



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 facilitate partnerships and resources that enrich the vitality and diversity of the Centre region.

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Global Connections is a nonprofit organization supported by the Centre County United Way, Penn State's Office of Global Programs, and members of the community. Global Connections is a secular organization that does not promote, endorse, nor is allied with, any religion or religious organization.



Connections

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An Evening of Worldly Women: First Annual Women's International Night Out

With the background sounds of world music setting the mood, women from across the community enjoyed the company of others amidst the tropical plants and waterfall of the Minitab World Headquarters atrium, indulging in an array of international finger foods and drink and wine bar. Guests could take pleasure in a chair massage, have their hand decorated with traditional mehendi henna, their names beautifully written in other languages, and try on traditional clothes of other cultures for a photo. There were demonstrations of Turkish dance, salsa, meringue, belly dance, and Chinese Tai Chi, and the art of gorgeous Turkish marbling painting called Ebru. Guests had a chance to learn the proper use of chopsticks and to challenge a friend to a chopstick "race," make their own little Guatemalan worry dolls and Japanese stationery, and purchase fair trade coffee and chocolate, pashmina shawls, and jewelry from the organization Made by Survivors. An International Cookie cRumble competition, with delicacies donated by volunteer bakers, afforded even more sweet offerings, and guests voted for their favorite – Teresa Abdulbaaqee's Jamaican Cocoa Delights! One guest, Ashear Barr, wrote to us the next day, "Thanks to you and your team for a wonderful time last night. I'm sitting here admiring my henna and recounting the evening for my husband. I hope it was a successful fundraising event, and I look forward to your next one! PS--the food was fabulous!" Make a note in your new calendar for next November's Women's International Night Out! Enjoy an evening in the company of worldly women and international indulgences and help Global Connections meet our budget at the same time! We'd love to see you there!



The beautiful atrium at Minitab



Elizabeth Kirchner (right) and friends



Tanuj Singh creates a mehendi decoration for a guest.



Gulay Baltali from Turkey demonstrates the traditional art of Ebru.

more pictures on page 4

Freedom of Speech Discussion Raises Vital Questions

Drawing on recent national and global events involving free expression, three panelists described how politics, religion and the law provide different contexts for free speech during Global Connections' World Affairs Forum on November 13, *Freedom of Speech on the Global Stage: Where Human Rights Meet Societal Barriers*.



Colleen Connolly-Ahern, William Butler
and Medhi Noorbaksh.

Colleen Connolly-Ahern, Associate Professor in the College of Communications, noted the significance of a woman running for the first time in the presidential election in Guatemala. While the woman's candidacy proved to be an accomplishment in itself among the many other candidates running, there was little publicity for her to attract voter recognition due to a very controlled and partial media system. In addition, segments of the population who might have seemed likely to vote for the candidate based on Connolly-Ahern's research did not coalesce around the woman but seemed to be more drawn to local or geographic issues. Connolly-Ahern observed that Guatemala's national political environment did not favor the appearance of new faces or modes of political expression, and does little to represent the majority indigenous people.

The US and other western nations continue to struggle with interpretations of free expression in Middle Eastern countries especially when they involve religious beliefs, according to Medhi Noorbaksh, Associate Professor of International Affairs at Harrisburg University of Science and Technology. Through his writing and consulting on Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan, Professor Noorbaksh hopes to dispel western stereotypes about Islam and lay the groundwork for greater understanding about the democratic movements in the Middle East.

Russia's punk band Pussy Riot was convicted of "hooliganism" for performing in a church in February. While human rights groups and celebrities raised an outcry against the group's conviction and subsequent imprisonment, there was less sympathy for their public event in Russia itself, explained William Butler, Distinguished Professor of Law at Dickinson. What some may have interpreted as Pussy Riot's right to free expression others, including Russia's judicial system and President Putin, saw as religious hatred and an attack on the country's morals. Butler is an authority and long-time observer of Russian law and he noted the importance of understanding the legal as well as political context for challenges to free speech.

ESL Classes Help Adults Function in their New Community

Is it OK to tell a "little white lie?" Do you expect something that happens "out of the blue?" At any level of language proficiency, idioms can "throw you." In Rosita Derstine's adult English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) class for Global Connections, idioms--along with vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar and more--are taught and practiced in a comfortable, small group environment. In an effort to assure accessibility for adult English language learners who might be busy, have children to care for after school hours, or lack transportation needed to get to one location, Global Connections offers ten different ESL classes with an offering every day of the week at different locations around the community. Classes are open to any adult in the community who would like to attend – residents, immigrants, refugees, students, scholars, or their family members. And unlike other English classes in the county, GC classes remain, for the most part, free of charge because the organization has never relied on state or federal funding. ESL classes assist individuals and are also key to a healthy functioning community-- fostering communication across the many cultures in our area.



- Heewon Lee and Jeongae Lee of S. Korea ask ESL instructor, Rosita Derstine, for clarification about an idiom.
- Hua Zhu Liu from China and Giovani Bellicanta of Brazil work together on an in-class activity.
- Rosita Derstine's Monday class focuses on beginner-level speaking and listening skills.



Lunch Hour Visit to China and Taiwan

In October, we enjoyed the culture and cuisine of China and Taiwan as Wendy Warner, Jie Xu and Xinping Gu prepared a wide array of tasty Chinese dishes for our Cultural Lunch. We were also happy to have the help of five volunteers from the GAP stores in the Nittany Mall who volunteered through their company's GAP Foundation grants for volunteer service.

- Yi Hu, Xinping Gu, Jie Xu & Bin Hu pause to smile in the midst of cooking for 100 guests.
- Wendy Warner with one of the fabulous dishes she helped to prepare.
- Global Connections staff members and volunteers were joined by volunteers from the GAP stores in the Nittany Mall. Five GAP employees assisted with the event and the GAP made a donation of \$250 to Global Connections!



Speakers Program Brings Learning to Life for Bellefonte Kindergarten Children

Since its beginning in 1994, the International Speakers Program continues to provide opportunities for cross-cultural sharing and learning by bringing international speakers into classrooms, civic groups, and youth programs throughout the Centre County area. Some 50 speakers each year share the history, geography, traditions, beliefs, music, art, literature, ideas and perspectives of their countries with thousands of area schoolchildren through this GC program.

This December, for instance, Felix Weigel, from Germany, visited three kindergarten classrooms in Marion Walker Elementary School in Bellefonte. Felix was accompanied by Noelia Torres from Mexico and Ruriko & Hideto Fukudome and their daughter, Maho, from Japan. Ruriko and Hideto showed the children dozens of photos of children in Japan and other images of the homes, food and geography of the country before working with the children on a simple origami project. Four year old Maho was adorably dressed in a tiny pink kimono to show the kindergarten children what a child in Japan might wear to a celebration. Felix and Noelia also gave presentations showing photographs and colorful graphics about their home countries, including German advent calendars and Mexican sombreros.

Teacher Cheryl DeCusati wrote: *"The visits were culturally enriching, and the children benefited from the opportunity to learn words in other languages, see costumes indigenous to other countries, and learn facts through the pictures and discussions about Germany, Japan, and Mexico. This experience broadens our understanding and appreciation of people similar in some ways and dissimilar in other ways. To visit in person with individuals from other cultures helps us gain insight and realize we are all important and valued for who we are as unique people as well as being special in countless ways."*

For young students who might never before have met someone from another race, culture, religion or non-religion, and who only know of other countries from dry 2-dimensional lessons of a textbook or too-often negative and always limited images projected on the news, bringing real "flesh-and-blood" people into a classroom brings humanity into a lesson and an experience of new realization and global awareness to the students. It fosters understanding and tolerance for all involved. It opens the classroom to the world, and makes the students' world a bigger place. It's also an amazingly eye-opening experience for the international volunteer. Thank you to all of the wonderful and adventurous internationals who volunteer for the ISP!

- Noelia Torres, a local community member from Mexico, teaches the children about the wide variety of topography in Mexico.



- Hideto, Ruriko and Maho Fukudome (in Kimono), from Japan, pose for a quick photo with two of the origami Samurai hats they created with the Marion Walker Elementary Kindergarten children.

- Felix Weigel, a Penn State undergraduate student from Germany, teaches the children to sing "Head, Shoulders, Knees & Toes" in German!



Jack-o-Lanterns 101

As part of GC's International Friendship and Conversation Partners Programs, Americans invited their international friends to learn the art of pumpkin carving and enjoy an autumn potluck buffet. For most internationals it was a first-time experience!



Marilyn Keat of State College and her proud friend, Suyeon Heo from South Korea, show off Suyeon's first-time creation.

Jean Dietrich (USA) helps her international friend, Indira Pathak Kafle (Nepal) to get the eyes "just right!"



Mother and son share their first carving experience.

Natali Pryshliak from the Ukraine carves a smiling face.



Conversation Partners Paul Medvedev (host) and Ana Carolina Diaz Beltran from Columbia worked together on their creation.

Continued from Front Page

- *Ebtesam Althowaini from Saudi Arabia and Teresa Abdulbaaqee from USA*
- *Charlotte Baldwin and Laura Reidy in a mother-daughter chopsticks race.*
- *Orpah Chimungu from Malawi and Grace Hakizimana from Rwanda*
- *Justine Andronici and Sharon Barney get their names written in Thai by Nicha Thanarugehok (left).*



Thank you to all who made our first annual
~Women's International Night Out~
such a huge success!

Minitab World Headquarters
Mr. Bruce Pincus, Minitab General Counsel
Joy Vincent Killian & Richard Killian
Cecilia Mills & Calming Points Massage Therapy
Penn State Ballroom Dance Club
Ritter Sport Chocolates, USA
W.C. Clarke's Cheese Shop
Nature's Pantry
The Pennsylvania Centre Orchestra
Ann Pangborn's Woolly Bliss

Polly & Jim Dunn, Jintana & Brian Witmer, Jayashree Sonti & Friends, Jie Xu & Friends, Sharon Shen, Tamra Fatemi, Joanne Green, Yuriko Kajigaki, Ruriko Fukudome, Mariko Oue, Donna Hamao-Langdon, Liisa Scheltz, Gulay Baltali, and all of the many wonderful volunteers who set up, staffed, cooked, donated food and cleaned up for our event.

We would also like to thank all who attended our first ever Women's International Night Out!



Poverty as Culture: Cultural Competency Workshop for Future Health Care Professionals

What are the hidden rules of economic class? Could you survive in poverty? How might your understanding of poverty and other forms of culture affect your care for a patient or your interactions with anyone?



As part of Global Connections' Cultural Competency program, Corey Whitesell helped the HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America) Future Health Care Professionals organization at the State College Area High School develop a better understanding of cultural issues in working with clients and in thinking about themselves. The group discussed their ideas of what culture means – Is culture music and arts? Or only defined by a language, religion, cuisine, social habits? Is there a high school culture? A culture of their own family? Through discussion and interactive activities, students considered what assumptions they might have and have not realized about culture, others and themselves, how we might impose our cultural ideas on another group of people-- however well intended we are, and how it could change their behavior as health care providers.

Make a New Year's Resolution!

- Volunteer to be a host (no housing involved) in the International Friendship Program or a conversation partner for a new international student – spring arrivals will be here on January 1!
- Become a volunteer tax advisor to help international students and scholars with their income tax forms – training is provided.
- Plan to attend the gala Passport on a Plate dinner on February 24th.

Call us at Global Connections for more information or sign up online via our website at www.global.psu.edu/gc.

What Does Your Gift to Global Connections Support?

- \$25 sends an international reader to a local pre-school so that an international child with limited English skills has comfortable time during the day to hear stories in his/her native language.
- \$50 covers the semester's cost of materials for one of our free conversational English-as-a-Second-Language classes which offer newly-arrived adult internationals a free and effective environment to improve their English language skills and build their confidence in speaking English.
- \$75 supports emergency translation services for an international scholar whose child's required health records are not in English, or an interpreter to work with the police in a family matter or court case.
- \$100 sends an international to a school or community group to bring lessons to life, sharing their culture and country in a live and personal way.
- \$200 allows us to offer a Cultural Competency Workshop to a non-profit agency, teaching their staff to be more sensitive to cultural expectations of their international clients.
- \$350 provides the ingredients for a cultural lunch, giving community members an opportunity to experience a new world cuisine and culture.
- \$500 helps support the Women's International Book Group Program for one year, bringing together international women and an American facilitator to read together and establish friendships across cultures.
- \$1000 supports our Children's English-as-a-Second-Language Classes for arriving international children. Our summer English-as-a-Second-Language classes are the only opportunity for many beginner children who are not yet in the school system to hear and practice English in a warm, friendly environment. Support is needed for expenses such as teacher stipends, educational materials, refreshments, and tuition scholarships.

Your gift in any amount directly supports these and other programs of Global Connections.

Thank you for your generosity!

*We are so very grateful for all of our volunteers – in our office, in each and every program, individuals, couples, families—there's no way we could function without you. **Thank You!***



Warm Welcome for New Neighbors

Some 100 international and American friends attended the Welcome Picnic at Tudek Park in September. The program is lucky to have 147 hosts and family members and 105 internationals and family members signed up this past semester alone! There are still many internationals waiting to be matched – do you know someone who would enjoy being an American friend? No housing is involved. “Hosts” offer newcomers a personal connection to the area and its unique culture. New friends try to get together once or twice a month to share a meal or experience – a sports event, apple picking, a child’s school concert, a chat over coffee. The friendship and cultural exchange is always mutually enriching!

Grace Hakizimana from Rwanda and her son, Yannick.



Adriana Cundar from Ecuador & a member of her host family, Laura Egan from the USA



(Left to Right) Adriana Cundar (Ecuador), Owen Baya (Kenya), Tran Tran (Vietnam), Sitti Khadijah (Indonesia), TingTing Zhu (China), Luka Juros (Croatia), Grace Hakizimana (kneeling, from Rwanda), Natali Pryshliak (Ukraine), Diana Stah (Moldova), Xinlei (China) and Global Connections Executive Director, Merrill David (USA).



Natali Pryshliak from the Ukraine, Jack Matson from the US and Owen Baya from Kenya



Elizabeth Goreham, Mayor of State College, kicks off to Natali Pryshliak of the Ukraine, in a friendly “World Cup” game of soccer.



Found in Translation

On November 15th, GC's 8th annual Found in Translation: World Poetry Read by World People event brought together people from twenty different countries to read poetry in their native languages and in English. A brief introduction on the topic of translation was given by Emily Grosholz, and then each reader took their turn at the mic. The words, voices and sounds of so many different people and languages from around the world filled the room at Webster's Bookstore Café, bringing everyone together in a UN of poetry. Thank you Webster's for hosting this year's reading!

(Top from left) Mañuel Delgado of Spain, Robert Lima of Cuba & Spain, Xiaoyu Fu of China, Gregory Pierrot of France, Emily Grosholz, Gabeba Baderoon of South Africa, Renata Horvatek of Croatia, (Middle Row from left) Sudathip Saetan of Thailand, Eun Sun Jung of South Korea, Aga Gabor of Poland, Tugce Tuncdemir of Turkey, Vanda Hurnyi Mikóné of Hungary, (front row from left) Fanny Wu Almanzar of Dominican Republic, Diana Beryland of Russia, Tamar London of Israel and Patricia Fanaya of Brazil. Not pictured: Prasenjit Mitra of India (reading in Bengali), Pallavi Eswara of India (reading in Hindi), Binh Nguyen of Vietnam and Ephraim Muchada Govere of Zimbabwe.



Pallavi Eswara read in Hindi and English



Ephraim Govere read for Zimbabwe

Prasenjit Mitra of India reading in Bengali



Binh Nguyen from Vietnam

Give the Gift of Intercultural Community and Understanding!

You can donate to Global Connections in honor of the holidays, a birthday, or other special occasion, or just in the name of friendship!

We'll notify your honoree with a card in your name, and send you a receipt for your records. Your donation is tax-deductible, and goes directly to support our programs.

Please send completed form and check (made to Global Connections) to:

**Global Connections
427 Boucke Building
University Park, PA 16802**

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Thank you!

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Wishing Peace & Understanding to All!

Save the Date!

***PASSPORT ON A PLATE:
A Silk Road Odyssey***

*Please plan to join us for our gala evening
with dinner prepared by creative and talented local chefs, and featuring a
silent auction, international entertainment and beautifully and
uniquely designed table décor.*

Sunday Evening, February 24th, 2012
The Ramada Inn

To benefit Global Connections

Tickets: \$125 tax deductible

Invitations will be mailed in early January 2013.
Are you on our invitation list?