

The Center Report

Winter 2015



Ecumenical Center and International Residence

**An Intentional
International,
Intercultural
Interspiritual,
Living Learning
Community**

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A Call for Volunteers!

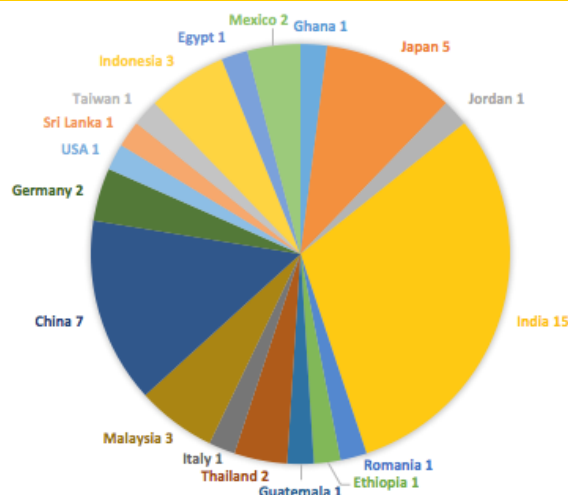


ECIR needs you! Are you interested in being a part of our program committee? Available to drive or participate in ECIR events?

email us at info@ecir.org

Residential Diversity

We have a full and diverse group of residents living at ECIR this fall. This diversity consists of 49 international students (20 male and 29 female) representing over 20 countries. This pie chart depicts each country represented as well as the number of residents who identify with each country. Interestingly, sometimes students and scholars identify with multiple cultures and nationalities. This can happen when one is born in one country but lives in another, offering layered identities and new perspectives.



We have an increasing amount of applicants each semester, signifying the growing demand for the services ECIR provides as well as a desire for intercultural connections.

The International Fair

The second annual international fair will be held on the Michigan Diag on March 28th. Last year, the fair was a huge success with the participation of six student organizations who created informative displays for the culture they were representing. This year we plan on the participation of several student organizations representing countries such as Malaysia, Mongolia, Iran, India, and Mexico.



This fair is important because it provides a voice to countries and cultures that are underrepresented on the University of Michigan campus. For example, participating student organizations included ones representing Bangladesh and Malaysia, two countries that have a smaller presence on campus. Furthermore, the fair showed that there is space for deeper student involvement on the University of Michigan campus. By bridging the gap between ECIR and the broader UM student community, we will raise awareness of ECIR's mission and promote intercultural respect and peace.

Recent Events

ECIR residents and friends have been kept busy this semester with weekly events offered through ECIR. These social, educational, and service oriented events included:

- Lectures on Entrepreneurship in Kenya, Tipping Etiquette, and Indigenous Art
- Making Valentines Cards for University Health System patients and a service trip to New Orleans
- Community meals and Intercultural Dining
- Chinese New Years Celebration
- Random Acts of Kindness Week



Program Highlights

New Orleans Spring Break Trip



This Spring Break, residents went to New Orleans where they helped rebuild homes that were damaged by Hurricane Katrina through the St. Bernard Project (SBP). Here's what the residents had to say:

"I really enjoyed my time here. Never imagined volunteering could be so much fun.. I'd like to congratulate SBP for making a big difference to New Orleans." - Putri Dariah Ariff

"I liked working on the houses, it shows how little efforts—like painting, sanding, and mudding—lead to others' happiness." -Laila Razip

"I really enjoyed this volunteering experience and I highly appreciate that it gives me a chance to do something good for others" - Fu Mingzhou



Ojibwe Round Dance

On Saturday, March 14, 23 international residents and non-residents were warmly hosted by the Saginaw Ojibwe Nation for its 8th Annual Ojibwe Round Dance in Mt.

Pleasant, MI. The gathering of 500-600 dancers represented the indigenous diversity of North America, including tribes and traditions as disparate as the Northern Cree, Arapahoe, Cheyenne, Comanche, and the Three Fires of the Great Lakes region (Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi). Representing the four directions, more than 15 world-class hand drum groups and singers kept the dancers moving for more than eight hours. In these Native communities, dance is more than entertainment or mere social interaction; it is a form of prayer, of re-establishing community connections, of restoring balance and relationship with the Creator and all of creation. The vibrating membrane of the drum and the tonal voice of the singers has the power to attune and synchronize a diverse community to the vibrations of their own hearts and the vibrations of creations itself.

The Islamic Center of America

Eide Alawan, a long-time member of the congregation at the Islamic Center of America (ICA), welcomed a bus-load of international students and their family members during a visit to Dearborn in February. Alawan, a life-long Detroit resident who coordinates interfaith activities for the ICA, provided the students with his own very folksy and friendly approach to understanding Islam and its place in American society. The ICA is often described as the largest mosque in North America, and the students were able to visit the large prayer room and observe a children's class in progress. The students also visited Arab American National Museum and a bakery featuring Middle Eastern sweets and other confections. Most were not ECIR residents, a reflection that ECIR's

mission and programs extend way beyond the walls of the building on Church Street.

ECIR director Bruce Martin and board member Terry Gallagher, who worked in Dearborn for years, also participated.

ECIR's Got Talent!

ECIR's Got Talent was a resident initiated, first-time event and it was a hit! A big thanks must be given to ECIR residents Sneha V. and Gurman for initiating and planning the event (and participating!). ECIR residents and staff entertained a full audience of residents, friends of the center, and volunteers.

The show lasted for over two hours and included dancing, singing, cake decorating, acting, and interactive games. The talent show was an amazing opportunity to see new aspects of residents' personalities, interests, and cultures. Thanks to everyone that participated and came out to support the community!



**SHARE
WITH US!**

ECIR is looking for residents, supporters, and volunteers who are interested in writing about their experience. Submissions can be emailed to info@ecir.org. We will do our best to utilize all submissions so that future residents and supporters can enjoy your story too!

ECIR: Then and Now

ECIR: A Historical Perspective

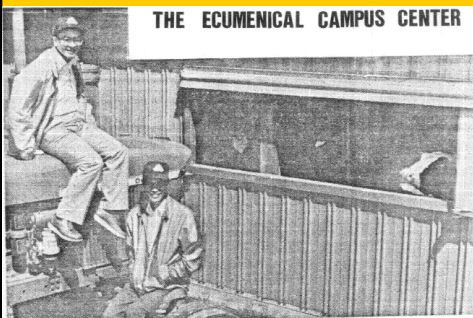


Photo from Ann Arbor news depicting the visiting scholars. As the original caption states, "Farm-China Open House was sponsored by the University of Michigan's Ecumenical Campus..."

On April 30, 1982, Fifty Washtenaw Country families hosted visiting scholars from the People's Republic of China. As pointed out by the Ann Arbor News, families hosted these international students in order to "reach out to others from half way around the world and make them neighbors." Even in 1982, ECIR (then the Ecumenical Campus Center) was reaching out to international students through the International Hospitality and Educational Program in order to pursue a mission of intercultural learning and peace.

The first international students visited Michigan in the mid-1890s from China during a time of widespread anti-immigrant sentiment; the Chinese Exclusion Act had been passed by Congress a couple years earlier and the Supreme Court Case, *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, made segregation the law of the land. Even so, ecumenical cooperation slowly increased on campus throughout the early 1900s. By the 1930's the University of Michigan had become one of the four national universities with the largest number of international students, culminating with the establishment of the International Center in 1938. The period after WWII witnessed another influx of international students, which catalyzed the establishment the Protestant Foundation for International Students (PFIS) in 1953, which expanded opportunities for international students through the Hospitality Program where students were matched with local families. And in the spirit of promoting intercultural respect and creating a "home away from home" for international students, special attention was given to students from China, Korea, Japan, the Middle East, Africa, and other places that were experiencing profound political changes. As international presence on campus increased, so did the need to develop the residential program. PFIS became the Ecumenical Campus Center in 1961, through which the resident community expanded programs promoting counseling, study, and social activity. Cultural trips and educational programs were established throughout the 1980s. Some of these programs, such as the weekly Global Village Dinner (established 1987) are continued today. The name ECIR was first used in 2000 after merging the Ecumenical Campus Center with Ecumenical Association for International Understanding. ECIR reflects a century-long effort to promote intercultural understanding and peace, a legacy and commitment it intends to carry into the future.



A Word From an Alumnus

Levon Petrosyan, ECIR Resident 9/2011-4/2012

"I was attracted by ECIR for two principal reasons: International aspect and Ecumenical background. Before coming to ECIR, I resided at the International City of Paris which has around 40 student houses dedicated to different countries. Before moving to Ann Arbor, I was looking for a similar student housing arrangement in Ann Arbor. I was equally attracted by the ecumenical aspect of ECIR where students from different religious backgrounds interact with each other. In my imagination ECIR was a mini-model of our world: Despite cultural differences, there are common moral rules which create a peaceful, harmonious, and mutually enriching life. I had a great experience living here. I actively participated in different events organized by the administration of the ECIR, such as picnics, retreats, and dinners. Through these events I met new friends, I enriched my knowledge about other cultures, and strengthened my sense of responsibility to global social problems."

A Visit from Japanese Students

During the first week of March, two Japanese students visited ECIR. Miki Isozaki and Hiromi Hamada are both BSW students at the Tokai University of Tokyo, Japan. They were here to learn about how social work is applied in different situations. They shadowed ECIR office workers Jessica Greenfield and Christine Su for a day and concluded their visit by sharing some of their culture by creating a display for the ECIR center showing some common superstitions from Japan. As in April 1982, ECIR continues to accommodate visiting scholars from around the world. This tradition was integral to promote ECIR's mission and will continue to be so in order to promote intercultural learning.

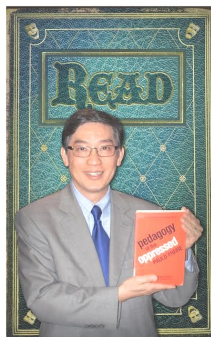


Meet the Intern

Christine is a student at UM's School of Social Work pursuing a Masters degree with a focus on community organization and communities and social systems. She was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, California, and has traveled, worked, and lived abroad. Most recently, Christine served with the Peace Corps in Ukraine. She strongly believes in ECIR's mission and in building individual and community capacity. The mission ECIR aligns with her personal values as well as her love of working with international students.

Welcome, Victor Liu!

Mr. Liu was recently welcomed to the ECIR community as a new member on the Board of Directors. Mr. Liu is the Dean of Learning Resources at Washtenaw Community College, where he is the head of the learning resources division overseeing the Bailey Library as well as the Media Service Department. When asked why he decided to join ECIR, he said, "what draws me to ECIR is its focus on inter-cultural, interfaith understanding and peace-making. This focus, to my mind, fills an organizational niche in the UM community by pushing the boundary of a learning/living community beyond the merely academic."



A Beautiful View



Resident Ace Choo took this beautiful photo that shows the view of the campus from his room at ECIR and won third place in Ross Photography Club's photo challenge entitled "A Michigan Winter!"

Congratulations Ace!

Wish List

There are many ways to give to ECIR and help the community. If interested in donating items, please contact ECIR at info@ecir.org. Here are examples of possible donations:

- Toasters
- Microwaves
- Blenders
- Mattress Covers (twin size)
- New pillows & Covers
- Computer & Dining Chairs
- Wash Cloths
- Vacuum Cleaners
- Kitchen Pots & Pans
- Love Seat (not full couch)
- 12 or 15 Passenger Van
- Volley Ball Net/Balls

All new or used items (in good condition), as well as cash, are tax-deductible gifts in support of our mission.



Global Friendship Program

ECIR pairs international students/scholars with American hosts to develop cross-cultural understanding and friendship. International scholars meet at least twice each year to share their cultures and traditions. The Global Friendship Program (GFP) matches students and hosts based on shared interests, activities, and frequency of meeting. Bridging cultures and continents, GFP is an exciting and rewarding experience for all!

Apply online at ecir.org/educational-programs/cultural-engagement/global-friendship/

GIVE APPRECIATED STOCK!

GIVING

DONATE AN IRA DISTRIBUTION

"If you itemize your deductions & own appreciated stock that you have held for more than one year, by donating the stock to charity you can deduct the stock's value as a charitable contribution and avoid paying taxes on the stock's gain. Just make a gift of appreciated stock by the end of the calendar year."

"By combining our donations, large and small, we create a legacy to advance our vision to expand our Center, to extend our program as a living learning community promoting understanding and peace between diverse peoples and cultures of the world."

—Bruce Martin, Director

"For the tax year 2014, retirees can redirect all or part of their required distribution to charity without paying tax on the withdrawal. Making this tax free transfer can help retirees who want to support a charity but who don't itemize their deductions and as a result can't deduct their charitable contributions. Qualified charitable distributions must be paid directly from the IRA to the charity by the year's end."