

## Participant Newsletter December 2010



### Table Of Contents

- Trainee/Intern of the Month
- IEC Office Holiday Schedule
- New Year's Eve
- When Cultures Collide
- Contact Information

This newsletter is sent to all active participants in the American Immigration Council J-1 Training Program. Please review the information below and remember to always contact the Council if you have questions or concerns about your training program or non-immigrant status. If you are no longer participating in our program, please notify us. If you have a question for the Council, please do not reply to this message, but instead send your question to [J1program@immcouncil.org](mailto:J1program@immcouncil.org).

## facebook

The International Exchange Center is on Facebook!

If you are already on Facebook, look up our page "International Exchange Center" and Like it.

The IEC page is updated frequently with interesting information including a city spotlight every other week and video tips and information. You can also use this space to connect with other trainees and interns in your area!

Find us at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com). It's free and easy to join. Plus you will never know who you might meet or the experiences you could share.

### IEC Holiday Schedule

Just a reminder that our office will be closed for the holidays from December 23 to January 2. We will back on our normal 9:00am to 5:30pm schedule beginning January 3.

If you have an emergency during the time we are closed, please email Lois at [lmagee@immcouncil.org](mailto:lmagee@immcouncil.org).

The staff at the International Exchange Center wish you a wonderful holiday season and safe travels!



## EXCHANGE VISITOR OF THE MONTH

### Bronwyn's American Dream



*Bronwyn enjoys the beach side life of San Diego.*

The International Exchange Center is proud to announce Bronwyn Cambridge as this month's Exchange Visitor of the Month. Each month, we select an exchange visitor who has made an effort to get involved in his/her community and explore American culture.

Bronwyn, 25, originally from New Zealand is currently training the Jones Payne Group in San Diego, CA. At Jones Payne, Bronwyn is training in the field of Noise Mitigation. They work with the San Diego Airport Authority and the Quieter Home Program in San Diego to make living close to the airport a less noisy experience. Bronwyn especially enjoys being able to observe the design work that goes into making noise mitigation plans for his-

torical homes.

When not at her training site, Bronwyn has enjoyed getting to know her new city. This is Bronwyn's third time in San Diego and she has found it to be just as great as she remembered! "I am so stoked to say that I am living My American Dream and proud to call myself a San Deigan, Chargers & Padres fan." Bronwyn's idea of the American Dream includes everything from being able to train in her field, to living two minutes from the beach, to being exposed to the melting pot of cultures the US has to offer.

Bronwyn has taken the time to make sure that she gets a taste of everyday American life. "By having American friends and hanging out with them and getting to meet their families has

definitely been a great way to be exposed to American living." She mentions how American families often will have an American flag hanging outside their homes. "It's very patriotic and I love it how proud Americans are to be American."

During her time here Bronwyn has been able to participate in many holiday festivities such as for Halloween and Thanksgiving. For Halloween "I dressed up as a kiwi spread called Marmite, and went as Marmite Girl!" She also enjoyed participating in a Thanksgiving dinner with friends and being able to share some dishes from her own culture.

In addition to sharing her own culture with her coworkers through explanations of New Zealand slang and care packages from home filled with New Zealand goodies, Bronwyn has been introduced to the different cultures represented within her training site. "I have been exposed to the Indian culture as a result of my Indian co-workers who invited me to an Indian dance festival."

While Bronwyn's California location makes it possible for her to go to the beach and watch the sunsets over the ocean every night, she still would like to see other parts of the US. Each state and city has its own specific culture and Bronwyn would like to experience more of them, specifically Florida and Chicago.

# New Year's Eve in the United States



New Year's Eve is a time when people all around the world observe the start of the Gregorian calendar New Year. One popular way to celebrate in the United States is by dropping or raising an object at midnight like the giant crystal ball in Times Square,

New York City.

The tradition of dropping an object began in New York City in 1907, when The New York Times owner Alfred Ochs "arranged to have a large, illuminated seven-hundred-pound iron and wood ball lowered from the

tower flagpole precisely at midnight to signal the end of 1907 and the beginning of 1908." Today, the Times Square Ball Drop is still one of the biggest New Year's Eve celebrations in the world, with up to one million people in Times Square and one billion watching on television. The 2011 Ball is 12 feet in diameter, 11,875 pounds, and is made of 2,688 crystal triangles, 672 lights, and an aluminum frame. It will drop at exactly 11:59 p.m. and over one minute, be lowered to the ground to ring in the New Year at midnight.

Although the Times Square ball drop is the most famous U.S. tradition, it is certainly not the only one—there are actually several different "object drops" all around the country. Some of the objects dropped symbolize a local commodity such as the "Peach Drop" in Atlanta Georgia, "Opossum Drop" in North Carolina (don't worry, they don't actually drop it), or the "Cheese

Drop" in Wisconsin. In some places, the object may not have a specific correlation to the area other than a night of fun, such as the Dillsburg Pennsylvania Pickle or the Bartlesville Oklahoma Olive! Regardless of the object dropped, New Year's Eve is a time that people reflect on the year passed, and celebrate the year to come. Maybe you could start your own object dropping tradition!

Every culture around the world has a way of marking a new year. This is a great opportunity for you to share your culture with your co-workers and friends. If you are going home for the holidays you could bring back pictures to share of the New Year's celebrations. If you will be staying in the US for New Year's Eve you could host a Ball Drop Viewing party or go to someone else's. No matter what you end up doing we hope that you have a very happy new year!

## When Cultures Collide

Holidays can be a time when cultural activities and beliefs are front and center in our daily lives. What and how is celebrated reflects the history and underlying values of a society. Traditions of family, food, gift giving, remembrance, forgiveness, and caring take on different forms from one culture to another. Sharing one another's holiday customs can be fascinating. But, each of us can also find ourselves dealing with the cultural walls that our own identities will not allow us to cross. How do we handle situations in which our values are clashing with the host culture where we find ourselves?

Take as an example the holiday party featuring an open bar. For many, the concept of unlimited alcohol at a party is simply expected. But for others, the very idea of any alcohol consumption is unacceptable. Or, take the issue of gambling. For some cultures, gambling is an integral part of society. For others, gambling is an extreme vice. What about the religious rites

that often go along with holiday celebrations? Do you feel comfortable participating in the lighting of a menorah, the lighting of an advent wreath, the lighting of the Diwali lamps? At what point do you find yourself saying, "I cannot do this." What do you do when an activity is obviously deeply important to the people you are with, but simply not something you can do? How do you gracefully maintain your sense of self without insulting your hosts?

A good place to start is with the question, "Why is this important to me?" Often, wrestling with ideas and behaviors that are new to us leads to personal growth. If you don't have a solid answer for why something is important, you may decide it's fine to try something new. But if it is important to you to abstain from an activity, try to find a tactful way to opt out. Make sure you do not come across as judging your host. Always express appreciation for the offer to be included, even when you opt out.

Usually, a simple "No thanks!" will suffice. Finally, the United States has a long history of learning to live side by side with many different cultures. It's always fine to say, "I do not feel comfortable with this." Your host will understand.

### Contact Information

The best way to contact us with address changes, questions or suggestions is via email. Please send your message to [J1program@immcouncil.org](mailto:J1program@immcouncil.org). We welcome any and all newsletter suggestions or comments.

American Immigration Council  
1331 G Street, NW, Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20005  
(202) 507-7500  
(202) 742-5619 (fax)

[www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org](http://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org)  
[J1program@immcouncil.org](mailto:J1program@immcouncil.org)