



Madison International Partners' Newsletter

"The Global Mind"

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<https://internationalmadison.org>

Welcome and Hospitality Matters!

By Jean-Rene Watchou, MIP's Executive Director

With the return of in-person classes this fall, many international students have returned to Madison. This includes international students who returned home following the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020 that led to the switch to online classes. It also includes international students from both the freshmen classes of 2020 and 2021. For many of them, it is their first time on an American campus. At Madison International Partners (MIP), we recognize the many life adjustment challenges facing these international students and we try our best to make their transition to life in America a smooth and enjoyable process. We create conditions that make them feel welcome in our city and country, reassure them, provide a support system, and help them build and develop long lasting friendships. Most of our volunteers go above and beyond their call of duty to help create conditions for a "home away from home" for our new international friends.

One of the programs that best illustrates MIP's welcoming spirit and hospitality is the Airport and Bus Depot Pickup program. More than a "taxi service" to take students from point A to point B, our pick up program brings a warm and caring touch to the service. In fact, even before they leave their countries, our volunteers have contacted the students to introduce themselves as the one who will help them when they arrive in Madison. This not only reassures the students, but also allays any fears that their families sometimes have when their child goes to such a far away place to study. These advance contacts reassure them that their child will be in good hands. One of the international students we picked up this fall told us that she chose to come study in Madison because of organizations like Madison International Partners which make our city more welcoming and friendly to international students.

I'm proud to report that this fall we mobilized 55 volunteers to provide airport and bus depot pickups for 300 international students and visiting scholars. This is the highest number of volunteers mobilized and pickups completed since we launched this program 10 years ago.

Kudos and thanks to our amazing volunteers!



The excitement of meeting in-person again

By Milli Lau, MIP's Program Assistant



After eagerly awaiting and yearning for over 15 months, we gradually and carefully returned to meeting in-person in June this year. English Conversation Time meetings are now being held on the front patio of Christ Presbyterian Church every Friday evening and Global Spouse Circle is held in Eagle Heights on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month.



On the first day of the English Conversation Time and Global Spouse Circle in-person outdoor meetings, our participants and volunteers were very eager to greet one another and share their current situation. They were excited to see their old friends again as well as meet new friends who joined our programs in-person for the first time. In these sessions, we talked about a variety of topics including the policies of wearing masks and vaccinations in the U.S., the political situation in their hometowns, language differences, the Madison moving season, places worth visiting in Madison, and more. Occasionally, participants bring snacks and drinks to share that are popular in their countries such as Cuban flan and Taiwanese bubble tea.

This year, our summer picnic also came back. On July 16, more than 90 volunteers and participants attended the evening picnic. Many of them had been participating in virtual meetings or other events for a while, but this was the first time they attended the summer picnic. International community members not only enjoyed the delicious food but also took advantage of the opportunity to share their stories with our volunteers and fellow internationals. Adults and children alike joined in on games including croquet, hula hoops and circle games.

In addition to adult programs, our virtual International Children's Reading/Art Program started meeting in-person at Eagle Heights. The international children paid deep attention to reading with our native English-speaking volunteers and some helped to lead the yoga sessions. Children also vied to get close to volunteers as they dazzled them with science experiments. They were very excited to learn about the concepts of gravity, density and scientific observation through fun hands-on science experiments.

All of our volunteers and participants were delighted to be face-to-face again engaging in activities and games that are hard to duplicate online. Joy and laughter have been in the air during these in-person meetings and events.



TUB be OR not TUB be...that is the question!

By Jan & Rod Anderson, MIP Volunteers

Fall. Football. Back to school! This has always been an exciting time for us! Living in a college town brings back those great memories to a couple of old, retired teachers. So much so, that for the last several years we have availed ourselves to reliving those move-in days with Madison International Partners and the multitude of international students descending upon our community! What fun! What recollections! And, what new friendships!

This year became a first for us, though. Until now we have safely delivered “our” students to their dorm rooms by picking them up at the bus stop, gathering their luggage, and helping them lug it to their rooms followed by goodbyes and well-wishes for a successful year. Not so this time! Instead, we arrived at an apartment: two beds, two chairs, a table and a vinyl couch. That’s it! Where were the glasses, the dishes, silverware, the pots, and the toilet paper!!

We left our new friend with instructions to make a list of everything she might need and hurried home with our own “needs inventory” in mind! What did we have lurking in the back of our cupboards, the basement, and vanities that might make for smoother apartment living for her! Alas, we found many needed items that would provide some of the basics while a trip to a local store with her updated list would cover the rest. Today we made a delivery of items we found around our house and later this week we’ll help her acquire the rest with a shopping trip.

On our way home from her apartment we laughed about our new ministry! Before we were in the garage though, we realized how many more students must find themselves in the same predicament: away from home for the first time, in a foreign country, with only the clothing and school items you have in your suitcase, and no idea of where and how you can find simple items needed to survive in a place of your own. Dropped off by strangers. We are so happy that for just a moment God gave us a role of surrogate parents and that we took the time to step in. It’s exactly what we would want someone to do for our child.

Well, our thought wheels are spinning more than a little!! We have visions of 5-6 covered plastic tubs filled with kitchen essentials waiting to be used by our visiting friends who are moving into apartments rather than dorms. These tubs will be filled by us and our local friends, used by our visiting students, and returned to us upon their departure, only to be inventoried and readied for our next guests! Perhaps we’ll even include a welcome bag of dish detergent, a dish cloth or two, hand soap and, of course, some toilet paper!!

The following basic kitchen items are needed to supply our “Tubs”: plates, cups, and glasses, silverware and knives, can opener, stirring spoon and spatula, casserole dishes, mixing bowls, cookie sheets and cake pans, and pots and pans. Each tub will also include a “Welcome” package of toilet paper, bar of hand soap, dish soap, dish towels and dishcloths.

We are here to help and would welcome your donations!!!

Anyone else interested in our “Kitchen Tub Initiative”?? Contact Rod or Jan Anderson at 262.968.3690.

My take on a successful Partnership with a Community Organization

By Oliver Haozhe President of the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA)



In the past few months, Madison International Partners (MIP) and the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA) have worked together on several fronts to provide welcome and hospitality to new international students. Among all of these events, the Airport Pick-up activity is the most unforgettable one. It was a complex initiative to organize, but a successful one.



Here's how it went: Starting in July, CSSA used its own platform to disseminate information about this hospitality opportunity and recruit students who might need this service. Through this process, CSSA reached out to every single student and built a discussion forum on WeChat to double-check if all the information collected was correct and set up a mechanism to convey the information from volunteers to students within a short time. Once that process was completed, the file with student information was sent to MIP which swiftly mobilized many generous volunteers willing to provide the pick-up service from Dane County Airport and the Van Galder Bus station on UW campus. This academic year, we had an unprecedented high number of new international students coming to UW Madison. Because of the unpredictability of international travel between China and the US, many of the students arrived in Madison very late at night. This added extra challenges to the volunteers' work, however, no matter how late the students arrived or how often their flight or bus arrival times changed, the volunteers were always waiting at the pick-up point with warm and kind greetings.

Many students were too shy or exhausted to adequately express their gratitude to the volunteers in person at that time. But since then, I have received so many positive comments from students asking me to convey their sincere gratitude to volunteers. Here is a sampling of the feedback from students:

"All of the volunteers are friendly and kind. Before I got off from the bus, they have already been waiting at the station with a sign of my name on it."

"The volunteers are super friendly! Before driving me home, they even bought me a milk tea at Kungfu Tea located on State Street."

"My volunteer is an interesting old guy. He told me so many stories and information concerning Madison along the way."

I'm so proud of our collaboration with MIP and what we achieved this fall. I look forward to our continued work together.



Shopping Trip to Walmart: A Courteous Welcome

By Mengwei Sun, Vice President of the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA)



While inclusiveness is something we all envision for our world, it cannot be easily achieved without actual commitment. Madison International Partners (MIP) actually makes it happen. On Sunday, September 5, MIP successfully co-organized a Shopping Trip event with the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA). The Shopping Trip consists of taking the students to Walmart for 2 to 3 hours so they can get the supplies they need for their apartments and dorms.



This was my first time partnering with MIP since I joined CSSA two years ago. Many international students who signed up for this event expressed their sincere gratitude for MIP and CSSA to me, but I believe we all learned something beyond the gratitude.



The Shopping Trip event has been held annually for the past four years. Before the pandemic, volunteers from MIP would pick up several students, drive them to Walmart for shopping, and bring them back to their dorms and apartment afterward. I didn't expect the in-person Shopping Trip event to happen this year because of the continuing pandemic and fears of close contact especially given the larger group of "new incoming" international students signed up this year compared to previous years.

Despite the increased numbers and the challenges posed by the pandemic, MIP showed determination and made the trip happen as usual. MIP helped arrange for two school buses to accommodate many of the close to 200 students seeking the help. In addition to the school buses, MIP volunteers came to help, taking small groups of students shopping using their own cars. We ensured that students had enough and flexible shopping time to buy what they wanted and did so safely with everyone masked.

The Shopping Trip was incredibly helpful for the students. They were able to obtain desperately needed essential items, groceries and even furniture. Students were grateful to the volunteers for their friendliness and thrilled to start their college lives here in Madison. Some confided to me that people in Madison were more supportive than they expected. Despite being new in Madison and so far from home, they felt less alienated because of these acts of kindness.

MIP and CSSA were very glad that the students enjoyed the shopping trip and felt supported by the local community. MIP is dedicated to welcoming and supporting international members of our community, and CSSA is honored to join with MIP in its mission.



Greetings from Providence, Rhode Island!

By Diem Trang Tran, Visiting Scholar from Vietnam

My family arrived in Providence, RI, from Madison, WI recently and is now settling in to a new apartment near the university. I will be a visiting lecturer in Vietnamese at the Department of East Asian Studies at Brown University. I am in charge of the new Vietnamese program there and teaching two courses. My husband and I have mixed feelings as we are both excited about the new opportunity at a prestigious Ivy League institution in the U.S., but also sad about leaving Madison which has been a welcoming home for us.

Madison has such a special place in our hearts. Whenever I look back on the journey we have been through, I feel so grateful because of the great people we met and the support, love and care we received from the International Program at Madison International Partners (MIP).

The whole family has been involved in MIP activities that are well-organized by the kindest volunteers I have ever met. My husband studies for his Ph.D in Poland and joins the English Conversation Time program via zoom twice a week. Rob, a MIP volunteer, has also been helping him with his dissertation proofreading.

My daughter Mimi joined the virtual Kids Reading Program during the pandemic and the in-person sessions that were held at Eagle Heights. She had fun and learned a lot through story times, art and science experiments.

I received invaluable assistance from other MIP volunteers, including Viji and Mike, related to job applications and interview preparation. Without all of their support, I would not have reached my goal of finding an academic job in the U.S. and overcoming many challenges when our family was separated for more than 2 years because of COVID-19.

When I left my home in Vietnam for a new place in the U.S. we hadn't thought that we could find family in Madison, but we did. Thank you for being so kind and welcoming to us and making our stay in Madison so memorable!



How to get involved or support Madison International Partners:

Sign up to volunteer: Online at <https://internationalmadison.org/volunteer/> or use the form below.

Donate to support MIP securely online at: <https://internationalmadison.org>

Fall is always an interesting time for Madison International Partners (MIP) as thousands of new international students and visiting scholars arrive in our city. MIP's programs and activities offer them the opportunity to connect with people and important resources available in our community. As a welcoming community, we want to show these internationals true American hospitality, help them understand American customs and lifestyles, provide opportunities for them to build relationships, and make their transition to life in America as smooth and rewarding as possible. We are blessed with dozens of volunteers who are vital to making this all happen and enjoy the friendships they develop in the process. ***You too can become a volunteer and make a difference.***

Current Volunteer Opportunities:

◇ **English Conversation Time (Fridays at Christ Presbyterian Church from 6 to 7:30 pm).**

English Conversation Time is a very flexible program where international students have a meaningful interaction with native speakers. The program helps international students practice their English and gives them the opportunity to learn more about American culture while sharing their own customs and culture with Americans. You can make a huge difference in the life of someone through this opportunity.

◇ **International Friendship Program.**

This program pairs you up with an international student/family for conversation and friendship purposes beyond the Friday gatherings. You help your partner transition to life in America while learning about your partner's culture: <https://cpcmadison.org/friendship-program-3/>

◇ **Global Spouse Connection Volunteer (Wednesdays, 1 to 2:30 pm Alternate in-person outdoor meetings and online).**

Moving to the U.S. can be challenging for the spouses of international students and visiting scholars. We know that it can get lonely being at home by themselves or with children while their partners are busy with their studies or research work. The goal of this program is to help international spouses/partners make connections with Americans and find friendships and support within the Madison community as they embark on a new life in the United States.

◇ **International Kids Reading Program (Every other Saturday from 11 to Noon, currently held in person outdoors at Eagle Heights and will move online once the weather gets cold).**

Before the pandemic, internationals participating in our programs were able to bring their children along to English Conversation Time, Global Spouse Circle, and International Cooking and Dinner where they were cared for by our childcare staff and volunteers. Since moving to online formats, the children have not been able to participate in our programs. To solve that, this program consists of story time with the kids, art projects and science experiments.

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO MAKE THESE PROGRAM AND ACTIVITIES TO HAPPEN.

To volunteer, check the circle next to the opportunities of interest and fill out the application below. Mail it to MIP, 944 East Gorham Street, Madison, WI 53703 or contact Jean-Rene at 608.217.3008 or email jeanrene@cpcmadison.org

For more information, visit <https://cpcmadison.org/internationals/> or <https://internationalmadison.org/>

MADISON INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Date of Birth _____

E-mail Address _____



Contact:

944 E. Gorham St.

Madison, WI 53703

Phone: 608 217 3008/608 257 4845

E-mail: jeanrene@cpcmadison.org

Our Mission:

Madison International Partners' mission is to extend welcome and hospitality services to internationals and promote in-depth cross-cultural exchanges between Americans and internationals in the Madison community. Through its various programs MIP creates opportunities for global awareness and better understanding between people of different races, cultures, religions and social backgrounds.



In August and early September, volunteers warmly welcomed 300 international students and visiting scholars at the airport or bus station and transported them safely to their new homes in Madison.

See inside to learn more about this and other programs of Madison International Partners.

Board of Directors: Martha Henderson—*President*; Amy Stettner—*Treasurer*; Eileen Wilson—*Secretary*; Dave Nelson; Sumudu Atapattu; Nathan Barnes; Terry Tao; Hannah Lanser; Guy Van Rensselaer; Viji Kandhadai; and Bob Sorensen

Advisory Board: Norma Madsen; Ellen Murdoch; Boris Frank; Jane Coleman; David & Marian Quade; Mike & Cheryl Shult; Ken Baun and Sharol Hayner



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