International Bazaar 2013

This year’s International Bazaar was a huge success with over 350 people in attendance and more than 20 countries represented. Aside from outstanding representation from TU’s international community, the U.S. was also represented this year through performances, the fashion show, and a food/culture booth. Thank you to everyone who attended and/or participated in the wonderful evening! Thanks to Simon Wang for the great photos! More photos are available on the TU AIS Facebook page.
Omani National Day 2013

The Omani Student Association held a celebration of the 43rd Omani National Day on Sunday, November 17th. The evening was a great success with delicious Middle Eastern cuisine, henna tattooing, traditional clothing, awards, performances, and other cultural displays. Omani National Day is celebrated annually on November 18th and 19th to commemorate the birthday of Sultan Qaboos bin Said (born November 18th, 1940) and independence from the partial colonization of the Portuguese (November 18th, 1650). Omani National Day is widely celebrated throughout Oman with parades, fireworks, flag and light displays, camel races, dancing, and other cultural displays.

We are very happy to welcome Fred Johnson, our new Latin American and Caribbean recruiting representative for The University of Tulsa. He recently took some time out of his busy travel schedule to share a few interesting facts about himself:

Current home: Santiago, Chile (very close to the end of the world)

Hometown: Corpus Christi, Texas, USA

Hobbies: Travel, collecting currencies, volunteering, cooking (but most of all, EATING!!!)

Favorite Food: REAL Mexican food (mole verde, pozole)

Favorite Music: Depends on the mood and where I might be, love to blend in so usually like local popular music of the country I might be visiting.

What I do for The University of Tulsa: I am the international representative for Latin America and the Caribbean. I am responsible for helping students from the region with anything related to TU. I get to travel throughout Latin America and the Caribbean meeting with Counselors at high schools, students, and parents. A very rewarding and humbling position.

A Random Interesting Fact About Me: I was born in the US but my whole family is from Mexico. I grew up in el D.F. in Mexico City, so I don’t fit the typical stereotype of being Mexican but I embrace and love it. I also just got married in December 2013, thus my reason for moving to Chile!

Interesting Facts About Oman

Since gaining freedom in 1650, achieved through a rebellion led by Imam Sultan bin Saif, Oman has remained the longest continuously independent state in the Arab world.

Oman was known in the past for being a major international producer of incense.

According to the Institute for Economics and Peace, Oman is the 45th most peaceful country in the world.

Oman’s economy has been ranked 17th most resilient and 20th freest in the world.
Mary and Phuong: A Thriving Cross-Cultural Friendship

When Phuong Hoang first came to The University of Tulsa, she felt uncomfortable and out of her element. She had never been to the U.S. before, having graduated from a small high school in Vũng Tàu, Vietnam. At TU, she was assigned to live with American roommates in Lottie Jane Mabee Hall but just never made a personal connection with them. Aside from the culture shock and language barrier, Phuong’s initial shyness made forming friendships difficult. She focused solely on her classes, missing out on the excitement of campus activities. However, all of this changed in her sophomore year when she met Mary Behm.

Mary grew up moving around and constantly meeting new people. Whenever she arrived in a new place, she forced herself to step out of her comfort zone and get to know her peers, something that became especially difficult when she began going to school in Bogotá, Colombia at the age of 13. Not about to spend two years in a foreign country without learning the language and as much of the culture as she could grasp, Mary challenged herself to meet her Colombian schoolmates and find common ground. She not only learned to speak Spanish but also developed proficiency in Latin dancing. This nomadic childhood and early experience abroad seems to have prepared Mary well for the many intercultural friendships she has developed at TU.

When Mary and Phuong became roommates during Phuong’s second year and Mary’s first, they immediately hit it off. With their common interests in shopping, eating, and playing board games, they found much to enjoy outside of their classes. Phuong credits this friendship with her rapid adjustment to U.S. culture and much of her success as a student. Mary sees their friendship (or any intercultural friendship for that matter) as an opportunity to get to know a wonderful person but also as a chance to learn more about a place that she may never visit.

“I may never visit Vietnam,” Mary says. “but I can still learn about the different beliefs, the food, and get to see the world through someone else’s eyes.”

While Phuong has faced many obstacles in adjusting to U.S. culture (learning to understand sarcasm for one example), her friendship to Mary has been strong from the beginning. Still, such friendships can be a challenge to form because there is often reluctance among both domestic and international students to go out on a limb and try to meet someone from a different cultural background.

“You have to step outside the bubble,” Mary says “just like Americans need to step outside the bubble.”

Mary says the keys to making friends across cultures are to get past the concern that someone is going to judge you, to drop your assumptions about other cultures (e.g., all Americans are close-minded), and to just be yourself. She feels that international students could benefit from attending events that U.S. students attend (e.g., football games and other sporting events), and that U.S. students could benefit from putting themselves in the shoes of international students.

“Recognize their challenges,” she suggests, “They’re in a new place with a new language, they may have no car. Be encouraging and ask questions. Share parts of your culture, and try to respect their beliefs.”

Phuong agrees with Mary’s advice and adds a few of her own thoughts for international and domestic students.

“International students should find a really good American roommate! It made a big difference for me.” She says, adding for U.S. students “Don’t hesitate to talk to international students. We love to be asked about our culture, our food, or anything else!”

The major obstacle in Mary’s and Phuong’s friendship has nothing to do with their different cultural backgrounds. These days, the challenge is finding the time to hang out. They still eat lunch, have coffee, and shop together but their busy schedules make it difficult. Mary is in the College of Nursing and stays very busy with the responsibilities of her membership in Kappa Gamma sorority. Phuong is a senior in the College of Engineering, so she has plenty of projects to keep her busy. Nevertheless, they make an effort to find time each week to reconnect through their common interests.
Chinese Student Association Celebrates the Year of the Horse

By Junyu “Johnny” Wei

On Jan 30th 2014, the Chinese Student Association held a successful New Year celebration event. Up to 400 people from various countries attended. The event featured authentic Chinese food, traditional and modern performances, and traditional Chinese decorations.

Although we ordered enough food for 500 people, we ran out quickly, so we provided a second round of food. It turned out that all the guests loved the slightly spicy Chinese food.

The performances included Sleeve Dancing, a traditional costume show, hip-hop, and singing. Sleeve Dancing showed guests the elegance and tranquil quality of Chinese jasmine in terms of the gentle and slow-paced style of dancing. The traditional costume show presented the delicately handmade Chinese chi-paos which are thought to accentuate the beauty of Chinese women.

For a little more fun and a little trick to keep our audience, we held a lottery throughout the party. People were given their numbers as they signed in at the entrance, and the third prize drawing was done at the beginning of the party. We gave out the second prize at the half way point of the event, and the first prize at the end. Prizes included gift cards, super snack pack and domestic round trip flight tickets.

We are really glad that all the guests had a good time with us in the party and learned more about our tradition and culture. Some of guests said they could not understand at some points during the party, which is what we need to improve in our future events. We are happy to learn from those precious experiences. The Chinese Student Association appreciates the support from everyone.

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ISS is also on Twitter!

If you use Twitter, you can keep up with us at https://twitter.com/tu_iss.