Fall 2008

New International Students Arrive at UW-Madison

Last August, MFIS helped welcome new international students to the UW at several university student events. MFIS representatives were present at the UW housing resource fair, the International Student Services Welcome Reception & the International Students Services New Student Reception. At these events, volunteers spoke with students and informed them of our many different programs. They also promoted and handed out invites to our annual "Welcome to Wisconsin!" fall picnic (More information about the picnic can be found on page 2 of this newsletter).

This year, the total number of international students has increased, along with the number of countries the students are representing. The total number of international students attending UW-Madison in 2008 was 4,496 – 850 more students than in 2006. Also, the total number of countries represented by UW-Madison’s international student community increased from 100 in 2006 to 114 in 2008. It’s great to see that more and more international students are choosing to attend UW-Madison. Also, the increasing numbers of students choosing UW-Madison is a wonderful reminder that MFIS volunteers and programs will be needed for years to come.

MFIS Temporary Housing Program Serves Over 130 Students in August 2008

MFIS would like to thank all those who volunteered to be temporary hosts for international students and scholars arriving at the beginning of the fall semester. With your help, MFIS hosted more than 130 students from over 35 countries during the summer and fall of 2008. Thank you so much for all of your efforts and we hope we can count on your help in the future.

MFIS’s temporary hosting program gives Madison-area families the opportunity to host an international student or scholar in their home for up to three nights. International students have found this to be extremely helpful, as it provides a brief period of rest and comfort while they transition to permanent housing in dormitories, apartments, and boarding homes. In addition, the hosts can help students by answering the many questions they will have about life in Madison and the USA.

Here are a few quotes from past program participants…

"We had a lot of fun with (our student) …we love hosting and intend to do it forever”.

"After dinner, we took our students for a walk, which they enjoyed…one said, 'I don't want to blink, I think I will miss some of the beauty that surrounds me'."

If you are not already a temporary host, and are interested in becoming one, please email Nancy Schultz, randn1509@sbcglobal.net, to receive more information about this great program.
New international students and scholars were the guests of honor at the annual Welcome to Wisconsin Picnic held on Sunday, September 14 at its new location, the beautiful Olin Park and Pavilion located on the shores of Lake Monona in Madison. MFIS decided to try the Olin Park location because of its close proximity to the UW campus and would allow international students and scholars to utilize several different transportation options to get to the event, including walking and biking.

Over 100 students and MFIS volunteers enjoyed an American cookout with grilled chicken, hamburgers, veggie burgers, salads, homemade desserts and lemonade. Several students were joined by their Madison host families; and a few brought their spouses and children.

Sabrina Karl, President of MFIS and master of ceremonies, warmly welcomed guests and shared information about MFIS and its programs. She also introduced Laurie Cox, Director of UW International Student Services (ISS), who wholeheartedly encouraged the students to take advantage of MFIS programs during their time in Madison, especially the unique opportunity to befriend a local family or community member.

Fifteen members of the UW Marching Band provided lively entertainment with the chance to polka and sing along to *On Wisconsin* and *Varsity*. Long-time MFIS picnic favorite, Bucky Badger, charmed the crowd, kicked up his heels with the band and hammed it up for photos.

After lunch, Brian Beutter, MFIS Past-President, handed out door prizes in gregarious fashion, and lead the Wisconsin Trivia contest with winners receiving UW baseball caps, winter hats and t-shirts for their impressive knowledge of Wisconsin history, politics, and geography.

Outdoor American picnic activities included three-legged races, football and a rousing game of wiffle ball. Plans to canoe on Lake Monona with the Hoofers Outing Club were regrettably canceled due to strong winds – but keep your fingers crossed for next year.

The picnic organizers would like to extend a special thanks to all the MFIS volunteers and special guests who helped make this year’s picnic such a memorable day for the new students, scholars and their families!
The MFIS English classes are off and running once again. Although the number of students is down by almost 1/3 this fall, those who attend the classes are enjoying the teaching, the very committed teachers, and the new friendships they are forging. We have noticed over the past several years that the level of the English skills of newly arrived students is increasingly higher than a few years ago. Students particularly value the opportunity to discuss ideas with others from different cultures. There has been a lot of interest in our writing section, and Liba Daub is also offering a 5-week cooking class.

Ongoing MFIS Volunteer Opportunities

Conversation Partners Needed
The English Conversation Partner Program is a very flexible program. The international students who come to the UW sign up for this program when they arrive. All they want is to get to know an American and speak English on a friendly, social basis. It is not tutoring. You will be matched up with an international student and then you decide together how often, where and what you would like to do, such as go for a cup of coffee, a walk or whatever. The commitment is for one academic year, the fall and spring semesters. If you are interested, please email mfis@odos.wisc.edu and provide your name, address, telephone number and e-mail. Thank you!

Wanted: Photos of MFIS
Do you have photos to share of MFIS volunteers or international students taking advantage of one of the many opportunities offered through MFIS? If so, we would love a copy for our records and/or promotional use. Please email scanned or digital photographs to mfis.photos@gmail.com with information about the people, event, and date, if known. Many thanks!

MFIS Office
Currently, the office is short staffed. Would you be interested in helping out? The goal is to have the office open every weekday between 10am and 12 noon. We need people willing to work once a week or once every other week. Please email the MFIS office at mfis@odos.wisc.edu if you’re interested in this opportunity.

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For nearly 55 years, MFIS and its volunteers have befriended and helped UW-Madison international students, scholars and their families adjust to life in Madison. One of the ways we do this is through the Thanksgiving Hospitality program, which offers international students an opportunity to celebrate Thanksgiving with a local family. To make this possible, we rely on local families to host the students. Our community response has been great. Last year we were able to place 44 students from 12 countries with 18 families. Many of you have hosted students for many years.

MFIS is looking for families who would like to invite international students to celebrate Thanksgiving with them. It is a wonderful opportunity for parents, grandparents, children and friends to share Thanksgiving traditions and food with people from around the world. “Both as a former international student who was fortunate enough to have been invited into the homes of local residents, as well as a host for the past 32 years, the warmth and friendship shared will never be forgotten” said Eng Braun, program coordinator.

Please consider inviting an individual, a couple, or a family to your home for Thanksgiving. You can contact Eng Braun at 273-1721 or email ebraun@chorus.net, or MFIS at 263-4010/email mfis@odos.wisc.edu.

Madison Friends of International Students
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