
*Friends of the International Center,
at UC San Diego*



Newsletter

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March 2013

Seen at the February Ethnic Dinner



Joan Adamo and Friends scholarship recipient Andrew Yeung



Life members Rea and Alan Costley, visiting briefly from their native England

*The Costleys had come to UCSD in the 1990s, when Alan, a distinguished physicist, was part of the high powered international ITER team charged with developing an experimental fusion reactor, for which our campus served as the U.S. administrative center, until 1999, when the U.S. temporarily withdrew from the project. Greek by birth, Rea had been active in international affairs at Oxford University, and soon became active in the Friends, no doubt due to the encouragement of **Carol Smith**, ITER's International Scholar Advisor. Rea participated in many capacities, and was elected Friends 1st Vice President, serving from 1996-98.*

President's Message

Remember the description of our logo? "A moving crossroads, a hub of activity where travelers can come together to share their common interest in and knowledge about each other's countries."

See the evidence all the time at the International Center. If you attended our Chinese New Year Banquet on February 2nd, you enjoyed a fantastic gourmet meal, cooked by an international team of volunteer chefs and served by an international team of students, you met friends new and old, heard from two of our scholarship recipients, and then traveled to Ethiopia through **Chris Wills'** amazing lens. An international crossroads indeed!

If you come on any Wednesday morning, you hear nursery rhymes sung by an international "choir" of preschoolers at Mommy/Daddy & Me, and a range of international perspectives shared at Gus' Conversation Table. You may see Japanese or Finnish or other chefs in the kitchen preparing lunch, if you're lucky enough to come on International Kitchen day. And you may meet some new international families learning about all the opportunities the Center offers them. Truly a hub of international activities!

What drives this moving crossroads? Some very dedicated volunteers, who love what they do and share that joy: **Liz Fong Wills, Georgina Sham, Nori Faer, Alice Blake-Stalker, Mary Woo, Jennie Chin, Nancy Homeyer**—a few of our most stalwart workers.

Strolling by the Resale Shop, you may also see **Alma Coles** back as coordinator, relieving **Jeri Abernathy** and **Eleanor tum Suden**, who filled in for the last few months.

People love these programs. BUT ... remember that underneath it all, less fun perhaps, there's the Board, essential for a non-profit organization. Please consider serving, so that Friends very special hub of activities can survive.

Joan Adamo
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An Inside Look at the Family Orientation Program

—by Nancy Homeyer, Program Coordinator

Here is a portrayal of what the Family Orientation Program is all about. It's a description of a pretty typical session that took place on January 16, 2013. (Sometimes, however, we have the families of graduate students or males attending or no children.)

It is 9:15 a.m. About 20 people have gathered in the dining room at the International Center. Most of these are international scholars who have come for their orientation to the University given by the Immigration Analysts on staff at the International Center. They are called the J-1's in our shorthand for the visas they hold. Some of them are accompanied by dependents, spouses and children, known as J-2's. These are the focus for the hospitality program called Family Orientation. The idea is to make people feel welcome, to impart information about the programs of the Friends of the International Center, and to address other issues of living in the U.S. **Barbara Fitzsimmons** and I identify the J-2's, and give a brief description of what we are going to be doing together.

It is 9:30 a.m. Barbara Fitzsimmons and I have gathered together four women, three of them with children, two and under. In bureaucratese, they are the "dependents" of international scholars, but as is usually the case, they are well educated and have careers in their home countries. We are meeting in the conference room of the International Scholars Office where it is quiet and there is a door to keep the children with us.

First come introductions. Barbara and I explain the role of the Friends and of volunteers.

Remi Nemoto introduces her-



Clockwise from left: Barbara Fitzsimmons holding Milo, Remi Nemoto with Mirei, Yuko Fujimori with Sakura, Gerti Csapo, and Dora Stancel

self and **Mirei**, her daughter, who is two. They come from Yokohama, Japan, and they arrived two weeks ago. Remi and family will be in San Diego for two years. (Mirei is eager to get out of her stroller and start exploring, but is diverted by crayons and a coloring book.) Remi worked in marketing in Japan. She plans on spending time with her daughter while they adjust to the new environment in the States. Then she hopes to find daycare for her daughter, where the little girl can have fun and make friends and give her mother the time to explore opportunities. In Remi's words, "Although there're still a lot going on for settling down for the new life, we're so ready to find something new and interesting here in this country."

Yuko Fujimori is also from Japan. She introduces her daughter, **Sakura**, who is nine months old. Yuko arrived on the end of December and had lived in San Francisco for a while. She and her family will be here until June. She had been an English teacher for children in

Japan before getting married and becoming a mother. Her plans are "to socialize with people and practice English as much as possible, so I'd like to make the most use of this chance (when we are in the USA and have this nice program!!), while we live here. Getting involved with many people is how I'd like to spend my time here."

Gerti Csapo is from Klagenfurt, Austria. She arrived at the end of December and is here for an indefinite time. Gerti says, "Back home in Austria I was a kindergarten teacher for almost 10 years. I looked after children at the ages from 1 to 6 years. Here in San Diego I will go to a language school to improve my English. After that I am looking for a job, not necessarily in a kindergarten."

Dora Stancel spent the first 12 years of her life in Hungary but then moved to France. She lives in La Rochelle. She introduces **Milo Peteri**, who is seven months old. Dora and family will be here until August. She explains her occupation in France. "I'm an artiste, spe-

cializing in digital and social art. I organize projects, which take place in public spaces where I can reach most of the people, not just the one who is interested in art. I offer the possibility to interact with my installations. It can be a sound installation or video or other digital ways to make it interesting and fun." Here, Dora is planning on studying Spanish while continuing with ocean swimming and kayaking, and taking up biking.

After the introductions, Barbara and I explain the various activities that are available at the International Center: Wednesday Coffee, including International Kitchen and Gus' Table, Knit-Along, International Cooking Experience, Friday Cafés, the Resale Shop, Kitchen Exchange. Mommy/Daddy & Me has particular interest for this group. They inquire about childcare in this country, and we suggest that they ask the participants at Wednesday Coffee. We talk about the resources, on and off campus, that are available for improving English,

especially the English in Action program at the International Center. We talk about culture shock, how it can affect you when you live in a different country and also when you return home, and that the best remedy is to keep busy and engaged with others. We cover transportation and carrying documents with you when you travel out of the city. Participants fill out registration forms indicating the specific programs that interest them. (At this point Milo wants to help his mother complete the form so Barbara gets to hold the baby.)

It is 10:30 a.m. The session closes with a tour of the International Center, highlighting the Oceanids Kitchen/Baby Exchange and the Friends Resale Shop. Both of these are very popular with those attending Family Orientation. We end up at Wednesday Coffee where new friends for all are awaiting.

Allow me to share comments from this group. Yuko wrote, "Thank you for introducing lots of nice programs and giving me

an e-mail. Yes, it was so helpful and Sakura and I enjoyed a lot there. I'm so excited to go there again. I'm sure that we'll go there every week! As I told you, I was in San Francisco. There, there were not programs like this and nice supporters like you. It was a little bit more difficult to get to know other people. Thanks for giving me good opportunities."

Gerti wrote, "Many thanks for showing us around. You were most helpful. I am looking forward to coming to the International Center again. Actually already tomorrow." Dora wrote, "I've got your mail and thank you very much. It was nice to meet you and your help is really great." Remi wrote, "The orientation was really helpful for us, and we love to come back to the International Center to attend some activities!"

What a great program for all involved!



Wednesday Morning Coffee

—by *Georgina Sham*

March 6: **Art Walk.** **Bob Starkey** (see p. 4) will lead us to three more Stuart Collection installations: **Richard Fleischner's** La Jolla Project, **Elizabeth Murray's** Red Shoe, and **William Wegman's** La Jolla Vista View.

March 13: **Women's History Month Discussion.** **Alice Blake-Stalker** will lead and facilitate a discussion on women's roles worldwide and more specifically on their roles in the United States.

March 20: **Eggs of All Kinds.** **Gayle Barsamian** will show us how to create beautiful eggs by dying with silk. Additionally, we'll learn how to incorporate hardboiled eggs: making egg salad, deviled eggs, Hindoo eggs, chopped chicken livers, and marbled tea eggs. Please bring 6 uncooked and 6 hardboiled eggs.

March 27: **Easter Celebration with Egg Hunt.** Please bring a dozen hardboiled eggs, which we will dye into many colors before hiding them for the children to find. We will also make baskets for the children to put their eggs in.

Children should dress in their spring finery; and Moms and Dads, don't forget to bring your cameras!

March Calendar

- March 1, 8, 15: **International Café**, Noon-1:15
- March 6, 20: **Family Orientation**, 9:15
- March 6, 13, 20, 27: **Wednesday Morning Coffee**, 10:00-Noon
- March 5, 12, 19, 26: **Knit Along**, 1:00-3:30
- March 12: **Executive Board Meeting**, 10.00
- March 14: **International Cooking Experience**, 9:30-1:00
- March 29: **Cesar Chavez Holiday**

40 Years of Ethnic Dinners!

—by Ruth Newmark

Thinking back to our first Ethnic Dinner—held on March 11, 1973—I realize that that dinner, like our most recent one on February 2, 2013, featured a fine array of Chinese dishes. That inaugural feast, chaired by **Lily Lin** and **Luna Fung**, was quickly followed by a succession of others: Indian in April, Tanzanian in May, an International Medley in September, and an Indonesian dinner in November of the same year.

It has now been 40 years since the inception of the Friends Ethnic Dinner series, an appropriate moment to track how many dinners we have offered over these four decades. I counted 108 in all!

Not only the number, but also the variety is staggering. Alphabetically, the dinners range the gamut from meals featuring dishes representative of Austria to Thailand, with culinary offerings from Brazil, Hungary, Japan, Lebanon, Mongolia, Morocco, Peru, Sri Lanka, and ever so many more countries between. We even highlighted food from our own United States of America, presenting Creole fare in 1980 and a Hawaiian luau in 1987.

Being part of an educational institution has always been taken seriously by the Friends; it is not



Medha von Essen and Luna Fung selecting tableware needed for Friends Ethnic Dinners, April 1973

surprising then that our programs generally contain an educational element, which helps to explain that each of the Ethnic Dinners is followed by a cultural program. We are especially grateful to **Chris Wills**, Professor of Biological Sciences, for his many illustrated talks that demonstrate his wide knowledge, photographic skills, and adventurous spirit.



Chris Wills among baboons in Ethiopia

AND the dinners raise money! While funds are not necessarily earmarked, money initially raised was applied to furnishing and landscaping the then-still-bare International Center. Occasionally, money went for a specific purpose: for Chilean scholars who had come to the U.S. to study at UC San Diego to escape persecution by the Pinochet regime, or for some of our early Chinese students whose government stipends rarely covered expenses. But, in the main, the Ethnic Dinners have been raising money for international scholarships.

In a continuous effort to introduce volunteers and scholarship recipients to each other, we invited two recent awardees to the 2013 Chinese New Year's celebration. As requested, they spoke briefly about their studies and the meaning for them of a Friends Scholarship.

Mike Nicholson, a graduate

student in Political Science and recipient of a Friends **Joyce Rapaport Scholarship**, explained that his research focuses on anti-immigration sentiments. Looking for underlying causes, he is gathering material from the United States, among other places, but will soon depart for Denmark to delve in archives for data there, as that country has a particularly comprehensive amount of information with bearing on the topic of his doctoral dissertation.

Andrew Yeung, a 5th-year undergraduate who is double-majoring in biology and music, with hopes for a career in the health sciences, spoke about the importance of his study at the University of Hong Kong (see his scholarship report on p.10). In a note, Andrew wrote: "I want to thank the Friends of the International Center for the generous support for my abroad experience. It has changed my perspective in life for the best. I hope that I may be and continue to be of service promoting exchange in the future."

Forty years of any program is worthy of note. We owe a great deal of gratitude to **Luna Fung** and **Lily Lin** for providing us with a concept that has withstood the test of time.

We extend a big thank-you to **Liz Fong Wills** for her utter devotion to the program and for being able to lure into the kitchen her many buddies—be they her dentist, realtor, mortgage broker, or her husband's students. Liz has served as Ethnic Dinner chair since 1995, not counting the prior 9 years during which she coordinated the program jointly with **Alma Coles** and **Georgina Sham**. My ten-year reign (1973-83) pales in comparison.

Good food followed by high caliber and informative entertainment help create an interest in our organization, while providing an exceptional experience at which the local and university community can come together. It is not only the Ethnic Dinner chairs who deserve our thanks, but it is all who help and have helped to make these dinners a reality—and fun!



Alma Coles, Liz Fong Wills, and Ruth Newmark



Kathy Wong, who helped with both the 1973 and 2013 Chinese dinners



The main cooks



Side-winding snakes



Longevity noodles ready to be served as the sixth course in the banquet

Chinese New Year 2013: Year of the Snake
—by Liz Fong Wills

Once again (for the ninth time in a row!), **Theresa Song** and **Jimmy Chen**, with the help of **Peggy Cheong**, **Rita Hsia**, and **Clara Wang**, put on a Chinese banquet unlike any other in San Diego! Chef Jimmy created “snakes” out of pork and water chestnuts wrapped in bean curd skins for the Year of the Snake. Tiny pieces of carrot represented the eyes. (Some of you may remember the spectacular “dragon” that he created out of Maine lobster, shrimp, and avocado for the Year of the Dragon. The year before, for the Year of the Rabbit, Jimmy created rabbits out of prawns.)

This very labor-intensive gourmet meal could only have been produced with the help of many enthusiastic volunteers, who worked like crazy and had a great time doing it.

In the kitchen: **Dagmar Bocakova**, **Coco Chen**, **Laura Chen**, **Alma Coles**, **George Foo**, **Diane He**, **Jade He**, **Keiko Hirai**, **Lanna Cheng Lewin**, **Renate Schmid-Schoenbein**, **Julia Shao**, **Mira Vendler**, **Kathy Wong**, **Jenna Wu**, **Susan Wu**, **Theresa Xu**, and **Ia Yang**.

The wait staff: **Ting Chen**, **Coco Chen**, **Laura Chen**, **Mariama Fofana**, **Passi Fofana**, **Tuva Hope**, **Robert Kretschmer**, **Miguel Negreros**, plus some of the kitchen helpers. These cheerful waiters were mostly foreign students, along with one postdoctoral fellow.

Eleanor tum Suden handled the reservations for nearly 160 guests. In the absence that day of Georgina Sham who had to be at a folk dance festival, **Alma Coles** made the seating arrangements and **Mary Woo** jumped in to do the programs and nametags with assistance from **Georgia Crowne** and **Georgina Sham** (who normally performs these tasks).

The flower arrangements were created by **Candace Kohl** using red and gold, the colors that Chinese love. **Katya Newmark** took photos.

Chris Wills had a very appreciative audience for his photos and commentary about Ethiopia. Thanks to **Lanna Cheng Lewin’s** suggestion, we used the same lecture hall that Chris normally teaches in, just across Library Walk from the International Center, with its state of the art audiovisual equipment. This suggestion also allowed us to expand the number of dining tables into the International Center lounge. By seating a larger number of guests than usual, we raised an all time high for Friends Scholarships!

2014 will be the Year of the Horse. We look forward to seeing Chef Jimmy’s creation of a horse for next year’s dinner! It may look like a horse, but it is guaranteed not to taste like a horse!

•*Among the many kudos received:* “Is it really true that none of the cooks have a restaurant in San Diego? This food surpasses any of the Chinese restaurants we have eaten at locally.” True, but some of them have family members who run restaurants in Taiwan and the U.S., and Chef **Jimmy Chen** has a catering service, called **Jimmy’s Kitchen**—you may contact him at: rh4998@hotmail.com; you will be pleased.

English-in-Action

—by Shelly Taskin, EIA Program Coordinator



The International Center's English-in-Action (EIA) tutor program matches qualifying applicants with volunteer tutors to help our international visitors with conversational English language skills, simultaneously helping them to acquire a better understanding of American culture and to acclimate more quickly to their new environment.

In 2011-12, a record number of 250 students, scholars, and spouses from 20 different countries were matched with over 200 volunteer tutors, who are community members, faculty, staff, and students. In addition to improving their conversational English, the majority of tutees want to learn American idioms and slang, but are also eager to learn more about our American culture and traditions.

Participation in the program is a rewarding learning experience for both the international guest and the volunteer, as both gain considerable cultural insight and a deeper understanding and appreciation of global diversity.

Alice Blake-Stalker, a member of the Friends of the International Center and an EIA tutor since 2010, heard about the program from **Georgina Sham**, her international folk dance instructor and the coordinator of the Friends Wednesday Morning Coffee program.

Alice is from Buffalo, New York and is a retired teacher. In our EIA program, she has worked with students and scholars from Iran and China and comments that she has developed wonderful relationships with all of them. "I learn at least as much as I teach; it's a mutual experience." She loves learning about her students' countries and enjoys



Alice Blake-Stalker with tutee Hao Yan at House of China, Balboa Park

spending time with them, like picnicking in Balboa Park with their families, eating out, having them over for Thanksgiving, and going to their homes for great ethnic food.

Her current tutee, **Hao Yan**, is a visiting scholar at the Moores Cancer Center doing research in medical imaging. Alice reports that he is picking up English very fast, and grasps the many nuances of our culture. He asks wonderful questions and wants to talk about what happened during the week to him, his family, and the world at large. Alice also tutors Hao's wife, **Jia**, at their apartment.

Alice encourages other members of the Friends to join the EIA program as tutors. "Don't wait until it fits neatly into your life, but work it around the other stuff you need to do—it will give you much more than you give it!"

For more information about the English in Action program or to apply to be a tutor, please visit our website at: bit.ly/EIAProgram. No previous experience is necessary. We only ask that tutors meet with their students weekly for 1-2 hours.

International Friendship,
Understanding, and Cooperation

Friends Membership

Please welcome among our newest members Dr. **Kirk Simmons**, Dean of the International Center; **Joan & Allan Kleinman**; **Alicia & Jorge Meneses**; **Greg Rouse**, Professor of Marine Biology; and **Judith & Daniel Muñoz**.

We regret to report the death of **Irma Gusfield** at age 87. Irma was a member of our organization until she and her husband, **Joseph Gusfield**, the founding chair of UC San Diego's Sociology Department, moved to the Bay Area to be closer to their children. Having spent a happy time in India, where she became acquainted with that country's enticing cuisines, Irma helped mount the Friends second Ethnic Dinner, a 1973 fundraiser that showcased Indian food, but she also participated in many other activities, most recently by serving on the Friends Scholarship Committee.

January also saw the death, at age 93, of Friends life member **Larry Bertrand**. Larry was one of the founding partners of FedMart, a pathbreaking chain of membership discount stores open to government employees. (Publically better known among the chain's founders are **Sol Price**, who later went on to start Price Club and for whom the UCSD student Price Center is named, and **Mandell Weiss**, the philanthropist for whom two of our campus theaters are named.)

Lily Lin and **Ruth Newmark**, neighbors of the Bertrands, fondly recall shopping at the Kearny Mesa FedMart for essential goods that helped launch our Ethnic Dinner series. Friends extend condolences to Larry's wife, **Patricia**, and their three sons.

Robert Starkey and Wednesday Coffee Art Walks

—by Ruth Newmark



Trees by
Terry Allen

From time to time, **Robert Starkey** leads Wednesday Morning Coffee participants on walks around UCSD, showing them different art works created specifically for our campus. Most of these site-specific pieces are part of the Stuart Collection, currently comprised of 18 commissioned outdoor sculptures, prominent among which are such popular works as **Niki de St. Phalle's** Sun God and **Tim Hawkinson's** Bear.

The heart of the campus—the Geisel Library, named for **Audrey** and **Theodor Seuss Geisel** in recognition of their work in promoting literacy—is encircled by a number of important art installations, including **Terry Allen's** “talking” Trees that melds unobtrusively into the eucalyptus grove, **Alexis Smith's** Snake Path, and **John Baldessari's** Read/Write/Think/Dream, an integral component of the Library's glass entrance doors.

Situated on the library's west side, but not part of the more avant-garde Stuart Collection, is a life-size depiction of Ted Geisel seen seated next to a considerably taller Cat in the Hat, the best-known of Geisel's Dr. Seuss creations. Audrey Geisel's daughter, **Lark Grey Diamond-Cates**, designed the realistic bronze sculpture.

With true modesty, Bob Starkey proved reticent to talk about himself; however, knowing that he was an active campus volunteer tour guide, I found the following statement by him in an article titled “Point of View with the Visitors Tour Program” (thisweek@ucsandiego, Nov. 14, 2011). In answer to the question: “What is your connection to the campus—past and present,” Bob replied:



Wednesday Coffee participants, including Kristine Kneib, fourth from the left (who provided the photo), with Bob Starkey on the far right, at the Theodor Geisel sculpture

“I started at UC San Diego in 1967 when Revelle College was the only college on campus. I spent 39 years, most of my working life, as a UC San Diego employee in the Campus Planning Office. I was in a position to see many of the changes at the development stage, and as they were implemented. I was lucky enough to know many of the bright, forward-thinking and creative faculty and administrators who started the campus. I am now a member of Chancellor's Associates and we have regular events on campus. I'm also on the board for the Faculty Club, so I participate in their events, and I like to remind people that the Faculty Club is open for membership to all faculty, staff, and community members. I go to lectures and plays. I probably spend one or two nights a week doing something on campus. In fact, I'm on campus every day because I use the athletic facilities.” Asked to name his favorite pieces in the Stuart Collection, Bob singled out the Sun God, Snake Path, Bear, and Standing by **Kiki Smith**.

Both Bob and his wife, **Barbara** (a past president of the Friends and 20-year-long coordinator of our Cooking in America classes), are life members of the Friends. Our Wednesday Coffee program is fortunate to have in Bob a knowledgeable and enthusiastic tour guide! **Kristine Kneib** urges all of us to join in the fun of learning about UCSD's acclaimed art collection.

SCHOLARSHIP LETTERS

Kimberly Tran spent the summer of 2012 in Vietnam. Her first weeks were spent with Vietnamese Village Health (VVH), a non-profit that describes itself as an organization that “provides love, compassion, and humanitarian assistance to the poor villagers and their children in remote areas of Vietnam, through free health care services, education, and technology.” It is in such underserved rural villages outside Ho Chi Minh City that Kimberly saw her own patients with primary care complaints, treating them under the supervision of American-trained and California board-certified physicians. Subsequently, on the United States Naval Ship Mercy, much like her fellow scholarship recipient Milan Dang-Vu (Friends Newsletter, February 2013), Kimberly worked as a translator, but as she says: “I also got to scrub every day in the ophthalmology operating room and work as 1st or 2nd assistant.” —Ed.

Hello from Vietnam! What a different world from UCSD!

It has been an extremely busy six weeks here in Vietnam, and we are changing locations constantly, so I apologize that I didn't get a chance to write until now. Our team is such an inspiring group of strong people with such good hearts that I feel privileged to be here with them.

The first two weeks with the VVH NGO, we saw over 3,000 patients and had a team of 8 internal medicine physicians, 4 dentists, ophthalmologist, 3 pharmacists, and a whole bunch of nurses, support staff, and college students with whom I very much enjoyed spending time. They had me seeing my own patients under the supervision of attending physicians. I am constantly moved by how happy and grateful the people are to see us.

I'm on the USNS Mercy now, working/translating daily with ophthalmologists from our San Diego Naval Medical Center and the University of Washington. You cannot imagine the size of this ship: 8 floors and seemingly 10 football fields long. It is a living, breathing, fully functional floating hospital that slowly rocks with everyone rocking in tune. However, after the first day or so, you don't even notice it anymore.

I am working as a translator in the surgery department, from where each day a medical team is sent out to the mainland to treat patients, and identify those cases that should be brought back to the ship to have surgery. We treat them onboard, whether it's orthopedics, obstetrics, gynecology, dermatology, reconstructive surgery, ophthalmology, ENT—we have it all. We keep the patients for as many nights as necessary until they're sufficiently stable to go home, and can follow with their own primary care physician later.

Additionally, we bring on a team of Vietnamese physicians from the biggest hospitals in Vietnam. They stay with us for a week to observe and learn from us. We in turn visit their hospitals. I am struck by the Vietnamese surgeons' sincere

interest in learning about things that are mandatory and routine for us, like pre-operative checklists and time-outs to confirm the patient's name and procedure, instrument sterilization, and prevention of post-operative complications. By translating, I am included in this unique international exchange of skills and knowledge, and I have come to understand that it is actually through teaching that we effect the most scalable and sustainable change. This realization, as well as the opportunity to live and work alongside providers from all over the world, has confirmed my interest in pursuing a teaching career in ophthalmology, as I am convinced that my strengths and joys converge here. I also look forward to a career of participating in underserved medicine and global health, and in mentoring students, much as my teachers are doing here, and of experiencing the constant adventure and dynamism of daily interaction with patients.

I feel like one of the luckiest people alive. I am learning so much. I am currently living with the medical corps from New Zealand. We call our set of bunks Kiwiland, and are having an absolute blast every night trying out different American vending machine staples: Doritos, cheese spread, lemon drops, Snickers bars, etc., but also Vietnamese staples that I have grown up with in my own household and are commonplace to me, but so strange and delightful to the others—items like mangoes, rambutan, dragonfruit, longans.

This trip brings back all the memories from when I visited Vietnam for the first time seven years ago. Life is so “cuc” for them here, *Cuc* is a Vietnamese word that translates somewhere between hard, tiring, tough, incessantly challenging. Seeing their hard lives touches and stirs



The ophthalmology team

a part of the soul, and reminds me of what led me to pursue medicine. Knowing that I made the right choice in choosing medicine finally gives me the peace and confirmation for which I've been looking for the past few years. Suddenly, all these years of struggle, sleeplessness, and stress seem so extraordinarily worthwhile. By practicing medicine side by side with physicians from all over the world, I feel fulfilled and happy.

Again, thank you so much for making this trip possible for me. I couldn't have afforded it without your financial support. This was truly the experience of a lifetime, and I will treasure and cherish these memories until my last day.

Kimberly D. Tran

M.D. Candidate, class of 2013

Dear Friends,

The year 2012 ended on a bitter-sweet note for me. I am still exhilarated from having spent the last four months studying abroad in Córdoba, Spain, while also mourning not returning to España after the holidays.

Córdoba offered the perfect setting for a language and culture program. This small Andalusian city maintains Spanish traditions within an urban setting: cologne advertisements use hunky matadors; there is a large commercial downtown, yet all the stores close on Sundays. Most importantly, unlike in the larger cities of Spain, I was forced to speak Spanish in Córdoba. This meant that I practiced my Spanish with the wonderful family with which I lived, with my new Spanish friends, and in daily interactions on the street or in restaurants. I felt fully immersed in Spanish life, so much so that after two weeks of being home, I still miss my full but tranquil routine.

Every morning, I would walk a half hour to school, where I studied Spanish, Spanish History, and International Relations. I particularly enjoyed the last two classes, as we discussed events from a Spanish perspective,

shedding new light on my understanding of history. I would then walk back and wait for my *hermanas* to come home from school to eat lunch at 3 o'clock. During lunch we would watch the news, and I quickly realized that this was a very interesting time to be studying in Spain. The nation was suffering from an economic crisis, and the government was in the process of privatizing certain institutions, such as healthcare. Many Spaniards were angry: every day there were large demonstrations in Madrid, and I even witnessed a few smaller protests in Córdoba. It reminded me that I was in Spain not only to travel and have fun, but also to try to understand another way of life, and this meant understanding the country's politics.

In the afternoons, I volunteered teaching English to immigrants living in Córdoba. Most of my students were over thirty and from Central and South America. They taught me the challenges of trying to find a job as a foreigner, as well as the thought process and effort it takes to plan one's migration.

Almost every Friday, we had a cultural *visita*, or field trip. Córdoba was once the center of the Muslim world, and also the city from which King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella ruled, and therefore holds numerous historical treasures. These *visitas* allowed me to become invested and take pride in the city. Of course, Córdoba offered other cultural attractions, such as an African film festival and, my personal favorite, the Filmoteca, where one can watch old and foreign movies for the equivalent of 90 cents.

On weekends, I took advantage of Córdoba's central location in Andalusia to visit other cities and towns. While these weekend trips removed me from my effort of trying to live like a Spaniard, they were enriching in other ways. I learned how to plan and travel independently, enjoy being lost, and leisurely absorb different lifestyles. Although I tried to see as much of Spain as I possibly could, I also vis-

ited Portugal, Belgium, and Morocco.

In the States, I am consumed by school and work. Abroad, I learned that I must also nourish my adventurous spirit and explore places near and far.

I urge all my peers to study abroad. I thank the Friends for helping to make such an incredible experience happen.

Isabella Blasi

Eleanor Roosevelt College
Urban Studies major

Among the pleasures of being Friends Scholarship Committee Chair, I can count the following letter—Ruth Newmark

Dear Ruth,

This is **Mabel Zhang**, EAP participant and recipient of a Friends of the International Center Scholarship in 2009. I don't know if you still remember me. I was studying Computer Science at the University of Edinburgh in Fall 2009, and you included my story in the March 2010 issue of the *Friends Newsletter*. We had a lunch together with several other ladies active in the Friends [**Eleanor tum Suden** and **Estelle Shabetai**].

Recently, I suddenly remembered you mentioned that it'd be nice to hear from us (EAP participants) from time to time, hence this e-mail. Perhaps the suddenness is because my family is planning to move away from California. I tried to get in touch with my high school French teacher, whom I always wanted to see throughout college, but never heard back. This made me realize that I shouldn't wait too long, if I really want to contact people!

I am now studying at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia for a Ph.D. degree in computer science, specifically in robotics, as a fellow in a National Science Foundation IGERT program, an interdisciplinary program with Penn's Psychology Department. The robotics part is inspired by my experience in Edinburgh.

The Ph.D. program—it's quite

tough, I have to say! Last year was the biggest struggle of my life, far exceeding any immigration struggles I had previously. Since last year, I learned so many things “the hard way.” I still live in fear of not graduating, while making lots of lifestyle changes to balance out that anxiety. In my spare time (it exists now, unlike in undergrad days), I’ve been doing indoor rock climbing! It’s a fun sport, even for non-athletes like me.

Have you read or heard of the short book, *The Ph.D. Grind?* If you haven’t, it is available online for free

(legally), written by a Stanford grad, **Phillip Guo**, who received his Ph.D. in Computer Science in 2012. It gained lots of popularity with different sections of the population within the first month it was released. I found time to read it during this X-mas break, and it indeed offered me a sense of support.

I still hope to go abroad for several months or a year later in my graduate studies to do research towards my thesis, but that’s an unattainable goal for now.

I just finished reading a chapter in *Astrobiology: A Brief Introduction*.

I’ve always been interested in finding aliens, however absurd that may sound. It’s kind of a secret thought. That’s okay, as, believe it or not, the book is a recommended reading in the course “Astrobiology and the Search for Extraterrestrial Life,” an online course offered by Edinburgh on [https://www.coursera.org/!](https://www.coursera.org/)

If I ever do succeed in landing a career in SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) Institute in Mountain View or the European Space Agency, Edinburgh would again be my inspiration.

Respected Friends of the International Center,

Sitting... Breathing... Concentrating... What was only twenty minutes of sitting meditation felt like an eternity for my mind to wander. “Focus only on your breathing. If you make the slightest move, you will be smacked with the meditation paddle,” said **Gao Bo**, our Kung Fu meditation master. Stepping... Respiring... Focusing... Walking barefoot in the recently rainy Buddhist monastery perimeter. “The first time you truly try walking meditation, you will never forget. That is why we try it barefoot. So you remember it forever!” repeated Gao Bo.

“Now raise your arms in the air and move your arms in a circle! Like air rushing out from your Chi. Pound your chest. Feel hard like earth,” said our master as he demonstrated the four elemental martial art techniques for meditation.

As part of the study-abroad curriculum in Hong Kong, we were invited to our professor’s Buddhist monastery for first-hand practice of the different art forms of meditation. The ancient art of *Ānāpānasati*, or Mindfulness of Breathing meditation, has been employed in Buddhist Meditation practice for thousands of years. For my Buddhism Psychology and Mental Cultivation course,

my class went for a weekend retreat to the Hong Kong Buddhist College to be taught the basic techniques of *Ānāpānasati* and review meditation topics we covered in class. It was a humbling experience to live in the home of Buddhist monks, eat vegetarian delights, and learn meditation techniques from the enthusiastic Gao Bo, a Mainland Chinese Buddhist monk and Kung Fu master.

If there were one word I would use to describe studying abroad, it would be “evolving.” Evolving, because at the moment of your return, you no longer are the same person you were when you left. Our minds, body, and spirit change with the stimulation of novel experiences that accompany being in a foreign country, culture, civilization.

My goal for my Hong Kong experience was to gain a better understanding of life, and mature with the attainment of a new self-awareness. I was in a position in my life where my perspective on life was clouded; I was lost and unguided. I did not know whether what I was doing was the best for me, whether my career choice was right for my life values. By applying the Buddhist philosophy that I had learned, I was able to find new guidance. My new motto: “Always live in the present moment and do not dwell too much on the future or past.”

When I first applied to study at the University of Hong Kong, I was uncertain how I would finance my way. I was going to be a fifth-year undergraduate with accrued loans and limited financial options. It was not until I was awarded the Friends of the International Center Scholarship that I found relief in my decision to study abroad—once again [Costa Rica 2011, Australia 2010]—and I am so thankful that I did. I can proudly say that this study-abroad experience was invaluable in shaping my mind, body, and spirit into what it is today.

With great gratitude,
Andrew Yeung
Thurgood Marshall College
General Biology and Music majors



Vegetarian breakfast provided by Buddhist monks
Andrew Yeung on the left

Scholarship Contributions: Some gifts come with interesting stories. When Friends Treasurer, **Jeri Abernathy**, notified me, as *Newsletter* editor, that our organization had received a donation to our scholarship fund from **Esther Lee Fong** and her sister, **Lianne Fong-Dominguez**, of Stockton, California, given in honor of **Liz Fong Wills**, I mistakenly assumed these were relatives of Liz, our Ethnic Dinner chair. The latter, however, quickly corrected and enlightened me. Wrote Liz: "Esther Fong is the same lady who made a donation last year. She was the first Chinese-American schoolteacher in Stockton, and a charter school was named after her. She isn't a relative, but is the daughter of my father's best friend. In the card with the check, she told me a story that I had never heard before. Evidently my father told her father that I was marrying a redheaded man. Her father asked if this redhead was educated, came from a good family, and treated me well. When my father answered in the affirmative, her father said that this was the best that a father could ever hope for. I'm sure that this made my father feel better, even though he would have preferred that I marry a Chinese."

In February, our **Ethnic Dinner** raised a substantial sum of money for scholarships. Friends join **Louise Engleman** who wrote **Liz**: "Many thanks to you and your dedicated crew for the wonderful dinner Saturday night. We look forward to it yearly. Sharing your travel experiences is always enjoyable and educational. Thank you for all that you and **Chris** do to enrich our International Center experience." Speaking for the enthusiastic waitstaff, **Ting Chen** from Shanghai wrote: "The Saturday dinner was great! I enjoyed the waitress experience and the tasty food, also the impressive photography. Don't hesitate to call me for assistance if you need any help in the future."

And, also in February, Friends received a contribution to the **Ruth Newmark Scholarship** made by **Leonard** and **Ruth Newmark** in celebration of their grandchildren, **Danya** and **Justin Costello**. Additionally, Prof. **Greg Rouse**, a SIO colleague of **Lanna Cheng Lewin**, made a scholarship donation upon joining the Friends.



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