

Andrews Osborne Academy

An international student becomes a mentor to others.

Traveling to Northeast Ohio from her native China nearly four years ago to begin ninth grade at Andrews Osborne Academy, Mengqian (Vera) Xiao's mind was filled with movie-set images of girls' boarding schools from films like *Mona Lisa Smile*.

"I thought it would be very formal, very serious," she says with a laugh. "Now I realize we also have fun and like each other like family."

Xiao is emblematic of the cultural diversity that makes Andrews Osborne — which became coed in 2007 — unique among Cleveland's private schools. This independent, college-preparatory institution in Willoughby offers not only day school for early childhood through 12th grade, but also a seventh-through 12th-grade boarding program that draws nearly 100 students from 11 countries and 10 U.S. states.

It's here that Xiao has grown from a shy freshman who spoke little English to one of Andrews Osborne's most accomplished students. She's been a member of the Cleveland Youth Wind Symphony for three years and is third chair among 20 flute players. She's won a host of academic awards for math, science and music, including superior achievement in the Ohio High School Math League Contest. She plays varsity tennis and lacrosse and volunteers in the Lake West Hospital emergency department.

But what makes Xiao beloved by Andrews Osborne students and faculty is her caring nature. She organized the school's Chinese students to make and sell traditional ornaments to raise funds for the earthquake victims in her native Sichuan province. As one of the first Chinese students at Andrews Osborne, Xiao acts as a mentor to the two dozen who have come after her, helping them maintain cultural traditions like Chinese New Year while navigating the transition to life in America.

When Xiao heads to college in the fall — she hopes to attend Stanford University to study biomedical engineering — she'll take many life lessons with her from Andrews Osborne, chief among them self-reliance.

"I will always remember my science teacher, Mrs. Marsh, saying, 'You are a self-reliant young woman, you need to feel confident about sharing your perspective,'" Xiao says. "Even when it might be difficult, I always keep the [mind-set] to fight for what I believe in."



school highlights

- * **Location:** Willoughby
- * **2008-09 enrollment:** 285
- * **2008-09 tuition and fees:** \$5,600-\$16,950
- * **Visit:** www.andrewsosborne.org

Senior Mengqian (Vera) Xiao, at Andrews Osborne Academy's auditorium, is a member of the Cleveland Youth Wind Symphony.