



Our Mission

is to bring together people of diverse national origins to foster intercultural understanding, to promote awareness of our roles as citizens in the wider global community, and to create goodwill.

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Global Connections is a nonprofit organization supported by the Centre County United Way, Penn State's Global Programs, and members of the community.

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Connections

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Fifth Graders Bring Cultural Sensitivity to Service Learning

This spring, Global Connections was pleased to bring its cultural competency know-how to Corl Street Elementary School. As part of a SCASD district-wide service-learning grant, fifth-grade teacher Eve Evans asked us to develop a service learning project that would give her fifth-grade students the experience of reaching out to English language learners.

The result was "Parley Pals" which included sessions on helping the fifth graders understand cultural difference, develop ground rules for supporting language learning, and create activities for working with preschool- aged children. The final project was a visit to the Bennett Family Center, where the fifth graders read to and played with the preschoolers and kindergarten students, using strategies that supported language learning. The Bennett Family Center is an early childhood education center operated through Penn State's Health and Human Development Department.

To prepare the students for their work with preschoolers who didn't speak English as their first language, Global Connections staff members led the students in sessions that explored their own experiences with different cultures. They examined their own stories for insights into how to appreciate diversity and how to welcome people who are new to a culture. The students soon realized that culture isn't restricted to the arts or to other nationalities. Rather, culture can change from family to family, classroom to classroom and school level to school level.



Fifth grader, Millie Brennen, uses engaging techniques as she reads to English language learners at the Bennett Family Center.



GC's Barb Ballenger (top, left) and Corey Whitesell (far right) discussed ESL basics with the Corl St. class. Fifth grader, Sydney Jackson (under flag), demonstrates a good way to share a book with a listener.

Once they were primed with insights and guidelines into how to be culturally sensitive to the

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World Affairs Forum - Voices of the Arab Spring: Personal Perspectives from the Streets

Three members of the Penn State University community described their involvement in Arab Spring demonstrations in their home countries as part of Global Connections' World Affairs Forum on April 4: "*Voices of the Arab Spring: Personal Perspectives from the Streets.*"

Ahlem Yazidi a Fulbright Scholar from Tunisia, Karim Aziz an exchange student from Egypt and Amal Alachkar, a Humphrey Fellow from Syria, told moving personal stories of the conflict.

Ahlem shared photos that she took of the protests in Tunisia in December of 2010. Her cousin died in the clashes that began after a street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, set himself on fire in protest of police corruption and ill treatment. Ahlem said she personally participated in the protests, which ultimately led to the ouster of long-time President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in January 2011.



Amal Alachkar from Syria, Ahlem Yazidi from Tunisia, and Karim Aziz from Egypt.

"We were all inspired by Tunisia," said speaker Karim Aziz, from Egypt. "It was the spark that started the revolution."

Karim said he had been out of the country when the protests began in Egypt on the 29th of January 2010. He recalled getting a facebook invitation to the revolution. "I'm sure no one would have imagined it would be as big and huge as this."

When he returned to Egypt a few days later, he said, neighborhood residents had become responsible for their own police and security.

"It began with a request for a change in government – a vice president and the assurance that President Hosni Mubarek's son would not replace him as president," Karim said of the protests that ended President Mubarek's 30 –year rule. By February Mubarek ceded his presidential power. In June the country held democratic elections.

For Amal Alachkar of Syria, the protests that began there in January of 2011, marked a sort of birth after "a 40-year pregnancy" in which the people of Syria waited for substantive political change. Protesters' demands included the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad and an end to his government, as well as the end of 50 years of Ba'ath Party rule. The response has been a government crackdown that has taken thousands of lives and has been decried throughout the world.

The conflict in Syria continues to date. Alachkar, a pharmacy professor from Homs, currently cannot return to her country because of the ongoing violence. But while at Penn State she has given several talks and presentations on the situation there, and has stayed in contact with former students and colleagues.

The people's weapons, she said, "were cameras and signs, and people were killed and tortured for using them." She said she has lost friends and family members in the violence. Her family home, abandoned and used by snipers, has been destroyed.

International Children's Festival!

Global Connections' 2012 International Children's Festival, held in collaboration with Penn State's Global Programs, proved to be one of the best attended yet, with well over 500 kids and their families enjoying a day of international crafts, dance, food and music. In the auditorium of the South Building of State High School, attendees took in 16 performances, such as traditional Thai dance, Japanese sanshin and American Hip-Hop. In the cafeteria, activities varied from making Chilean rain sticks or learning Egyptian hieroglyphics to crafting Guatemalan worry dolls, learning to use chopsticks for a chopsticks challenge or making Ghanaian bead bracelets. More than 19 countries as well as a variety of community organizations were represented. Festival-goers also enjoyed judging an international dessert competition and bidding in the silent auction.



GC Presents CBICC Membership Luncheon: Local Business = Global Business

On February 21, 2012, Global Connections presented a panel discussion on issues and resources impacting the growth of international business in Centre County. The luncheon was sponsored by Fulton Bank and moderated by Merrill David, Executive Director of Global Connections. Amy Sahm, Vice President of the Fulton International Group, offered welcoming comments. Three panelists—Plato Ghinos of Shaner Group, Gavin Fernsler of Restek, and David Miller-Martini of Global Penn State—spoke briefly about their experiences and then opened the floor for questions from the audience. Topics covered in the panel presentations included the value of establishing partnerships in foreign markets, the challenges of cultural alignment, the importance of marketing analysis, and the impact of the European debt crisis. Panelists seemed to agree that even with current problems, there is opportunity for growth in the global marketplace. Another topic that brought agreement was the issue of barriers such as visa requirements that limit local tourism and entrepreneurship by foreign nationals. Two areas mentioned where the US has growth potential are manufacturing and customer service. Questions from the audience of over 120 guests included topics such as challenges facing companies that seek business in volatile areas of the world, recommended exit strategies, potential for Penn State to help facilitate partnerships, and the adequacy of existing commercial air services in this region. John Rodgers of Fulton Bank believes there is interest in ongoing dialogue on these issues and will pursue additional opportunities to partner with Global Connections to facilitate such discussions.

*Individual acts of service
may seem small, but each
reverberates far beyond the
people who are directly
affected, generating a
momentum that builds to
protect our world.*

— Ban Ki-moon,
secretary-general of the
United Nations



Women, Save the Date for GC's newest event ~

A Women's International Night Out!

The evening of Thursday, November 8th —

*fun and relaxing international activities — hand-on crafts, henna body painting,
calligraphy, massage, pre-holiday sales, demonstrations, food and drink!*

More International Children's Festival!



Fifth Graders Bring Cultural Sensitivity to Service Learning (*cont'd from front page*)



needs of English language learners, the students planned ways to engage with the students at the Bennett Family Center during their 45-minute visit. The fifth graders chose to staff different activity areas already present in the pre-school classrooms, and they developed strategies for being especially welcoming and sensitive to language learning. Some of the fifth graders read books to the pre-schoolers. Others engaged in imaginative play or helped the children build with blocks and other manipulatives.

Their goal: invite the children to talk as they played so they could practice the language that they were learning.

But the fifth graders' immersion into cultural understanding didn't end with the preschool service learning project. As a final session to prepare the students for the diversity of middle school this fall, we brought in some international students from State High to share their own stories of what helped them get used to life in State College in middle school and high school. The high school students, Yiduo Mei and Yi Hu, from China and Mary Bergado from the

Using skills learned through GC's program, Corl Street's Jack Piazza engages pre-schoolers in story.

Philippines, had previously shared their stories with seventh graders at Hollidaysburg Junior High

as part of Global Connections' International Speakers Program.

Global Connections can craft service learning or cultural understanding programs for your classroom or diversity committee, as well as provide international speakers to discuss their countries and culture. Call us at 814-863-3927 or email us at globalconnections@ip.psu.edu.



The Corl Street class demonstrates their "I need help" eyes.

Internationals File Taxes, Too!

From Kazakhstan to Germany, China to Argentina, our tax program of 9 volunteer tax advisors and 4 volunteer receptionists along with the GC staff, helped 756 international students and scholars from 55 countries figure out and submit their tax returns over about a one month period this past tax season.

A huge thank you to volunteer tax advisors Bob Bernlohr, John Diercks, Reinhard Graetzer, Gordon Hamilton, Bob Malcom, Laura Smith, Bill Scheuchenzuber, Mimi St Clair and Bob Minard, and to our volunteer tax receptionists, Hina Fancy, Sara Cremonesi, Janis Nickerson and Gege Nie, and to Donna Hamao Langdon and Reinhard for helping with preparation.



Reinhard Graetzer (right) explains the tax forms to an international student.

We can always use more help, no experience is necessary and we'll train you! Contact us if you might be interested in becoming a volunteer for the Tax Assistance Program for spring 2013!

Tales in Many Tongues

Global Connections teamed up with Young Scholars Charter School, the Center for Global Studies at Penn State and Schlow Centre Region Library to offer *Tales in Many Tongues* in a new collaborative community program at Schlow this year. The program featured adults from other countries reading stories in their native language to young children ages 3—8 and their families, as part of the library's "World Stories Alive" program.



Russian traditional dress for Tales in Many Tongues—Russian story day in March.



Sharareh Zolghadr-Azhdari reads Persian stories to attendees in April.

Global Connections provided several international readers for the program which gave opportunity for children to experience stories, songs and art in 12 different languages: Chinese, Spanish, Turkish, Arabic, French, Hindi, Russian, Bengali, Yiddish, Korean, Persian and Japanese.

Trash to Treasure: Agency Volunteers Roll Up Their Sleeves for United Way

Culling through and reselling mountains of items left behind by Penn State students at school-year's end — *everything* you can imagine from jeans to electric fans, Halloween costumes to ramen noodles— United Way's major fundraiser saves literal tons of garbage from ending up in landfills and raises much needed funds for its local member agencies. Agency volunteers are a major part of the effort, and Global Connections' staff was there again to help! This year's T2T sale netted a new record, \$60,855.05

for the Centre County United Way!



GC Program Coordinator, Tami Fatemi, checks customers out at the T2T register.



GC Program Coordinator, Barb Ballenger, moves a ping-pong table at the T2T sale.

Community Enjoys World Sounds at Noon

Global Connections' *World Sounds at Noon* eighth season of weekly performances ran from May 31st through June 28th at the Schlow Library. GC's series gave the community the opportunity to enjoy an array of global music — the dulcet tones of Russian vocalist Natalia Orlovskaja with piano accompanist Elena Loukachkina; Turkish Melodies with Anatolian Fusion; a joyful mix of dance, song and calligraphy demo from China with Xinping Gu, the Happy Valley Chinese School, the Penn State Taiji Club and Yongle Du; the serene classical sounds of India with the group Raaga; and the exquisite music of South Korean gayageum with Eun Sun Jung and guests Udoro on guitar and Mi Hae Kim on bass.



Sadik Yondem, visiting scholar in Penn State's School of Music, explains the Turkish baglama to an attendee.

Thank you, Fulton Bank -
for sponsoring a week of Global Connections' World Sounds series!



Congratulations to GC volunteer and friend, Grace Hakizimana!

It seems that whenever we're asked to give an example of someone who exemplifies the spirit and goals of Global Connections, Grace Hakizimana is the first person we name.

In 2003, Grace moved to State College as a refugee from Rwanda. Soon she immersed herself in Global Connections programs, including our English as a Second Language classes, and our Conversation Partners and International Friendship programs. She credits GC with teaching her English. But even before she could speak the language, Grace began volunteering in our office, a move she has said helped her gain the confidence she needed to speak to others and learn the complicated idioms that accompany life in Central Pennsylvania.



Grace and her son, Yannick, on her graduation day.

A single-mother and then full-time Penn State student, Grace has staffed our office as a work study, has volunteered at our events, and has shared her story at Global Connections workshops and events in her beautiful, soft-spoken English.

We'd love to take the credit. But really it's all Grace. She has tackled everything she has set out to do – overcoming incredible odds, learning English, getting a degree, creating a life for her son and herself -- with a quiet determination that gets things done. And that's why we were especially pleased to celebrate with her as she graduated from Penn State this spring with a bachelor's degree in Human Development and Family Studies and began a full-time position with a preschool program on campus.

Grace has truly made our world bigger and the whole world smaller. We congratulate her, wish her the best, and welcome her ongoing friendship and support.

Volunteer Conversation Partners and Friendship Hosts Greatly Needed!

Start a friendship that lasts throughout the year (or lifetime!) by becoming a Conversation Partner or International Friendship Program volunteer.

Internationals faced a lengthy waiting list for matches this year, as their numbers exceeded our American volunteers. Through our Conversation Partners program, applicants are eager to practice their conversational English one-on-one. No foreign language experience is needed to volunteer, as you meet with your partner to chat in English.

The International Friendship Program matches people for cultural exchange and friendship— friends get together to share a meal, attend an event, or include each other once or twice a month in whatever they might be doing anyway. No housing is involved, and the experience is mutually beneficial as you and your new international friend(s) learn about each other's cultures. In addition to the many internationals we have on our waiting list, a huge number of brand new people have recently arrived!



Please contact us for more information about either program!

Visit our website at www.global.psu.edu/gc to register online!



Global Connections Joins Community Initiative as a Charter Organization

A new initiative called Our Community Day, encompassing a wide cross-section of groups and individuals in our community, was formed with the purpose of rallying the community — both “town & gown”— making and embracing a covenant of our mutual values and commitments by public declaration, remembering the tragic events of this past year, and bringing attention to the prevention of and healing from physical and sexual abuse. The group, including the American Association of University Women, the Borough of State College, the Centre Foundation, Centre County United Way, Centre County Woman’s Resource Center, the Community Diversity Group, Keystone Church, Penn State Hershey Medical Group-State College, Penn State Off Campus Student Union, Penn State University, and Global Connections, held a press event in April, signing a Community Covenant and encouraging others to do the same. Any individual or group can sign on by going to Ourcommunityday.org.

On **Saturday, October 13th**, the annual America’s Day for Kids, Community Resource Fair and Downtown Harvest Festival, will all be joined as **Our Community Day**, with a special program at the front of the State College Municipal Building with words, entertainment, and a chance for anyone to sign on to the covenant in person.



Passport on a Plate: Home Edition Dinners 2012



Guests at the home of Barb & Jesse Ballenger enjoyed a *Gourmet Trek through Nepal* expertly cooked by Nellie and Deepu Bhattacharya.

The 2012 Passport on a Plate: Home Edition Dinners were a great success! The Home Edition Dinners are held every other year, alternating with the Passport on a Plate Odyssey galas which are held at the State College Ramada Inn. This year's Home Edition Dinners were held in 20 homes in the State College/Bellefonte area.

Volunteer international chefs and student assistants prepared a wide array of delicious dishes for guest to enjoy, as well as providing cultural, historical and personal information about their home countries.



A *Down Under Aussie Tucker* dinner was prepared by Carolyn Wilcox from Melbourne Australia (not pictured) at the home of Don & Renee Marks (Renee, far right) with assistance from volunteer nutrition student, Robert Zuccarello (left). Also pictured, guests Mark Modaforre (center) and Angela Anderson (front).

The cultures represented in this year's Home Edition Dinners were: Mexico, Iran, Syria, Ecuador, Thailand, Turkey, Burkina Faso, France, Ghana, Italy, Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, Brazil, Venezuela, Ukraine, Nepal and Hawaii. The next Home Edition Dinners will be held in January & February 2014!



Norifumi & Yuriko Miyokawa (left & center) prepared a *Tempting Japanese Tempura* dinner at the home of Janet & Bill (right) Haner.



Svitlana Iarmolenko holds a dish from the *On the Wings of Ukrainian Songs* dinner hosted by Nancy & Glenn Gamble.

Mark Your Calendars for the Next Passport on a Plate Gala Dinner!

Passport on a Plate: A Silk Road Odyssey

Sunday, February 24th, Ramada Inn

Tables and menu will be designed with themes from Silk Road countries. In addition to Silk Road cuisine, the evening will feature live entertainment and silent auction. Tickets will go on sale in early January 2013 at \$125/person.

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO GAVE THROUGH Centre gives



Through the Centre Foundation's special event, Centre Gives — a 36-hour online donation event which took place from 6 a.m. on June 27 to 6 p.m. on June 28 — Global Connections' supporters raised \$5,386.66 in extra funding for Global Connections!

Thank you for directly supporting programs that teach English to newcomers, bring international speakers into area schools, train local businesses to better work with people from other cultures, bring cultural events into the community, and much much more.

Your donations go far in bringing our community together across cultures!

Thank you, Centre Foundation!
And thank you, supporters!



Around the World at Lunch Hour

In February, we enjoyed the culture and cuisine of India as Khyati Bhatt, a visiting Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow, and her husband prepared a wide array of tasty Indian dishes.

Our April cultural lunch was prepared by Amal AlAchkar, another visiting Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow. Amal offered our guests several savory and sweet dishes from her native Syria and then gave a heartfelt presentation about the devastation being faced by her fellow Syrians due to the on-going conflict in her country.



Thank You, Volunteer of the Year—John Rodgers!



This spring, we were delighted to recognize John Rodgers, Senior Vice President - Commercial Banking Division of Fulton Bank, as our *Centre County Council for Human Services—Rose Cologne Volunteer of the Year* for John's outstanding service and support of Global Connections. As Advisory Council chair, former board member, fundraiser, committee co-chair, host for Passport on a Plate Home Edition Dinner, long-time Friendship Program host, and corporate advocate – John is a model of commitment and kindness and an inspiration to all who work with him.

Simone de Beauvoir wrote, "...What I consider true generosity — You give your all, and yet you always feel as if it costs you nothing."

We know, first-hand, how John gives his all, yet his graciousness belies his remarkable efforts. We also know how lucky we are that John is a part of our organization.

John, thank you for giving so much of yourself to Global Connections and to your community – internationals and locals alike.



Shiqing and Lily Wang from China, the Rodgers' good friends through GC's International Friendship Program, attended the reception with Carla and John Rodgers.

Local Refugee Resettlement Program Closes its Doors

Global Connections was sad to learn of Church World Service's decision to close the fledgling refugee resettlement program that it started in State College in 2011.

A total of 19 refugees from Iraq and Burma had been resettled in the area, starting in September of last year. However, lack of affordable housing and nearby work opportunities compromised the future of the program, which will officially close Sept. 30. Most of the families are in the process of relocating to other refugee relocation sites.

"It has become clear that even with the unwavering support of individual volunteers, congregations and the service community those bottom line issues – available, affordable housing and jobs with benefits that can support a refugee family – are going to continue to be a nearly insurmountable challenge for refugees in State College," local interim director Naomi Madsen wrote in a letter to supporters.

Over the last year, Global Connections was actively involved in supporting the newcomers, including providing specialized English as a Second Language classes and transportation to services. In November, we featured the Refugee Resettlement Program as the topic of our community dialogue World Affairs Forum titled, "A Place to Call Home."

Volunteer and former staff member Ruth Parrish Sauder designed an English as a Second Language program for the refugees, and coordinated a staff of volunteers to provide a variety of daily classes. The program helped the new residents both learn the language and acquire basic skills, such as filling out forms and applying for jobs. The classes were open to all beginning English speakers, and featured a mix of local residents, building community with the refugee population.

Several of the refugees were matched in our International Friendship and Conversation Partners programs. Global Connections volunteers also stepped forward with donations of money, household items and bicycles.

Thank you to all who helped us support this important program through their volunteer work, contributions and enthusiastic support of the effort to provide a safe home for people fleeing threat and trauma in their home countries. It is our hope that the Centre County area will develop the infrastructure necessary to secure sustainable opportunities for such residents in the future.



Refugees from Iraq, Waleed Khudhair Hussain and his sons, Majid Khudhair and Hasan Khudhair enjoyed the International Children's Festival in March.



Find us on
Facebook

Be sure to "Like" Global Connections on Facebook!
(Look for our logo as profile pic to be sure it's us!)

Working with a Diversity of Cultures: GC Offers Cultural Competency Trainings!



Global Connections has been informally offering Cultural Competency Trainings to local organizations since 2007. Now the Cultural Competency Training Program is in full-swing and officially a GC program! Area businesses, public and human service providers, government offices, and Penn State departments have all benefitted by providing trainings to their employees and volunteers.

The primary goals of the workshop are for participants to learn about the make-up of the local international community, and to understand cultural differences beyond foods, clothing, and holidays — what culture means, how it defines us, and how to incorporate culture into every day! With this information, participants have been able to better serve the international community of Centre County. Previous participants have included CATA, the Centre County Women's Resource Center staff and volunteers, Global Studies teachers, Liberal Arts Advisors, Work Force Education's New Teachers Workshop, and first responders to domestic violence and sexual assault at the Stop Violence Against Women Training Institute (SVAWTI). Trainings have ranged from one hour to all day and have included a panel of international speakers with experience in the workshop participants' field in their own country or the US.

If your organization would benefit from a Cultural Competency Training, contact our office and we can tailor a workshop to meet the needs of your organization.

Knight Report Affirms Community Need for GC Programs

In its project report, *Soul of the Community: Why People Love Where They Live and Why It Matters: A Local Perspective* released this last year, the Knight Foundation found much to affirm the vital importance of Global Connections programs.

Their research finds a positive correlation between community attachment and local GDP growth — when residents feel more attached there is greater GDP growth, a key to not only “a community’s economic success, but also its ability to grow and meet residents’ needs.” Further, “communities that are more open to diversity are better able to compete for talent.”

The report goes on to state that, “[w]hile State College outperforms other comparable cities in terms of openness to various groups, leaders should do more to increase this key driver to community attachment. Cultural learning events and festivals that promote a diversity of lifestyles and backgrounds may go a long way toward increasing the perception that the community is open to racial and ethnic minorities [and] immigrants..” And “[s]ince State College also struggles, as most communities do, with the perception that the community is a place where people care about each other, events that bring people together to foster more interaction and understanding are likely to have a compounding effect on community attachment.”

Quite an affirmation of all we do to help build community across cultures!



New friends in GC's **International Friendship Program** enjoy each other's offerings at the spring IFP potluck in April, one of a few group events in the program. Have you thought of joining? We are always in great need of local “hosts” (no housing is involved). It just means inviting your new international friend, perhaps a couple of times a month, to join you in something you might already be doing — share a meal, go apple picking, attend a sports event, just meet for coffee. You'll quickly see, the enrichment is mutual!

Register online at our website at www.global.psu.edu/gc

Register for Global Connections Programs!

Over the last year more than 900 people have used Global Connections' online registration form to sign up for programs such as Conversation Partners, the International Friendship Program, International Speakers Program and Women's Intercultural Book Groups!

If you have registered in the last year, you can update your contact information and program preferences and sign up for additional programs with our new online Registration Update Form, found at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/updategc>. This is different from our online form for first-time registrants, and hopefully will make it easier for us to update your information.

You can use the update form to:

- Provide us with new contact information
- Update your preferences for programs in which you are currently enrolled
- Sign up for new programs
- Alert us if you no longer want to be in Global Connections programs

You can also use this form more than once to update your information as your availability and preferences change. Please bookmark the link.

New to Global Connections?


If you have never registered with Global Connections, or it's been more than year since you've signed up for Global Connections programs, please register for our programs using our online form for first-time participants, found at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/gcregister> or via our website www.global.psu.edu/gc with the online registration link.

Interested in ESL classes?

Our free English-as-a-Second-Language classes use a different registration process. Please visit our website at www.global.psu.edu/gc to view a list of our classes for fall. To find out more about any class, please e-mail the individual class teacher. You can register at the class at your first attendance.

Let us know if you have questions

Email us at globalconnections@ip.psu.edu or stop by our office in 427 Boucke on Penn State's University Park Campus.



*Each friend represents a world in us,
a world possibly not born until they arrive,
and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born.*

- Anais Nin

