



Bridging Borders

The International Friendship Program

PURDUE
UNIVERSITY.



IFP FALL EDITION 2017

For the past four years, IFP has partnered with the Undergraduate Research Experience at Purdue—Colombia (UREP-C) to provide scholars, here for six months, with IFP host families. What a fantastic experience it has been for hosts and scholars alike! Joseph Briller, intrigued by the scholars he'd met, was interested in learning more about this special program that is bridging borders (see article below). Enjoy! Beth & Wendy

Researching the Future by Joseph Briller

June is magical at Purdue for 30 young scholars from Universidad Nacional in Bogota Colombia. The scholars, generally ranging in age from 20-24, arrive for advanced research under the tutelage of Purdue faculty mentors. The goal of their research is both to foster progress in their specializations and change their lives.

Ulianova Vidal, a Purdue PhD candidate, the program's assistant director, describes the program as *transformational*. Participants go home changed—with new outlooks on enhancing their academic and professional careers while contributing to science and society. Uli, the much loved program "mother", keeps a benevolent eye on the young scholars, encouraging them to eat, sleep and make timely progress on their projects.

The program is a dream realized for Juan D. Velasquez, Director of Strategic Initiatives for the College of Engineering. Dr. Velasquez, a Purdue graduate in industrial engineering, has a passion for Purdue and his native Colombia. It was his desire to bring Purdue and Universidad Nacional together for high performing Colombian students to pursue advanced research in the cultural setting that he experienced. His goal is to continue this unique program and expand it as much as possible. Purdue and Universidad Nacional support it jointly.

Dr. Velasquez emphasizes the positive effects on family, professional growth, economic and cultural life for the scholars upon returning home. Greatly appreciated are the contributions of IFP and its host families. Juan believes it is very important for the young scholars to have a "family" far away from home, often for the first time, in a foreign country, speaking a second language. For Jaime Mejia, a mechanical engineer, it is a new path in life and being welcomed as an adult professional. Nathalia Olivera, specializing in food science delights in doing advanced research and exploring the possibility of graduate school. For all the participants the paths ahead will be exciting and rewarding to Purdue and at home in Colombia.

Enjoying the Flavors of Fall by Wendy Medbourn



On October 14th, at the IFP Autumn Party held at White Horse Christian Center, 260 IFP students and their hosts enjoyed a delicious traditional American meal of chicken and noodles, mashed potatoes, green beans, rolls and baked apples. (and some Indian sides to spice things up!) After dinner, participants selected "a piece of culture" they could not imagine people in their cultures living without. Tea, coffee and hospitality were common themes in a number of cultures, while baseball and apple pie were two American favorites. Bobbing for apples, and relay racing to dress for winter weather and wrapping up mummies rounded out our evening activities. A great time was had by all!

Our Host Families In Action *by Joseph Briller*

Peru is in South America but thanks to IFP Hosts, Joe and Opal Wilkerson, Jaime and Catalina discovered it is also in Indiana. A trip to the circus there was one of many excursions Joe and Opal have made to welcome their international students.

Like so many of our IFP Hosts, Joe and Opal have become a second family in so many ways for those far from home. Beyond excursions and festivals, Joe and Opal share with their students enriching aspects of local Indiana life. Those range from church activities, and shopping for groceries to cookouts for which a small camp stove was purchased with the opportunity to try new dishes.



Jaime Mejia Mosquera, Joe & Opal Wilkerson

Joe and Opal feel strongly that making time for international students is greatly rewarded. They welcomed Jaime and soon “adopted” Catalina as well. Joe mentioned how, “They gave us valid reasons to travel and do things with them and they appreciate us in spite of our age.” IFP Hosts often find that the welcome, support and family life they offer quickly melts away age differences.

Joe’s long business career in the bicycle industry also proved to be a boon for Jaime and Catalina. Joe helped them obtain and maintain their bicycles. From circus to Scrabble, Jaime and Catalina have become family to Joe and Opal and the feeling of delight is mutual.

Editors’ Note: In interviewing Joe Wilkerson for the above article, Bridging Borders editor Joseph Briller learned that they are both Josephs who came to Greater Lafayette from afar with birthdays only six days apart.

IFP has been such an enriching experience for me. This is my second year in the program, and both years, I have been paired with wonderful students: kind, inquisitive, thoughtful, bright, and engaging. This year, when attending the Fall Mixer, we were charged with the challenging task of locating one another in a bustling room of excited students and hosts, and we were so thrilled upon locating one another! But, we were even more thrilled as we realized a shared love for chocolate-covered fruit and a shared disdain for cooking! With such a large, diverse campus, it is often difficult to actually encounter those of different cultures on a deeper and more meaningful level, and so I am very grateful that IFP encourages the two communities - longer-term residents in the community and transitional international students - to just spend time together and share life.

Andrea Waclawek, Host

“What was something you learned from your host about their culture?”
“What have you enjoyed doing the most with your host so far?”

Sharing Stories *by Joseph Briller*

Rachna Shetty pursuing a masters in mechanical engineering, found teatime with her Chinese-American hosts revealing. In her native India, tea is taken with milk in the British manner, inherited along with the English language and parliament. This time, it was taken in the Chinese tradition, freshly brewed from tea leaves.

Shyam Bahadur Pandey, a doctoral candidate in second language studies, loves excursions with hosts Kathy and Michael Atwell as well as seeing them try on the Nepali scarf and hat he brought for them from home.

Yongjie Zhuang likes learning about American culture from her kind hosts, Nicholas and Lydia Romanin, and getting advice such as how to use kitchen appliances.

Guochenhao Song enjoys playing table tennis with his friendly host, Michael Linnes.

Yen-Chen Chiang appreciates how his host, David Bates, has reached out to him. David, grew up in the Congo as an international student himself. Yen-Chen feels that this shared experience has helped ease his transition to Purdue.

Yashashree Devendra Watkar, looking forward to a career in engineering, is thrilled with host, Joy Hagan. Joy’s enthusiasm and her ability to bridge cultural differences has made her feel right at home.

Vahap Demir from Turkey, a doctoral candidate in curriculum and instruction, also feels it is like being home with awesome hosts, Sandy and Steve Flammini.

Sachin Kulkarni, a graduate student in mechanical engineering, is always excited about time with his hosts. That’s what IFP is all about, being family far from home.