



Bridging Borders

International Friendship Program

PURDUE
UNIVERSITY



SPRING 2019 EDITION

Dear IFP Community Hosts and Student Guests,

*In this issue of **Bridging Borders**, we hope our readers will get a bigger picture of how IFP is impacting lives. It's a joy for us to see and hear from YOU—your stories and involvement continue to help us stay engaged in seeing connections come to life. Thank you for your openness, curiosity, and desire to make our world a better place.*

*Beth Tucker & Wendy Medbourn, IFP Coordinators
Joseph Briller, Bridging Borders Editor*

Longing for “A Place Called Home”

This fall and spring, IFP coordinator, Beth Tucker, launched “A Place Called Home,” a guided reflection with activities centered around the theme of HOME with hopes that IFP international students would be able to connect with their hosts in more meaningful ways. Building greater self-awareness, cultural openness and curiosity are important outcomes of a study abroad experience that can impact international students' lives for many years to come. Find out on page 2 what students are learning through their friendships and interactions with their IFP hosts.

Inspiring Our Hosts

We often like to share what we as hosts do to make our international students feel welcome and adjust to life at Purdue and in our community. It is also appropriate to add what our students do to make our hosting an inspiring experience.

Four of our hosts shared some of those sentiments with *Bridging Borders*. They reflect how all of us work to cross cultural borders and bring us together. Their comments are indicative of across the board feelings of our dedicated volunteer hosts. It is true that the goal is to enrich the lives and experiences of our international students. At the end, we also see that our outreach goes both ways as our students enrich our lives as well.

Dease Johnson reminisces about the wonderful experiences she has had with her international students over the years and the fond memories of times spent together. “We have celebrated both Chinese and American holidays. I particularly enjoyed their amazement at the size of my Thanksgiving turkey as well as cooking and eating together. I have been privileged to



share in their struggles and joys and count them all as dear friends.”

Bernie and Ann Tao mentioned sharing life's activities together. Teaching golf and tennis and especially chatting about what was going on in Kushal's life, friends and

PhD studies. “I was just happy to share a bit of life with a bright, capable young person and maybe influence his outlook on life, hopefully for the better.”

Sarah and Steve Goad enjoyed good conversations and so many things with Isaiah and Edwin. “They brought energy and delight into our home and we look forward to several more years with them as they continue their postgraduate studies here.”

Clément's parents had already crossed the Atlantic from France to visit him at Purdue. When it was not possible for them to return for his master's commencement, hosts Joan and Joseph Briller put it on their calendars. “We would not let Clément's graduation be without ‘family’ present.

In so many ways our hosts become family for our international students far from home and those family relationships are so often mutually inspiring.



Dancing into Spring Semester

Breaking bread, music and dancing are some of the best ways to bring people together. The last Friday in January each year, IFP teams up with the New Chauncey Neighborhood Association (NCNA) to host the Soup and Square Dance welcome event that brings Chauncey neighbors, hosts and their newly arrived student guests together for the very first time.

The event this year was on January 25th at Happy Hollow School. All engaged in happy conversation and sampled an exquisite assortment of soups, breads and desserts. Refreshed and energized, participants then took to the dance floor, creating circles, squares and trios that insured that every lady and gent present would be introduced to each other by night's end.

Caller Barry Rubin's enthusiasm, selection of fun dances and patient instruction helped everyone feel happy and at ease on the dance floor. Asked how he accomplishes this, Barry modestly credited having great musicians who are able to create that special energy which makes the dancing magical. Square dancing, Bloomington native Barry contends, is a highly enthusiastic part of the American musical experience.

Host Megan Knigga commented that "Square dancing reduced the "space" between us" and her student Giulia Docimo from Lugano, Switzerland agreed.

NCNA organizers, Zachary Baiel and Marcus and Tammy Hammack said that welcoming people new to the neighborhood engendered good conversation, fun cultural exchange, and the feeling that we all are part of a great human camaraderie.

The evening ended far too soon, but the dancing will be remembered as simply magical—the glue that made it all happen.

Longing for "A Place Called Home" (cont. from p. 1)

- ◆ I've learned to become more open minded and to share my feelings with others.
- ◆ I learned about my own culture as I compared it to American culture.
- ◆ I used to think that family was not the top priority of the American people. However, my perspective changed entirely after meeting my host.
- ◆ I was able to appreciate the relatively slow-paced lifestyle apart from the faster lifestyle I grew up with. It provided me a different perspective on life.
- ◆ I had thought that I could only talk comfortably with those I already knew. But this activity made me realize that I can easily engage with people and find some common ground to talk about.
- ◆ I learned that in order to achieve understanding as an international student, I need to first overcome my own prejudices.
- ◆ I did not expect to see a lot of similarity to my culture, but surprisingly, my hosts reminded me of my grandparents back home in how they engaged in this activity and packed home-grown vegetables for me to take home with me. This act of giving changed my perspective – cultures may seem different from the outside, but their inherent values are quite similar.

Touring the Big City

A visit to **New York** or **Chicago** can seem overwhelming. Where do you go when so much is offered? How do you get there? How do you make the experience worthwhile? Thanks to [Big Apple Greeter](#) in New York and [Chicago Greeter](#) you can begin to feel at ease in both places.

A friendly and enthusiastic greeter will welcome you to his or her home city. You will go on a neighborhood walk in a part of the city that he or she knows intimately to see the local street life and become acquainted with interesting buildings and neighborhood history. You find where the locals shop and it can be possible to step in and see what is offered. Don't be surprised to stop at a delightful restaurant or café not found in the guidebooks where the greeter knows the best specialties of the house and the folks who work there. At the end of the day, you are no longer a stranger in the city. You have a new friend and contact often lasts long beyond the day of the visit. All too soon it is the moment to part but after the day with your greeter, you feel comfortable in the city and know how to navigate the public transport system.

Visits last approximately 4 hours and are private for 1-6 persons traveling together. Greeters are volunteers, there is no charge for the visit and tipping is not permitted. To book a visit, go to <https://bigapplegreeter.org/> or <https://chicagogreeter.com/>. Apply early as soon as you have accommodations. Available slots can fill up quickly, especially during peak tourist seasons.

Bridging Borders Editor **Joseph Briller** served 23 years as a volunteer for Big Apple Greeter. He can be contacted with questions at jjbriller@gmail.com. Tell Gail Morse at Big Apple Greeter or Katie Law at Chicago Greeter that Joseph sent you and enjoy your visit.