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Upcoming Events

**Saturday, Nov. 15, 2014**

***Table at Teen Opportunities Fair***

11:00 AM-2:00 PM

Longreach High School, Columbia, MD

Part of our commitment to community outreach is to teach students of all ages that they can make a difference in their community. Visit our table to learn about how teens can help collect food for our Food Pantry for low-income Asian senior citizens living at Longwood Apartments in Columbia, MD. This event is free and is open to the public.

**Saturday, November 8, 2014**

***Food Pantry Delivery***

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Longwood Apartments, Columbia, MD

This is our next delivery. If you would like to help out please visit the Get Involved page for more information regarding opportunities to help the food pantry.

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Frequently Asked Questions

***Where do I bring food collections to?***

You can bring them to the red boxes on UMBC’s campus or you can contact Julie Rosenthal to set up a time to drop by your collections or our interns can also come pick them up from you.

***What kind of food are you looking for?***

We are looking for non-perishable food donations. Primarily Asian noodles, seaweed, canned tuna, spam, canned mackerel, peanuts, soybeans, canned fruit, and canned vegetables.

***What do I have to do to become an intern?***

Interns are UMBC students. Anyone who attends UMBC can become one if they are qualified and pass interview selections. We are looking for interns who can translate and interns who can help with the coordination of the food pantry. 40 hours of work count towards each credit hour.

***How often do you deliver donations?***

We deliver donations on a monthly basis.

For contact pg.

Contact

*Julie Rosenthal*

Program Management Specialist, Asian Studies Program

410-455-2094 (8am-5pm)

[julier@umbc.edu](mailto:julier@umbc.edu).

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Intern Testimonies

##### ***Internship Evaluation, Longwood Senior Center, by Molly Bradtke***

This semester I have interned at the Longwood Senior Center in Columbia, helping the staff and the Chinese-speaking residents there communicate and ensuring that activities run smoothly and efficiently. I work at Longwood every Friday morning from 9:00 to 11:00 or 12:00, helping with whatever activities are occurring at the time.

On a typical Friday, I work with another intern, Christine, to conduct an English conversation course for the residents, first thing in the morning. Together, we work through the lessons, correcting pronunciation and explaining aspects of English grammar. Many of the residents have not had formal English classes before, although some have been in the United States for as long as 25 years, so they are eager to learn so that they can be more self-sufficient in the US. After conversation class, I help them communicate during their chorus session, translating between the staff member conducting the session and the residents participating. The residents tell me which songs they want to learn, if they want the tempo faster or the key lower, and how many times they want to practice a particular song, which I then communicate the staff. Often, the residents want to review the words of the songs (which are all in English) so that they know how to pronounce the lyrics and understand the meanings of the songs they sing, which I explain. After chorus, many of the residents attend a crafts session, with a different craft every week. This semester so far we have painted mugs, made necklaces and bracelets, decorated holiday cards and sent them to American troops overseas, and made Christmas ornaments, among other things. These crafts sessions are the most challenging parts of my work at Longwood because the instructions are often somewhat complicated and the residents need to hear them explained several times during the sessions.

I originally wanted to intern at Longwood as a way to help me keep up my Chinese language skills once I returned from study abroad, and hopefully even improve my skills somewhat. My time at Longwood has definitely helped me to accomplish this goal. At Longwood, I am often called upon to stretch my vocabulary or find a way to use work around to explain what I mean when I don’t know a specific term related to art or music. The residents will often help me to find the correct wording or a specific term that I need so that I can learn more about Chinese. There is also more than enough time at Longwood, during crafts or between sessions, to chat with the residents and learn about their families and their lives. Many of the Chinese residents have lived in the United States for decades, having come to the US with their children in order to help raise grandchildren. They are highly educated and worked as professors, engineers, and doctors while in China. We often compare and contrast Chinese and American culture together and they often have amusing observations to make about American culture or language that have never occurred to me. Other times, when they have questions about the US, I try to answer them. My favorite conversations have been about the residents’ time in China – they all lived through the Cultural Revolution and the tumultuous years that surrounded it and will bring up the subject on their own.

More than helping me learn about China and improve my language skills, my time and Longwood has made me aware of new possibilities for my future. I am more aware now of the large and growing Chinese population in the United States, and the need for services to accommodate this population, particularly when it comes to communication, but also in terms of cultural needs. Although I am still passionate about international relations and improving circumstances abroad, since I began my internship at Longwood I have been seriously considering the differences that I could make domestically, working with Chinese communities in the United States. It is incredibly rewarding to work at Longwood and see how happy the residents are when they are able to communicate efficiently with the staff and have their needs met, or even just to have a conversation with someone who understands them and who they can understand in turn. I am grateful that Longwood has introduced me to this whole new possibility for a future career and showed me new areas where I can put my schools to good use in improving the lives of others.

Although I will not be able to continue interning at Longwood next semester, I hope to continue volunteering there during the winter and make myself available to them when my schedule allows. I only wish that I had more time this semester to spend with the residents and to learn from them.

##### ***My Internship Experience at Longwood Senior Center, by Christine Au***

My service at the Longwood Senior Center was fruitful and rewarding. It has become a milestone for students from Asian Studies to reach towards Asian communities and advance their cultural interactions and understanding.

Since the summer of 2013, I have been involved in various activities with the Chinese residents and built up strong friendships with some of them. The director of the activity center, Kathy, is a capable and passionate administer who I like to work with very much. Together, we planned the activities for the Chinese seniors and I become a communication bridge between the residents and the administrators.

The seniors of Longwood enjoyed weekly activities such as Tai Chi, Ping-pong, American dances, singing, crafts, and an English cell group. They were pretty energetic and engaged. For example, many of them are very good at ping-pong and one of them is the champion in the state-level competition. During the summer, I had the opportunity to play the game with them and it was actually full of fun. As a matter of fact, they were my teachers and I learned some skills of navigating the game from them. Tai Chi class is another opportunity for me to learn to relax my body, while at the same time I can help the residents by translating the manuals and instructions for them. As a traditional exercise and a form of healing therapy, the Tai Chi classes deepen my understanding of Chinese culture.

The American dances is another example of cultural unification. The dancing group is big and diversified in race as everyone is very engaged and excited when the music begins. Some of the members are Americans while some of them are Chinese or Koreans, and all of them learn diligently with harmony. In the class, I am not a translator or helper anymore, but an engaged new learner and dancer. The dancing group shows me the harmony and beauty of unification when people from different cultures are able to come together and learn.

Singing in Longwood is interesting as the choir gathers every Friday morning at eleven o’clock and sings all kinds of songs. Sometimes the group sings some traditional Chinese songs and other times they like to sing American songs. There are musicians who come in to play piano for them and Kathy also joins the group in singing sometimes. Even though I was never in the choir, I was able to help by translating the English lyrics into Chinese for the seniors. Nevertheless, music is the universal language that brings harmony, peace, and joy to the hearts of the people. I still remember that the most impressive moment for me was listening to the choir sing “God Bless America”, and the beauty of the lyrics and the voices truly brought me peace.

Arts and crafts is fantastic and enjoyable at the activity center. The craft teacher, Joyce, is a talented and patient woman who can motivate people’s creativity and passion for art. Every piece of art is the self-expression of joy and character. As a craft assistant, I helped Joyce by talking to the Chinese group members while they were working and helping them when they had questions. While helping them to do crafts, I got to understand more of their backgrounds and families. For example, one of them told me that  all of the Chinese residents in Longwood were retired professional people who were either professors or medical doctors back in China. The only reason they came to the United States was to help their kids in household work and take care of their grandchildren. They will ask me to write English sentences and greetings for their grandchildren in the cards or the pictures, so that the young ones are pleased and amazed.

The English conversation group is my passion and I committed to it even after the end of the internship. At the beginning, I sensed there was a great need for the Chinese residents to learn English in a self-composed and relax way. For them, daily conversations with Americans is not a easy task and there are always language barriers among them. As an immigrant, I can easily understand their needs and anxiety. As a matter of fact, many of the Chinese residents are eager to communicate but cannot find a way to express their feelings in English fluently.

With the help of Kathy, we set up a new activity during the summer that was an English conversation group that had only four female Chinese residents in the beginning. We followed a study guide of simple English conversations which was provided by one of the group members and we all found it interesting and practical. During the summer, we had the group every Wednesday morning and all the members enjoyed our unique ways of learning English. For example, they learned how to praise the people in different situations and how to respond to certain simple questions with confidence. When I talked to my children about this group in the summer, my two daughters who are sixteen and fourteen years old were thrilled to come and help. In the group, the girls were not only able to teach the Chinese seniors about English conversations, but were also to learn Mandarin from them. It truly was a great language experience to my kids, and the most important thing for them is learning to be patient and humble when they communicate with elders. During the fall semester, one of my classmates, Molly, was able to join the group and more and more residents came to us. The members in our group were very respectful and humble even though they were retired scientists or medical doctors. As a matter of fact, they are our teachers and we learned a lot from their life experience and sharing.

The most cherished experience for me in Longwood is our friendship and it extends beyond the group. As I respected their commitment to their own family and their courage of learning another language even in their old age, they made friends with me by sharing their family stories and delicious Chinese dishes. The internship experience in Longwood enhanced my cultural understanding and cultivated my passion to serve in the Asian community continuously.