



Connections

A Global Connections Publication

December 2014

Our Mission

To build community across cultures by bringing 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 facilitate partnerships and resources that enrich the vitality and diversity of the Centre Region.

Staff

Marc McCann, *Executive Director*
Virginia Meadows, *Program Coordinator*
Claudia Prieto, *Program Coordinator*
Clara Hensel, *Intern*
Vanda Mikóné Hurnyi, *Office Volunteer*

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Stay Connected

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Global Connections is a nonprofit Centre County
United Way agency and Penn State affiliate.

Centre County
United Way



Director's Notes:

Global Connections 2014 – a Year of Transition



2014 marks a year of change at Global Connections. With a new staff, upgraded office space, and a reconstructed website, the activity has been non-stop the past year. Despite these changes, Global Connections is still the same organization it's been since 1961 – an organization that offers great programs and events that serve and reach out to the international community while simultaneously acculturating the residents of Centre County.

I began my role as Director during the last week of April and was immediately struck by both the variety and the value of Global Connections' programs. Since late April, these positive feelings of what we provide for the community and how we do it have only been reinforced. I've learned over these past 8 months just how vulnerable members of the international community can be and observed the unique scope and impact of Global Connections' services. The work that Global Connections does, and that you support, strengthens our community for everyone.

The Staff

I feel incredibly fortunate to be working with such a dedicated and talented staff. Virginia Meadows joined the team in May, bringing years of experience in human services programming and special events management. Claudia Prieto started in August, bringing with her many areas of expertise, including international educational programming and social media marketing. Clara Hensel, our intern from Bonn, Germany, joined us in October, and will stay through the end of March. She is trilingual and has jumped in, with great enthusiasm, to every project thrown her way.

The Move

Global Connections was given the opportunity to move from our office in 427 Boucke down one flight of stairs to an open space on the 3rd floor. It was a relatively easy decision, as our new office space in 314 Boucke is bigger, has more light, more windows, a higher ceiling, and better control of heating & cooling. We prepared for "the move" during the first week of December and arrived in our new office on December 8th. While the unpacking process is not yet complete, we are enjoying our new setup. Our phone numbers and email addresses are the same. In conjunction with this change, we're in the process of moving some historical Global Connections documents into the archives of the Paterno Library, which is a service that Penn State provides for community organizations.

Director's Notes: (continued)

The Website

We've recently struggled with website issues that impacted people's ability to access and use our site. Thanks to the generous support of an anonymous donor, we have been able to pursue the project of reconstructing our website, and we are doing this with the help and expertise of the Denovati Group, a technology solutions company based out of Chicago. The web address is the same – www.gc-cc.org – but you'll notice that we've redesigned the home page, brought in new themes, and added updated features. We're hopeful that the new site is very welcoming to all visitors. Site updates will continue through January - please be sure to take a peek!

I hope you enjoy this newsletter, as it gives snapshots of all the incredible work happening. We would like to give a special thanks to our friends and volunteers. Without our supporters' time, treasure, and talent, we wouldn't exist. Thank you for making a difference! On behalf of the Global Connections staff, I'd like to wish you a Happy Holiday Season, and Peace & Health in the New Year.

~Marc

Cultural Luncheons: Exploring Cultures and Cuisines Across the Globe

These special meals are held on Wednesday afternoons throughout the year, and each luncheon features a home-cooked ethnic meal along with a cultural presentation prepared by an international person from a specific country. We are always looking for international cooks who would be interested in sharing their culture and food with people in the community. If you would like to be involved as a volunteer or be added to our email invitation list, please let us know.

In October, guests enjoyed a delicious family-style meal featuring the tastes of Sudan. Yosra Abdelkareem prepared the menu for the afternoon and led a wonderful group of volunteers in the preparation of the food. Yosra is a visiting scholar at Penn State as part of the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program. During an intriguing presentation, Yosra shared many interesting details and perspectives of her home country of Sudan, and guests had many questions for her at the conclusion of her presentation.

A Cultural Luncheon in the month of December highlighted the cuisine and culture of Turkey. Our featured presenter was Belma Tuğrul, and she was also joined by her daughter Öykü who performed a traditional Turkish dance for the crowd. Belma received support from friends and helpers from across the community as they prepared and served a fantastic Turkish meal for over 100 guests. As part of her message to the attendees, Belma invited everyone to visit her and her family in Turkey when she returns home from her studies at Penn State.



Don't forget to
SAVE THE DATES for the
Cultural Luncheons
in the upcoming year:

Feb. 4, April 22, & May 20

We hope to see you there!

Sharing Language and Culture: Expanding Your Horizons

The International Friendship Program matches people together for cultural exchange and friendship. Friends get together once or twice a month to share a meal, attend an event, or include each other in fun activities and outings. No housing is involved, and the experience is mutually enriching as you and your international friend(s) learn about each other's lives and cultures. Interested participants can register to join the program any time of the year, and we are always in need of American volunteers. In 2014, the International Friendship Program matched people from 26 different countries around the world spanning 5 continents.



Through our Conversation Partners Program, we pair native English speakers with non-native speakers for the purpose of English language practice in a relaxed and fun atmosphere. Participants are matched either one-on-one or in small groups, and they spend time together with the primary purpose of practicing English through casual conversation and interaction. With improving



English as the focus, no foreign language experience is necessary to become a Conversation Partner. This is also a great opportunity to share culture and make new friends! Our Conversation Partner matches in 2014 have brought people together from North America, South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia representing 27 different countries.

If you or anyone you know is interested in making a new friend through the Conversation Partners Program or the International Friendship Program, please contact us! You can visit our website at www.gc-cc.org to register online. Just look for the button to "Register Online."

Conversation and Crafts: The Art of Sharing Culture Through Crafts



Our Conversation and Crafts program is a group for adult community members to practice English as a second language in an informal environment while creating inventive crafts. This group is led by Lisa and Kelly who put a lot of creativity and preparation into each meeting. Every other week, they open their homes to enthusiastic crafts fans from all cultures. The meetings follow themes of the current season or cultural events taking place around the time of each meeting which creates a nice focus for the craft activities. The group created silk pumpkins

around Halloween, pine cone turkeys for Thanksgiving, and Orange Pomanders to prepare for Christmas. During the last meeting of 2014, the group baked Christmas cookies and enjoyed a potluck lunch with contributions from all members.



It was a great conclusion to this year's Conversation and Crafts meetings.

Conversation and Crafts meetings are always filled with a lot of talking, laughing, crafting, and a warm cup of tea. For more information on how to get involved with this group, contact Global Connections!



Uniting the World through the Art of Poetry

Fifteen community members representing thirteen countries from around the world shared their voices, languages and poetry during the **10th annual “Found in Translation: World Poetry Read by World People”** event on November 20, 2014. Held once again at Webster’s Bookstore Café, this culturally-enriching event embodies the interconnectedness of society where one can appreciate both the diversity and the common thread that exists across cultures through the shared art of poetry. To view the collection of poems, [click here](#).



Special thanks to Dr. James Brasfield for providing the introductory remarks and to our 2014 poetry readers, followed by country and language: **(Top Row)** Nithin Varma (India | Malayalam); Bahaeddine Taoufik (Tunisia | French); Yanni Cao (China | Mandarin); Jaroslav Jansky (The Czech Republic | Czech); Abhishek Rao (India | Kannada); Erika Anseloni (Brazil | Portuguese); Vanda Hurnyi Mikone (Hungary | Hungarian); Sarah Osmane (Lebanon | Arabic); Ukranian guest; Clara Hensel (Germany | German); Dr. James Brasfield (Introductory remarks); **(Bottom Row)** Sumithra Surendralal (India | Malayalam); Dr. Gabeba Baderoon (South Africa | Afrikaans); Renata Horvatek (Croatia | Croatian); Tatjana Neuberger (Croatia | Croatian); Claudia Prieto (Colombia | Spanish). Special thanks to John Wheatley for photographing the event.

Making English Language Learning a Community Affair

Whether it is cooking while practicing new English vocabulary, attending a weekly ESL conversation class, or discussing a favorite novel with a group of women, members of the international community continue to enjoy English language learning opportunities while making connections with others thanks to Global Connections’ volunteer ESL teachers and Women’s Intercultural Book Group facilitators!



In fall 2014 alone, Global Connections’ 14 book group facilitators offered a total of 11 reading groups (Beginner, Intermediate or Advanced levels) comprised of 54 members representing 20 countries. Additionally, our volunteer ESL teachers offered weekly classes at varying speaking/writing levels, benefiting hundreds of English-language learners from over 17 countries. Special thanks to our enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers for making these educational and cross-cultural learning programs possible!

International Speakers Program: Discovering the World, One Person at a Time

Curious about what school life is like in Tunisia? Interested in learning about Dia de los Muertos traditions in Mexico? Volunteers from the International Speakers Program strive to close the cultural gap by sharing their first-hand knowledge of what life is like in another part of the world. Global Connections is delighted to be able to connect area schools, community organizations and retirement communities with our engaging international speaker volunteers each semester. Special thanks to our speakers for providing a personal touch by expanding our knowledge about a new region, country or culture! To request an international speaker, please visit the Global Connections [website](#).



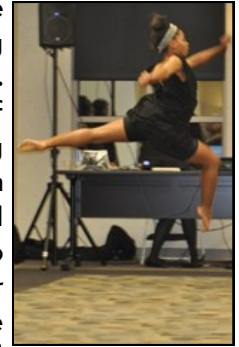
To volunteer as an international speaker, please [register online](#) or contact Claudia Prieto at clp31@psu.edu.

3rd Annual Women's International Night



This year's Women's International Night event took place on November 12th at the fantastic Minitab World Headquarters in State College. The evening, filled with international delicacies, crafts, and dance performances, provided a fun, safe, and relaxing environment for women from any cultural background. Over one hundred women came to enjoy a fun night of crafting activities like Russian doll making, creating colorful bookmarks, or having a word or name written in different languages. The international activities were led

by volunteers who offered to share a piece of their culture with the other women who attended the event. While enjoying a great variety of international finger foods, our guests had the opportunity to see dance performances from Ireland, Africa, Argentina, the Middle East, and India. The Indian dancers also invited guests to take part in a Bollywood Dancing lesson.



The event also offered the opportunity to wear a Bengali Sari, get a beautiful henna tattoo, or enjoy a relaxing massage. A silent auction featured items from countries all over the world, and many women purchased jewelry, accessories, chocolate, tea, and coffee at the fair trade sales tables.

Women's International Night 2014 was a great success thanks to all of our wonderful volunteers and guests!



Global Voices: Where Words Fail Music Speaks

Global Voices is a choir led by Jennifer Miller where internationals as well as locals meet once a week to sing songs from around the globe in a casual, friendly environment. The purpose of Global Voices is to provide a place for international and American adults in State College and surrounding communities to come together to enjoy singing and promote peace and friendship through multicultural music. Participants are from countries all over the world and the music varies in language and style. No prior musical experience is required. It's meant to be a place where music is FUN, so there's no pressure! Participants in Global Voices recently enjoyed a fun end-of-the-year party (see photo). A great time was had by all!



Global Connections Helps Organize Panels

In conjunction with International Education Week, Global Connections helped organize two major events. On November 18th, “Why State College: A Panel Discussion about the Immigration Raid in Our Community” was held at the State College Municipal Building. Partnering with The Center for Immigrants’ Rights, Global Connections and two other community entities served as “the client” to work with two, second-year Penn State law students in the planning of this session. About 100 people from the community attended this forum which addressed such topics as Immigration Law and Policy 101, how grand juries function, what happened in the June raid, and how local police work with federal agents. Local media was present, and C-NET also taped the event, which can be accessed [here](#).

The next day, on November 19th, Global Connections partnered with Mount Nittany Medical Center, Penn State Professor of History and Religious Studies Dr. Jonathan Brockopp, and the State College Area School District, to hold “The Diversity of Ramadan: First in a Series of Cultural Conversations” at the hospital’s Galen & Nancy Dreibelbis Auditorium. About 75 attendees listened to and interacted with Professor Brockopp and four panelists who represented diverse Muslim backgrounds. C-NET also taped this event, which is available [here](#).

Global Connections Awarded Seed Grant to Enhance Conversation Partners Program

Global Connections was awarded \$5380 as part of the Robert Ott Seed grant given by the Centre County Council for Human Services. The grant proposal was inspired by a program matching retired Americans with Brazilian students via Skype, so that the Brazilian students could practice their English. See that program in action [here](#). Global Connections will use this award to purchase laptops and webcams, partnering with four local entities: The State College Senior Center, The Bellefonte Senior Center, the Village at Penn State, and Juniper Village at Brookline. With this equipment, we’ll be able to match retired volunteers as Conversation Partners for local internationals looking to improve their English. This will be done via Skype, allowing retired volunteers to enjoy this social interaction without having to leave their buildings.

Day of Caring

On October 2nd, a group of Global Connections staff, Board members, and Humphrey Fellows spent the morning at Sunset Park as part of the Centre County United Way’s Day of Caring. We painted posts & picnic tables, and scrubbed green growth off brick pavilion columns. Staff member Virginia Meadows noted – “It’s always fun to get out of the office and do something to help in the community!”



SAVE THE DATE!

A Caribbean Odyssey



Sunday, March 1st, 2015

Ramada Inn and Conference Center Ballroom
1450 South Atherton Street, State College, Pennsylvania

You Are Invited! Join Global Connections for a multi-sensory Caribbean experience featuring fine food, authentic entertainment, unique table décor, and exciting auction offerings – all in support of programs that contribute to international education, understanding and friendship in the greater State College community.

Join us!

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Dinner will feature renowned local chef Duke Gastiger of Spats and chefs from a dozen other establishments, including the Elk Creek Café, Harrison's, Benjamin's Catering, Fasta Pasta, The Village at Penn State, and Zola New World Bistro.

Tickets are now on sale!

Tickets are \$135 per person. The deadline to purchase is Friday, February 20, 2015 or until the event is sold out. Space is limited to the first 200 paid guests. Tickets can be purchased [online](#) or by check payable to Global Connections.

Learn more at
www.gc-cc.org/passport-on-a-plate



Above: Students enjoying Creamery Ice Cream during the International Student Orientation Welcome Reception. The event was sponsored by The Centre County Chapter Penn State Alumni Association and Global Connections.

Spring 2015



Calendar of Events

- **February 4** - Cultural Luncheon Presentation
- **March 1** - Passport on a Plate
- **March 25** - International Women's Day Award Ceremony
- **March 28** - International Children's Festival
- **April 22** - Cultural Luncheon Presentation
- **May 20** - Cultural Luncheon Presentation

[Visit the Global Connections Website for Updated Information](#)