

Tuesday, September 8, 2009

ISSO program connects international students with host families

By **Katie Land**, news editor

As many students say goodbye to their families and embark on a new college experience, international students are meeting families for the first time. The host family program through Oakland University's International Students and Scholars Office connects foreign students with American families to help ease the transition to a new country and college.

This year, roughly a dozen host families are planning to mix and mingle with the more than 25 foreign students in the program. The ISSO is continually recruiting new families and has placed a special emphasis on bringing OU staff and faculty into the line up.

Most international students who have lived on campus or in dorms have not been fully exposed to mainstream American culture, mostly because they tend to stay close to campus and intermingle with other international students. This program ensures that students are gaining more from their time in the U.S. by receiving a support system and guide to depend on, according to Petra Knoche, assistant director of the ISSO.

"It is not uncommon for international students to assume that American life is like what they've seen in the movies or on reality shows," Knoche said. "Having a host family who can show the student what America is all about and help them integrate is one of the most crucial aspects of this program."

The ISSO has prepared a welcome and information session at 4 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 11, in the Oakland Room of Oakland Center. Another host family event will be held during the semester.

Alena Vackova, an international student from the Czech Republic, built stronger ties to America as a result of her participation in the host family program.

"My host family always made me feel at home, they invited me to their family functions and even family vacations," she said. "It was nice to go to the park, have a barbecue or celebrate the Fourth of July and experience the American style of living with them. Through this host-family, I have gained a life-long relationship with wonderful people."

Knoche is particularly glad to get more of the Oakland community to participate. "Though both host families and international students benefit from this exchange, students receive a greater advantage. Most faculty and staff have some experience with international students, whereas incoming international students don't have a real perception of the American culture most of the time."

The ISSO is still recruiting host families. For more information about this opportunity, contact Sehar Kazi at skazi@oakland.edu or call (248) 370-3608.

SUMMARY

The ISSO will host a welcome and information session at 4 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 11 for participants and prospective participants in the international host family program.

Created by Katherine Land - Deleted (land@oakland.edu) on Tuesday, September 8, 2009

Modified by Katherine Land - Deleted (land@oakland.edu) on Tuesday, September 8, 2009

Article Start Date: Tuesday, September 8, 2009