Picnic Perfection
MFIS Showcases America’s Best with Friends, Food and Fun

It’s unanimous! The annual Welcome to Wisconsin picnic was a barnburner! From horseshoes to hamburgers, from Bucky to badminton—all the bases were covered in this introduction for new international students. Anisha Akula—despite recent knee surgery—chaired the picnic committee and marshaled some 40 volunteers to welcome 275 international students. Thanks to Susan Bulgarin and Culvers (who provided ice cream for all the guests), Chase Bank for help with the new MFIS banner, and to all who supported the event so generously by subsidizing student meals and volunteering their time.

Volunteer Spotlight: Susan Becker
By Joanne Lenburg

Susan Becker has been working for MFIS as office supervisor for the last 25 years. She enjoys her weekly contact with students and with the staff in International Student Services (ISS), where the MFIS office is currently located. In her role as supervisor, Susan orients new office volunteers and serves as the primary contact with ISS staff. She has also served as newsletter editor, Thanksgiving Coordinator, and Co-president. In addition, Susan and her husband Rad have enjoyed hosting students in their home during many holidays and temporary home stays. She was also an enthusiastic participant in MFIS’ International Women’s Group, which brought together Madison residents, international students, and spouses for social and educational gatherings.

Susan’s interest in other countries stems in part from her family and childhood. Her father was Scottish and she was born in England, although she grew up in eastern Washington State. After coming to Madison for a University Hospital internship in dietetics, Susan met Rad. They have made their home here ever since.

“I’ve always been interested in other countries,” Susan says, adding that MFIS is an ideal organization to complement that interest.

Thanks, Susan, for all your hard work!

www.iss.wisc.edu/mfis
To provide the best and safest experience for our international students, and to learn more about our volunteer interests and backgrounds, MFIS has implemented a Volunteer Application Form. Whether a new volunteer or an experienced one, you will be asked to fill out this form, particularly if involved with Global Friends, Thanksgiving Hosting, or Temporary Home Stay. This will allow us to maintain the strength of our key programs. Thank you for your patience as we transition to this new form.

Thanks to all who hosted students as part of MFIS’ Temporary Home Stay program this summer. More than 55 hosts welcomed students from 16 different countries. Thanks, too, to our tireless Temporary Home Stay coordinators who made phone calls and sent e-mails in order to place the students. They are: Sean O’Herrin, Karen Carlson, Karen LaValley, Don Jones, Kathryn Lederhause, and Mary Ann Fahl.

**Give Thanks for International Friendship!**

*Share Your Thanksgiving with an International Student*

Interested in sharing your Thanksgiving celebration with an international guest? Madison Friends of International Students (MFIS) is looking for families who would like to invite international students to their homes for this year’s Thanksgiving celebration.

It is a wonderful opportunity to share Thanksgiving traditions, food, and family with people from around the world. The warmth and friendship will never be forgotten. Volunteers are screened and matched through MFIS. For questions or to volunteer as a host, call MFIS at 263-4010 or send an e-mail to info@mfismadison.org (with “Thanksgiving Hospitality” as the subject line) by November 15.
Comfort Zone...
By Sherry Caves

I am happy to be a part of MFIS because it gives me a sense of connectedness. It gives me an opportunity for face time with people from around the world, people with new and different ways of seeing the world. It gives me a chance to break down the barriers that form easily from politics and nationalism. This face time is crucial to foster understanding in our changing world.

Many more countries are now sending students to the UW and Madison College—and to MFIS homes—than ever before. Some of these changes are quite surprising to someone like myself, who lived through the tumultuous changes of the 1960s and 1970s. For example, out of 4,000 students on the UW campus today, 1,500 are from China. When I was a college student in the late 60’s, someone suggested that soon the US and China would have diplomatic relations. At the time, this was as radical an idea as if he had said Wisconsin would soon give up cheese! My 18-year-old mind had never before entertained such a thought. The prejudices of the Cold War era made the idea of diplomatic exchange with a communist country unthinkable.

Fast-forward to this August when my husband and I hosted two young men from Shanghai, only the most recent of many Chinese we have gotten to know because of MFIS.

A veteran MFIS member told me about her experience of inviting 15 students to her home for Thanksgiving. Among them were several white South African students, and this was at the height of apartheid. Not many other MFIS hosts wanted to host these students. This gracious woman gave them the experience an American holiday, in the company of people from many different cultures. She and her family also provided them with a view of what is best about the United States: diverse people coming together in friendship. To be fair, perhaps the South African students, too, were opposed to apartheid, and this experience gave them the chance to see a more egalitarian society in action.

Without the opportunity for face time, we remain strangers. But volunteering with MFIS provides face time. In the process, it gives us a chance to change the world, and to be changed by it, for the better—and widen our comfort zone.

Newsletter dilemma: to e-mail or to mail?

At MFIS, we want to allot as much of our budget as possible to programs for students. To this end, we have offered our members the choice of communications sent electronically or through the mail. Because communication is key to maintaining support for MFIS, we are evaluating the effect of this choice. All members received the mailed version this time. Why? Our end of year fund appeal was less than expected in 2010. Could it be that e-mailed newsletters receive less attention than mailed ones? The plan: have two e-mailed and one mailed newsletter this year, then re-evaluate.

If you haven’t provided us with your e-mail address and wish to hear from us electronically, send an e-mail to info@mfismadison.org with “MFIS Newsletter Delivery” in the subject line.
Help us reach our fundraising goal!

MFIS continues to operate all programs mostly from the generosity of volunteers, which requires us to manage our budget diligently. Although we have received many donations, for which we are grateful, we do still need further help from our friends to reach our fundraising goal. Can we count on your support?

Name: ____________________________
Address: ____________________________
Telephone: ____________________________
E-mail Address: ____________________________
Amount of Gift: ____________________________

Mail this completed form with your check (made out to “MFIS”) to:
716 Langdon St., Rm. 223
Madison, WI 53706

*We are also able to accept donations through our website.

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