INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE CENTER
AMERICAN IMMIGRATION COUNCIL

NOVEMBER 2009 NEWSLETTER

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 exchange@immcouncil..org.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Please Report a Change in Your Address

Please be aware that the American Immigration Council is required to report any changes in your U.S. home address in the U.S. 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 the Council as soon as possible if you change your U.S. address. Thanks!

facebook

The American Immigration Council's International Exchange Center is on Facebook!

If you are already on Facebook, look up our group "**International Exchange Center**" and request to join. We promise we'll accept you.

While it's fun and informative to receive this newsletter, the Council's International Exchange Center 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

Huw McDonald Lends a Hand

Huw participates in making improvements to his community.

The International Exchange Center is proud to announce Huw McDonald 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.

Huw McDonald, 27, of Johannesburg, South Africa, is a J-1 exchange visitor with City Year, a U.S. community service organization that recently expanded into South Africa. Huw trains with City Year in Boston, Massachusetts. Huw worked with City Year in South Africa and was excited to come to Boston to do his training at the organization's headquarters. Having been introduced to Boston during past City Year conferences, Huw is enjoying the opportunity for a more in depth exploration of the city during this stay. He particularly appreciates the easy-to-navigate transit system and the vast number of live music shows the city offers.

When Huw isn't in Boston, he's traveling around the United States and meeting Americans from many different walks of life as part of his training. "The division of City Year with whom I am training (Care Force), engages City Year's corporate sponsors and their employees in high-impact community service events that improve youth and family-focused educational, recreational and residential facilities."

Huw's travel and training schedule certainly keeps him busy but he also finds time to have fun. During a project in Indianapolis, IN, Huw and some of his coworkers took a side trip to the Indiana State Fair. "I had a really good time," Huw shared, "but without a doubt [I] ate too much deep-fried everything." One of Huw's favorite experiences during his time in the U.S was helping with a City Year project in which he and a group of volunteers transformed a community center in New York City.

While his training program has allowed him to experience a part of American culture that many may not see, there are other facets of American culture to experience too! The cultural, sporting and social events outside of his training have helped to give Huw a well-rounded familiarity with the American landscape. The time an Exchange Visitor gets to spend in the U.S. can pass incredibly quickly so Huw's advice to other J-1's is to "engage fully in the experience of being in a foreign country". You never know what adventure may be waiting for you just around the corner, so get out there and have a new experience today!

Understanding American Culture

Understanding American Elections

Election Day in the United States is on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. Election Day 2009 falls on November 3. Why do we have elections in November? The United States began as a mostly agrarian society, meaning that agricultural growing seasons dictated the lives of most citizens. November was chosen as the best time for elections early in American history because in the regions of the country settled at that time, early November was a transitional period between harvest season and the onset of cold winter weather. Why Tuesday? It was the most convenient day, falling after Sabbath observations on Sunday but before Market Day which was usually held on a Wednesday. As traveling to the nearest polling place in order to vote could easily take an entire day, Tuesday made the most sense.

Today, we still hold our elections in November. However, in order to accommodate those who cannot get to the polls on a Tuesday or will not be in their home state on Election Day, the absentee ballot has become a popular solution. Absentee ballots can be filled out and sent in before Election Day. Many members of the military, college students, seniors and others use this option as a way to make their voice heard at the polls.

Those of you who were here last November will remember the excitement of the 2008 Presidential election. Presidential and Congressional elections are held in even numbered years (e.g. 2002, 2004, 2008). This year we are in what is called an "off-year" in the election cycle. In off-years, or odd numbered years, elections are held at the state and local, rather than federal, levels for positions such as Governor and Mayor. Elections for Congress are held in off-years. All J-1 participants who currently reside in New Jersey or Virginia will be able to witness a gubernatorial election in their states; while New York, California, Illinois and Florida will be holding special elections to fill vacant Congressional seats. Several large US cities will hold mayoral elections on November 3, including New York City, Boston, Los Angeles, Houston, Seattle, San Antonio, and Detroit.

If you are in one of these cities or states you have probably seen the candidates' campaign slogans on TV, in the newspaper or on signs in people's front yards. As exchange visitors, you can't vote in US elections, but you can take some time to learn about the issues in your area. Off-year elections are a great opportunity to get to know what is important to Americans at the local level!

We Have a New Name!

Announcing the American Immigration Council

After more than 20 years, the American Immigration Law Foundation has officially changed its name to the American Immigration Council. As an Immigration Council we will continue to position ourselves as a national organization where committed people can come together to make a positive change in how America thinks and acts towards immigration.

Executive Director of the Immigration Council, Ben Johnson, explained the reason for the change this way:

"The decision to change our name was driven in part by the fact that we do not operate as a foundation," Johnson said, "and are concerned and involved with more than just the law. Furthermore, our new name is a recognition that the organization has grown both in size and stature over the last five years. Our program work has expanded beyond the courtroom and into the halls of congress and the public square. A new name and new look for our organization gives us the opportunity to celebrate and publicize this remarkable evolution."

Meanwhile, the Exchange Visitor Program has changed its name to the International Exchange Center. Even though we have a new name, we continue to serve as your J-1 visa sponsor. There will be no changes needed to the documents that you were originally issued (your DS-2019, etc.). With our new name come some exciting changes! We have a new, more user-friendly website (www.internationalexchangecenter.org) with a special section dedicated to YOU, our current trainees and interns. You can now easily find resources like the participant handbook, the mid-point and final evaluations, frequently asked questions, and past newsletters online by clicking on the Programs tab. After you've taken some time to browse our new website, please also become our fan on Facebook and follow us on Twitter!

If you have any questions or concerns about the name change, please feel free to contact us at J1Program@immcouncil.org.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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

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