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ISSO host family program offers support for international students

By Eric Reikowski, media relations assistant

Oakland University's International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) is recruiting area families who are interested in becoming part of its Host Family program for the 2010-11 academic year.

The program provides support to Oakland's international students by pairing them with families who help ease their transition to American culture. The experience is richly rewarding for both students and families, according to Petra Knoche, assistant director of the ISSO.

"As a former international student, I can attest to the benefits of having a host family," Knoche said. "I recall how valuable my host family was in helping me get acquainted to the culture, customs and traditions of Americans."

Host families help international students become acclimated to their new surroundings by introducing them to the university and surrounding community. Students get to experience American life by participating in holidays, traditions, activities and events, while sharing their own customs and practices with their host family. This exchange of culture has helped create memorable experiences for dozens of families and students who have participated in the Host Family program since it was launched in fall 2009.

"The program has been highly successful at fostering positive cultural interaction between international students and their host families," Knoche said. "The sharing of ideas and experiences has allowed everyone involved to learn and grow. It's a small commitment, but makes a huge positive impact within the life of an international student."

One of those students, Ahmed Abedy, came to the U.S. from Iraq.

"My host family made a huge difference in my life here," said Abedy, who was in the program during the 2009-2010 academic year. "I learned a lot about U.S. culture and my family did their best to eliminate my homesickness. The idea of such a program is awesome."

For more information on the Host Family Program, contact the ISSO at (248) 370-3358 or Sehar Kazi, Graduate Assistant and Host Family Coordinator at skazi@oakland.edu. Those interested in joining the Host Family Program are encouraged to fill out and submit the **host family enrollment form** by Friday, August 20.

SUMMARY

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