Needed: Volunteers who want MFIS’ next year to be a success!

Fall semester of the 2009-2010 academic year may seem far away, but now is the time that MFIS begins its preparations each year for the thousands of international students that will begin arriving in August. Our goal is always to make as many helpful and friendly connections as we can between incoming internationals and local volunteers, as well as make those experiences as positive as possible. Pulling this off takes a great deal of three different things: 1) strategic planning, 2) program coordination, and 3) individual voluntarism.

As we plan for 2009-2010, we need to fill several important roles within MFIS, and to fill those roles, we need you, and many others like you. Individual volunteers are what have made it possible for MFIS to successfully serve internationals for more than 50 years, and we will need the help of many this year, just as every other year. Fresh faces are also extremely beneficial, as they bring us new perspectives and energies.

With the retirement of several key Board members and program coordinators, MFIS’ needs are significant this year, so please consider whether you can be the person who turns one of the following volunteer needs into a filled role that will help make MFIS’ 2009-2010 year a great success for internationals and for our hundreds of volunteers. Thank you!

✦ 2-4 Board members – The MFIS Board provides strategic planning for our programs and activities, and oversees the organization’s finances, meeting 9 times a year (every 6 weeks) on a weeknight evening.
✦ 2-3 team volunteers to help match arriving internationals with host families for our Temporary Hosting program.
✦ 1 event coordinator & 4-6 team volunteers for our “Welcome to Wisconsin!” picnic to be held in September in Olin Park.
✦ 1-2 program coordinators for our new Friendship Hosts program (see article on page 2).
✦ 1 program coordinator for our Thanksgiving Hospitality program.
✦ 1 event coordinator & 3-4 team volunteers for our Capitol Reception next February.
✦ 1-2 MFIS office volunteers (MFIS’ office is located in the Red Gym on campus).
✦ Individual volunteers to: host arriving students in your home for up to 3 days in August, be a Friendship Host to a student, or invite a student to your home for Thanksgiving festivities.

To find out more about any of these roles, please contact MFIS at mfis@odos.wisc.edu or 263-4010. Thank you!

UW International Student Demographics for 2008-2009

In Fall 2008, UW-Madison welcomed 4,042 international students from 114 countries! As in years past, the top 3 contributing countries were 1) China, 2) Korea and 3) India. However, the 2008 order changed from the 2007 order, which was 1) Korea, 2) China and 3) India. Also similar to past years, graduate students made up the majority of students enrolled at 53% of the total international student population. This percentage is down from 2007’s graduate make-up of 57% of the total international student population. In 2007, UW lost student representation from the West Bank present in 2006. In 2008, the UW regained the West Bank as a country of representation. A table of the regional analysis of 2008 UW international students’ countries of origin can be found on page 3 of this newsletter and a complete analysis is available on UW’s International Student Services website at http://www.iss.wisc.edu/sandr.html.
MFIS spoke with recent student participant Alessio Cecchinato. Here's some information Alessio shared about himself.

1) From: "I come from Italy. I have been living in the north-east part of Italy in a little town close to Venice called Maerne."

2) Age: 27

3) Hobbies and/or personal interests: "Well... I have many hobbies and personal interests: I like to play football (soccer), read books and have fun with my dog."

4) Arrival in Madison: "I arrived here in September, and I'm now completing a research/study program."

5) Major and graduation date: "I'm carrying out my PhD program from Italy (Padova) in Animal Breeding and Genetics and I'm planning to finish this year."

6) Funny, confusing, or surprising experience during first few weeks of arriving in Madison: "When I just arrived in the new apartment, I realized that the bed and other stuffs were not included in the apartment, so I needed to buy everything!"

7) What he misses most from or about Italy: "Maybe it could be foreseen... but definitely the food."

8) MFIS involvement: "I don't have clue about the right name. I attended the English class with two wonderful teachers! (Anne and Katie)"

9) Italian restaurants he likes in Madison? "I think there is a good Italian restaurant close to the Capitol called "il papavero"."

10) Post-graduation plans: "I don't know right now... a post-doc here at the UW?"

11) What he'll miss most about Madison: "I definitely will miss my friends I found here in Madison (from all the parts of the world)."

12) One lesson learned from the experience of studying in another culture: "Have patience..."

13) Favorite book by an Italian author: "La luna e i falò", by Cesare Pavese.

15) What do you think of Bucky Badger? "It's the icon of the University of Wisconsin–Madison!"

Friendship Sharing & Conversation Partners to merge

For several years, MFIS has offered students two different, but similar programs. One was Friendship Sharing, which matched Madison-area volunteers with students wanting to connect with an American "host" throughout the school year. The volunteers in this program were often families.

The Conversation Partners program more specifically served students who wanted help with their English conversation skills, pairing them with an individual volunteer (generally men with male students and women with female students) to meet regularly and practice speaking English.

Although the programs do have these differences, we believe the two offerings can be more efficiently administered as a single program by a single coordinator or team, instead of one coordinator/team for each program. To do so simply means finding out participating students' specific interests (e.g., general friendship vs. language improvement), finding out program volunteers' specific interests on these same two counts, and making matches as appropriate.

We are calling this new program "Friendship Hosts", and are excited about working in the coming months to ensure it is ready to serve incoming 2009-2010 students. As mentioned in the article above, we are seeking 1-2 organized individuals to coordinate these student/host matches, so if helping with this "new" program interests you, please contact us ASAP!

UW International Student Profile

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15) What do you think of Bucky Badger? "It's the icon of the University of Wisconsin–Madison!"
Over the last year, MFIS has been working on a plan to not only update our mailing list, but entirely upgrade our whole database system. We will be moving in the coming months to a more robust volunteer management system, which will provide our organization with greatly improved capabilities to keep each volunteer’s interests and preferences more up to date, recruit more volunteers, and keep in better contact with existing volunteers. All of this will help MFIS minimize returned mail, reduce costs and our environmental impact by sending out as much as we can electronically rather than by paper, and reach more volunteers for each of our programs to ensure as many students as possible are served by MFIS.

To make this new database set-up succeed, however, we will need your help. In the near future, you will receive a fairly simple Volunteer Information Form. This form will allow you to tell us how you wish to be contacted and what MFIS programs are of most interest to you. We will also start requiring a similar “Volunteer Application Form” for all new MFIS volunteers.

We hope you will find it quick and easy to complete the form and return it to us, as the information you provide is critical to us operating a well-organized, effective, and efficient database, which in turn helps us run a well-organized, effective, and efficient MFIS!

Thank you in advance for your completion of this form when you receive it!
PROST! 2009 Annual Dinner at the Essen Haus

For the last 2 years, the MFIS Annual Dinner took on a new format: featuring a country from which the UW draws a large portion of its international students. In 2007, we highlighted India and in 2008, we focused on China.

This year we’re spotlighting the UW’s largest European representation—Germany. Please join us while we experience German cuisine, music, facts, and prizes, as well as contributions from German students.

We’ll also tell you about volunteer opportunities for the coming academic year, and information about who is on the newly elected 2009-2010 MFIS Board.

We hope you can join us for this once-a-year social opportunity!

Reserve your spot no later than Monday, April 6 by emailing us at mfis@odos.wisc.edu or calling us at 263-4010.
You’re invited to the MFIS 2009 Annual Dinner
“A Taste of Germany”

In 2007, the MFIS Annual Dinner began featuring a country from which the UW draws a large portion of its international students. In 2007, it was India. Last year, China.

This year we’re spotlighting Germany, bringing you German cuisine, music, facts, and prizes, as well as contributions from German students.

We’ll also tell you about volunteer opportunities for the coming academic year, and information about who is on the newly elected 2009-2010 MFIS Board.

“A Taste of Germany” will be held:

Monday, April 13, 2009
6:00 – 8:15 pm
The Essen Haus, 514 E. Wilson Street, Madison

Reserve your spot by email or telephone only (see black box below). Tickets are $16 each to cover dinner costs, payable at the event with either cash or check.

Please also consider adding a donation to support our 2009-2010 programs. Thank you!

We hope you can join us for this once-a-year MFIS social opportunity!

Unable to attend? Please consider supporting MFIS’ 2009-10 programs with a charitable gift.

Name(s): ____________________________________________________
Address: ____________________________________________________
Amount of gift: ______________________________________________
Telephone: __________________________________________________
Email address*: ______________________________________________

-Mail this completed form with your check written to “MFIS” to:

716 Langdon Street, Room 223
Madison, WI 53706-1400

☐ Please send me information on how to include MFIS in my will or estate plans.

As always, thank you very much for your support!