

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

VOICES

A Publication from the Language and Culture Center



CELEBRATING
40 YEARS
THE LCC THEN
AND NOW p. 8

Fall **2015**

The LCC Team

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VOICES – Fall 2015

Cover and Culture Festival photos courtesy of Margaret Molloy

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Conversation Club Guides



Counseling Team

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From the **Director's** Desk

As you surely know by now, we are currently celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Language and Culture Center. LCC historians advise us that the first group of students came from Venezuela and attended the first classes offered by the LCC in the summer of 1975. Forty good and important years have gone quickly by. The celebration of those years began during the summer and will continue throughout this anniversary year.

At the Fall Culture Festival on Friday, November 20, Dr. Renu Khator, President of the University of Houston sent her Chief of Staff, Michael Johnson, to present a certificate signed by the President and the Provost of the University and congratulating the LCC on its forty years of service to more than 20,000 international students. We had a wonderful day with students bringing dishes from their countries and enjoying music and dancing from many countries around the world.

2015 has been a year of remembering and a year of transition. In this issue of Voices, we wish to acknowledge Sandra Woodson, former Associate Director of the LCC, whose retirement became effective this fall on September 1, 2015. Sandy was a teacher and manager in the LCC intensive English program before she became Associate Director in 2005. Many of you will remember her, as she was the Associate Director when you began your studies in the LCC. She was a dear friend and colleague and will be greatly missed. We thank her for many good years of service to international students and to teachers of English as a second language.

We welcome the new Associate Director of the LCC, Dr. Jodi Nelms. Her first day of work was August 3. Fortunately, during August, the two Associate Directors worked together to ensure a smooth transition for students, teachers, and staff at the LCC. Jodi holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Florida as well as a Master's in Linguistics and TESOL from Florida International University. She brings extensive experience in teaching, administration, writing, publishing, and professional service to her new position. We have advised her that she will work with the best students and the best teachers in the profession, and we have promised her that she will never be bored. We congratulate Dr. Jodi Nelms on her new and exciting job.



Joy Tesh, Dr. Wyman Herendeen, and Sandy Woodson at Ms. Woodson's retirement reception

This fall, we have been delighted to have 383 students from 38 countries in our program and on our campus. As the fall term of 2015 closes, we wish you a safe and productive academic break. Fall classes will end at the close of graduation ceremonies on December 10, 2015. The LCC office will remain open through December 23, 2015, and then will close for the Winter Break and open again on January 4, 2016. Online registration for the spring term will begin on January 5, 2016.

If you are leaving our program for any reason, we encourage you to stay in touch with us through email or through our web site <http://lcc.uh.edu>. We are eager to hear from students who continue their studies at the University of Houston or at another school in the United States or from students who return to their countries to continue their journey. We invite you to join a great network of former LCC students, now living and working all over the world.

Please accept our heartfelt congratulations as you complete the fall 2015 term of study in the intensive English program. We look forward to seeing many of you again in the New Year for the spring 2016 term in the Language and Culture Center.

Suyi Yau Chen, Daniel Eduardo Hernandez, and



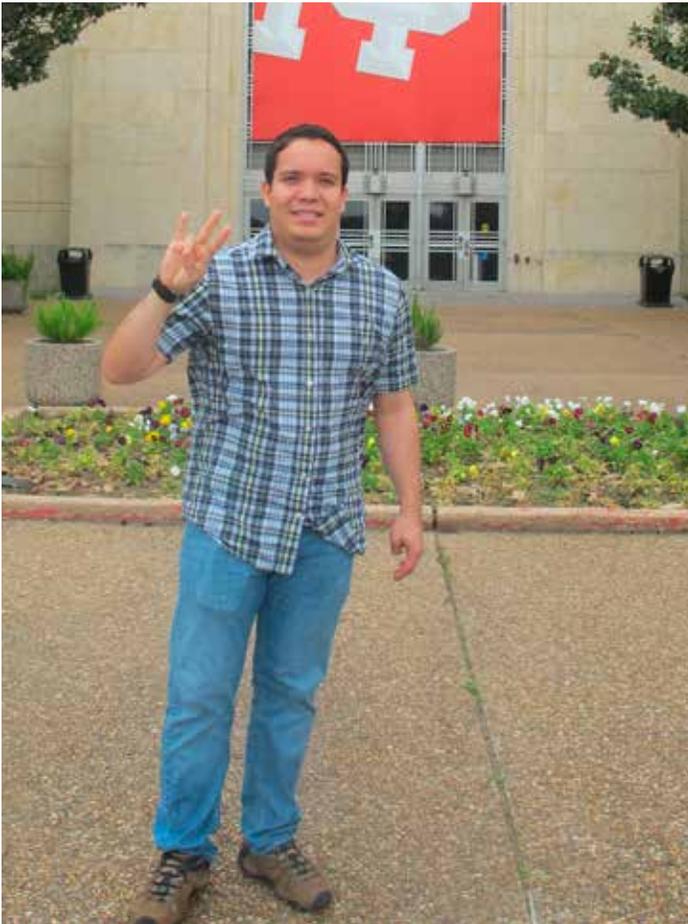
Dr. Jodi Nelms - Associate Director

The Language and Culture Center awards three scholarships each term to returning students who best combine academic excellence and leadership with international awareness and cross-cultural understanding. The Joyce Merrill Valdes scholarship honors Professor Joyce Merrill Valdes, who was the founder and first director of the Language and Culture Center; the Joseph O. Davidson scholarship honors Dr. Joseph O. Davidson, who served as director of the Language and Culture Center for twenty-three years and retired from service on January 31, 2006; the Brad Leon Powell scholarship honors Brad Leon Powell, who was the Program Director for Counseling and Student Services and served as a dedicated member of the Language and Culture Center since 2002. Each scholarship is for one term of study in the intensive English program and covers the full cost of tuition, fees, and medical insurance. At the summer graduation ceremony on Thursday, August 6, 2015, the LCC awarded the Valdes scholarship to Suyi Yau Chen, the Davidson scholarship to Daniel Eduardo Hernandez, and the Powell scholarship to Issa Karambiri.



SUYI YAU CHEN was awarded the Valdes scholarship. Ms. Chen is from Panama and is studying in level five. This is her second term at the LCC. After she completes her studies at the LCC, she plans to study Psychology at the University of Houston. She said, "I was thrilled to hear that I had won the scholarship. I love being here at UH and plan on continuing my education here. Winning the scholarship not only motivates me, but also the people around me."

Issa Karambiri Receive LCC Scholarships



DANIEL EDUARDO HERNANDEZ was awarded the Davidson scholarship. Mr. Hernandez is from Venezuela. This is his fourth term at the LCC, and he is currently studying in level six. Daniel has a Mechanical Engineering degree from his home country. Upon completing the intensive English program, he hopes to earn a bachelor's and a master's degree in the College of Technology at the University of Houston. Mr. Hernandez remarked, "I feel honored to have been chosen as the scholarship winner. The scholarship has improved my confidence and my desire to work even harder toward my academics goals. Thanks, LCC! I am so grateful for this award."



ISSA KARAMBIRI was awarded the Powell scholarship. He is from Burkina Faso and is currently studying in level three having been at the LCC for two terms. He has a bachelor's degree in Public International Law from his home country. When he finishes his study of English, he hopes to earn a master's in Political Science or International Relations. Mr. Karambiri said, "I'm very happy to be a scholarship winner. This shows me that I have some potential. It pushes me to improve every day so I can be a global scholar for myself, for my country and maybe for the world."

We congratulate Suyi Yau Chen, Daniel Eduardo Hernandez, and Issa Karambiri on their outstanding records in the Intensive English Program at the Language and Culture Center, and we wish them great success as they continue to study in the United States. We all look forward to learning who will be the next LCC scholarship recipients at the fall 2015 graduation ceremony.

Counseling and Student Services

Congratulations on completing the fall term at the LCC!

I bet you are ready to kick back and relax and enjoy the holiday. I want to remind you of some important immigration rules you should review before you finalize your winter plans.

Please see an LCC Counseling Team member to request a travel signature if you are traveling outside the United States. If you plan to go home and not return, please let us know. We will report to immigration that you have completed your studies at the LCC and will leave the United States.

If this is your final term at the LCC and you will transfer to another program, be sure you turned in all transfer paperwork to an LCC Counseling Team member. This process is time sensitive, and you have only 60 days from LCC graduation to complete your transfer. If you do not complete this process on time, you will lose your immigration status. Your new school must start within five months from the last day of the program.

If you are thinking about taking the spring 2016 vacation term off, please speak to an LCC Counseling Team member for more details. Log into the LCC Student System and submit a vacation request. I will review your request and contact you with the results. Only students that meet the requirements for a vacation term will be allowed to take a vacation in spring 2016.

If you have any questions or concern about your immigration status, please see an LCC Counseling Team member. I hope you have a wonderful holiday, and I hope to see you in the new year!

— Sam Long, *SEVIS Compliance Coordinator*

This term, the Counseling Team was very excited to present various activities and events to LCC students.

We went to the Texas Renaissance Festival, where we met entertaining performers, saw unique arts and crafts, and ate delicious food. We went to Moody Gardens in Galveston where we visited the magical Ice Land Ice Sculptures, the colorful Rainforest Pyramid, the breathtaking Aquarium Pyramid, the beautiful Festival of Lights, and more. Last but not least, we had the Fall 2015 Culture Festival and celebrated the 40th anniversary of the LCC. The event featured food, clothing, music, and dancing from around the world. We hope that you had a great time with friends and made new connections.

In addition to advising LCC students daily on many topics, the Counseling Team carried out three different workshops this term: the Career Services Workshop, informing students about how to look for jobs on campus and utilize resources provided by University Career Services; the F-1 Workshop, advising students about how to maintain F-1 status; and the Admissions Workshop, helping students understand the university's application processes. We hope that you found the workshops informative and helpful.

We were fortunate to spend the term with you, and we wish you great success.

I would also like to recognize the LCC Singers and their director Caitlin Sapaugh. The choir members worked hard to learn new songs. They performed at the Zoo Lights and the LCC Graduation Ceremony. Caitlin, we are so proud of the choir members. You have done a fantastic job!

— Adam Chen, *Program Director of Counseling and Student Services*



Sam Long, Adam Chen, and Cathy Blake

Congratulations on making it through the fall 2015 term at the LCC!

You worked hard and learned a lot. Now it is time to relax and enjoy a long break. If you are going back to your country, enjoy your time with friends and family! Remember to practice your English skills while you are away!

If you are staying in Houston, connect with friends who will be in town. Plan some fun activities. If you are not sure what to do, check out 365thingsinhouston.com for a list of activities in your area. Enjoy your time off. We look forward to seeing you all back next term.

Best,

Cathy Blake,
International Student Counselor

The LCC Then and Now

Connections

Shaima Alawami – Saudi Arabia, **Joseph Phuoc**

Nguyen – Vietnam, **David Rubio** – Peru

6A

The Language and Culture Center (LCC) at the University of Houston is a place where you can connect with people from around the world and a place where you can get one of the most valuable experiences of your life. Dr. Carol Archer, one of the first teachers at LCC, discussed with our group how students from the LCC can keep connected. According to Dr. Archer, in the past, it was very difficult for her to contact students because she did not have their phone numbers. If she wrote a letter, no one replied. However, these days, with the development of technology and social media, she has many ways to keep in touch with students, such as sending an email or using Facebook. These ways let her talk with students daily and build a strong student-teacher relationship. If students ask for Dr. Archer's help and advice in some difficult situation such as choosing a major of study, she helps them to find ways of dealing with it. All students can keep in touch with Dr. Carol Archer at <http://culturebump.com>.

The LCC Scholarship Development

Maria Pilar Valverde – Peru, **Abdullah Alsumayin** – Saudi

Arabia, **Yu-Chen (Yvonne) Chang** – Taiwan

6B

Now the LCC Scholarship is different from before in various respects. According to the LCC Admissions Manager, the LCC scholarships are awarded to students who have the merits of leadership, achievement, cross culture awareness, good attendance, cultural understanding, and academic success during their studies at the LCC. The LCC originally offered only one scholarship; additional scholarships were added later. Until 2013, the LCC offered two full scholarships and two partial scholarships. Eventually, the two partial scholarships along with additional funds were combined to offer a third full scholarship that covered the cost of tuition and fees for one term of study. The first two full scholarships honor Dr. Joyce Valdes and Dr. Joseph Davidson. The full scholarship established in 2014 honors Brad Powell.

The Best ESL Program

Maha Alshammari – Saudi Arabia, **Ha Tran** – Vietnam,

Anh Pham – Vietnam

6A

In the last forty years, based on the opinion of many transferred students' experiences, the LCC has always been the perfect environment to learn English. The LCC offers good facilities, professional faculty, and a good ESL program for students who want to learn English. According to Ms. Hang, a student who moved from the LCC to another program, at the LCC, students learn the necessary skills to use in universities and colleges such

as writing research papers, presenting, and working with a team. These are rarely found in other ESL programs. Another student, Ms. Duyen, said that the LCC offers many activities for students to practice English such as the LCC Singers, Conversation Club, and provides many other opportunities for students to exchange their cultural experiences. Based on most students' experiences, the LCC is the best choice for ESL students.

The LCC Scholarship Names

Seth Havor – Togo, **Mohammed Al-Taher** – Saudi Arabia,

Pilar Rodriguez-Salto – Argentina

6A

The Language and Culture Center offers three full scholarships which were named to honor the influential people that helped build and develop the intensive English program. The first scholarship is named the Joyce Valdes Scholarship to honor the founder and first Director of the LCC. Joyce Valdes worked ten years persuading the University of Houston of the importance of having an intensive English program to help people learn a language. She thought it was very important to understand other cultures. The second scholarship named the Joseph Davidson Scholarship was created to recognize the work of the second director of the LCC, who served for twenty-three years and dedicated his time to emphasize his vision for this program. Finally, the Brad Powell Scholarship was created in 2014, combining two former half scholarships into a new full scholarship to honor the memory of the former Program Director for Counseling and Student Services, who served at the LCC from 2002 until his passing in 2014. Brad Powell was a very dedicated and beloved person.



Carol Archer & Dola Young
in the LCC's early days

The LCC Then and Now

Abdullah Alajmi – Saudi Arabia,

Abdulqader Almnabri – Saudi

Arabia, **Phuc Huynh** – Vietnam

6B

Ms. Dola Young is a special teacher who has witnessed the time of formation of the LCC. She started working at the LCC in 1976. However, she left in 1981 to pursue her dream to become a lawyer. After 25 years of work as a lawyer and then retirement, she taught at the LCC several times as a substitute teacher in 2013.

Because of her experience working with international students, she realized how much she loves to teach international students and so accepted

the offer to be a full time teacher. According to Ms. Young, the LCC has changed a lot over the years. A larger number of students

has lead to a larger number of teachers. In 1979, there were only six teachers. Another thing is that the CALL Lab in the seventies did not look the same as it does now. Teachers had to record their own voices to help students practice listening skills. Now, with modern computers and software supporting teachers, teachers can focus on other things, but this does not mean that they are less enthusiastic.

Cultural Changes at the LCC

Jose Boccalandro Ferreira Dias – *Venezuela*, **Gabriela Limongi** – *Venezuela*, **Amal Aljeshi** – *Saudi Arabia*

6B

According to Gregory Urquhart, who has worked as a teacher for thirty eight years, the LCC is an institution where people from all over the world come to study and learn English. However, the culture of the students and the staff has evolved over the past forty years. Back then the majority of the students were from Central and Latin America, and the Asian group was formed by Japanese students rather than Chinese and Vietnamese students. Nowadays, the majority of the students are from Asian countries such as Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, and China. In the same way, before the teachers were mainly American and taught survival English; presently, there are more international teachers with different views of teaching, and the focus is on academic English.



Updating of the Facilities

Tan Nguyen – *Vietnam*, **Van Dinh** – *Vietnam*, **Sarah Marafi** – *Kuwait*

6B

In the last forty years, many things have changed, and the LCC is not an exception. Forty years ago, modern things like computers, projectors, and the internet

were not available. According to Ms. Jeanne Peine, forty years ago, students and teachers had to use chalk boards while explaining lectures and little cassette and tape recorders for listening. Without the internet, the main resources for students were teachers and books. Over the years, the LCC facilities have been renovated to create a better learning environment for students. Most classrooms are now equipped with modern devices; therefore, the combination of traditional teaching techniques and visual presentations make lessons clearer, faster, interesting, and effective. The CALL Lab, which is also used as a reading room, is a place for students to practice listening, reading, and more by themselves. All in all, such upgrades have made the LCC a better place for students to learn.

How the LCC Helps International Students Succeed

Daniel Hernandez – *Venezuela*, **Marta Gomez** – *Venezuela*, **Atheer Alshahrani** – *Saudi Arabia*

6A

Our group interviewed students from different countries and cultures that graduated from the LCC. They shared their experiences about how the LCC has helped them succeed in college. According to Randy Nip from Venezuela, the LCC gave him a little introduction to the university and college system in the United States. The LCC prepared him to face the different challenges that a student may encounter in college life. It also gave him advice on how to behave toward professors and classmates. According to another student from Venezuela, Hortensia Barrios, the LCC has helped her improve her writing and reading skills. She said, “I did not realize how important my time at the LCC was until I had a huge research paper due for my history class. I remember I was nervous about it, so I talked to my teacher. I told her that I only knew argumentative structures, which I had learned at the LCC. She told me that was the right way to go. In all my other writing classes, I stand out. I did have writing skills before, but the practice and confidence I gained at the LCC has helped me become a 4.0 student!” Abdullah Al-Hajri, who is from Saudi Arabia, is a current engineering student at the University of Houston. He graduated from the LCC in 2013. He said that the LCC prepared him very well for the university, especially in writing scientific papers and major essays for university courses. In addition to teaching English, the LCC gave Abdullah a chance to meet many people from various cultures. According to Diosdado Fermin, who is a freshman from Equatorial Guinea, his experience at the LCC has had a great impact on his studies. He added that he feels confident when he interacts with professors and classmates, and believes he speaks more fluently. Also in courses like English 1331, he is up to speed when the instructor asks him to write several essays, and in political science classes, he does not have any issues taking notes.



Randy Nip
Venezuela
Electrical Power Technology



Hortensia Barrios
Venezuela
English Literature



Abdullah Al-Hajri
Saudi Arabia
Chemical Engineering



Diosdado Fermin
Equatorial Guinea
Petroleum Engineering

DR. CAROL ARCHER: CELEBRATING FORTY YEARS AT THE LCC

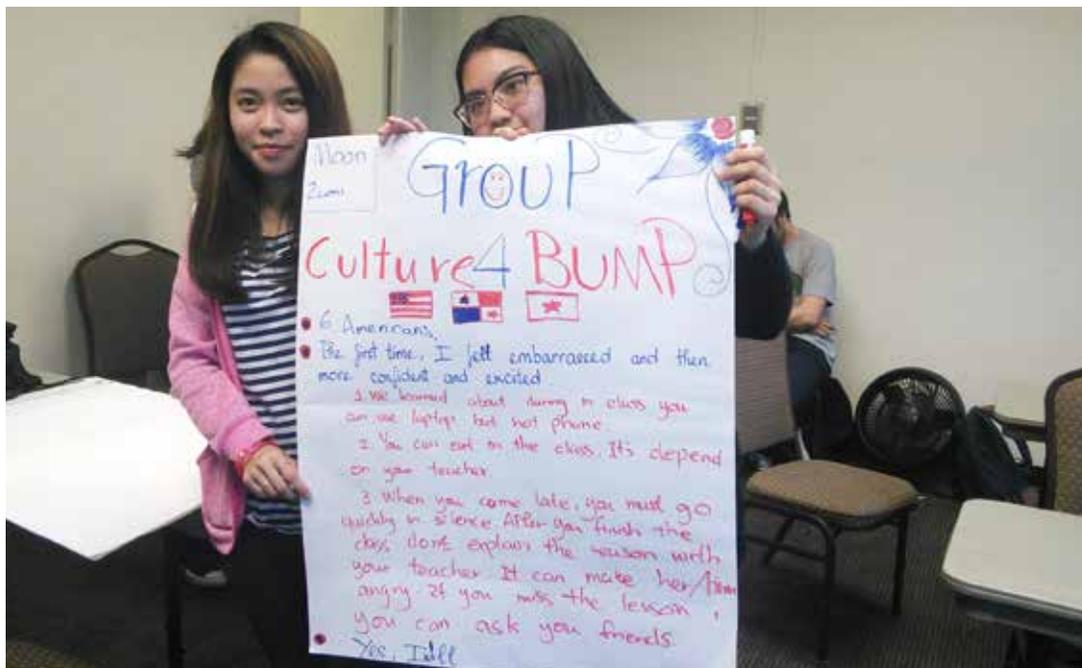
*Joy Tesh, Director @
Jodi Nelms, Associate Director*



When the Language and Culture Center was formed forty years ago, Dr. Carol Archer was one of the first teachers to be hired. She developed the cross culture communication program at the LCC and is the originator of the Culture Bump. She describes the Culture Bump as the phenomenon that occurs when an individual encounters a cultural difference. Dr. Archer still shares her experiences and passion for diverse populations and cross-cultural communication with LCC teachers and students.

Dr. Archer speaks Spanish, French, and Arabic and has lived in Venezuela, Argentina, Guatemala, and Algeria. She has a master's degree in Comparative Education with Latin America and a doctorate in Culture and Urban Studies from the University of Houston, and she is certified by the Institute of Intercultural Communication at Stanford University.

Dr. Archer is now retired from the Language and Culture Center and is the principal of Archer and Associates—a cross-cultural training company. We thank her for her contributions to the LCC and for her many years of dedicated service.



Fall Festival



A SPECIAL CITY

Guiyang

Qin Zhang

1B – China

My hometown, Guiyang, is a special city. My city is in the south of China near Burma. It is called “the nature city” in China. Also, it is the only city to be called “the nature city” because my city has a lot of mountains and forests. My city has karst landform, and it has the best air quality in China. It has one third of the world’s waterfalls, so I like my hometown, and I think Guiyang is a special city.

Dammam

Ali Al Dubais

1B – Saudi Arabia

I am from Dammam. Dammam is in Saudi Arabia. There are malls in Dammam. There are beaches in Dammam. There are parks and beautiful hotels in Dammam. I like Dammam.

Dohul

Ibrahim Alkaabi

1B – Qatar

Dohul, my hometown, is a special city. It is in Qatar. Dohul is in the southern part of Qatar near Saudi Arabia. The name “Dohul” means “rich area.” Dohul is a small city in my country. It will have the World Cup in 2022. It has a beautiful beach. It has some rare animals. Now, I live in America, but Dohul is still very special to me.

Baoan

Shuangmei Liu

1B – China

Baoan, my hometown, is a special city. It is in Shengzheng. Shengzheng is in the southern part of China. My hometown is in the northwestern part of Shengzheng near Hong Kong and Taiwan. The name Baoan means “precious and safe.” It is a developed city. It has two airports, one for travelers and another for transporting goods. Also, it has a long beach. There are a lot of beautiful parks in this city, and there are many special buildings too. Baoan is special to me.

Wenzhou

Qingnan Ni

1B – China

Wenzhou is my hometown. It is a very special city. It is in China. My hometown is in the southwestern part of China, west of Japan near the sea. The name Wenzhou means “a place of rivers and foothills.” The Wenzhou people are called “the western Jews”. There are many company directors in this city. Also, Wenzhou has many rivers and foothills. Now, I study in Houston, but Wenzhou is still very special to me.

Jeddah

Waddah Alkhomaisani

1B – Saudi Arabia

Jeddah is my city. It is in Saudi Arabia. It is in the west of Saudi Arabia. It is next to the sea, and it is a beautiful city. There are many jobs in Jeddah. Many people live in Jeddah, so there are many malls and cars. Jeddah is a very special city.

Jeddah

Mohammad Alsefri

1B – Saudi Arabia

Jeddah is in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is in the western part of Asia. Jeddah is a big city. There are beautiful beaches and deserts in this city. I live in the city town center. We don’t have any train stations or bus stations. We don’t have bars and night clubs. My city is very safe, and people are friendly. I can’t live in any other city. It is very special to me.

Skaka

Majed Alotaibi

1B – Saudi Arabia

Skaka is a special city for me. It is in northern Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is in the Middle East. I have a farm in Skaka. The mountain Zaabal is in this city. Zaabal is an important mountain. Skaka is an agricultural city. It is famous for olive oil and dates. Many people live in my city. Life in Skaka is very good, so it is a special city.

Ho Chi Minh

Thao Tran

1B – Vietnam

Ho Chi Minh, my hometown, is a dynamic city. It is in Viet Nam. Viet Nam borders China, Laos, and Cambodia. Ho Chi Minh city is in the southern part of Viet Nam. The name “Ho Chi Minh” is the name of a president of Viet Nam. Ho Chi Minh is the second largest city of my country. It is a fun and dynamic city with a lot of good food. I like dynamic life. I live in America, but I miss Ho Chi Minh city and want to go back to my country. Ho Chi Minh is still very special to me because I like dynamic life.



Khafji

Abdullah Alshammari

1B – Saudi Arabia

Khafji is a special city for me. It is in Saudi Arabia. Khafji is in the southwestern part of Asia near Kuwait. Khafji is a special city because my family lives in Khafji. It is a very small city and has one Arabic restaurant. My friends live there too, and I have fun with them. Khafji is also special because it has many camels. I study in America, but Khafji is still very special to me.

Liaoning

Dachuan Yue

1A – China

Liaoning, my hometown, is a special city, Liaoning is in China. China is in the eastern part of Asia, south of Russia. My hometown is in the northeastern part of China near North Korea. The name “Liaoning” means “Liao river peaceful forever”. Liaoning is the provincial capital of my country. It has many woods and a sea. It has a Buddhist temple. Now, I live in Houston, but Liaoning is still very special to me.

Harbin

Haibo Chu

1A – China

My hometown, Harbin, is a special city. Harbin is in Heilongjiang. Heilongjiang is in the northern part of Asia close to Russia. My hometown is in the northeast of China near North Korea. The name “Harbin” means “ice city.” There is an ice lantern show in Harbin every year in winter, and it is the cultural center of Heilongjiang. We also have snow sculptures and ice engraving. Harbin is a very cold city. I live in Houston, but Harbin is very special to me.

Medina

Rajeh Rajeh

1A – Saudi Arabia

Medina is a special city. It is in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is in the western part of Asia near Qatar. The name “Medina” means “a good city.” Medina is special for Saudi Arabia because it has the mosque of the prophet Mohammed. It has a large number of mosques. It has many other places for sightseeing. Also, it has a special mountain named Uhud. I love my city.

Bamako

Assanatou Koita

1A – Mali

Bamako is special to me. It is in Mali. Bamako is in the western part of Africa near Cote D’Ivoire. The name “Bamako” means the capital. Bamako is the capital of my country. It is a big city. There are many important government offices in Bamako, and my family lives there. Also, there are many good schools, and we have many big hotels. These things make Bamako a special city.

Dammam

Hindi Alqahtani

1A – Saudi Arabia

Dammam is a special city. It is in Saudi Arabia. Dammam is in the eastern part of Saudi Arabia near Bahrain. The name “Dammam” means “the place of the beach.” It has a beach and many deserts. I like restaurants in Dammam. My family lives in Dammam. I live in America, but Dammam is still very special to me.

Tphcm

Thu Nguyen

1A – Vietnam

My hometown, Tphcm, is a special city. It is in Viet Nam. Viet Nam is in the south western part of Asia near Laos, China, and Thailand. The name “Tphcm” means “the land of Tphcm.” It has many important government offices, universities, and schools. It has many shopping centers and big malls. People in my city are very happy. I live in Houston now, but Tphcm is still very special to me. I love my hometown.

Luanda

Donaize Neto

1A – Angola

Luanda, my hometown, is a special city. It is in Angola. Luanda is in the western part of Africa. The name Luanda means “peace and liberty.” Luanda is the capital of my country. It has many important government offices. It is very important to me because my family lives there. It has a famous Mausoleum. It is very important in my country. Now, I live in Houston, but I still think that Luanda is a special city.

Qurayyat

Mohammed Alsharari

1A – Saudi Arabia

Qurayyat is a special city. Qurayyat is in Saudi Arabia. It is in the north of Saudi Arabia. It is next to Jordan. There are two universities in this city. There is a train station and an airport. Qurayyat has olive oil too. The port in Qurayyat is the biggest port in the Middle East. I live in America, but Qurayyat is still very special to me.

Ba Ria Vung Tau

Oanh Pham

1A – Vietnam

Ba Ria Vung Tau is my hometown. It is a special city. It is in Viet Nam. Viet Nam is in the southern part of Asia near Laos and Thailand. The name “Vung Tau” means “the place of Ba Ria Vung Tau.” People in my city are very friendly and helpful. It has many important government offices. Besides, it has a beach for tourists. Its name is “Bai Dau.” I like it very much. Now, I live in American, but Ba Ria Vung Tau is still very special to me. I love my city.



CLASS Pictures



1 A and B



2 A and B



2 C and D

CLASS Pictures



3 A and B



3 C and D



3 E and F

CLASS Pictures



4 A and B



4 C



4 D



4 E and F

CLASS Pictures



4 G and H



5 A and B



5 C and D

CLASS Pictures



5 E and F



6 A and B



6 C and D

Teacher Spotlight: GREG URQUHART

- Dr. Jodi Nelms, Associate Director

One reason that so many students return to the Language and Culture Center and recommend it to their friends is that the teachers in the LCC are outstanding professionals in the field of English as a Second Language. In each edition of *Voices*, we profile one of our teachers, and this term we have chosen Gregory Urquhart. Greg has been a member of the LCC family for 38 years now--that's longer than anyone else on our staff. He is currently teaching level 5 grammar and writing in the intensive English program.

Mr. Urquhart was born in Buffalo, New York, and raised in the nearby countryside in Elma, N.Y. While a senior at SUNY Fredonia, he was offered the extraordinary opportunity to journey to Poznań, Poland to study and teach EFL. After graduating from Fredonia with a Secondary Education/English degree, he traveled to Poland to work with the world-renowned linguist, Dennis Preston, who had received a Fulbright scholarship to conduct research at Adam Mickiewicz University. Greg spent a full year studying in Adam Mickiewicz University and earned an M.A. in TESL. He is fluent in Polish, having spent four years in Poland teaching EFL.

How Greg discovered the LCC in 1977, long before the Internet came around, was a real stroke of luck for us all. Greg's brother, Mark, had been on a motorcycle tour of the U.S. and he called Greg to tell him that he would really like Houston. So, listening to his brother's advice, Greg got in touch with the LCC's founder and first director, Dr. Joyce Valdes. She hired him right away to teach level 6. Over the years, Greg has taught all six levels.

On November 16, I sat down with Greg and asked him why he had decided to stay at the LCC for nearly four decades. He told me that he loves the family atmosphere here and that he hopes we never let go of this unique atmosphere and the caring environment that make the LCC a wonderful place to work. He also told me that he feels



fortunate to have found a niche for his particular abilities. I think his colleagues and students would agree. In fact, Anna Hood, a teacher and colleague, told me that, "lecturing is not Greg's style. He likes to get his students out of their desks and talking about the finer points of grammar and writing. When you walk by Greg's classroom, you will observe students working in pairs or up at the board."

Doug Jones, one of our program managers, agreed with Anna. He shared that Greg is knowledgeable about all the important operations of the LCC. He told me that Greg is "first and foremost a teacher. He loves teaching, and his students love and respect him. Greg is always looking for new material that will inject humor into his lessons or that will instill in his students both knowledge about grammar and wisdom about life."

The LCC director, Joy Tesh, shared this about Greg: "He was teaching at the LCC before I arrived, and I simply cannot imagine the LCC without him. His commanding presence and his big voice are staples in the LCC experience. His big heart may be the reason we all love him. I feel very fortunate to have worked with Greg and to have called him my colleague and my friend for many good years."

From long time LCC colleague Jeanne Peine, I have heard that Greg is "exuberant about teaching tips and techniques that have worked for him, and he is eager to share these ideas with his colleagues. You can often catch him in the LCC Staff Room offering handouts to teachers on topics ranging from gerunds and infinitives to advanced reading articles." From my own perspective, as his new supervisor, I can tell you that I

quickly learned to recognize the special way he knocks on my door and that this knock makes me smile, just knowing that I am in for a real treat when he visits my office.

Susan Wilkins, who has been Greg's co-teacher frequently over the past few years, wrote this very touching poem to describe to us who Mr. Urquhart truly is:

GREG

*A word about Greg, that's not easy to do
Cause with complex beings, the discussion
is never through.*

*Suffice it to say, he never tries to be
brotherly, kind or nice.*

He never tries to overlook a fault or vice.

He never tries to intuit a need

Without a squeal or plead.

He never tries to make you feel you belong

Or have a joke or remember some song.

The point is—he NEVER TRIES.

He just IS and just DOES all those things!

We celebrate the outstanding work of all LCC teachers, and this term we acknowledge Mr. Urquhart's dedication to his students and his work. Mr. Urquhart's main teaching goal is to "give students tools to make the world a better place." I think we can all agree that he has achieved this incredible goal—and that the LCC, and the world, are better places because of Greg. We thank you, Greg Urquhart, for your important and highly valued contribution to our teaching program and for remaining loyal to the Language and Culture Center for the past 38 years.

HEROES

My Super Heroes

Ide Edwige Nkengne Tekou

2A – Cameroon

John Tekou is my farther; he was born in 1945 in Cameroon. He is a businessman, and he has hotels and restaurants in my country. He is a generous, honest, and modest man. He taught me humility, and forgiveness. My mother's name is Janette Hutch; she was born in 1962 in Cameroon. She is a nurse, a wonderful woman, and a good mother. She taught me how to be a good daughter and a good future wife. They have been married for twenty eight years. They are my heroes because they give me good education and teach me a good lifestyle. Forever, they will be my super heroes.

My Mother

Zixin Yang

2B – China

My hero is Kristin ji. She is my mother. Her English name is named by me. She was born in China. I think she is very cute. She is a very intelligent engineer. Engineers work very hard especially females. I worry about her.

My Father

Qianqian Qian

2B – China

My hero is Wengfan Qian. He is my father, and he is a good man. He is very intelligent. He was born in Wemzhou City, China. He has been married to my mother for forty four years. He is my hero because he is a good man.

My Hero

Jafar Al Wuhayb

2A – Saudi Arabia

My hero is Ali Al Wuhayb. He is my father. He was born in Saudi Arabia in 1941. He is retired now, but he worked for 50 years. His major was electrical engineering. He is my hero because he is a very smart and intelligent person. He taught me how to take care of myself.

My Father

Paulo Decio De Escobar Paiva

2B – Brazil

My father was born in 1924 in Pernambuco, Brazil. He was a fighter pilot in the WWII flying P40 and P47. After the war, he flew for Pan Air Brazil. In 1964 he retired. Today at the age of ninety one, he likes to read books and chat with friends.

My Hero

Tami Aldossary

2B – Saudi Arabia

My hero is my father. His name is Abdullah. He was born in Riyadh in 1969. He works in Aramco company as a manager. He is my hero because he has a lot of patience with the family.

My Father

Hussain Alhawsah

2B – Saudi Arabia

My father is the best father in the world because he has taught me everything. He took me to my school, and he showed me the right from wrong. He gave me full support for my studies, and he taught me how to rely on myself, but he died ten years ago. I will soon be a dad, and I hope to be a great parent like my father.

My Hero

Islam Khasawneh

2B – Jordan

My father is from a simple family in Jordan. He lives in a small village. He got a bachelor's degree from Syria and a master's degree from the United States of America. He is ambitious and took an important role in Jordan. He was elected mayor of my city for twenty years. In 1990 he was a member of parliament. From 2007 to 2012, he was a senator. He proved that anybody from a simple family can make it. I am proud of him.

My Father

Ahmed Aleissa

2A – Saudi Arabia

Habeeb Aleissa is my hero. He is my father. He was born in Saudi Arabia. He works for a big company in my country. He is a mechanical engineer. He has served at Aramco company for thirty eight years. He has been married to my mother for thirty three years. He is my hero because he respects me and loves me. He spends a lot of money on my education. He is always at work because he has to work hard to give us a good life. In the end, my father is my hero.

My Grandfather

Son Duong

2B – Vietnam

My hero is Sau, my grandfather. He had very strict rules. He was born in Binhphuoc and worked for a grainary. He was a husband and a father of nine children. We lost him on September 12 about eight years ago. While he was living, he did not allow his descendants to go anywhere without asking him. He could sacrifice and do anything for posterity. I miss my grandfather very much.

My Hero

Reem Alkhamesani

2A – Saudi Arabia

A hero is someone that you can look up to and get advice from. My hero is Mohmmmed. He is my father. He was born in Saudi Arabia. He has been married to my mother for twenty eight years. I always enjoy spending time and learning new things with him. He is always teaching me how to differentiate between wrong and right. He wants me to become a good human being like him. He is my best friend. I want to make him proud. I also wish to see him in good health for the rest of his life. My dad is my hero, and I love him very much.

My Hero

Zainab Al Dubais

2B – Saudi Arabia

My hero is Faisal Ahmed. He is my father. He is an electrical engineer. He was born in Jeddah, but he is living in Dammam. He married my mother thirty five years ago. He is a lovely hero. He is going to visit me next summer. He is my hero because he does anything I want.

My Grandfather

Bin Chen

2A – China

Everybody has a hero in their heart, and my hero is my grandfather. He is an ordinary Chinese farmer. He was born in 1914 in a quiet village. There are only five thousand people in that village. Everybody liked him because he was a very gentle and kind person. In 1942, China suffered a serious drought. There were a lot of refugees who came to this small village. My grandfather led the villagers together to help those refugees. There were many people at his home, and he gave them the same food. That year, my grandfather saved many lives. He is a hero in my heart.

My Mother

Sokynah Alhilal

2A – Saudi Arabia

My mother is my best hero. She has a long and hard job, but she does not take salary for it. That job is caring for her babies, and she is a teacher, doctor, and chef for them. She has eight children. She is forty four years old. She is my hero because she makes me a smart woman.

My Brother

Ali Alhelal

2B – Saudi Arabia

My hero is my brother. He is fourteen years old, and he is my third brother. In my country, he massaged my back and my feet when I finished playing soccer. Also, he played video games with me when I was bored. He is my hero because he is so funny.

My Hero

Mohammed Alnakhli

2A – Saudi Arabia

Zain Aldine Zidane is my hero. He lives in France, but he is from Algeria originally. Zidane was born in Marseille city in 1972. When he was seventeen years old, he began playing with Bordeaux team then changed to Real Madrid. He won the World Cup in 1998. Also, Zidane won the best player award three times. Finally, I admire his skills, and he is the best player in the world.



CULTURE FESTIVAL



Language and Culture Center Fall 2015 Culture Festival

Celebrating 40 Years of the LCC



CULTURE Bumps

Chelsea Pacheco

3A – Angola

I had one difficult culture bump in the United States. It was with my transportation. The first time I went on a bus, I just watched what happened, saw the route, and arrived at the university quickly, but after two weeks, I started to feel very uncomfortable and angry because in Angola I never took the bus. It wasn't popular in my country. I drove or walked to my college or to the store. Houston is a very big city, and I lost almost six hours per day taking the bus. After my first week on the bus, I started watching other passengers and what they did. They played games, listened to music, read a book, slept, or studied on the bus. Although I prefer to do these things in a quiet place, now I listen to music on the bus. I don't like the bus schedule, and sometimes we have to wait for another bus for an hour or thirty minutes, but now I accept my new transportation because I have learned to use it to my advantage.



Issa Karambiri

3A – Burkina Faso

I experienced an interesting culture bump in the United States. Last April, before I began my English classes at the UH, my friend thought that it would be a good idea to take the bus with me so that I could get used to it before class. When we got on the bus, we saw some students. I was shocked when I saw two teenagers kissing. It was really surprising to me because in my country I had never seen that before, so I didn't know what to do. It felt very

strange to me, and I opened my eyes wide and thought, "What is this? Don't they care about other people on the bus?" So, I asked my friend if he saw the teenagers. He said that it upsets nobody here. In my culture it's impossible and unthinkable for two people to kiss in public, especially young people. I remember in my country they made a film where two people kissed. It was a problem for everyone. In my country, it is believed that such things only happen in American or European movies. However, I found that it's not usual to do that here. I think those teenagers were impolite because I have never seen that again on a bus or in a public place. People usually just give a little kiss to say goodbye.

Man Tran

3A – Vietnam

My culture bump happened when I first arrived in the United States. I noticed that when people got on the bus, they didn't try to push me to get on the bus first. I also realized that the bus drivers were very friendly, and they took their time and didn't get angry when people got on the bus too slowly. Also, the air conditioning on the bus was so comfortable, and people on the bus were polite. When I got on the bus for the first time, I asked the bus driver to guide me to get home. The bus driver was very friendly and showed me what I had to do. Most of the bus drivers in Viet Nam don't do that. They are always trying to rush everyone, and if people don't get on the bus quickly, they will be left behind. Maybe it is because all the bus drivers in my country are trying to get home. Therefore, I really enjoy going to school by bus in the United States, and I feel relaxed when I get on the bus.

Yi Wang

3A – China

I remember when I first arrived in the United States, I experienced two culture bumps. First, I noticed when people got on the airport bus, they waited for people to first get



off the bus, and then they lined up to get on the bus. This situation surprised me. It is very different in my country, China. People in my country rush to the door to grab seats because they fear that the traffic jam might be very serious, and they might have to stand on the bus for a long time and be very tired. When my family and I got on the airport bus with relative ease, I thought everything was great and fabulous for me. I love the United States, and I was so excited knowing that I was in the United States now. Another bump was when I saw some pregnant students in class when I was in Washington D.C. I was amazed that the school accepted pregnant students and made them feel at ease. No one scorned and ridiculed them. In my culture, no school will accept such a situation. If a student becomes pregnant, the school would cancel her student status and expel her because this is law. She will also lose her chance to learn. The most frightening thing is that her family will be unable to cope with their friends and their neighbors because most Chinese people are very sensitive about their reputation. For this reason, the pregnant student's family will keep blaming her. The girl sometimes takes things too hard, and ends her life. Therefore, I believe that the law in the United States is very supportive and helps pregnant and parenting students have equal access to schools and activities.

Xiaokai Liu

3A – China

It was a culture bump when I saw an American student with a seeing eye dog in class. On the first day of school, when my classmate brought his dog and entered the classroom, I was absolutely terrified. I thought that the dog would bite because some dogs had bitten me when I was a child. When the dog lay on the



ground beside me, I was a little afraid. My classmate said to me, “Kai, do not fear the dog, it is a seeing eye dog,” but I continued to watch the dog. Since the dog was quiet, I felt calmer. After class, my classmates petted the dog, and it was very friendly. I began to relax. In China, no one can bring a dog to school, and the blind are not an exception. If someone brings a dog to class, the teacher will get angry

and will call the school director. The most serious consequence would be to call the parents to come to school and be criticized for their child’s behavior. In addition, the subway, the buses, and the airports refuse to accept guide dogs for the blind. In fact, in 2013, some people complained on the Internet when the subway staff saw a blind man with his guide dog trying to take the subway and rejected them immediately. It triggered a heated debate. In fact, in China, there are many stories in the news about dogs biting people, so people fear and avoid stray dogs. However, I know that seeing eye dogs are the blinds’ constant companion because these dogs are trained rigorously to help and protect the blind. Therefore, we should respect the dogs and their owners.

Founga Ouattara

3B – Côte d’Ivoire

I had an interesting culture bump when I was running late one day. It happened when I got a taxi to get to class faster. In my country, I have to wait a long time for a taxi, and I have to negotiate the price with the driver if I don’t have enough money. Sometimes, the driver insults me if I don’t have change. In the United States, there are many taxi companies, and if I want to get one, I just have to check on my phone to see who is available, show my location, and chose a time for pick up. However, I cannot negotiate the price because when I get off, my bank debits the fare immediately. The first time I got a taxi, I was surprised to see how easy it was to get a taxi. It was so fast, and I was comfortable in the taxi. The driver was nice and talked about the traffic in Houston. I appreciated that. After that, I realized that the driver was trying to promote his company to get more customers because they were very cheap. Why doesn’t my country do the same? The government should think about that. It will be very beneficial for people who don’t have a car.



GROWING UP

Three Ways I Have Changed

Chelsea Pacheco

3A – Angola

I was very excited but a little nervous when I left Angola to come to the United States to study English four months ago. However, I knew studying in the United States was important to get a good job, but I have also received some unexpected benefits. First of all, I have learned how to become more sociable. Sometimes, I have problems talking with others, and I'm very shy, but during the summer, my former teachers spoke with me about changing my habits. They advised me to talk, to join in conversations with my classmates, and also to participate in conversation club. My classmates helped me because they were more social than me. I listened to their advice, and as a result, I feel very comfortable when I join conversations and talk to people. In addition, I have become more responsible. In Angola my parents paid the bills like energy, television, and water bills. Now, I don't have my parents here, and they cannot pay the bills for me. They just send me the money, and I pay. Also, I have to pay attention when I am paying bills. I also have to take care of my own house, organize my things, clean, cook, and wash. In Angola I didn't worry about these things because my parents did everything, and we had help at home, but here I have to do everything myself. Finally, I have learned how to manage my time. In my country, I never had to plan. I thought it wasn't important. I just marked when I had something important to do. Since May, I have started using a calendar. I make a schedule for each day, and I have fixed the calendar on my bedroom door. Every day when I wake up, I check to see if I have something important to do that day. Now, I have more priorities in Houston. I need to study and clean my apartment. Although sometimes I don't always follow my plan, I still plan my time because it is necessary to be organized. Fortunately, this term I was able to become more sociable, manage my time better, and become more confident. I feel so strong and motivated. I know in the future I can achieve my goals.



How I Have Changed

Trinh Pham

3A – Vietnam

I was very excited but a little nervous when I left Vietnam to come to the United States to study English two months ago. However, I knew studying in the United States was important because I could benefit from a good teacher and professor, which would help me have a good job in the future. Although it has been challenging to live in the United States, I have

made some positive changes in my life. First of all, I have learned how to study English more effectively. When I came to the United

States, I practiced at communities frequently. I have had many opportunities to come in contact with foreign people such as my classmates, my teachers, and others. I perceive that now my speaking and listening skills are better. When going to class, I focused on the lessons by following rules such as turning off the smart phone, not talking to my classmates, not sleeping in class and so on. After each lesson, my classmates and I talked about a lot of things. This was an important way to improve my language skills. At home, I complete my homework every day. Sometimes, I access online resources, which are useful to me to practice and improve my English. I think that taking initiative when studying is best way to achieve good results. In addition, I have learned how to take care of myself. In the morning, I wake up without my mother's call. Before going to sleep, I set my alarm-clock. It has helped me wake up on time. I can also cook my meals. In Vietnam, my mother always prepared my meals. Since I am studying in United States, she is not with me. Sometimes, I called her to ask about how to cook a dish. I also accessed the internet to learn. On weekends, I clean my room, wash clothes, water the lawn, and go to the market. Now, I do not depend on my mother. I can do anything without my mother's help. I have grown up! Also, I have learned how to drive a car. In the United States, most people travel by car. Thinking about driving a car was difficult for me because I had never driven a car in my country. The streets are different here, so I was afraid of driving the first time. However, two weeks ago, my sister took me to a driver education course. Through the course, I learnt important information about traffic signals, the fundamentals of driving, and ways to handle bad situations. I have just driven two times, but driving has become interesting although I still have a little fear. If I can drive a car, my life will become easier because I will not have to depend on my sister. Fortunately, this term I was able to learn English effectively, take care of myself, and learn to drive. I feel so mature now because of these successes. I know in the future I can make my dreams come true.

Three Ways I Have Changed

Xiaokai Liu

3A – China

I was very excited but a little afraid when I left China to come to the United States to study English about a year ago. However, I knew studying in the United States was important because I want to have a successful business in the future. Although it has been challenging to live in the United States, to my surprise, in such a short time, I have learned more than just English. First of all, I have learned how to communicate with deaf people in American Sign Language (ASL). I began to learn ASL at Gallaudet University when I came to the United States. After classes, I often communicated with more experienced students in ASL in the cafeteria, and I learned a lot of words in ASL. Furthermore, I sometimes saw deaf events on Facebook, so I attended many different activities for the deaf. Most importantly, I always took the initiative to talk with deaf

people in public places, so I have greatly improved my ASL skill. In addition, I learned how to talk with car dealers in English. I began looking for a used car when I moved to Houston from Washington D.C. Many people who live in Houston said that I couldn't get around without a car because it is a very big city and the wait time for the buses is long. I spent two months trying to find my favorite car. To be honest, it was not very easy to find a nice car, so at night I took the initiative to study English words I needed to communicate with car dealers. Then I visited many different used car dealerships, and I tried to communicate with the dealers in writing. I also negotiated with them for the best price. I finally learned how to communicate with hearing people, to improve my English communication skills, and increase my knowledge. Fortunately, I have also become more independent. I started to learn how to live and study independently when I came to the United States. In the beginning, I really didn't know sign language, and I sometimes relied on Chinese students' interpretation to understand what the teachers were saying during class. After class, I learned ASL actively to become more independent. I wasn't familiar with the local area in Washington D.C., so my classmates helped me go shopping and visit parks. Later, I bought a cell phone and went shopping alone. I could go everywhere because I relied on Google maps. I have also learned how to communicate with hearing people in English since I moved to Houston. I finally negotiated independently with the car dealer in writing, and I successfully bought a very nice car. At that point, I realized that independence made me confident, clever, and sensible. In conclusion, this term I was able to communicate with deaf people in ASL, talk with businessmen in English, and also become more independent. I feel so proud now because of these successes. I know that in the future I will be able to achieve my goals.

How I Have Changed

Founga Ouattara

3B – Côte d'Ivoire

I was very excited but a little worried when I left Ivory Coast to come to the United States to study six months ago. However, I knew that studying English in the United States was important because I want to bring modern nursing ideas to my country. Although it has been challenging to live in the United States, to my surprise, in such a short time, I have learned more than just English. First of all, I have learned how to study English more effectively. When I got home after class, I tried to watch movies with subtitles, practice listening, speaking, and learn some new words. American people talked so fast that if I didn't pay attention, I didn't understand anything. During class, I focused and talked more even if I didn't have good speaking skills, but it was very helpful and I learned faster than other students who didn't speak. Sometimes, I met some friendly American neighbors in my complex. I took just a few minutes to talk to them and know them. My English is much better than before. Furthermore, I

have become more independent. In my country, I used to go with my parents to register at school but in the United States, I do everything myself such as paying my tuition and trying to get more information. I used to live with my family, and everything was ready when I got home from school. I didn't need to clean my bedroom, cook, or wash dishes, but I am living alone right now, and I have to do those things myself. I am aware that being in a foreign country, I will meet some challenges every day, but I can take care of myself without other people's help. Fortunately, I learned how to cook in the United States. My mother is a good cook, so I used to cook some delicious dishes with her. In the United States, we don't have the same ingredients as in my country, but sometimes I create my own recipes and the result is perfect. When I want to make food from another country, I use the internet, and I go to Fiesta to get those ingredients. I don't need help from my mother. I do everything myself because I am more responsible. However, she often gives me some recipes when I want to impress my friends, and I am always successful. Little by little, I have become better at cooking than before. In conclusion, I was able to learn how to study English more effectively, how to become more independent, and how to cook. I feel so proud and mature because of these successes. I think in the future, I can overcome any challenges that may come.

My First Accident

Hassan Aleid

3E – Saudi Arabia

My first accident in my life was unusual. I took my father's car without his permission, and I had an accident. I hit a car in the street. I was very scared because I did not have a driver's license. When the police came to make the accident report, they asked me about my license. I said, "I do not have a license." Then the police took me to jail. The police called my father. They told him about my accident. My father was very angry, but he came to the police station to take me home. Then he punished me. That was my first accident in my life.



GROWING UP (CONTINUED)

How I Have Changed

Yi Wang

3A – China

I was very excited and a little afraid when I left China to come to the United States to study English about a year ago. I didn't know how to communicate with others. However, I knew studying in the United States was important because I wanted to become an artist. Although it has been challenging to live in the United States, I am very proud of myself and of what I've accomplished so far. First of all, I have become more confident. When I was in China, I was afraid to drive. When I came to the United States, I learned how to drive. Driving makes me feel confident. Also, communicating with other people in English was very difficult for me before. My friend encouraged me to try to learn English. I participated in different kinds of activities with other people, and I used ASL at a social event for deaf people. It made me even more confident. In addition, in the past I didn't participate in art competitions because I was afraid of failure. When I came here, I saw a lot of art competitions, so I entered an art competition. Surprisingly, I won an art award, and now I'm happy and more confident. In addition to being more confident, I have become more responsible. For example, in China, I used to live with my family. I didn't know what "responsible" meant. My family always helped me a lot, and they never let me worry. When I came to the United States, I encountered a lot of problems in life. I had to look for an apartment to rent with all bills paid including internet, gas, and electricity. In addition, most schools required health insurance. I felt so much pressure. I had to learn how to save money for living because now it was my responsibility. Fortunately, I have also become more independent. When I came to the United States, it was the first time that I had lived independently as an international student. I found a good part-time job in the library at Gallaudet University last year. Living everywhere is very expensive. I can't pay much even though my family works so hard in China. I was very lucky to find this job to pay for my expenses such as my room and board. This not only increased my confidence in life, but also cultivated my independence apart from my parents. I am glad that I became independent because some deaf students from China couldn't find part-time jobs, and they always rely on their families. It was a good opportunity to become independent. In short, this term I was able to become more confident, responsible, and independent. I feel so proud of myself now because of these successes. I know in the future I can make my dreams come true.

When I Disobeyed My Mother

Hang Nguyen

3F – Vietnam

When I was a child, I was an active girl. I liked to explore everything around me. I really liked plants and animals. The summer holiday was a great time because I didn't have to go to school. My mother seldom saw me at home. Most of the time, I was

in the fields. My friends and I played a lot of games. We fished and built little houses of leaves and branches. We enjoyed being in our houses. Sometimes, we went swimming in the small river in front of my house. But I was really interested in fire, and my mother warned me, "Don't play with fire! It's very dangerous," but I never obeyed her. Once, my friends and I found a milk bottle. It was made of tin. We cleaned it. I came back to my house and got some rice and a lighter. My parents were working on their farm, so it was very easy for me. Then we played a very exciting cooking game, but there were a lot of dry leaves around us. When I used the lighter, the fire spread very fast all around. We were very scared. My friends ran away, so I followed them. The fire continued to spread and became a large blaze. It burned my neighbor's outdoor toilet. When everyone discovered the fire, they put it out. My parents came back as soon as they could. They were very angry. I got punished and have never forgotten it.

A Funny Cooking Experience

Xuefei Guan

3E – China

About three months ago, I got interested in cooking because I tasted a delicious dish that my friend made. I planned to learn how to cook from my friend. I also hoped that I would be able to make the double cooked pork slices in the future. Sam, my friend, was very pleased to teach me. He taught me all the steps about how to make the dish. I thought I had understood, so I started to cook. I did it step by step. I felt it was very easy. When I finished, I asked all my friends to taste my dish. I was very surprised that all my friends refused to eat more. I picked up a piece of meat and tried it. Ugh! it was terrible. I had forgotten to put salt in my dish.

The Best Day of My Life

Salman Alqahtani

3E – Kuwait

My graduation from high school was the best day of my life. That year was my last year in school, and I was scared about whether I would graduate or not. On the day that I would know my score, I was scared, and all my family members were waiting. That day, when I checked, I had a good score, and we were happy. My father had a big celebration. I haven't forgotten that day. My father was happy and smiling, and my mother was crying because she was so happy. I will never forget this day because it was the best day of my life.

Expectations From America

Suleyman Akartuna

4H - Turkey

“The world has changed. I feel it. I feel it in the water. I feel it in the earth. I smell it in the air. Much that once was lost. For none now live who remember it.” These words were taken from a film named “The Lord of the Rings.” I think these sentences are the best sentences in this film. These words reflect my point of view. The world has altered, and the alterations still continue, so nothing is the same between the past and the future such as the family requirements, the expectations, the job opportunities, and the economic conditions. Because of these changes, we must adapt to the changes which are coming in our lives. Therefore, I also want to adapt to this changing life, I came to America, and I think that I will have three significant improvements in my life, including learning English, graduating from an American university, and working in an American company. These three opportunities will be the most important improvements in my life. Why is learning English so significant? The answer is simple of course. There are two reasons for this. One is that if you want to enter an American university, you must learn English very well. That’s why I came here; America is the best country to learn English and to enter an American university. Another reason is to communicate with people all around the world. If the world is a single state, probably English is its language. Without any doubt, English is the most useful language in the world. If you know English, you can easily get in contact with people all around the world. Most of the big companies in the world are from America, and to work in an American company means prestige. Almost everyone wants to work in an American company, but that is not easy. To graduate from an American university is much better for entering an American company. The companies would hire you easily when you graduate from an American university. For this reason, I came here to study at an American university. Consequently, as I said before, I hope that learning English, graduating from an American University, and working in an American company will make my life better; because of these opportunities, I came to America to carry out my aims and my dreams. Thus, I came to America to survive in this changing world, and finally I came to America to create a new life.



Changes in My Life

Victor Glorioso Mastrofilippo

4H - Venezuela

Starting a new life in another country sometimes is not easy. Thinking about leaving home and saying goodbye to your family, friends, and daily life is really hard. In some cases, it takes a lot of time to make the decision to leave. After moving to the United States, I have become a more sensitive person, and many other aspects of my life have also changed such as my sleeping and eating habits. First, when you have years of living at the same place, you start to live in automatic mode. In other words, you fall into monotony, and you do not pay attention to important things like family. In addition, small things like seeing your mother and realizing how important she is in your life, or receiving advice from your father, which you never paid attention to, are some of the things that you start to miss after moving to a different country. You become more sensitive. To illustrate, back home, I used to talk more with my mother on the phone than face to face, but now I miss her so much, and I talk with her every day, wishing my mother was in front of me to give to her a big hug. Living far away from your family and your hometown makes you a more humble, careful, and loving person. My sleeping habits were also affected after I began a new life in the United States. In this country, my daily life is totally different. I started to learn English as my second language, and it requires more focus and energy than to study in my native language. Furthermore, after making the decision to learn English, I have been participating in more extracurricular activities because it helps me a lot to improve my English, and I enjoy socializing with people from different cultures. However, getting to know people takes a lot of my time, which affects my sleeping time. In addition to extracurricular activities, I have a job on campus, which helps me a lot in my listening and speaking skills, but these extracurricular activities and my job demands more energy and focus every day. For example, I go to conversation club, volunteer in the community, and go to my job. I start my homework very late at night, which results in decreased sleep time. Sleep is necessary to stay energized. Finally, food consumption is one of the most important aspects that changes in a new country. Because you are accustomed to eating your traditional food, it may be hard to adapt to a new kind of food, flavors and condiments. For example, here in the United States there are plenty of junk food restaurants, which have impacted drastically the type of food I eat. Another aspect of my life that has changed due to moving to the United States is mealtime. Because of the different time zones and lack of time between each task, it is difficult to honor every mealtime. When I am studying, sometimes, I do not even have enough time to finish my homework or to study for a test, so I prefer to study a little more than to eat. To conclude, making the decision to start a new life in a different country was not easy because many details from my daily life changed. Your priorities may change, and with them your habits will change, too. Feelings for your family will become stronger, and you will also experience changes in your sleeping habits and mealtimes. Before moving to another country, we should think it through carefully to see if it will be worth it.

GROWING UP (CONTINUED)

Moving To The United States

Tianyu Wang

4H - China

Have you ever wanted to move to the United States? Now, many people prefer to migrate to the United States. They think the United States can change their lives. This country has changed my life by offering a better educational system, less stress, and openness. First of all, there is a good educational system in the United States. Before I came here, I was thinking about studying abroad. I chose to study in the United States because American schools rank high in the world. In China, we always have large class sizes due to our large population. This means the teacher cannot pay attention to every student, but here teachers can pay attention to everyone because there are fewer students in each class. American teachers always encourage students to have confidence, but most teachers will not encourage students in China. If you do not get a good grade on a test, the teacher will blame you. Most teachers judge students by their grades in China. If you have a good grade, you are a good student. If you do not, you are a bad student. For example, when I was studying in a Chinese school, I did not get good grades. I missed a lot of activities because my teachers always gave these opportunities to students who had good grades. Even though some “good students” made some mistakes, it would be fine. If “bad students” made some mistakes, they got in more trouble than the “good students,” so I like the educational system in the United States. Secondly, I like studying now because it is less stressful. In the United States, we usually alternate work with rest. This work-rest system makes me have less stress than before, and I have more interest in studying. In China, we have very long classes and too much homework. Most students do not have enough time to relax. When I was in China, I did not have time to work out or hang out with my friends. Lack of free time led me to lose interest in studying. Teachers usually agree that students should study together in the United States, but we are not allowed to study together in China. Finally, I am more outgoing now. Communication is a very important thing for a country. When I came to the United States, I found most people to be very friendly and easygoing. I had a little bit of infantile autism when I was young. I had it in China because most people are very cold. When I was studying in China, most students’ parents did not want their children to make friends with someone who did not have good grades. Most parents thought that these students were a bad influence on their children. Americans and most international students are very kind, and they like to be my friend. This friendliness helped me become more outgoing than before. In conclusion, the United States has changed my life with a better education, less stress, and openness. I think that in the future more and more people will move to the United States because it offers a better life than most countries.



Renaissance Festival



LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Things I Have Learned

Oanh Nguyen

3C – Vietnam

Finding new adventures is very important to me. I moved away from my home eight years ago. I learned a lot of things in a big city in my country, but they were only small experiences. Now, it's very special to me to experience lots of things in a foreign country. This term I learned how to meet new people, to pay automatically for bus, and to use the express line while grocery shopping. The first important thing I learned this term is how to meet new people by shaking hands, making eye contact, and saying "hello." When I meet new American friends, they always introduce themselves with their names. Then we shake hands with each other. We shake hands strongly. I think that is a good way for us to build a good relationship. If I do that, it is very easy for me to make new friends. In my country, Vietnam, the first time I meet new people, they only smile and ask some questions without shaking hands. It's very hard for me to approach them to shake hands. Making eye contact is another gesture which is used to meet new people. During a conversation, I should make eye contact. It is the way to express my respect to partners who will think that I am very kind and considerate. In Vietnam, when I talk to other people, if I make eye contact, they will think I don't respect them. Moreover, they will feel afraid of talking to me. They will look somewhere else to avoid eye contact. They won't want to be friends with me. In addition, saying "hello" when I meet new people is important. Americans are used to saying "hello" or "hi" to new people whom they don't know. This is a way to express their openness to meeting new people. I can easily talk to them and make friends. From now on, I will have a friendly and cozy feeling. I won't feel homesick when I live alone. If I can imitate the American custom, it will be easier to get used to America. Another thing I have learned is how to pay automatically for going by bus. First of all, it's very convenient to pay fees automatically. I don't need to bring cash for payment if I have a bus card. If my card runs out of money, I can pay with cash, but it's safer for me to bring a card for charging when I go by bus. Second, when I want to transfer to another bus, I can get a transfer ticket. I don't have to pay again, so I can save a little money. Vietnam also has buses, but if I take a bus, I have to pay cash. There is a driver and a cashier on every bus. I have to pay cash to her every time. If I change buses, I have to pay for the next bus. This means I have to pay a fee each time. Moreover there are a lot of people on the bus. It's not comfortable for me. The last thing I learned this term is express line grocery shopping. Americans have an express line for payment when they go shopping. So, if I only buy one item, I don't have to wait for people who come first. There is no violence or fighting to get priority for payment. Moreover, I have noticed that the express line is very easy not only for the customer but also the cashier. In Vietnam, when I go shopping, I don't need the express line if I go fast and put my items first. I might also have a friend or relative as the cashier, so I will get a priority for paying. In short, it's very significant for me to learn to how to meet new people,

to pay automatically for the bus ride, and to use the express line for grocery shopping. Living and learning in a different country has been a great experience. In my opinion, I will be learning something new in the coming terms. Then I will be ready to study my major at the University of Houston.

Things I Learned This Term

Truong Trinh

3C – Vietnam

I have had the opportunity to connect with the American society and culture in order to feel more confident in the modern world. I learned three things this term that have been useful and necessary in order to develop my knowledge and myself. They are automated services, driving a car, and freedom. The first thing I learned this term was automation in paying, buying, and using public transportation. Now, when I pay for something, it is easier because I have a credit card. For example, I can pay water, electricity, or gas bills without cash, and I can stay home to do that instead of going to offices. I can buy whatever items I think are necessary for me such as food, drinks, and books. Finally, I can also be comfortable in traffic without worrying about bringing money with me. I just swipe my credit card to pay for bus, taxi, or rail tickets. To summarize, I feel more comfortable in my life with automated services. I do not need to take a lot of money with me when I want to go shopping, pay bills, or use public transportation. Driving a car is another of the difficult lessons that I learned. First, it is difficult for a person to drive his car on the interstate to go home. There are many streets marked as one way, and I might drive the wrong way anytime I drive from home to Walmart. I cannot drive slowly to check the direction because I have to keep a speed on the street. For another point, it is not easy to drive a car on wide interstates where there are many cars driving. I have to decide many times to cross three or four lines without any traffic lights. In short, the first time I drove a car on the freeway and on wide streets was a hard way to learn to drive a car. Freedom is one of the most important rights I enjoyed when I came to live in the United States. I can do anything that I like without complaints from others, but I still have to be within in the limits of law. For example, I can decide to buy a car without a permit from my parents or other relatives. I can go anywhere and nobody can object. Next, fashion is not limited for anybody. I can wear any clothes I want to and go everywhere such as restaurants, university, or a government agency even. For instance, I can come to the university in my jeans and a T-shirt instead of the uniform which I had to wear in my country. To summarize, the freedom which I have experienced is appreciated. It is important for human rights. To sum up, I learned to value the important things which help me to develop my knowledge when I came to live in the United States. Automation helped me control everything easily. I feel more comfortable going anywhere with my car. Even though I have a little difficulty in traffic, I can do everything with freedom here. I think that I will continue to feel more confident as I continue to in the United States.

Things I Learned This Term

Chia-An Li

3C – Taiwan

If I wanted to survive in Houston, then I had to learn about the express line in supermarkets, shopping online, renting an apartment for my comfort, and making my life better. The express line that is in most supermarkets surprised me, and it is very convenient. There are crowds and a rush for time in this generation. Most people are trying to save their time as much as possible. Therefore, people choose the express line in supermarkets. The check out machine is smart. For example, it can scan the item's bar code very quickly. The express line is good for someone who has a few items to pay for. There is nobody to serve you, and people do not have to wait for a long time. Finally, customers can pay with cash and get change or with a credit or debit card. In conclusion, the express line has some advantages, and it really surprised and helped me. I don't like to go out to shop, but I can buy anything by shopping online. First, it is difficult for me to shop in Houston. For example, I don't have a car, so it is not easy to go shopping. I have to ask my friend to pick me up, or I waste a lot of time on the bus and metro. Now, however, distance is not a problem for me because online shopping is as easy as entering my credit card number and my address. Then, after a few steps, I'm done. There is everything like clothes, shoes, cars, shampoo, bowls, and books to buy online, and the best part is that there are many choices. I am usually tired after shopping at the mall, but I only move my finger when shopping online, and I'm done. In short, I prefer online shopping over traditional shopping because it saves time, and it is easy, especially because I am not concerned about transportation. Apartments in Houston have many choices and details available. I had several rental experiences after college. However, there are some differences between Taiwan and Houston. First, in Taiwan, rent included internet, water, and gas, but the bills are usually separate here. Second, finding the right location was very difficult in Houston. Although, location was one of my most important concerns, I needed to balance price and distance. I wanted to pick an apartment which suited me. At the beginning, I compared a single room and an apartment. Each one had its advantages and disadvantages. There was more privacy and space in a single room, but sometimes it feels boring. On the other hand, it is more fun with a roommate, but it means I lose some privacy and space. However, it was a good experience to rent an apartment. I learned many things from the experience. In conclusion, it is important for me to know how to use the express line in supermarkets, how to shop online, and how to rent an apartment. Fortunately, I have survived, and I have a wonderful life in Houston.

What I Have Learned

Thu Vu

3C – Vietnam

I matured a lot when I lived alone in a new country. I had the opportunity to learn new things, and I learned good ways to live. I learned three important things such as how to cook, how to study in an American school, and how to drive a car. One important thing that I learned this term was how to cook. First, by cooking at home, I got to know new food products in my new country. For example, in my country, we don't use cheese with noodles, but in the United States, noodles are usually cooked with cheese. Second, I can keep my body healthy when I cook for myself. For example, if I eat only fast food, I will become fat because fast food has a lot of fat, but if I cook at home, I can choose food that is good for me. Third, cooking here is safer than in my country. In my country, we have to use gas to cook food, but in the United States, we use electricity to cook. It doesn't hurt me. It's not too hot, and it's easier to use. In short, I learned how to cook in a new country. I'm learning about American culture by cooking new dishes and using new materials. Everyone's country has a different educational system, so I had to learn how to study in an American school this term. First, I have to leave for school early because I need to be at school on time every day. Everything in class is always important. For example, if the teacher teaches new words, and I come to class late, I can't catch up with my friends because the teacher can't stop the class to teach me again. Second, I didn't cheat on my tests, and it was very good for me. If I cheat on my tests, teachers can't know what I learned and what I didn't learn. Third, by attending some events, I improved my speaking and my communication skills to work with groups. For example, I attended conversation club for Halloween. I learned a lot of things about Halloween. In addition, members taught me how to carve pumpkins. In short, studying in a new country helped me get new ideas about studying, and I learned good ways to understand new lessons. Another important thing I learned in the United States is how to drive a car. In the United States, I had to learn how to drive a car because cars are popular vehicles and safer than motorbikes. For drivers' education, I went to a school which was near my house. I studied eight hours about symbols and rules of driving. I need to know the symbols which warns drivers to be careful. Also, staying in lanes is really important. I must keep in my lane when I'm driving. I will be close to other cars, if I don't keep in my lane, I will hit another car. In short, I tried to learn how to drive a car because I really need to drive while I am living in the United States. Driving a car saves my time, and it's safer than motorbikes. In conclusion, I learned how to cook, how to study in an American school, and how to drive a car. I think that now I can take care of myself, and that is good because my mom will be happy. She doesn't need to worry about me because I can really live alone far from my home.

LEARNING EXPERIENCES (CONTINUED)

What I Learned

Sara Almendiel

3C – Saudi Arabia

My life is about challenging, changing, and learning new things to make my life more lively. I like to learn new things be more successful in my life. Three things I have learned this semester are how drive a car, rent an apartment, and learn academic English. I learned how to rent an apartment in the United States. There are many steps to renting an apartment. First, I had to search for the best apartment for me. I searched online, and I used GPS to visit the best options. Second, when I found my apartment, I talked with the leasing agent about the cost every month, the deposit, and electricity bill. The leasing agent told me I could pay the rent and electricity online. In conclusion, I needed to find the best apartment for me so that I could feel more comfortable and live the way I like, and I found it. Learning how to drive was not as easy as I had imagined. I went to the DPS office to complete the forms and take the written test. First, I took the written test. I passed it to get a learner's permit. Second, after the test I went back to DPS to fill out a paper and get an appointment for the "behind the wheel" test. After that, I spent time training and practicing for the test in a car. The trainer taught me the steps to drive a car on the streets. She gave me the street rules. She trained me in five days on how to park, drive on the highway, and understand the traffic signs. Finally, I went to take the driving test, and that took all day. I learned that when driving a car I need to be focused and careful. There are different ways to learn English. First, I am not afraid to make mistakes. I surround myself with American friends. They correct my mistakes in English vocabulary and pronunciation. I practice reading, grammar, listing and vocabulary. I read newspapers and the ads that come in my mail box. I try to listen to and watch TV and movies with English subtitles. I study the vocabulary in English and look up the definitions. I stay motivated to learn the language. Finally, I will pass level three one way or another and make myself proud. In conclusion learning new things is the best way to improve myself. In time, I will learn more new things in the United States.

Three Things I Have Learned This Term

Zohe Mendieta Pineda

3D – Colombia

I am happy to look back at all that I have learned this term. It's interesting to learn new things about different aspects and ways of my life. Each day is an opportunity to learn something that will help me to be a better person and student. I learned the process to make beer, write with correct structure, and be more organized with my money. My friend, Mauricio, and I decided to learn to make beer, so we searched for all the steps necessary to make beer at home. First, we went to the beer store, and we bought all the seeds that we needed. Next, we went to the supermarket and Fray's store to buy all the materials such as a ph balance and containers. Then we started to make beer. We cleaned all the seeds and the

containers. Next, we added a lot of water into the big container to ferment. Finally, we put the container in the refrigerator at a specific temperature with a specific light. All in all, making beer was an interesting project and easy to make for our friends and us. Learning how to write an essay is important for me as a student because writing with a correct structure has a lot of benefits for me. First, I can write logically because I know how to write the first part. For example, I learned how to write a sentence, supporting sentences about the topic idea and how to write concluding sentences. Writing paragraphs in English is like a sandwich. I learned that when people read other's writing they don't understand it. Now, I know a lot of things that I need to put in my essay to make it easy for the reader to understand. For example, I need an introduction with a thesis statement, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Finally, using connecting words and punctuation are important to know when I write. I feel good knowing I can write correctly and organize my ideas correctly. I decided to learn to use a credit card, when I arrived in Houston. I searched for all the steps necessary to open an account and start using it. First, I went to talk with an adviser and asked for information. The same day, I opened my account with my passport and some personal information that they needed. Next, I received my bank's approval and I deposited cash in my new account. After that, I received my credit card, and I created a password. Finally, I talked with my parents, and I told them about my account. Now they send me money directly to my bank from Colombia. Now, I always use my credit card because it is easy to use and practical. In conclusion, I learned a lot of things. Now, I can focus my attention on what is truly important and reach my goals.

Things I Have Learned

Fabio Briffel

3D – Angola

Have you learned to manage your life in a new country? I have, and I am sure that you will find your answers too. I work hard because I think it is an asset for me to learn new things. I am able to live alone, and I am learning another language. Over the past six months that I have been in Houston, I have also learned very important things about cooking, Google maps, and money management. There were some steps that I had to take to save my money. First, it wasn't easy for me to save my money in a good way because I had always lived with my family. Therefore, I had to create my own steps. The first step was to make a list of the necessities that I need money for. For example, I wrote down the money I spend on food, school, and bills (water, energy, and rent). The second step was to make a list that included the things that I like to do. For example, I like to go to restaurants, go shopping, and attend parties. The third step was to plan my spending on transportation. For example, bus and taxis. In conclusion, I think those steps helped me to save my money in an awesome way. Learning how to use Google maps made it easy to find restaurants, to check traffic, and to take public transportation. First of all, this

app is a highly ranked app. I usually use it when I want to go to a restaurant that I have never gone to before or when I wish to try a kind of food that I have never eaten before. For example, I go to the app and search “Restaurant with Mexican Food.” Then Google maps show me many options of price and places. Sometimes, people leave comments about the restaurant. I think it’s great because if I’m not sure about the restaurant, maybe the comments there can help me decide. Next, before I leave home, I always use the app to check the traffic on the street. For example, when I see the traffic, I can choose the best route that I want to take. It can also show me the accidents on the streets. Lastly, when I came to Houston, I used this app to learn how to take a bus. For example, it shows me all the bus lines, and where I can get on a bus. In short, I have used this app, and it has helped me until now for those reasons. It was very important for me to learn how to cook because I live alone. For me, it was very difficult because in my hometown I never tried to cook. My mother always cooked for me. Next, I thought about ways to learn to cook alone. At first, I tried to cook easy things. For example, I tried to cook eggs, pasta, and rice. At first, I didn’t have much success, and I couldn’t eat the same things every day. After that, I decided to go on You Tube and watched some videos of people cooking. For example, I watched people cook meat and fish. I think these videos taught me the important things about the ideal seasoning and the time that the food needs to cook. Later, I bought a magazine that has many food recipes, such as Mexican food and Chinese food. In conclusion, I think that it was good for me to learn how to cook because when I came here I spent a lot of money at restaurants. In short, I think that it was essential that I create my own steps to learn a good way to live alone. In my opinion, learning to cook, using Google maps, and managing my money have changed my life.

Three Things I Have Learned This Term

Saleh Alayashi

3D – Saudi Arabia

Everyone has to learn new things especially when he or she is in a country that is not their own. If you do not learn how to live in a new culture, you might be seen as a weird person. I am one who has learned new things about life. This semester I have learned a lot about taking care of myself, improving my English skills, and understanding American football games. There a lot of things I have learned about taking care of myself. One of them is saving or managing money. It is hard, but if I study in another country, I should do that because nobody will give me money for free. In some countries, international students cannot work. For example, the United States does not allow students who have the F1 visa to work. Saving money is also hard because I live alone and do not have anyone to share expenses like rent and home insurance with. The money I get from my parents has to pay the rent and fees, and the rest is for other things I need to do such as pay bills and buy the food I eat. However, if I got a lot of money, I might not save it like I do now. In short, learning how to take care of myself is one thing I

learned. Since I have come to the United States, I have also learned about different cultures and games. Some of what I have learned is about what American people wear and eat. Most of them wear blue jeans, and in Texas, native people like to eat Mexican food, but the most interesting thing is American football game. I had not known about it until I went to watch the game in the stadium at the university. That day, when I went to the stadium, my teacher invited my classmates and me to a party at her home, and then we walked to the stadium. There, in the stadium, my teacher explained to me the rules of the football game, and from that day on, I have become interested in it. In conclusion, when I am living in a country that is not mine, I have to learn about and respect other cultures. Also, when I came to the United States, my English skills were not good, but I have improved them since. First, the thing I

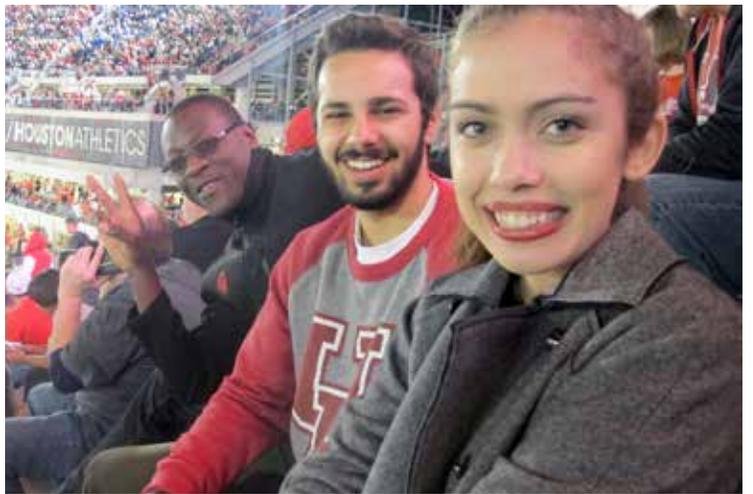


have improved quickly is reading. The way I have achieved this is by renting books and stories from the library. I have read a lot to improve my reading skill. Next, I have improved speaking too. It was easy to speak better. The most important thing is learning not to be shy when I talk to people. My teachers have helped me to improve my skills in class also. All these steps that I have taken have helped me to improve my English skills. In conclusion, taking care of myself, improving my English skills, and understanding American football games are things I have learned this semester. These are the three things I never thought I would learn. I thought I would just learn English, and I would not need to learn any things else. However, I learned them, and now I am interested, and I enjoy knowing about new things in cultures.

Studying FUN



School Spirit



How I Relax

Murad Al Yagoub

3A – Saudi Arabia

Sometimes, I feel so stressed because I am homesick and far away from home. However, there are three places in Houston where I relax. The first place where I feel relaxed is a special Arabic coffee shop. They have some special food, and they have hookah. I really like to go there and listen to Arabic music. I also like to go to the park, and it helps me relax. I enjoy sitting and walking with my friend. I lie down and look at the stars. It is amazing, and every weekend the park has a new singer who sings for us, so I feel relaxed. Finally, I like to go to Galveston. There, I swim for three to five hours, and I barbecue. I enjoy it especially if it is lamb because lamb is my favorite meat, and I also like walking on the beach. In conclusion, I feel relaxed when I go to these three places, so everyone should find places where they can relax.

The Perfect Wife

Ali Al Ali

3F – Saudi Arabia

Every man wants to marry a perfect woman. In my opinion, the perfect wife must possess several characteristics. First, a perfect wife must be a kind woman. When the wife is mean, you can't live with her. Also, if she is going to be mean, you will be in a bad mood every moment in your home. Second, I think the wife should be a calm person because your life will be a mess if you marry an impulsive woman. Third, when you consider marriage, you should choose an honest woman. If your wife is dishonest, you may not be comfortable with her. Finally, she must be easy-going, funny, and intelligent. Indeed, such a woman would be my dream wife.

How to Make a Simple Cake

Zumi Yau Chen

3E – Panama

If you want to know how to make a simple cake, you need to follow these steps. First, you need to go to the grocery store to buy the ingredients for your simple cake. You should buy margarine or butter, flour, sugar, four eggs, baking powder, and your favorite flavoring. If you wish, you can make it without any special flavoring. Next, mix your ingredients and put the batter in a cake pan. Bake your cake at 350 degrees for about 45 to 50 minutes. The final step is to let your cake sit in the pan for five minutes, and then turn the cake out to cool. Follow these steps, and your cake will be very delicious.

Things That Make Your Teacher Unhappy

Xinru Zhang

3E – China

We do many things to make our teachers unhappy. It may not be intentional. For example, being late for class is not only bad for our own learning, it will also affect the teacher's and our own mood. Not being serious in class, not paying attention, or not being focused are inappropriate behaviors. A student has the obligation to complete

the work assigned by the teacher; otherwise, he will make the teacher unhappy. When we don't study hard and get a bad grade, the teacher might be very upset. For our own well-being, we should not make the teacher unhappy. We should study hard and get a good result to make our teacher happy and to guarantee our own success.

Things That Make the Teacher Unhappy

Cuong Nguyen

3E – Vietnam

Most people experience at least twelve years of school. We will meet many types of teachers. Every teacher has a different personality and teaching method, but all of them want their students to understand what they teach. However, that is not always easy. Students and teachers often do not understand each other and make each other unhappy. This is especially true for young people from twelve to sixteen years old who are forming their own personalities and want to assert themselves. They have behaviors such as not focusing on lectures, not completing homework, or disturbing their classmates. However, the things that make teachers unhappy are not the students who lack intelligence or skills, but the students who don't make an effort and have no desire to learn. These things actually make teachers unhappy. In my opinion, I think teachers and students need to talk more to understand each other by solving problems and offering the best solutions for each other. Finally, students need to understand that the school is for their benefit. They should try not to make the teachers unhappy since they are enthusiastic about imparting knowledge to us.

Qualities of a Good Friend

Yixuan Wang

3F – China

Everyone has good friends, but what important qualities should a good friend have? First of all, my best friend's habits should be the same as mine. When we have the same habits, we will have lots of topics to discuss. Therefore, we won't feel bored with each other. For example, we can talk about K-pop music, Korean TV shows, and so on. Secondly, a good friend should be honest. I think her good qualities can affect me. For instance, if I don't want to do homework by myself, I can ask her for help. As a result of her honesty, she would not do homework for me. She would change my mind and tell me to do it. The most important qualities of a good friend are not to have a big mouth and keep secrets about friends. A friend must not mention secrets to anybody, such as another friend or teacher. The last quality is that friends should help each other. For example, when I face trouble in my life, a good friend should give some advice to me, or when I have a problem with my studies, we should work it out together. All in all, a friend is like sunshine in our life. As we all know, getting along with friends is important to us, so a good friend should have these four important qualities.

How to Be a Good Friend

Maxat Zhardemgaliyev

3F – Kazakhstan

People want to surround themselves with friends with good qualities, but to have a good friend, first of all, a person should be a friend. In my opinion, good friends have to have important characteristics such as honesty and mindfulness. By honesty, I mean to be truthful with friends and himself. Also, in cases when a person is emotional and going to make a choice which can be harmful in the end, a friend can help him avoid it with good advice. A good friend can help materially and morally. Material help is with housing, money and food, etc. Moral help is good advice and encouragement. Finally, all the ways listed are not the most important. Friends are like mirrors that show your soul. They can teach you many things about yourself.

Important Qualities of a Good Friend

Ibrahim Aldhurai

3F – Saudi Arabia

Every one has a lot of friends in life. I prefer friends with four important qualities. Friends should be able to advise me, help me, keep secrets, and be honest. First of all, when I make a mistake or don't care about school, my friend should advise me to be better in school. Next, friends should help me to solve problems with my family. Also, I should be able to keep secrets with my friend. This is important to me. For example, when I feel sad, I want talk to him. In addition, my friend should not lie and should tell the truth. When my friend lies, I cannot trust him again. Friends must have all these qualities to make me happy and comfortable.

How to Make Caramen

Nguyet Dinh

3E – Vietnam

Caramen or flan is a very tasty dish and is easy to make. There are many nutrients in it. You can make caramen if you follow these basic steps. The ingredients required are three eggs, 200 ml of regular milk, condensed milk, and sugar. The first step is to separate the egg whites. You only need the yolks. Add three tablespoons of condensed milk. Depending on how sweet you want it, add more or less condensed milk to your mixture. Mix this evenly with the egg yolks. Then add the regular milk and start mixing again. The second step is to heat sugar in a pan with a little water and start stirring until everything has dissolved. When the sugar starts turning yellow, you must stir faster. When the sugar turns a darker yellow, you have to add a little water (just a little) until the sugar dissolves completely. This is the caramel for the caramen. Next, pour the egg mixture and the caramel in a mold. Remember to pour the egg mixture slowly to create two layers. The last step is to steam it. Put your mold in a pan with water, but not filled all the way up, and turn on the heat on the stove top. Remember to put on the lid. Let it sit for twenty minutes with medium heat. After it has cooled, you can put it in the refrigerator. You have made caramen, and now you can enjoy your result.

A Good Friend

Anh Trinh

3F – Vietnam

In my mind, a person should have some qualities to become a good friend. I have a girlfriend, and she has four qualities I need in a friend. First, she is very kind to me, she never leaves me alone when I need someone who can help me. I remember a time when I was sick, she took care of me carefully. Second, she always listens to me and understands me when I need to share something and I do it for her too. That might be a sad situation or a happy one, we don't care. Next, she and I face some challenges together in our lives. That's really great! Finally, we can say "sorry" when we do something to make each other sad. She is really a good friend to me. We'll be best friends forever.

How to Improve English

Julio Guzman Ortiz

3C – Venezuela

One year ago, I decided to come to the United States in order to learn English, and the Language and Culture Center of the University of Houston gave me the opportunity to improve my English. There are three important things that helped me improve my English including working on campus, attending class, and going to Conversation Club three times a week. When I found a job at the University Center at the University of Houston, I was so excited and afraid at the same time because I felt that my English was not really good. Also, I did not know much about computers, and I was going to work on fixing computers. However, my boss told me that my English was not really bad and everything was going to be fine. Now, I have been working for almost eight months at Student Affairs Information Technology Services, and I like my job because they have given me the opportunity not only to earn money, but also to practice English a lot every day. On the other hand, attending class every day has also helped me improve a lot not only because I have had excellent teachers, but also because my classmates are from different countries around the world, and they speak different languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Vietnamese, and others. Therefore, if we want to talk in class the only way that we have to communicate to each other is through English. Also, we have different activities in class such as presentations that help us a lot to practice our English. Finally, the Conversation Club is one of the best activities that the Language Culture Center at the University of Houston has because it helps us a lot to practice English every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Also, we might go to the football game or other activities away from campus. Also, we have parties on special days such as Valentine's day, Halloween, or Thanksgiving. I would recommend it to my classmates. In conclusion, I feel very lucky for studying at the Language Culture Center because they not only give me the opportunities to learn English, but also they have helped me a lot to improve my English and learn very fast with the different activities us. Therefore, I would recommend that my friends in Venezuela come here if they decide to learn English in the United States.

Influences

My Best Teacher

Ali Alhuzani

3F – Saudi Arabia

In my life, I have met several teachers, but I cannot forget the best one. He was Mr. Sami. He taught me in elementary school in Saudi Arabia. I learned some morals and respect from him. He helped us when we asked him about anything. He was always fair and flexible. Before we took a test, he explained it. Also, he encouraged us when we got the right answer by giving us a piece of candy, and it pleased us very much. I learned outside of class because he taught me things that were of interest, not necessarily from the textbook. For example, he taught me how to be a better person. He smiled, encouraged me, and showed respect. In conclusion, I cannot forget my teacher. I will remember him all my life.

My Grandfather

Hassan Alsultan

3E – Saudi Arabia

My grandfather was the best person that I have ever known in my life. His name was Hajji, and he was born in Saudi Arabia on October 8, 1906. He was a good person who knew poetry. Also, my grandfather was the first hunter in his area. In his region, there was no school or mosque, so he worked to build two schools and one mosque. Everyone in his community respected him and invited him to their events. The first king of Saudi Arabia called my grandfather to work with him because he was a good hunter and a brave man. My grandfather had a big farm with different kinds of animals and flowers. He passed away ten years ago, and everyone in his area misses him because he was an example of a brave man. In conclusion, my grandfather was a good example whom everyone can follow to be successful in life.

The Most Important Teacher in My Life

Wenxiao Xin

3F – China

In my life, I have met a lot of teachers. They were my math teachers, geology teachers, Chinese teachers, and so on, but I think my university piano teacher has made the biggest difference in my life. When I studied in the university, I was very busy because I needed to study hard and teach children how to play the piano. Sometimes I didn't practice enough. One time, in my private piano lesson, I didn't do a good job. My teacher didn't say anything terrible or angry. She just asked me, "Do you have a best friend? How long was your relationship? Most importantly, I want to know how long you have played the piano." When I heard this, I thought I had not met my best friend yet, but the piano was an important part of my life. I realized I needed to do a lot of work on it. It was and is my best friend. I can't leave it or lose it. So, in that moment, I began to love my piano and my major again, and I practiced harder. Later, I won some competitions. I think my university piano teacher influenced my life. She made the biggest difference in my attitude toward playing piano.

My Grandfather

Yupeng Zhang

3F – China

My grandfather defended our country for a long time as a soldier. He served in the army for thirty two years. During his service, he was in the Second Sino Japanese War. At that time, they had very difficult conditions. They were not afraid of sacrifice. Now my government has given them a lot of help and a lot of benefits. Many people think they are heroes. After the war, my grandfather entered the State Forestry Administration. He managed two thousand people and two trains. He helped a lot of people find jobs, which for him was a big change. He developed a forest protection plan. Before that, the Japanese in this region had destroyed a lot of forests, so he worked very hard to continue to learn and develop an improvement plan. I am very proud of him.



The Fisherman and the Pearl

Ahmed Alsadiq

3F – Saudi Arabia

My father read this story to my brother and me when we were little boys, and it influenced us a lot. There was a fisherman who went to work every day and caught some fish. After that, he went back to his home, and he and his wife ate the fish he caught. One day, his wife was cleaning the fish, and she was surprised to see a beautiful pearl inside the fish. As soon as she found the pearl, she hurried to find her husband. She told her husband what she had found. Then he stood up to get the pearl, and he said to his wife, "Today I will sell this pearl to buy more food." He went to sell the pearl in his hometown, and a man who worked there said, "This pearl is priceless, so that if I sold my store, my house, and all the things that I have, I can't give you enough for it." The man in the store told him to go to a bigger store in the city, so maybe he could sell it there. Then he went to that bigger store in the city, and he was shocked because the seller told him the same thing that the last seller had told him. Then he told him, "I know someone who can buy it from you--the governor." Then, he went to the governor, and the governor said, "I was looking for a similar pearl many years ago. I will let you go to my safe, and you can take what you want from there, but I will give you only six hours to take the largest amount of gold in exchange for your pearl." The fisherman said, "No, sir, just two hours is enough for that, but the governor said, "No, you need six hours." Soon, he entered the safe, and he saw three rooms. The first room had a lot of food and drinks. The second room had a big bed, and the third room had gold and diamonds. He said to himself, I will eat and get some rest. Then I will continue collecting gold. After that, he spent more than an hour in the first room, moving from one table to another and eating a lot of food. Finally, he said, "There's a lot more time. I will rest. Then I will collect the gold and diamonds. Finally, he fell into a deep sleep, but the voice of the guard woke him. The guard said, "Wake up, fool, your time is done." He started begging them, "Please give me more time." They said, "We gave you six hours, and you were able to collect all the gold and diamonds, but you wanted to have fun for a moment. You missed the moment you could have gotten enough to provide for your whole life." Then they drove him out of the palace. To sum up, the lesson of the story is that the pearl is our soul, and the room for food is the lust of this world, and the room for rest is all the time we don't think about God. I hope we wake up and collect that gold instead of wasting time.

Agostinho Neto

Helmer Pacheco

3F – Angola

Who is Agostinho Neto, the nation builder? He was born on September 17, 1922, in a small village called Catete, which is near the capital. He died on September 10, 1979. Agostinho Neto was a brave person. He helped build Angola in two ways. First, he fought for independence from Portugal and was in jail for many years due to his actions. People knew that he was incredible because he encouraged the nation to fight for human rights and peace. In addition, he wrote a famous poem called "Havemos de Voltar." Then he became the President. He ruled Angola from 1975 until 1979. He was very smart, and he studied in Portugal and Russia. He was a doctor and a poet. Since his death, his birthday, September 17, has been celebrated as National Hero Day.



Conversation Club



LANGUAGE AND CULTURE CENTER PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT

Joy Tesh, Director of the Language and Culture Center, after serving as President of the Board of Directors of UCIEP (University and College Intensive English Programs), remains on the Board as Past President.

Adam Chen, Program Director of Counseling and Student Services at the Language and Culture Center, is serving as Chair for the Houston Forum of Advisors of Internationals (Houston Forum) for the 2014-2015 term.

Farideh Nekoobahr is serving as Member-at-Large of TextESOL IV.



CONFERENCE	PRESENTER(S)	TITLE
TextESOL San Antonio, TX	Duygu Uslu-Ok Farideh Nekoobahr	Motivation and Future Selves in ESL Scholarship Recipients
	Farideh Nekoobahr	Transitioning Students from ESL to Academic Courses Through Modeling
	Jenifer Edens	Reading Test Resuscitation
TextESOL IV Houston, TX	Thong Dang	When the Books Are Long and the Time Is Short
	Jenifer Edens	Reading Test Resuscitation
	Hope Kovalevskaya	Building Roads in ESL Classrooms
MEXTESOL Cancun, MX	Katey Porter Barbara Kennedy	Breaking Through the Silence: Effective Oral Presentation Instruction
	Vincent Tran Barbara Kennedy	Fun and Free Icebreakers
NAFSA Region III Norman, Oklahoma	Adam Chen	F-1 Student Advising for Beginners
SIETAR International* Orlando, FL	Sandra Carrettin-Mulvany Barbara Kennedy	Plant Seeds, Reap Trust: Cultivating Inter-Cultural Collaboration in ESL Classrooms

*Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research

LCC Calendar

Important Dates

Spring Term 2016

Tuesday, January 5-12
Online Registration Begins

Tuesday, January 12
Student Check-In

Thursday, January 14
Student Activity
Late Online Registration

Friday, January 15
First Assembly, Orientation
Last Day of Late Registration

Monday, January 18
Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

Tuesday, January 19
Classes Begin

Monday - Friday, March 14 - 18
Spring Holidays, No Classes

Monday, April 11 - 14
Testing and Final Exams

Monday, April 18
Testing

Tuesday, April 19
No Classes

Wednesday, April 20
Final Student Activity

Thursday, April 21
Student - Teacher Conferences (morning)
Graduation Ceremony (afternoon)

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