

2021 October

Erin 00:27

Hello, everybody, and welcome to this episode of all things team. Erin here, and today I have a really exciting special guest. This happens to be mega, my identical twin sister. So welcome to the podcast, Megan.

Megan 00:45

Thank you.

Erin 00:47

So I realized that this would be a cool opportunity, because you live full time in Sweden. And I'm sure that our teens, would want to know what it's like to live in Sweden, but also maybe some differences about what it's like to be a teen in Sweden. So, what are some like, kind of obvious differences when you first move there?

Megan 01:13

Well, the school system is completely different for teenagers. There are specialty high schools that children go through they are...adolescents choose. Like my husband, when he was a teenager, he decided that he wanted to go to a school that focused on animal care, and biology based on animals. So, he had a lot of what we call praktik, which is practical work with animals as well.

Erin 01:48

That's really cool. Um, isn't there like a stipend for high school students to attend school?

Megan 01:55

Yes, I believe it starts at the age of 16. So, before that, the parents are given a monthly what we call barn bedrug, which is a monthly child stipend for every child you have. And that's given every month. In the US, we get that back. Once a year. You generally, I heard there are now monthly things that you can get through the government here too. But yes,

Erin 02:25

That's a pandemic measure. People, they they're getting monthly money for the child tax credits and additional credit, and I believe they'll still get child tax credit when they file taxes.

Megan 02:39

But yeah, so instead of getting a lump sum for your kids every year, when you file our taxes in Sweden, you get it spread out through every month per child, but I believe when they are 16, they start getting the money themselves. And they're when they're when they are high school students. And High School is called gymnasium, or, <Swish pronunciation>, which is, um, it's a three-year program. And there are all different kinds of specialists,

my husband's younger sister, and his older sister both focused on the arts. And his younger sister focused on acting, his older sister did a lot of crafts, like sewing and costuming, and lighting and design for sets.

Erin 03:35

That's really cool. Have you heard of like a program that you would have wanted to do for high school? If you were in high school there?

Megan 03:44

Um not, not exactly but I mean, there are lots of programs I don't even know about. So, I think that if I could do High School over again, I probably would have done the cosmetology program at the same time.

Erin 04:00

Yeah. Cool. Um, so in general, though, like, what are some differences in reading, been like living in the US?

Megan 04:11

Um, children are adolescents. Some in the US are very independent, you know, and, you know, they have parents that work all the time. So, they are very independent. But children are, even though most of them do see their parents every day in Sweden, they're still very independent. When it comes to getting to school, they walk ride their bikes, or they have to walk to the bus station or train station. And I've seen even you know, middle school kids or younger kids, get on the train by themselves every day and go into school. It depends on you know, where you go to school and where you live or whatever. There are school buses for all schools. My little children don't have school buses for their schools. Um, I think you have to live farther away. So, we, I guess we live too close, we have to walk every day. But so that's different. Um just, we rely on public transportation. And so, teens have bus cards or school cards that they used to get everywhere. And, um, they get out of school earlier. Um, but I feel like they have they have a good amount of homework. So, I don't know, the lifestyle is just different. It's much slower. It's much more relaxed. There's not as much pressure on teens. So, it's nice. It's definitely a different lifestyle from the American lifestyle.

Erin 05:53

Yeah, it seems like most European countries are more relaxed of a lifestyle? Yeah, I mean, there's obviously no expectations for teens to work. Some of them like to babysit or get summer jobs. But, you know, it's hard on a lot of American families and so a lot of teenagers do work nowadays. Well, I think the teens are most likely going to be interested in hearing about food, Swedish food and yeah, what that's like and what are like some of your favorites that are native to Sweden or that you've only seen in Sweden. Well, I feel like it's really family dependent on the lifestyle our family we don't go out much and so if...if you make good money and you and you give your kids money, they probably stop and get snacks all the time at the convenience stores at places like Espresso House which is our version I would say of Starbucks and apparently Starbucks isn't doing very well in Sweden so but When you've gone to Espresso House why would you want to go to Starbucks?

Megan 07:18

I really do I am a big fan of Espresso House I do have their app and I use it whenever I can. Um but we have Mac's which is their number one fast food chain and Swedish fast food chain and to my husband and I and our

kids it's...it's far superior to McDonald's and Burger King which we both have. And that is because of the vegan and vegetarian options because we eat vegan vegetarian my girls and I were pescatarian so we eat fish and seafood as well. My husband is not so a lot of kids you know they...they love you know, they want to go to fast food you know, they like McDonald's and Burger King and Mac's but Mac's menu is just really large and it's got you know everything you want and everybody can eat and so that's why it's probably the most popular is because you know, they have dietary options for everyone. So, I think kids after school they...they like to hang out they like to go places you know if they have money they like to go to Mac's or whatever. They, you know, they're depending on where they live they're more like community things. In our old town we had um, we had a lot more programming and activities and the town we live in now unfortunately, that's not true. Um, so it's really dependent on where you live, but their...their life is just to go to school, hang out, relax, if they have activities. Like judo, which is one thing that's offered where we live, or swim class or whatever they want to do, but they like to hang out with their friends. They ride their bikes over they, you know, do what teenagers do.

Erin 09:18

Yeah. So as far as candy and chocolate, what are the best things to eat in Sweden?

Megan 09:28

Well in Sweden there is a huge emphasis on "loss goodies" and "lourdes goodies" is which is it's unpackaged candy where you know you get you get a new clean scoop and you scoop which candy from each bin that you like into like a bucket or bag. And then lourdes goodies is a started years ago. The idea of you know, like people were getting really a lot of cavities for their teeth because they were eating so much sugar and candy all the time. So they started this idea like hey have candy Saturdays so eat your candy on Saturdays so now it's a big thing and a lot of sweets you know they...they don't buy candy regularly they wait till the weekends so um a lot of kids like our teens like gummy candies, gelatin-free, and regular gelatin candies different kinds like Swedish Fish different kinds there's Blar which is cars which is kind of like the more creamy gummy dairy tastes really good but I don't eat gelatin anymore so unfortunately can't have that but um they're they eat a lot of gummies and like sour candy and they do have chocolates they have chocolates from other Scandinavian countries they have their main brand was Maribou which is bar chocolate and you know we each have our favorites at home, We try not to eat too much candy though but we are big chocolate fans um so i don't know i think it's different in the aspect of most people really buy like loose candy regularly whereas like even know what that was available growing up for our generation you and me not a lot of kids buy candy like that nowadays you know it's all

Erin 11:40

It's all refined unless you go to like special like candy store or grocery stores you have those bins we don't have anything like that anymore in our in our grocery stores.

Megan 11:52

Yeah but remember we used to have that at Meijer growing up. Now I don't think it exists there anymore so and um you know over the pandemic you know people bought a lot less but you know they use they you know you would use the same scoops or whatever you would just grab it and use it and then put it in the bottom so the next person could use it. Now you have to use a sanitized scoop and then you throw it in a bin when you've used

it so I mean that's to you know, be more sanitary. But it's funny because in the "los Crispin's" out there you can find wrapped candy. I live in a town called milk and there's a little fudge factory there candy factory and they make fudge. So, there's little wrapped fudge pieces. There's things like Kit-Kat, Twix, Snickers, but let me tell you all those things taste different from the American version. Kit-Kat do not taste the same Snickers do not really taste the same Twix. Twix tastes the most similar to American version but they just don't taste the same

Erin 13:10

That's disappointing if you like want to try to eat some chocolate from home and then you get it and then it's just

Megan 13:17

Yeah I have to say I don't really care for the sweetest Kit-Kat and I love American Kit-Kats but the Swedish have...have a company called "coleta" or whatever and that's my favorite chocolate and they have their own version. They have a big bar like it's a giant Kit-Kat one of the giant ones and it's called Sportex and that is my favorite.

Erin 13:47

Yeah, I like that a lot too with the Swedish version of KitKat is I like it better I think the chocolates creamier and it's not as sweet like they just tend to use less sugar in in Sweden and like even in like the bakery if you go and get like a treat they just don't have the amount of sugar that you do in American desserts.

Megan 14:12

Yeah, I do miss like chocolate American chocolate cake and stuff because yeah, I mean I do love the pastries and things that we have in Sweden but yeah, it's definitely different. It's definitely more European for sure. Instead of cinnamon rolls we have cinnamon buns with pearl sugar sprinkled on top.

Erin 14:35

And so yeah.

Megan 14:42

Or "Semlore," which is a bun that has almond paste and whipped cream in it. And we eat those for Fat Tuesday every year

Erin 14:53

Oh like Paczkis.

Megan 14:56

or "looser catheter," which are saffron buns. And they have like raisins in them. So those are Christmas pastry that we eat.

Erin 15:15

What was your favorite find when you went to Sweden?

Megan 15:21

Like food wise?

Erin 15:24

Sure, food and otherwise.

Megan 15:28

Um, okay, well I have to say there are some flavors that we don't really eat here in the US. So, they eat lingonberry jam with their mashed potatoes and meatballs. Because meatballs is a big thing in Sweden. But the cool thing is there you can find vegetarian meatballs. You can find vegan meatballs and, you know, meat regular meat meatballs. So, everybody can enjoy meatballs, which is nice. And it's either eaten with mashed potatoes, and gravy and lingonberry jam and Pete's while lingonberry jam, like we don't, you know, it's not really a thing in the US. So, I really like it because it's tart, like cranberry sauce at Thanksgiving, you know, I really like that. And so that's a flavor I really like that I found that I really like. And then there's this thing called flattersaft, and saft is like, you know, it's like concentrated, like sugar drink, basically that you water down and you make and it's, it's, it's a drink that you enjoy. And they make it from all different kinds of like fruit and berries. Okay, so you can you can have blueberry strawberry, but my favorite is flutter, which is flower. And it's a specific flower that you take off the trees and then yo... you boil it, and you make it into like a concentrated sugar.

Erin 17:07

Like syrup.

Megan 17:08

Syrup. Yeah, thank you syrup, and then you add water and you drink it and I just really love the flavor. It's like nothing I've had here in the US. And so, I really like that too. But I'm social-wise like community-wise, I find that I really love is that every community like we used to live in a small town of like maybe 5000 people and there was a really nice pool there. Now we live in an even like smaller town. And there's still a really nice pool there. So that that is really cool that all over Sweden like people have access to pools like pretty much everywhere you go there's, you know, a really nice pool within, you know, your community within your commune. Or even town and so it's that's one thing that's really nice and my husband told me about it like it was this thing, you know, maybe like 40-50 years ago, was like important for them to have pools and I don't remember exactly why he said that. But so now you know, there are pools everywhere and my daughter who's she's going to be eight in a couple of weeks or like a week and a half. She goes on Mondays, while during her she's in second grade. She goes on Mondays every day to swim class. And her school is literally right next to the pool. So she just walks over and has swim for like half hour-hour, and then goes walks back to school and all the little kids do that. You know, they all have like swim class and because it's important in Sweden, it's important to them that children learn to swim.

Erin 18:59

Yeah, I mean, surrounded by a lot of water.

Megan 19:02

So yes, there are lakes all over Sweden. It's kind of like, you know, Minnesota where there are lakes everywhere. So, like, you know, it doesn't get so hot in the summer, really, but people want to go out to the lakes. They want to go to the beaches, they want to go to the ocean. They want anywhere you can swim, they want to go in the summer and do that so

Erin 19:27

It's just too cold. The rest of the year.

Megan 19:33

Yeah, it is. It's...

Erin 19:36

It's actually cold and rainy back home. It's in the it's in the 50s I believe low 50s and it's raining so...so I'm...I'm amazed that we haven't talked about this yet. But tell everybody about feka.

Megan 19:54

Right so feka is the concept well, they like to say that it's like, um, it's like the American coffee break, but it's really not. It's really its own thing because um feka is relaxing you know how many people when they actually take a coffee break in the US when their full-time workers or work you know, way more than 40 hours actually get to have a relaxing coffee break and eat a pastry with it. You know, that's not something that happens. I mean, people do like to get stuck, go to Starbucks and get like the pumpkin bread and thing, but you...you sit down with friends, you sit down with coworkers, and you...you have a cinnamon bun and a coffee. You know, it's relaxing time. It's enjoyable time. I like to bake at home for feka. And we have my husband's parents come over, and they have coffee and the girls drink soft. And you know, I've learned how to make a few like Swedish desserts like "Claude Cocker," which is it's in between a like chocolate cake and a brownie. It's supposed to be like, gooey in the center like a lava cake kind of. But it basically looks like a brownie. Um, but you use it in a round cake, you make it in a round cake pan a single cake man. So, I've learned how to make that. And I've learned how to make "cola cucker," or, which is like, it's kind of like a shortbread cookie. But it's different because it's more like you can bake them so they're gooey and, or you can bake them so they're hard and crispy. Most people like them hard and crispy. And they're different because they you have you put syrup in them. So, you use baking syrup. Baking syrup is very big in Sweden. And so, like people have feka all the time, you cannot feka as much as you want. But most people have feka you know if they can have feka at work every day, they will. But most people have feka at least once a week. And you meet with your family, your friends, your coworkers, you usually enjoy something sweet. And you have if you're an adult, you have coffee or tea. If you're a kid, you usually have like juice or soft, which is basically like sugary flavored. It doesn't have any, like actual real fruit pieces in it. So, it's basically just like flavored sugar water. But and you know, it's it's, it's a cultural thing. You know, I think they do it in a lot of European countries. But in Swedish, it's called feka. And it's even become a verb. So, you can say, um, you know, like, we fekaed good today, you know, so, um, you wouldn't use it like that in English, but you can in Swedish, when you say it. So.

Erin 23:08

Yeah, it's one of my favorite things to do when I visit.

Megan 23:12

Yeah, and the funny thing is, and not everybody knows this. But instead of lunch, oftentimes people will have feka instead of lunch. So instead of an actual meal, like a salad or sandwich or, you know, like pizza or pasta or whatever, you...you just have, you have like a dessert sampler and coffee basically, basically you have like a piece of cake, and cookie and maybe a small cinnamon bun or a couple of different kinds of cookies, and coffee or tea. That's all a lot of people do that over the whole summer. Like, and miraculously you don't gain weight from that. I think it's because people there are very active, they walk and bike everywhere. Um, so it's, it's really nice. And I mean my in-laws they choose to have feka instead of lunch basically in the summer, so

Erin 24:17

yeah, that's nice.

Megan 24:19

Yep.

Erin 24:21

We're gonna switch gears, and we're gonna talk about books and graphic novels. So, I know you read a book. I'm gonna I think I'm gonna. Let's see which one do I want to share? I've read a lot this year. Oh, I know. So, one that I read this summer was called Eat Your Heart Out. It's by Kelly Devos. And I actually going to read the Goodreads description just because I think it does more justice to this book than I can. So, it says Shaun of the Dead meets Dumplin' in this biting funny why thriller about a kick ass group of beings battling a ravenous group of zombies. In the next few hours, one of three things will happen one will be rescued, unlikely. Two, will freeze to death, maybe. Three will be eaten by thin and athletic zombies. Odds? Excellent. Vivian Ellen Shah is fat, but she knows she doesn't need to lose weight. Well, she's not too happy to find herself forced into a weight loss camp's van with her ex best friend Allie, a meathead jock who can barely drive in the camp's owner snobby son and when they arrive at Camp Featherlight. At the start of the worst Blizzard in history of Flagstaff, Arizona it's clear that something isn't right. She barely has a chance to meet the other members of her pod, all who seem as unhappy to be Featherlight as she does, when a camper goes missing down by the lake. Then she spots something horrifying outside in the snow; something that isn't human. Plus. the camp supposed to supposed miracle cure for obesity just seems fishy. And being her fellow campers, no, they don't need to be cured of anything. Even worse, it's not long before Camp Featherlight's, luxurious bungalows are totally an overrun with zombies. What starts out as a mission to unravel the camp secrets turns into a desperate fight for survival. And not all of the Featherlight campers will make it out alive. A satirical blend of horror. body positivity and humor Kelly Devos' witty biting novel proves that everyone deserves to feel validated and taking down the evil enterprise determined to dehumanize you is a good place to start. So. I really like this book. It's it's a dark comedy. And it's really funny. V was like a really awesome main character. And Allie is a really interesting character because she, she's a filmmaker. So. she categorizes every other person she meets into different tropes. So. she'll be like, oh, you're the you're the basket case, you only have like a 10% chance of survival genes. So. she does that with everyone. So. they always talk about like which character they are, which character trope they think they are. And some friends do die, which makes it sad, but it's just um, I really like it. It's because it's also like commentary on like, diet culture. And this company was going too far and actually turning people into zombies by giving

them these weight loss bars, and genetically modifying their...their like structure and their body. So that becomes zombies. And it's just really a really fun, fascinating book. And I think it's good choice for October, because it's like zombies and thriller and all kinds of crazy stuff going on. So, Megan, I know that you read Instant Karma. Do you want to talk about that?

Megan 28:15

Sure. So, I actually read more, more young adult books every year, but I've only read two this year, Scarlet, which is the Lunar Chronicles number two, which probably deserves its own podcast. So, I'll tell you about Instant Karma the other young adult book that I read. And, I really liked it, even though it's funny because Prue the main character while the two main characters are Prue and Quint, and Prue is really unlikable for I would say, like two thirds of the book. Like, she's just not really a likable character because she's too much. She's just really unforgiving, unrelenting. She's type A personality. She's very confident in her abilities. She, she's very headstrong, and she wants to do what she wants to do. And so, you know, And Quint, you know, he seems he seems like possibly lazy or laid back at first and then you realize he is really actually very hard working and he has a lot on his plate. And so, it's about them, you know, having to do a project together and the project doesn't, you know, end up in the grade that she wants, so she wants to spend the summer redoing it with him. And she finds out that he works at like, a sea life conservation because his mom runs it. And so basically, she has to end up working there and getting to know him so that they can redo their project. And a lot of things happen, and you get to know her better and eventually I feel like at the end she becomes likable. Um, you know she...she changed a lot, she becomes, you know, more willing to listen to what other people think. Because the catch of this book is that she goes, she's at karaoke with her friends at the beginning. And her name gets called up and she has to sing this song. And so, she sings a song, she does a great job and all of a sudden, she has these abilities to deliver Instant Karma to the people around her. And so, whenever she does it, you know, she, she, people, she thinks she does it to deserving people, you know, somebody who litters, somebody who does graffiti, somebody who, you know, you know, maybe like, pushes somebody over while they're trying to, like get through, you know, so she delivers instant car, people. There are a couple instances where she realizes like, what she did, she later realizes what she did was like, you know, it wasn't her right or place to do that, and that, you know, we only see you know, somebody having a bad moment. But there's always more to the story. And it's funny because when she tries to deliver Instant Karma to Quint, it always backfires. And something good always happens to him. Because the thing is, he's not really actually, again, she doesn't she can't see the full picture. So, she doesn't actually realize, you know, he's doing good things. So, he's rewarded instead. And it's very cute, like young adult kind of rom com and it's interesting, I haven't read anything like it before. So, I really liked that. And I just really liked the idea when I read the blurb on a book and so I decided, I know I actually I think I got it as an audiobook. So, I don't think I read...read this one. I think I listened to it. Um, so I really enjoyed it. And I think most teens would like it.

Erin 32:23

That's awesome. Um, that one is by Marissa Mayer, if you guys Trusted, um, my next book that I'm gonna mention is was really cute. It's also funny, I've been looking for more funny books lately to recommend because a lot of teens especially in the super-secret book boxes that are asking for funny books, so actually gave this one out after I listened to it, so that somebody hopefully will enjoy it as much as I did. It's called Perfectly Parvin it's by Olivia Abtahi and it's about a 14-year-old Iranian American Girl Parvin Mohammadi. And she, she it's right

before she goes into ninth grade. So, she it's the summer after her eighth-grade year, she and her family go somewhere for the summer. And they're just like hanging on the beach, she meets this guy she really likes and then at the end, he asks if they can date, she's really excited. Because this is the first guy who's liked her. So, they began dating and then on the end, they didn't know they're gonna go to the same school the next year. So, on day of orientation he sees her friends with their like, crazy outfits and they're out their personalities and he is with friends from his church group. And he decides he's going to break up with her because his friends won't understand him dating somebody who he describes us as loud. So, she's really upset about that. And she decides, she finds out that he has a date, he basically starts dating a girl like right after he breaks up with her, and that he's taking her to the homecoming dance. So, she decides, well, I'm gonna prove to him that I've gotten over him and there's, you know, that I'm worth dating and find somebody else to take me to the homecoming dance. And so, she tries to she gets as this harebrained idea that after she watches all of her favorite, like movies and rom coms, that she should start acting like the women in these rom coms. They aren't loud, they don't cackle when they laugh and they smile a lot more than they talk. So, she decides that she's going to do that with Matty Fumero, which is a guy that she's met. And the problem is that she's, of course not being herself. And her, when she realizes that Matty is not, she finally gets a date with him and she realizes that they really don't have a connection. And she's can't be with herself with him. But she's met a friend that she can actually be herself with and didn't realize that he was interested in her. She decides like, okay, like, maybe had this all wrong, and actually has a little bit of a surprise ending. So, I'm not gonna tell you what happens, but it's really great. It's actually supposed to be part of a series so I just want to see what happens with Parvin in the future. So that was really cute. Megan, do you remember anything about the Lunar Chronicles to like mention that people?

Megan 36:06

Are sorry, there's a little feedback there. But um, I was thinking that um, okay, so I read it at the beginning of the year. And again, actually, I didn't read it an audio book it I, I love audiobooks when I'm doing chores at home. So I try to listen, or I walk a lot. So, I try to listen when I'm not with my kids, and I'm walking around. So the Lunar Chronicles, I was the second one. The Queen had already come to the country. And basically, she had to find the main character she had to find her right to, I don't know they're like convincing her to take her places, the Princess or whatever.

Erin 37:00

I have the description of the first book. So, people are wondering where the background it says humans and androids crowd the rocky streets of New Beijing. A deadly plague ravages the population from space. A ruthless lunar people watch waiting to make their move. No one knows that Earth's fate hinges on one girl Cinder, a gifted mechanic is a cyborg. She's a second-class citizen with a mysterious past, reviled by her stepmother and blamed for her stepsister's illness. But when her life becomes intertwined with the handsome prince Kai, she suddenly finds herself at the center of an intergalactic struggle, and a forbidden attraction caught between duty and freedom, loyalty and betrayal she must cover secrets about her past in order to protect her world's future so that's the first one. This is also by Marissa Meyer, so apparently, you're on a Marissa Meyer kick.

Megan 37:58

Yeah, um I look up authors that I like that I that I've read something else by so when I use Goodreads um but yeah, I remember the thing is she and Kai or whatever Cinder and Kai they really like each other but he didn't

you know he hasn't. They didn't really know each other they just met recently and you know, he doesn't...she's a cyborg and I don't think he knew that she was a cyborg and I don't he obviously didn't know that she was she was actually like the princess or like the ruler right to the throne because the evil lunar queen or whatever is her stepmother and her father was the king or whatever so um, so all this is unfolding and she's actually finding out who she really is, you know, and...and then they're like, you know, she has some friends to help her and everything and they're all like, you know, you have to take your rightful place kind of thing and you know, you...you can help save everyone and so there's a lot I don't remember how many books are on the series, but there's a lot more to read. But I when you know, I was skeptical about reading the series, but it's actually way you know, way better than I thought it's the ideas on it are you know, I didn't want them to be redundant with other series. And I don't think they are I think they're pretty fresh. So, I really enjoyed actually I'm gonna I'm on a waitlist for the third audio book right now. So

Erin 39:47

Yeah, she actually has some other really good books too. If you guys are interested, Heartless, which is like a prequel to Alice in Wonderland. It's all about how the girl Catherine ended up becoming the Queen of Hearts. So, it's like the Queen of Hearts origin story, and you could see how she was like this nice girl and why she turned, quote unquote evil. My favorite series by Melissa, Marissa Meyer is Renegades. And it's actually about superheroes. And super fascinating. It's about two teenagers who one is was raised as like a supervillain, and one is raised as like a superhero. And she tries to pretend she's a superhero she can get in, then she really actually becomes friends with these people and has really mixed feelings about what she's doing on infiltrating the organization and everything. It's just, it's great. The first one is Renegades the second one's Arch Enemies. And the third one is Supernova. And I really recommend that that's a fantastic series. Um, well, I think that is all we have time for today. So, thank you, Megan, for being my special guest and telling us all about Sweden and about what you've been reading this year.

Megan 41:11

No problem.

Erin 41:13

All right...

Megan 41:13

Thanks for having me.

Erin 41:15

Definitely. Until next time, signing off. Have a wonderful October, everyone.