

Ciao! Italian guests to arrive April 5

Northeast Indiana as a tourist destination for Italians? Pronto!

Yes, a group of 13 Italians will be arriving here April 5 to spend nine days as guests of 10 families in Noble and DeKalb counties.



GRACE HOUSHOLDER

The Italians, their host families and area volunteers will be sampling some of northeast Indiana's many tourist opportunities.

What we are quickly learning is that nine days is not nearly

enough time to enjoy even a small portion of what northeast Indiana has to offer.

But — given the limitations of the weather at this time of year — we are making an attempt. The Italians are all from the Turin area of northern Italy and friends of Cathy Linsenmayer, an American who married an Italian. Cathy, who has lived in Italy more than 20 years, is very active as an AFS volunteer and so are most of the Italians who are traveling with her.

I met Linsenmayer this summer. She and her family enjoy summers on Sylvan Lake, and Cathy sought me out because she knew of my affiliation with AFS, the international exchange organization for students and teachers. We thought it would be fun to

have an exchange for adults and we came up with the name CIAO (Creating Indiana/Italy Adventure Opportunities) because most of the Hoosiers will be traveling to Italy in June 2008 to stay with the they hosted. (In Italian "ciao" means "hello" or "goodbye.")

Because most of the host families work full-time and cannot escort their guests during the day, we have a network of CIAO volunteers — some of them may come to Italy with us, too.

Our destinations include: the Mid-America Windmill Museum, Maple Wood Nature Center, Notre Dame (for Easter services), East Noble High School, downtown Kendallville (tour of KPC Media Group headquarters, historic Main Street and a "Meet and Greet" hosted by the Kendallville Area Chamber of Commerce), a day in Amish Country, Cook's Bison Ranch, downtown Fort Wayne and Glenbrook Mall, SDI and a visit to a Noble County farm. In addition, side trips (the Italians chose what they want to do) will include numerous other opportunities such as a visit to Auburn's museums hosted by retired Judge Robert Probst, a visit to Purdue University hosted by Auburn Mayor Norm Yoder and a day in Steuben County with KPC chief photographer Andy Barrand.

The public is invited to the "Meet and Greet" Monday, April 9, from 4-6 p.m. at the Kendallville Area Chamber of Commerce.

This is a first-time grassroots effort. The Italian participants include three students — the rest



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Pictured are some of the CIAO participants who will be coming to Kendallville April 5-14. CIAO stands for Creating Indiana/Italy Adventure Opportunities. Cathy Linsenmayer, who lives in Ivrea, Italy, and also owns a home on Sylvan Lake, is seated on the right in front of the Italian flag.

are all professionals, mainly "middle-aged," with skills and interests that range from dentistry to social work to law to computers to photography. Most of them speak good English, so I don't think communication will be a problem. But you always have to be careful and not assume someone understands what you are trying to say.

We know that early April is not the time to see northeast Indiana at its best. There will be little color and quite possibly mud and rain. Had the CIAO group been able to come during the summer we would have planned many outdoor activities to showcase our

wonderful lakes and parks.

But this will give them a taste ... and we hope they come back for more!

Note: To view photos of the Ivrea area taken by Anna Trompetto, one of the CIAO participants, go to www.fwdailynews.com and click on the "Italian Connection" under slideshows. In addition, go to <http://www.fwdailynews.com/community/kendallville/> for more recent photos.

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