EXCHANGE VISTOR PROGRAM
AMERICAN IMMIGRATION LAW FOUNDATION

MARCH 2009 NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is sent to all active participants in the American Immigration Law Foundation (AILF) J-1 Training Program. Please review the information below and remember to always contact AILF 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 AILF, please do not reply to this message, but instead send your question to exchange@ailf.org.

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Please Report a Change in Your Address

Please be aware that AILF is required to report any changes in your U.S. home address in the government's Student & Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) database.

We ask that you report any residential address changes to us within 7 days of your move so that we can enter the information within the government imposed deadline.

Failure to update your address could result in termination of your J-1 visa status. We are responsible for sending you a slew of important documents, such as DS-2019 forms, insurance cards and other correspodence.

Please remember to contact AILF as soon as possible if you change your U.S. address. Thanks!

facebook

Are you Facebook friends with AILF's Exchange Visitor Program yet? If you aren't already, jump on the social networking bandwagon, check out our group, "**AILF J-1 Exchange Visitor Program**" and request to join. We promise we'll accept you.

You can also add us as a friend, "Ailf Evp". While it's fun and informative to receive this newsletter, the AILF J-1 Exchange Visitor Program group is a great way to interact one-on-one with other trainees and interns. You can post pictures, discuss your experiences and make new friends from all over the world!

Find us at www.facebook.com. It's free and easy to join. Plus you never know who you might meet or the experiences you could share.

EXCHANGE VISITOR OF THE MONTH

Chairy Saidjan Embraces American Culture

Chairy Saidjan of Indonesia embraces art at the Kansas City Sculpture Park.

The Exchange Visitor Program is pleased to announce Chairy Saidjan as March'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.

Chairy Saidjan, 43 of Jakarta, Indonesia, trains as an exchange visitor for the Kauffman Foundation, a nonprofit organization that studies the powerful economic impact of entrepreneurship, in Kansas City, Missouri. In anticipation of his arrival, Chairy eagerly studied U.S. demography and geography to better acquaint himself with the cultural and physical American landscape—a little bit of research that goes a long way in understanding American entrepreneurship.

A key factor in understanding how Americans run businesses is learning more about the cultural nuances that, in part, frame business practices. Chairy makes it a priority to get out and explore American culture by visiting various cities, libraries and art museums—like the Kansas City Sculpture Park.

"Without outside activities like visiting museums," Chairy said, "we would learn only entrepreneurship and not American entrepreneurship. We can not understand American entrepreneurship well without knowing American culture."

Chairy's cultural tour includes the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, the Truman Presidential Museum and Library, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Ewing and Muriel Kauffman Memorial Garden, as well as the Kansas City Art Institute. Chairy, who has also visited Boston and San Francisco, finds Kansas City's cultural heritage just as rich and the people equally friendly. In addition to exploring American culture, Chairy also enjoys sharing his culture with friends and colleagues.

"My friend from the UK, Peter, likes the "Batik" shirt I usually wear day-to-day at the Kauffman Foundation." Chairy said. "I explained to him the history and cultural aspects of the Indonesian style of "Batik." Another friend asked me to teach him some simple Bahasa—Indonesian expressions like *apa khabar* (How are you doing?) and *sampai jumpa lagi* (See you later.). So our cultural differences actually make our friendship closer."

Embracing American culture doesn't always have to be physical—although it doesn't hurt to hug some art every once in a while. Exploring American culture could be as simple as visiting your local library, teaching your colleagues and friends about your home or just asking your friends questions over lunch.

Understanding American Culture

Women's History Month Marches into March

While many other countries are leaps and bounds ahead of the U.S. in the "female leadership" game, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton came notably close to being elected the Democratic nominee in the 2008 U.S. Presidential election. Some argue that this might not have been possible twenty years ago. American women, after all, were only granted the right to vote in 1920.

But how far has America really come since the women's suffrage movement of the early twentieth century? Women currently comprise only 17% of Congressional representation and still earn, on average, 23.5% less than men—which doesn't exactly exemplify the ideals of equality. Enter Women's History Month.

Centered on International Women's Day (March 8), March marks Women's History Month—created to highlight the contributions of women to events in history and contemporary society. (As if populating the earth wasn't enough of a contribution.) Countless schools, museums and community organizations across the U.S. celebrate Women's History Month by holding local school projects, events and exhibits.

The National Women's History Project (NWHP), a California clearinghouse that provides information on women's history, names a theme each year. This year's theme is *Women Taking the Lead to Save Our Planet*, which recognizes the important work women do in the ongoing "green movement." NWHP also publishes a list of women pioneers in the environmental field as well as a list of what you (yes, you!) can do to promote Women's History Month in your own communities.

In conjunction with the NWHP, the Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Gallery of Art, National Park Service, Smithsonian Institution and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum also join in paying tribute to the generations of women whose commitment to nature and the planet have proved invaluable to society.

There are also many immigrant women who have contributed to American society, such as the first female secretary of state Madeleine Albright (Czech Republic), singer Rihanna (Barbados), athlete Martina Navratilova (Russia) and entrepreneur Liz Claiborne (Belgium). These women are just a small cross-section of immigrants who continue to raise the bar for American women.

So however you plan on celebrating Women's History Month, be it by visiting a school or library, writing a letter to a local newspaper or watching the Spice Girl's movie "Spice World" all the way through, remember that the fight for gender equality is far from over and that even taking a moment to think about equality brings all of us one step closer to realizing that ideal.

April 15th is Right Around the Corner

What Happens If You Don't File a Tax Return?

All J-1 trainees and interns who earned income form U.S. sources during 2008 must file tax returns with the IRS and State tax offices by midnight on April 15th, 2009. The central post offices in most major cities will stay open until midnight for those of us who procrastinate. Information on how to file your taxes can be found on the AILF EVP Facebook page.

What happens if you do not file a tax return on your U.S. sourced income? (By U.S. source, we mean pay or stipends you have received from your U.S. host company, interest from U.S. banks, and any other income you received through a U.S. entity.) The IRS computers create a tax return for you!

When the IRS receives a W-2 form from your U.S. employer, the form is entered into their computer. If the IRS does not receive a tax return corresponding to the W-2 information, it creates a tax return based on assumptions that other U.S. income has also not been reported. This results in the IRS believing that you owe tax. That amount of tax owed, according to the created return, begins to accrue interest and penalties. More than one J-1 participant has come back to the U.S. for school or work years after they finished their J-1 program and found the IRS garnishing their wages and bank accounts in order to collect the unpaid tax, interest, and penalties. As you can image, it becomes a bureaucratic nightmare to prove you never owed the tax.

So, if you have not already filed your 1040NR-EZ or 1040NR form with the IRS, visit the IRS website at www.irs.gov. You'll find links to instructions, forms 1040NR-EZ and 1040NR, and to State tax forms off this site. If you find the forms totally confusing, you may want to consider a tax service specializing in J-1 tax issues. Several can be found on the internet. The most well-known is TaxBack at http://www.taxback.com/. If you use a tax service, be sure to check the form to make sure you agree with the information!

By the way, if you have difficulty reaching the AILF EVP staff on April 15, you'll know that we are madly finishing our tax returns.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The best way to contact us with address changes, questions or suggestions is via email. Please send your message to exchange@ailf.org. We welcome any and all newsletter suggestions or comments.

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