

Spring 2012

The Center Report

ecir

Envisioning Change

An Intentional
International, Intercultural
Interreligious, Living
Learning Community

Celebrating Community

2012 International Dinner

Partnering with the University of Michigan International Center; residents, board members and friends past and present gathered together to celebrate ECIR's 51st International Dinner. Performance spotlights included the Indonesian instrument, Anklung, played by a group of residents followed by the beautiful traditional Anishinaabeg music of the *Swamp Singers*. Keynote speaker and new board member, Raj Raja, presented *Creating a Culture of Peace: A Gandhian Approach*. With over twenty countries represented, delicious Mediterranean food served family style and even more delicious desserts prepared by ECIR's board members, the evening was a success!



Program Committee Member,
Brigitte Maassen & ECIR friend,
Martha Krehbiel



Emrah from Turkey, Luna from
China & Levon from Armenia



Members of the *Swamp
Singers*



ECIR residents, Rini from
Indonesia & Shveta from
India

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ECIR Resident Life

Shveta (pictured above right) shares some of her experiences living at ECIR: When you move out of your country, you take a leap into the unknown. You feel excited for new experiences, adventurous to explore new things and spirited for new change. However you are scared and anxious too, as is natural with anything unfamiliar. I am from India and as an international student coming to United States for higher studies, I was in this emotional turmoil till I found a home away from home at ECIR. ECIR does a great job in bringing communities all over the world together in one place and enthusing a global close knit culture for its residents. You immediately take to this place with its neat and clean ambience and disciplined organized structure. More than anything else you feel safe and you get the chance to make close friends for life from all over the world. My room mate is from Netherlands, my table tennis buddies (ECIR has recreational facilities) are from France, Philippines and Africa and I share my late night movie fanaticism with people from Korea, China and Brazil. I truly wish I could find the similar residential set-ups in other locations as well and continue the good times!

**Volunteer or Donate
to ECIR**

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A Word From the Director



Dr. Bruce Martin, Director

Being the Change

Like spring, change is in the air. *"We need to be the change we wish to see in the world."* Spoken after years of struggle to change social and political institutions, Gandhi's words signified a change from social to personal activism. Experience taught that he must change himself in order to change the world. In a small room with only a mat for a bed and a wheel for spinning, Gandhi focused on becoming the change he had actively pursued during his early years.

Gandhi's words also signify a shift in his understanding of leadership and organizational change that present us with many challenges.

Our first challenge is to embrace change in our thinking and doing. Peter Drucker, an expert on non-profit leadership, writes, *"...mission needs to be welcoming of change. Then you need leaders who are open to that mission."* Like Gandhi, Drucker understands that deep change begins in individuals. *Be the change you wish to see in the world!*

Our second challenge is to provide organizational leadership for the change we are seeking in our community. Our mission is to serve the needs of international students/scholars at the University of Michigan. Our present facility provides housing for 50 from a pool of nearly 6,000 international students. We frequently hear that too few convenient and affordable apartments exist in Ann Arbor. Are we fulfilling our mission by providing housing for 50 residents in response to this growing need? Rather than lamenting the housing shortage, we could lead change by expanding our residential program to meet the needs of 50 or 100 additional residents. *"Lead the change you wish to see in the world."*

We have seen a lot of changes at ECIR this year—changes in our thinking, modifications to our Center, additions to our staff, and expanding educational programs. With the continued growth of the University of Michigan international community, there is also a growing demand for safe, affordable, short-term housing.

What a great opportunity to be and lead the change we are seeking for our world! Your continued support is needed if we are to fulfill our mission in this world of expanding need.

Bruce D. Martin, Director

*"Lead the Change
you wish to See in
the World..."*

**Meet Our
New
ECIR Board
Members**

Alma Chand
Beth Eliason
Terry Gallagher
Ernestine Griffin
John Kotre
Linda Kentes
Ramalingam Raja

Board Approves New Advisory Council

The mission of ECIR is to be a welcoming community for students/scholars of all nationalities; to provide residential and educational programs fostering understanding and respect for all cultures and spiritual traditions; and to promote lifelong friendships and leadership skills that contribute to harmony and peace between communities and nations around the world. With this mission in mind, the ECIR board recently approved the formation of an Advisory Council.

The Advisory Council, an assemblage of professionals and community members with diverse backgrounds and skills, will provide the board and ECIR staff with additional experience, knowledge, and skills to better enable ECIR to fulfill its mission. It will also serve to represent and make known the ECIR mission in Ann Arbor, throughout Michigan, and around the world.

We look forward to this new development and feel confident that the Advisory Council's contributions will prove to be an invaluable resource.

Spring Break Trips

Anishinaabeg Cultural Engagement Trip

Director, Bruce Martin, organized and led a group of over forty residents, students and community members on a trip to the Bay Mills Indian Community in the Upper Peninsula during spring break this year. The cultural engagement adventure included a traditional feast, drumming and sweat lodge ceremonies, and both dance performances and lessons. Classes included birch basket making and language and history lessons. The Bay Mills community supported ECIR in providing what many students expressed was a very meaningful, life changing experience for them.

In the words of a student, *"I left Bay Mills with a real feeling of peace; peace of mind, body and soul. I feel calmer, more attuned to and appreciative of the nature that surrounds me and more patient with the people I encounter. It was an awakening of the kind of person I would rather be, and will strive to be, in relation to my place among the living things and our earth. I remind myself daily that most of the deadlines I face are self-imposed and artificial. I do not believe I would be feeling these things had I attended a weeklong seminar in Ann Arbor. The setting, the people, the accessibility made this awareness possible. I hope I carry these feelings with me always. I know I will always carry the memories of visiting Bay Mills and meeting wonderful, wise and caring people."*



**ecir
Wish
List**

Appalachian Service Learning Program

ECIR organized a group of volunteers to participate in a service learning, alternative spring break trip to St. Paul, Virginia to work with families to repair homes. St. Paul is a rural area of Virginia and part of Appalachia, a region known historically for its economic struggles and its rich culture. Participants helped with dry walling, basic construction, caulking and painting.

In addition, students visited local museums, heard local singers and story tellers indigenous to the region. They also learned about coal mining and its impact on the region. All of this took place in the context of a pluralistic, interreligious environment in which participants were encouraged to examine religious identity and spirituality and its relation to service work.

After two years of service and positive feedback from both the families served and the students, ECIR plans to continue this program.



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For more information,

E-mail: info@ecir.org

Or

Call: (734) 662-5529

What Else is New?

ECIR Has a New Look Inside & Out



ECIR is making a statement on Church Street with new, brightly colored signs that reflect the diversity and vitality of the ECIR community. This contemporary new look and feel is not confined to the outside of the building. Inside, just to the right of the front door is the new café, a community space for residents to meet over a cup of coffee or tea, read the newspaper, work online or just hang out. New furniture, that's as comfortable as it is attractive, adds a feeling of warmth to the space. This cozy café space provides a great place for residents to spend time with visiting friends and family. Included on the list of new additions is also a vending machine, providing late night snacks for busy students.



Mark Pilarski, Maintenance Manager, installing new signs and diversity panels.

Spring Celebrations

Spring is always a busy time at ECIR. It's a time when many residents are saying good bye at the end of the school year and moving out or traveling for the summer. Each year ECIR hosts a celebration to commemorate these important transitions. This year a formal dance party, complete with a disco ball, marked the occasion.

The annual Global Friendship Program talent show and pot luck also gave ECIR residents, international students and American friends an opportunity to share their diverse abilities and interests. The event included story telling, calligraphy and origami lessons and a range of musical performances.

In addition to scheduled events, ECIR residents frequently organize dinner parties, movie nights, birthday celebrations and other gatherings to recognize each other and share experiences.



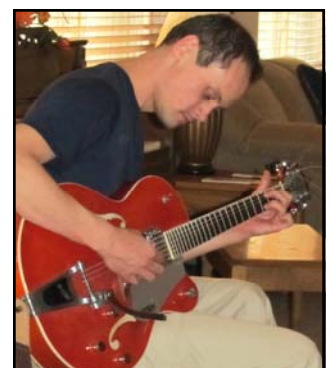
Yaqi and Luna from China



Yago from Spain



End of the Year Dance Party



Antoine from France