Jews and religious celebrations like how they are celebrated in some countries. I wish you all the best, keep your beautiful smile on your face all the time and make everyone around you happy, like you made us all. We are so grateful that we had an opportunity to meet you. We will miss you, dear teacher Louis! Best wishes, *Laura*

Dear Louis Higuera, I want to thank you for bringing different cultures to our school, introducing students to your religion, customs, and telling us about living on the other side of the Atlantic. We have learned from you that spreading your identity is important and no matter where you are in the world, being yourself is paramount. I wish you good luck in continuing to travel, teaching students and being such a nice person! *Gabija*

Thank you Ačiū

**Favourite lithuanian song you've heard during your stay?**

-Sentimentai! Eurovision was so fun to watch and learn about!

**Is there any specific place in our town that you would deem your spot?**

-I lived right by Senamiescio Park so I would often take walks there. I have a nice balcony in my apartment that I love to sit out on and watch the sunset.

**Was there anything here that you considered a "cultural shock"?**

-The only thing that was super difficult for me to confront while here is the history of the holocaust. As a Jewish American who has been taught the history, but from a distance and has a cultural and familial connection it was very overwhelming to live where it took place.

**Is there any slang or catchphrases that you've picked up?**

I loved saying "viskas gerai", "ane?!", and "kodel ne?"

**What is your life motto?**

-Why not?!

**What's your favourite dish in our school's canteen?**

-My favorite would probably be the pasta!

**What will you not miss and are happy to leave behind?**

-I will not miss the lack of diversity of people and food here.

**Local News**

**"Sometimes, no matter how hard we try, we may not be able to stay together, but our true friendship and the precious moments we shared will last forever." — Mouloud Benzadi.**

English teachers at Mažeikiai Merkelis Račkauskas gymnasium had an exceptional year together with you, Louis Higuera. Lessons, events, activities outside the classroom, personal conversations we had will stay with us and with our students forever. Insights into the similarities and differences between Lithuanian and American customs and traditions, educational systems and lifestyles, a variety of topics covered and discussed in your lessons contributed to our and our students' knowledge and a better understanding of the world. We feel grateful not only for the lectures and lessons you assisted or substituted us but also for building bridges between the Lithuanian and American cultures, bringing a different atmosphere into our classrooms and being more of a friend than a demanding teacher to our students, which was the best experience to our school community throughout this year. That's why we and our students are so sad to see you go and those are the reasons why we will miss your enthusiasm, your charisma and your wide smile. All the best in finding new opportunities elsewhere, but we truly believe that you have already found the place where you belong – school. And hopefully this is not goodbye; it's just "see you later".

*Sincerely, MMRG English language teachers*



In the history of Lithuania there were a lot of sad and painful moments, wars and massacres. One of them was The Holocaust in Lithuania, which is yearly commemorated on 23rd of September to commemorate the victims. Louis Higuera, our students and teachers remembered those sad events in History and Lithuanian integrated lessons outside the classroom.

On 9th May our community celebrates Europe Day. Thank you, Louis, for being and sharing with us those moments.

*By History teacher Silva Paulauskienė*



On 28th October 2021 an English teacher's assistant Louis Higuera performed a Geography lesson about the USA cities integrating the conception, structure and problems of English - American urbanization. It was the lesson where an American word, experience and the views of the cities intertwined. The graduates were introduced to the wealth of US urbanization from New York to Los Angeles, from Boston to San Francisco sprinkling it with the spices of tourism and serving the desserts of American daily life. The American word given by a charismatic and outstanding person, Louis Higuera, is real-life knowledge.

*By Geography teacher Dainius Stasys*





In an Art lesson about making pottery Louis and the graduates were forming dishes according to the ancient Lithuanian folk art traditions. We introduced folk art handicrafts and discussed what both Americans and Lithuanians have in common.

I'm glad that I had an opportunity to meet Louis Higuera in the art lessons. I gained knowledge about art lessons in America. Not only was it interesting to talk about arts, but to talk about films, music, video games and differences between American and Lithuanian cultures, as well. Besides, I noticed that everyone was relaxed, we interacted a lot and the lessons were as quick as a flash. I wish Louis not to forget our school, the people he met and to remain such an active and friendly person. *By Arts teacher Asta Milėškienė and Rugilė Kriaučiūnaitė*

The Debate club with our teacher Louis Higuera is full of interesting people who have their own subjective opinions, ideals and morals. It is for students who want to learn debating strategies, to express their opinion and discuss various global and local issues with others. The Debate club is not only a fun place to communicate with peers and our teacher Louis but also a place to polish your English language skills and learn to be more confident while talking. The club organized several public debates, meetings and game days. *By Vytautė and Vilandas*



## Regional News



Who is smart, educated, well-behaved, responsible, serious and very tall? Without a doubt, it is Louis, one of the English Teacher Assistants who spent a year in Lithuania. Dear Louis, I am super happy that we got introduced to each other last summer, that you came to visit my school and my students, and I am so thankful for the opportunity to show you one of the regions of my hospitable country! I hope you will carry sweet memories about visiting Žagarė and giving informative and motivational presentations to my students. I will never forget you and other ETAs singing "Killer Queen" on our way back!

Wishing you all the best in your future endeavors! Stay inspired, motivated, full of enthusiasm and may your goals and ambitions be achieved!

*By Kristina Urbonienė, LAKMA President*



Dear Louis,  
We really appreciate your visit to Mazeikiai Senamiesčio Progymnasium and having given us a great chance to listen to real English and your inspirational talk about your native country and daily matters. Kind regards from the 8th formers and their English teachers hoping you'll come back to Lithuania and give students more chances to know America better.

*An English teacher at Mazeikiai Senamiesčio progymnasium Daiva Petrikienė*



A special guest to Mazeikiai Ventos progymnasium Louis Higuera gave our students a unique opportunity to find out more about the USA and its education system, shared his personal experiences about teaching students in Mazeikiai. Everybody had a lot of fun trying new educational games and learning tools. We are grateful for the chance to learn in a different way. *An English teacher at Mazeikiai Ventos progymnasium Lina Čepauskienė*

On behalf of Telšiai Žemaitė Gymnasium team I would like to thank you, dear Louis, for an informative and useful lecture delivered with a perfect dose of sincerity and openness. We wish you all the best in your future career and personal life! *By Rasa, an English teacher*





Dear Louis, it was so nice to have you at our school. For students and me personally it was a great time spent together. Even though it was only the time of the lesson, your charisma and openness made everyone enthusiastically involved. Thank you for sharing your life experiences with us. You have everything that makes a great teacher. Good luck in your further career.  
By English teacher Olga Pileckienė and 8th-year students

## Foreign News

### Enjoying Erasmus+ Experiences together with MMRG

‘Louis has this incredible positivity and humor that makes people feel better whenever we are near him. I’m sure life will continue to smile at him and that’s what I wish for him: happiness and success. I’ll have Portuguese “saudades” and I hope to see him again soon.’  
Sofia, Portugal



2022 “The Future of Democracy”: the fifth edition of the EU-US Young Leaders Seminar took place from 27 to 29 April 2022 in Brussels. The event welcomed 25 Americans and 25 Europeans. It was a unique opportunity for young leaders from across the United States of America and the European Union to discuss some of the most important issues facing both sides of the Atlantic.

