

The Center Report

Re-Membering

Past and present residents and volunteers share their experiences on making a difference as members of the ECIR community.



MISSION

To Empower People
To Create Community and
Transform the World

Special points of interest:

- Residents are inspired by service-learning
- Volunteer Appreciation Brunch
- Meet ECIR's longest resident: Mutombo Mpanya
- Re-memering past and present residents and volunteers
- Opportunities to get involved

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INSPIRATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING

Enjoy your OJ on the Rocks...



Etty Theresia lived in ECIR in 2009. She regularly volunteered at Delonis Center through ECIR's service-learning

program. This story was inspired by one shelter visitor.

"What time do you get off from work?", said the guy with the metal spikes around his wrists. I looked at him, with a smile on my face, his face pale against his black ensemble: black shirt, black faded pair of jeans, black belt, long black fake leather jacket, and a black backpack.

I handed him his OJ on the rocks, and for a split second there, we looked into each others' eyes. Then through the smiling lips I said, "Sorry, I don't work here anyway," relying on the fact that as a foreigner my deliberate attempt to misunderstand his question would not be so obvious. As his face fledged through my head a couple of hours later, as I was hunkering down against the wind on my way here, I wish I had said a little bit more. I wish I had said, "Thanks, I think you're cute, but sorry, I've got to go home..." or..... or.... whatever..... I wish I had said something more meaningful than a series of empty

words, echoing back at me. I wish I knew more than the fact that his name was Kenny, and that Kenny was a pale young guy with a black ensemble, who had burger and OJ on the rocks for dinner tonight.

I wish I knew, that there will be somebody for him, to hand a tiny piece of extra dessert, or a big mug of hot chocolate, to give a big warm hug this Saturday to ward away the cold, and let him know that he is loved.

Ann Arbor, Thursday, Feb 12, 2009 from my station next to the milk and OJ and ice cubes stand.

E.P. Theresia

ECIR Appreciates Volunteers

On November 19, 2010, ECIR hosted a very special **Volunteer Appreciation Brunch** with special guest speakers Nile Harper, Motumbo Mpanya and musical guest Abdurraharan Baris. Thanks to our wonderful volunteers, our residents and the U-M international

community at large enjoy the best programming that ECIR has to offer. They are responsible for helping newly arrived students and scholars feel welcome, ease their adjustment to American culture, and make long-lasting friendships. Without the support of volunteers, ECIR

would not be the same warm and welcoming place.



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The Beauty and Strength of ECIR



Dr. Bruce Martin, Director of The Ecumenical Center and International Residence



During the reign of Shah Tahmasp (Safavid Dynasty, 1524-1576), the beautiful Persian Ardabil Carpets were woven of silk with 300 asymmetric knots per inch. One of the world's oldest tapestries, the "Cloth of Saint Gereon", is a seven-color wool tapestry made for the church of St. Gereon in Cologne (Germany, c. 1020). The most famous 14th century tapestry is the "Angers Apocalypse" (Musée des Tapisseries, Angers) made by Nicolas Bataille (c.1363-1400) for the Duke of Anjou.

The weaving of a distinctive, durable, and beautiful tapestry or carpet is a wonderful representation of the ECIR community. Each thread, uniquely colored and cultured, contributes to the distinctive pattern and quality of the whole cloth, just as each resident and supporter (donor and volunteer) contributes to the distinctive quality of our community and success of our mission. We know how strong and

durable a heavy fabric can be even though individual threads are easily broken. The fabric of the ECIR community, consisting of residents and supporters, has proven its durability through history stretching back to the late 1800s.

An important aspect of these magnificent woven works of art remains hidden from view. For example, the Ardabil Carpets are held together by an asymmetric pattern of miniscule Persian knots, some 300 per inch of fabric. This intricate and invisible cluster of knots holds the individual threads together for hundreds of years in a structure of strength and stunning beauty.

This specific feature reminds me of the hidden dimension of ECIR and many non-profits. These tiny knots, invisible against the patterned beauty of the whole, represent the many supporters of our work. Like the many invisible knots of the Cloth of Saint Gereon, our volunteers and donors are the invisible strength, structure, and energy we depend on to accomplish our mission.

Consider, for example, the important role of volunteers in the U.S. The most recent study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (January 2009) pegged the number of volunteers in the U.S. at 61.8 million (down from 64.5 million in 2004). Based on the entire U.S. population, only 26.4% of Americans volunteer and 73.6% do not!

According to this report, volunteers of both sexes spent a median of 52 hours annually on volunteer activities (Sept., 2007-2008). Men are less likely to volunteer than women (23 % versus 30%). Median annual hours spent on volunteer activities ranged from a high of 96 hours for volunteers age 65 and older to a low of 40 hours for those age 16 to 34 years.

What is the significance of these numbers for the strong and beautiful tapestry that is the ECIR community and mission? With approximately 1 million non-profits in the U. S. today, each has available 62 volunteers, a relatively small number. Because our mission is international, ECIR serves a diverse global community of millions. That's a lot of colorful threads and one magnificent tapestry!

But we cannot forget the knots—our statistically allotted 62 annual volunteers—that hold this strength and beauty together. The magnificent tapestry that is the ECIR community and mission hangs on a relatively small number of dedicated hard-working knots.

We know that our volunteers (and our donors), like the knots in the Ardabil carpets, are too often invisible. We appreciate more than we (residents and staff) can express the service and gifts of our supporters!

Bruce D. Martin

"We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow men."

Herman Melville

PAST AND PRESENT RESIDENTS

Dr. Sethuraman's Nostalgia

A few months back, a former resident left a message on our webpage.

It was a great experience for me at ECIR during my stay in Sept.1993-April.94, when I was a visiting faculty in the Physics department at the University of Michigan. From ECIR to my department it was just a 10 minutes walk. Being from a tropical climate, snow fall in December and temperatures of -20 degrees Celsius and less was a first experience. The Director was Mr. Harper. My room mates were Charles from China and Abdo from Lebanon. I was the oldest

resident at that time. My age was 50 years.

We went to Grosse Point and to the Canada border. We drove on water on a high speed boat for 45 minutes and enjoyed the hospitality for three days. I took part in an Ecumenical service and a holy communion service. The clergy asked us not to inform the Pope! I drank a little wine and biscuit to get baptized! We went to New York on a sight seeing trip. We had Diwali, Halloween, etc. We had boating at Camp Talahi and many more...

My good friend was Dr. Gail Eisen, a specialist in geron-

tology at the University. The program manager was an enterprising lady but the name I am not able to recall, a wonderful lady full of enthusiasm. Every Thursday we had lunch and discussion in the International Centre of the University and one board member used to take us to Meijer or other supermarket to buy weekly groceries etc. Sweet remembrances... I feel like coming back to ECIR.

The Manager lady escorted me to Detroit Airport when I bade goodbye to Ann Arbor.

Dr. J. Sethuraman



Dr. Sethuraman and his wife on a recent visit to Ann Arbor.

Meet Brandy Li



Hi! My name is Brandy and I am from Taiwan. I came to Ann Arbor, Michigan in August of 2009 for the Social Work Program at U-M. My concentrations in Social Work are Interpersonal Practice and Mental Health, and I am now an intern therapist at the Women's Center of Southeastern Michigan. I have been in Ann Arbor for a little past a year now and I am loving it. Love the place, love the people, but not a big fan of the winter weather here! This is my first time to

live and drive in snow. It was fun for the first week of winter but depressing from the second week after!

One of my favorite things to do is traveling. I enjoy the experience of simply walking in an unfamiliar city, seeing the architectures of another culture, and meeting new people with interesting life stories to share. It's always exciting to find similarities in differences and also differences from similarities from people and places I travel. This is one of the reasons why I enjoy living at ECIR! I have met so many great friends from living at ECIR in the past year. We are all

from different countries with different backgrounds, but there are so much more that we had in common.

Even though one's cultural background may be a big part of their identity, meeting these wonderful friends at ECIR made me realize that we do not need to be the same to bond. Learning from each other's experiences was also the fun part in the friendships made here. Despite the fact that I am 12,000 miles away from home, I am not lonely at all while living at ECIR with great friends around!

Brandy Li

"It's always exciting to find similarities in differences and also differences from similarities"

GLOBAL IMPACT

Advocating for Service-Learning in Japan



Masa and AmeriCorp intern, Naomi, became good friends while living in ECIR. They were reunited in Japan last January.

Yasumasa Fujinaga (a.k.a. Masa) is a faculty member of the Humanities Department at Yamaguchi University. He came to Ann Arbor in 2008 as a visiting scholar at the U-M Center for Afro-American and African Studies. While living in ECIR, he was exposed to service-learning for the first time. He wrote a piece for the Cross-Cultural Interchange & Research Institute's Newsletter in which he shares his participation in the 2009 Alternative Spring Break trip in

New Orleans organized by ECIR. His article highlights the combination of cultural engagement and community-service of that particular trip. Service-learning is not just about volunteering but about service as a means of learning. Thus, not only did he paint houses but also he learned about Hurricane Katrina, social justice, Mardi Gras and Ash Wednesday. Through this experience he came to the realization that service-learning opportunities are invaluable. So, in his

piece he advocates for more service-learning and community service opportunities for students in Japan.



*"I hear and I forget.
I see and I remember. I do and I understand."
Confucius*

The Long Stay Home of Motumbo

Prof. Motumbo Mpanya holds the title of the longest resident at ECIR. One of the rooms in the community area is named in his honor. We met with him and asked him a few questions.

Q: What is your connection with ECIR?

I was a long time resident here and I was president of Ecumenical Association for International Understanding so that was from 1977 through 1989 or something like that.

Q: Why did you decide to stay here for so long?

Part of it is because I had developed a lot of friendships here so when I got my jobs I could keep my apartment here and go somewhere else and live there and still this was my base

and it still is my base until today because I have been working in California for more than 20 years and still have my apartment here.

Q: How has living here impacted your life?

It helped me develop the skills to live with people from different cultures which allowed me to work in the different areas that I work now.

Q: Which ones are the areas that you work on?

I work mostly in the area of environmental studies. I do impact assessments. I teach environmental science, environmental engineering, and other things. But most of my work is doing international projects in different countries, Latin America, Africa. I haven't had any projects in Asian countries.

Q: Do you still keep connections to people who used to live here in ECIR?

Yeah, actually a couple from Switzerland just came to visit me in California and I am going to go to Switzerland next summer. Then I will visit with them as well. Other thing is that many of the people that I know now in France, in Switzerland and in Italy were people I met here at the Ecumenical Campus Center.

Q: Any last words that you would like to share?

I just think that people who work here and people who come to live here, I just hope that they have a broad experience of interacting with foreign people because it is a form of formation for real life and real world.

Thank you, Prof. Mpanya!



Motumbo Mpanya and Doris Rumman re-member at the Volunteer Appreciation Brunch

LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

How My Parents Met



Asha Radhamohan lived in ECIR in 2007. Her relationship with ECIR spans two generations.

I'm only 25, but my ECIR story started all the way back in 1975. As a second generation community participant, I'm very proud to have been a resident, activity coordinator, and 'baby' of ECIR; my parents met while they were both residents at the center (then named 'ECC') in 1981! Having heard all their exciting stories growing up, when I made the choice to go to Michigan for my undergraduate degree I knew I wanted to live in ECIR for at least one of my years!

It all began in 1975: my dad moved in to a room with several other international students. He had come from India to do his engineering MS at Michigan and, at 25, was the only one of his immediate family to have come to the US. He didn't know anyone and was eager to make friends; he immediately loved the international

atmosphere and friendly community at ECIR, so much so that he continued to live there after he finished his degree and began working, always keeping involved with the activities. He was still there in January 1981 when my mom, majoring in translation at the University of Geneva, jumped on the opportunity to do a six-month exchange at the University of Michigan to practice her conversational English. My mom had big dreams of working for the United Nations as a traveling translator, and so the community ECIR provided seemed like the perfect fit. The story goes that they'd seen each other in the stairwells before, but hadn't gotten to really meet until a March cultural night. My dad played the bamboo flute at the Indian-themed party, and my mom, dressed in a traditional sari by her roommate (and the help of many safety pins!), caught his eye. She couldn't get up to get food because she didn't know how to walk in the wrap, so my dad brought her a plate full of curries, sat down with her, and, well, the rest is history! They were

soon taping letters to each other's doors and spending whatever time they could together until my mom's exchange ended. While my parents had to spend a year apart as my mom finished her degree at another university, they got married at the Campus Chapel (just a block from ECIR) in 1982, and they were married by the reverend Paul Dotson, then the director of ECIR. The two lived in the house next to the current ECIR building (which used to be also part of ECIR, the "couples' house") for a year after when my mom's sister also decided to study abroad and lived in ECIR with them. Growing up, my parents went back every year to the ECIR Christmas party; I met Shirley Lewis and several of the alumni many times as a young child. As the years passed, my parents knew fewer of the attendees and we began to spend our holidays elsewhere. We still send Christmas cards around the world to old ECIR friends though!

Asha Radhamohan



Asha's parents met in ECIR in 1981. They have been married since 1982

"She couldn't get up to get food because she didn't know how to walk in the wrap, so my dad brought her a plate full of curries..."

Join Us

Our Global Village Dinners are open to everyone in the community. A group of residents cook a meal for about thirty people. After dinner, we usually have a guest speaker. The

short presentations are on various topics such as cultural differences and different religious traditions. They are held on most Tuesdays. Dinner is served at 6PM and presentations start at 7PM. Other

events that are open to the whole community are International Dinner, Global Friendship program, and more.

For more details visit our website: www.ecir.org.

INTERVIEWS WITH VOLUNTEERS

Why They Serve

*“Service to others
is the rent you
pay for your
room here on
earth”*

Muhammad Ali



“Volunteering at ECIR is one of my favorite activities. I have been fortunate to travel and have visited many of the countries that are represented at ECIR.

I learn so much from the students.

I enjoy making them feel like “home” in America.”

Lois Schlacter



“I enjoy volunteering at ECIR because I have always been interested in extending hospitality to friends old and new. Roger and I especially enjoy getting to know international students and families, and have made life-long friends this way. I feel fortunate to be able to learn about other cultures and to share knowledge of some of our American customs and ideas.”

Phoebe Vance



“I’ve been involved in ECIR for 30 years as a board member and now as a member of the program committee.

I love helping out in anything to do with international students because I care about the welfare of the residents.

ECIR is a nice community and I enjoy volunteering.”

Brigitte Maassen

Redecorating ECIR

At ECIR, we are always looking for ways of making residents feel at home. Part of this process involves bringing gently used furniture into their apartments. Most of our furniture is provided by generous donations. For the upcoming year, we will need furniture that looks like some of the pictures below.



WORKING FOR ECIR

Friendship Without Borders

Sam is very happy. His friends from Ann Arbor are coming to see him over Thanksgiving. Last year, he moved to Chicago with his wife, Irene, to pursue a doctorate in economics at the University of Chicago. That first year was stressful, but now he has finally found a good balance and he is comfortable in his new environment.

His friends had been a major support system over the last few years. They had been witness to major changes in his life, such as marriage and graduation. He never imagined that he would have such a close knit group in Ann Arbor when he moved from South Korea. In fact, he never imagined that his closest friends would come from four different continents. One of them was coming all they way from Italy to see him.

Sam's story is only one example of what makes life

and work at ECIR so special. I interned here in the fall of 2008 and the winter of 2009 but there is something that keeps bringing me back to this place. Whenever there is a volunteer opportunity or a social event, I come here where it always feels like home. During Global Village Dinners, I have witnessed very different people—an Italian psychologist, a Peruvian economist, and a Thai law student, for example—sitting around the same table, sharing a very animated conversation.

Through my time here, I have seen non-residents warm up to this place as well. While I was preparing some of the apartments for move-in, I saw a familiar name on one of the leases. I remembered Sylvia's name very clearly because when I met her, I thought she had misspelled her own name. She is a Malaysian student who had joined the Alterna-

tive Spring Break trip to New Orleans I had organized and led back in 2009. She learned about ECIR then and she liked it so much that she decided to move in. I was very happy to run into her in the building on move-in day because it confirmed the type of place that ECIR is: a living and learning community that builds strong bonds among people with very different backgrounds.

I am very grateful to ECIR for allowing me to make so many friends from all walks of life and all corners of the world. They are wonderful individuals who not only are generous and kind but also are the future leaders of their countries. Thanks to ECIR, I have the privilege to call each one of them FRIEND instead of Doctor or Professor, and to greet them with a warm hug instead of a handshake.

Rosana Lee



A group of residents go for a walk in the Arboretum.

Announcements

1. Our Annual International Dinner has been postponed. It will take place on Friday, March 25, 2011.
2. A new Residence Life Manager has joined the ECIR staff. Welcome, Rosana Lee!
3. We also welcome a new staff member, Cynthia Brundage. She is the new office support staff.
4. ECIR has listened to feedback from residents. Now, all apartments have free Wi-Fi and all utilities are included in the rent.
5. Accepting online payments is one of the many ways that we made it more convenient for residents coming from abroad to pay their deposits to reserve their rooms.

"The friend within the man is that part of him which belongs to you and opens to you a door which never, perhaps, is opened to another."

Antoine the Saint-Exupéry



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Changing the World through Transformational Living

We are on the Web!
<http://www.ecir.org/>

The Ecumenical Center and International Residence is committed to offering a welcoming and safe space for people of all cultures and backgrounds. ECIR believes that by empowering people and creating community, we can create peace and understanding powerful enough to transform the world. Many of our alumni go on to become leaders in their countries and fields of study. This global network of friendship is the starting point for positive change in the world.

Getting Involved

At the ECIR, we provide great programs and housing for international students and scholars. As a non-profit, we rely on the support of our volunteers and donors. Volunteering is a great way of meeting our residents and other international students. There are several ways of getting involved in the ECIR. To learn more about these opportunities contact us using the contact information above.

VOLUNTEER

- Drivers: drive program participants to and from ECIR.
- Grocery Shopping Trips: drive residents to the grocery store on Saturdays.
- Global Friendship Program.: spend a day with international students and scholars with your choice of activities.
- Global Village Dinners: bring desserts to our Tuesday dinners.

DONATE

ECIR appreciates in-kind donations as well as monetary contributions. Our wish-list this year includes:

- pots and pans
- glasses
- bath towels
- comforters
- furniture (see page 6)
- gently used laptop
- 10 –15 folding chairs

You can donate in person, by mail, or through our website by clicking on the “[Donate](#)” link on the top of our webpage.

BUY

Buy Greeting Cards or Coffee from ECIR! Come to our office to get Hand Made Greeting Cards and Fair Trade Coffee from Higher Grounds.

