EXCHANGE VISTOR PROGRAM
AMERICAN IMMIGRATION LAW FOUNDATION

MAY 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.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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

AILF's Exchange Visitor Program is on Facebook!

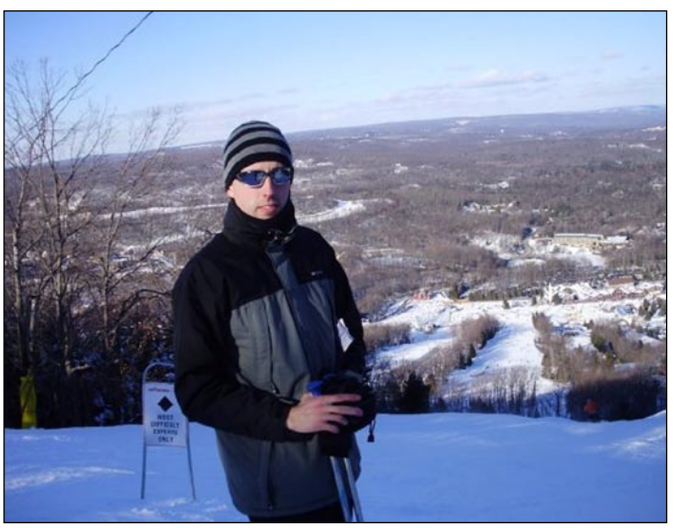
If you are already on Facebook, look up our group "**AILF J-1 Exchange Visitor Program**" and request to join. We promise we'll accept you.

AND 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 will never know who you might meet or the experiences you could share.

EXCHANGE VISITOR OF THE MONTH

Hit the Slopes with Egoitz Iturrixa Zubiri



Egoitz Iturrixa Zubiri poses on top of the Pocono Mountains in Pennsylvania.

The Exchange Visitor Program is proud to announce Egoitz Iturrixa Zubiri as May'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.

Egoitz, 23 of Hernani, Spain, is a J-1 Exchange Visitor in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He trains at Gamesa Wind US LLC, a company specializing in sustainable energy technologies. Like most exchange visitors, Egoitz was excited about the idea of training in the U.S. prior to his arrival.

"It's been a great experience so far," Egoitz said, "and I feel really lucky because not everyone has the chance to experience something like this. I had certain expectations in my mind, but things were a lot different than I expected when I got here—different in a good way."

Exchange Visitors must strike a balance between their professional lives and social lives. While learning and training are central to the exchange program, exploring the local culture and sharing ideas with coworkers and friends are equally important. Egoitz, however, can't have one without the other—his love of the outdoors is dependent on utilizing sustainable sources of energy.

"Not only is environmental sustainability going to be a big market in the future," Egoitz said, "it's also vitally important to take care of the environment. We're going to run out of resources one day and we have to figure out how to sustain ourselves without destroying the environment. Wind Energy is one of the most popular energy alternatives."

When Egoitz is not making the earth greener, he can be found on the slopes with friends and colleagues in the Pocono Mountains in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

"My skiing was great. Even though the Poconos are not the best as far as mountains go, I still had a really great time. I'm not a very good skier, but I did my best. I went with some work mates."

Egoitz also likes to travel around the US to pick up the local flavor and learn more about what makes each US city different. He's been to New Orleans, Chicago and Boston so far.

"Before I got here, I thought all the states in the US were the same. Through my travel experiences, I've noticed that every city is very different. I find Americans to be very friendly and they thoroughly seem to enjoy meeting new people."

Egoitz recommends getting involved in your local communities and exploring as much American culture as possible. According to Egoitz, meeting new people makes for a far more enriching and enjoyable J-1 experience.

Photograph courtesy of Matt Magee, flickr.

Understanding American Culture

America Remembers Immigrants on Memorial Day

From the Revolutionary War to the current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, immigrants have voluntarily served in all branches of the U.S. military from the beginnings of America. Without the contributions of immigrants, the military could not meet its recruiting goals and could not fill the need for foreign-language translators, interpreters, and cultural experts. Since 2001, 47,500 service members have naturalized and become U.S. Citizens in ceremonies around the world from Afghanistan to Iraq to South Korea and even on board Navy flagships at sea.

Monday, May 25th marked Memorial Day, a national holiday that commemorates U.S. men and women who died while in the military service.

But despite immigrants' honorable service and dedication to America, the U.S. government is still falling short on honoring the service of these young immigrant men and women. Attorney & Lieutenant Colonel in Military Police, Margaret D. Stock, testified before Congress in May of 2008:

"Currently, many military members fighting overseas find that they must also fight their own government at home, as that government creates bureaucratic obstacles that impede military readiness by preventing family members from accessing immigration benefits, refuses to allow family members into the United States altogether, or even seeks to deport military personnel or their family members."

According to the Migration Policy Institute, there are approximately 68,711 foreign born serving in the U.S. armed forces representing 5 percent of the total on active duty. Approximately 8 percent of men and women in the navy are foreign born and over 10 percent of those serving in the armed forces are of Hispanic origin. The top two countries of origin for foreign-born military personnel are the Philippines and Mexico and approximately half of the foreign born serving in the armed forces are naturalized citizens.

Immigrants are also part of grimmer statistics. According to the Associated Press:

Sgt. Christian Bueno-Galdos, a U.S. soldier born in Peru was killed on May 11, 2009 in Iraq. Officials say the 25-year-old Peruvian native was killed by a fellow soldier at a stress clinic in Iraq. Since September 2001 the Defense Department says about 150 immigrants have been killed while serving. Bueno-Galdos' family say he loved the Army and felt patriotic toward his adopted homeland where he immigrated with his family as a seven-year-old. He joined the Army out of high school and was buried with full military honors.

This Memorial Day, America will remember all the brave men and women who gave their lives for this country—including immigrant soldiers who have made innumerable sacrifices to keep our nation safe and free.

Exchange Visitor Program Visits Poland

From the perspective of trainees and interns, the AILF exchange experience seems to be all about J-1's leaving their home countries to spend some time living and learning in the US. That's a pretty accurate assessment, but every once in awhile, we turn the tables and focus on sending Americans abroad -- exchange, after all, ought to be a reciprocal arrangement. And as you know, there's a lot to be learned by stepping outside of the borders of your home country and the comfort of your own culture and language.

Our most recent outbound exchange trip involved an eclectic group of American professionals, one J-1 trainee, two cities in Poland, and a lot of talk about Central European migration trends and immigration/emigration issues. And of course, there were many pierogies, a lot of Żubrówka, and much baraszcz to be had. The group was able to explore Warsaw and Krakow, experiencing Polish culture and hearing from the experts about history, immigration, emigration, and the changes that membership in the European Union has brought to Poland.

Highlights of the trip included a visit to the US consulate in Warsaw, where the trip's one and only J-1 trainee, Tania Alves Calvao, was able to step behind the windows and see the Consulate from a very different perspective. Trip participants also enjoyed an informal visit to a premier Polish law firm, discussions with American business interests in Poland, and a presentation from the Warsaw University Center for Migration Research. A somber and informative day was spent at Auschwitz and Birkenau.

Ultimately, all agreed that much was learned in a few short days, giving a glimpse of what J-1's must acquire in their months of living in a country other than their own.

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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