



## INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK

*by Deirdre Donovan, USA*

From November 14 to 18, 2011, International Student Services & Activities (ISSA), in conjunction with other campus departments and organizations, hosted International Education Week (IEW) on Notre Dame's campus. IEW is a national event that is coordinated by the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Education to celebrate and promote global exchange between the United States and other countries.

ISSA hosted several events during the week to promote global education. On Monday, ISSA teamed with The Career Center to host the International Student Etiquette Dinner in South Dining Hall. Rubén Medina, analyst for Notre Dame International, taught 25 attendees about formal meal etiquette as well as how meal etiquette varies throughout the world.

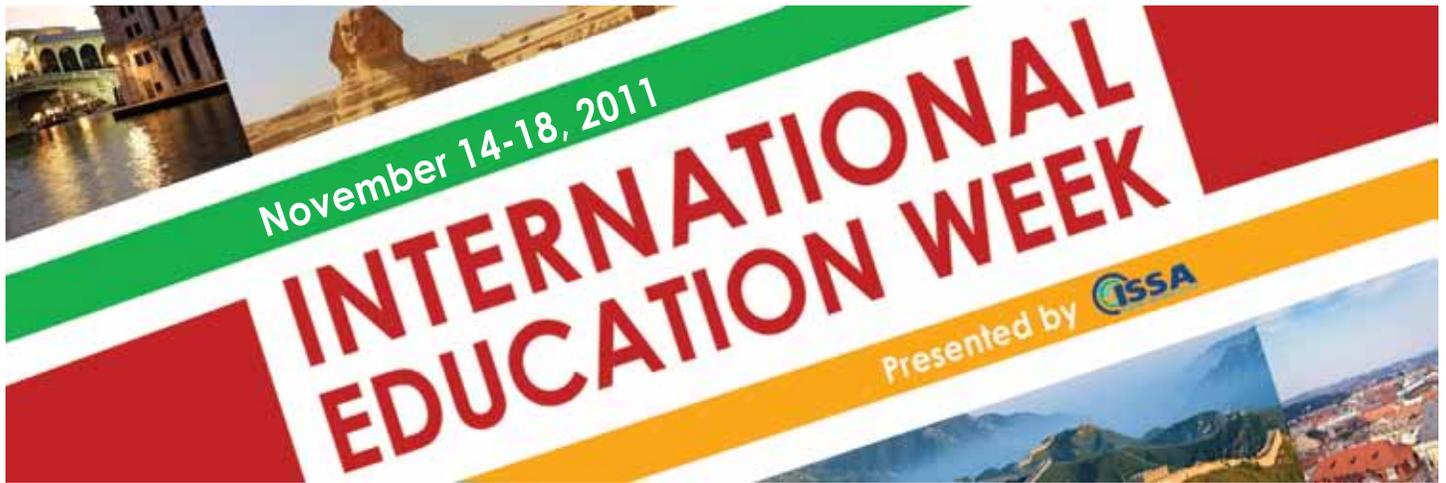
Throughout the week, ISSA sponsored

a sale of goods and handicrafts from the fair trade retailer Ten Thousand Villages, which provides vital, fair income to Third World people by marketing their handicrafts and telling their stories all around North America. The sale took place in the Hesburgh Library Atrium, where countless students, faculty, staff, and visitors stopped to admire and purchase these

goods. Not only did the Ten Thousand Villages artists benefit from IEW, so did the American Red Cross, St. Joseph County Chapter's Refugee Resettlement Program, which was the beneficiary of the supply drive that ISSA held all week. Local refugees received donated toys, school supplies, and toiletries.

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## IEW

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Certainly the most anticipated and popular event of IEW was the second annual International Taste of South Bend, which was held in the LaFortune Ballroom on Wednesday, November 16. More than 300 students, faculty, staff, and South Bend residents came to enjoy food from eight local international restaurants: Ari's Grill, China House, Eli's, Girasol, La Esperanza, Mikado, Noodle Alley, and Taquería Chicago. Guests sampled the restaurants' signature dishes while catching up with friends.

Other departments and organizations on campus also held events to celebrate IEW. The Canadian Association of Notre Dame Youths (CANDY) hosted a Canadian Ball Hockey Tournament, while the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center (DPAC) presented the acclaimed Thai film *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* as well as an encore broadcast of *The Kitchen*, a live theatrical performance from London. The Department of Film, Television, and Theatre and DPAC hosted the play *Provenance*. The Center for the Study of Languages and Cultures hosted an evening of Brazilian language and culture. Lastly, Artist Nandita Raman

spoke on her award-winning black and white photographs of old Indian cinema halls in the Mestrovic Studio Gallery of the Snite Museum of Art. All of these events were enjoyed by many.

ISSA would like to acknowledge their International Education Week co-sponsors and thank them for helping to make the week a success: CANDY, The Career Center, CSLC, Department of Film, Television and Theatre, DPAC, Hesburgh Library, Multicultural Student Programs & Services, Notre Dame International, Snite Museum of Art, and Ten Thousand Villages.

## NOTRE DAME INTERNATIONAL STUDENT POPULATION INCREASES

Statistics from the Office of Institutional Research show that the international student population at the University of Notre Dame continues to grow. A total of 913 international students called Notre Dame home during fall 2011, which is an increase of nearly five percent from fall 2010. This year's international student body consists of 265 undergraduate international students and 648 graduate students.

The number of international students from Asian countries also continues to rise. In fall 2011, 59 percent of Notre Dame's international students came from Asian countries, with China serving as the top sending country for both undergraduate and graduate students. Korea, India, Canada, Mexico, and Brazil also sent the most international students to campus this fall.

The Mendoza College of Business is the top college for undergraduate international students (excluding First Year of Studies) with 50 percent of undergraduate students majoring in business. 33 percent of graduate international students are studying engineering, which makes the College of Engineering the top college of study for graduate international students.



Mayra Duarte, a second-year graphic design graduate student from Panama, created *The Real Me Project* in fall 2011 to celebrate diversity on campus and bring attention to the many challenges minority students face. As part of her project, Mayra created a picture book that shares the stories of Notre Dame students who have experienced the consequences of being different, and have something to say about it. Here's what Mayra has to say about her project:

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"The Real Me Project is a celebration of Notre Dame's diversity. I use the term diversity to mean more than race and ethnicity, but gender, sexuality, class, religion, and other interests. Many think that Notre Dame has a homogeneous student body. I disagree. People of different backgrounds are part of this campus.

The aim of the project isn't to create a sense that there is more diversity than

# the REAL ME PROJECT

University of Notre Dame

by Mayra Duarte, Panama

there really is, but rather to celebrate the diversity that exists. Minority students often experience drastic and alienating misunderstandings. If the goal of having a diverse university is to increase exposure to different cultures and perspectives, the alienation of minorities is counterproductive.

We, as students who stand out and do not conform, have confronted misconceptions about us. Having experienced this myself, I've become

interested in what those with similar experiences have to say.

Instead of treating minorities in terms of mere statistics, The Real Me Project brings to life the people and experiences behind the numbers.

We are a collective of individuals that have experienced the consequences of being different; The Real Me Project is a platform to share those stories."



To view The Real Me Project, visit: <http://issuu.com/mduarteow/docs/realmeproject1.0>.



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT:

## *The Season of GIVING*

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*by an Anonymous Graduate Student, Kenya*

I have never volunteered at a homeless center until this past Christmas. It's not that I didn't like the idea, but because sometimes we miss many opportunities due to lack of self-reflection, and we fail to do the right things just because we never take a moment to think about it.

In Kenya, most homeless centers are for children and there are only a few of them. The centers provide food and accommodations for the children. In lower school, my headmistress back in Kenya always taught us the value of giving to the poor, not through class lessons, but through acts of kindness to children living on the streets. Once in a while, the school would prepare food and invite the street kids to the school. It was a humbling experience knowing that other kids lived on the streets. It was also terrifying not knowing what I could do about it. It still is. My school's effort was not a common one, at least where I grew up about 18 years ago. It is becoming increasingly more common for students in urban centers to volunteer at children's homes during the weekends or public holidays. Children's homes tend to be very institutionalized and so homeless people who are not in the homes are totally ignored.

When my friend Tori asked me to join her at a Cornerstone Community Outreach soup kitchen in Chicago (<http://www.ccolife.org/>), on Christmas Day, I didn't exactly know what to expect. For one, homelessness is skewed so much towards children in Kenya. Some children may grow up into adulthood on the streets, but overall, it is by far less common to see homeless adults. Even knowing that many adults are homeless in the U.S. is surprising coming from Africa.

It turned out to be really fun volunteering at Cornerstone Community Outreach, especially the teamwork and inspiration from other volunteers. A father and his four teenage kids as well as three doctors were all there to volunteer. The homeless people were polite and "normal" like any other person you'd meet, dressed in regular clothes, with kids, etc., and grateful to the volunteers for taking the time to help. It felt like home, like we were part of a family with people that only few hours ago we did not know.

The experience at the homeless center reminded me that there is always

something extra we can do to make a difference in the life of someone else. We don't have to be rich to give. We can give in time and by simple acts. People in developing countries can, through little acts like volunteering, make a difference within their communities and so can people here in the U.S. Living in the U.S. reminds me each day of the problems that unite all people from the world, rich and poor nations, the developed and the developing world. Wherever you go, social discrepancies exist.

I urge those who have not tried volunteering to take some time, grab some friends (or take the opportunity to make some new ones there!) and give it a try. The Center for Social Concerns at Notre Dame ([http://socialconcerns.nd.edu/campus\\_local/volunteer.shtml](http://socialconcerns.nd.edu/campus_local/volunteer.shtml)) has many short and long term opportunities. Who knows? If you are as touched as I was by the people I met, you may be encouraged to invite your friends and when you return to your home country, take the initiative to make service to those less fortunate a part of your daily life.

# LAS POSADAS

by Michael Mercurio, USA

It's sad for me to say, but I feel like with every passing year, a little bit of the Christmas spirit in me fades away. When I was younger, everything about Christmas was exciting – setting up the Nativity scene, last-minute shopping at Borders, opening presents (in traditional Filipino fashion) at midnight on the 25th. But as I grew older, celebration became obligation as wonder turned into routine. Bluntly put, I became bored. Granted, I always appreciated being with family, but in recent Christmases, I've found myself going through the motions of the season and impatient to return to school to be with friends.

However, one way to renew your enthusiasm for something is seeing it through the lens of another culture, and this year, my spirit for the Christmas season was renewed by Mexican culture. I was lucky enough to participate (quite unexpectedly) in the Mexican Christmas tradition of Las Posadas.

Back home in Los Angeles, I work as a museum guide at El Pueblo de Los

Angeles Historic Monument. It is known as the birthplace of Los Angeles (it has the city's first church and fire station, as well as its oldest standing house dating to 1818). It is also a sort of multicultural hub: it is home to Old Chinatown, the Italian American Museum, an old French winepress, and former African-American-run barbershops. Perhaps its most prominent cultural feature is Olvera Street, a traditional Mexican market.

The merchants on Olvera Street often share their Mexican traditions with the public throughout the year, and Las Posadas (Spanish for "The Inns") is one of them. Las Posadas reenacts the Biblical journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem as they seek an inn for Mary to give birth to Jesus. The Olvera Street merchants and their families dress up as pilgrims and carry statues of Mary and Joseph from shop to shop while singing Christmas hymns. It's been celebrated at El Pueblo since the 1930s.

As a museum guide, I usually give tours and answer questions for visitors throughout the day (for a person who

likes to talk to people as much as I do, it's the perfect job.) On the first day of my Christmas break, however, my boss called with an emergency request: two other museum guides were out, so she asked me to come in at night as a substitute to supervise Las Posadas. I had never worked Las Posadas before – let alone even knew what it was – but I accepted; I figured I might as well help out El Pueblo and earn some pocket cash along the way.

What I also received was a nice cultural treat. After I had opened the Avila Adobe (the oldest house in Los Angeles, from where the Las Posadas procession would begin), I watched and listened in appreciative wonder as a Mariachi duet playing in front of the house was joined by other musicians and slowly grew into a full ten-member band. They sang Christmas carols in Spanish while the merchants, dressed up as Hebrews, processed up and down Olvera Street with a crowd of visitors following. Afterwards, I helped the merchants set up tables so they could give out champurrado (a hot

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# LAS POSADAS

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cinnamon and chocolate flavored drink) and pan dulce (a sweet bread) to all the visitors.

Looking back now, there was nothing remarkably grand about Olvera Street's Las Posadas; it was simple and down-to-earth. What was remarkable, though, was its spirit. Because of my experience -- seeing the merchants celebrating with strangers, watching families and friends enjoying each other's

company, listening to the incredibly jovial Mariachi band, and contemplating the humble birth of Jesus Christ – in one short night, the love for the Christmas season that had been missing the past couple of years came rushing back to me.

In a world so rich in diversity, all of us should try to engage with and understand other cultures. You never know how doing so could impact you for the better. For me, even though it came unexpectedly, a small Mexican celebration helped me to regain my appreciation for Christmas.

## SNAPSHOTS

### *INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION Week*



### *ESL Holiday BRUNCH*



Twenty five students from ISSA's English as a Second Language (ESL) Program for International Spouses participated in a holiday celebration on December 8.

To honor the season of giving, students donated two large bins of toiletries, food items, and toys to the American Red Cross Refugee Resettlement Program.

### *INTERNATIONAL STUDENT STUDY Break*

More than 100 international students took a short break from studying to enjoy pizza and cookies at ISSA's International Student Study Break on December 8.

