

News for Participants

JUNE 2009

“Welcome” to Our Summer J-1s

WELCOME!

Summer brings warm weather, camp for children, and several thousand international J-1 visa participants sponsored by the International YMCA to U.S. summer camps, conference centers, hotels and resorts. Don't forget that your visa is a “cultural exchange” visa. While you will be immersed in the U.S. culture, you will find there are many opportunities for you to share your culture. “Just do it!” as the NIKE ad says.

SEVIS Validation

You also need to do the SEVIS validation upon your arrival at the U.S. host site. The visa will be considered invalid if not validated in SEVIS.

SEVIS is the Student Exchange Visitor Information System, created by US Homeland Security following “9-11” and is designed as a tracking

system for exchange visitors. Simply go to the International YMCA's web site, and click on the link for SEVIS validation:

www.internationalymca.org

Insurance

If you need medical attention for a work-related illness or accident, the expense is covered by the employer's Worker's Compensation insurance. If it is not work-related, you are covered under our program. You can print your ID card, policy information and claim forms; view information on existing claims; print a disclosure authorization form; and access an FAQ page. To access the insurance information, go to our site, click on link for Participants, then Insurance. Password is PART09.

Social Security Cards

J-1 visa participants will not receive any benefits from Social Security, but all employers (US host sites) need their par-



Children are the #1 priority at summer camp; share your culture with them!

ticipants to have a SS number for payroll and tax purposes. Participants will need one to open a bank account and, in some cases, to obtain a driver's license. Social Security uses Homeland Security's SEVIS system to verify legal entry into the United States. Participants MUST wait several days after arriving on site to apply for the SSN, as it takes time for Homeland Security information to reach the Social Security Administration.

Best wishes to all for a great, and a safe, summer!

Keep in mind:

- Your DS-2019 form has your official program dates on it.
- You may stay in the U.S. legally to travel for 30 days after your ending program date.
- ASK if you do not understand something!
- Don't ignore problems or conflicts; discuss them with supervisors at the camp or host site.
- J-1 visas are cultural exchange visas.

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Hillary Clinton Supports Exchanges

Speaking last month at Yankee Stadium to the graduating class at New York University, U.S. Secretary of State **Hillary Clinton** urged the 2009 graduating class to become citizen diplomats and to open themselves up to “this increasingly complex and intercon-

ected world.” Clinton spent a significant portion of her speech empha-



sizing that “lay[ing] the ground-

work...for global cooperation” begins with international exchange.

The former U.S. first lady beseeched the 6,000 grads to become “citizen diplomats” in a world increasingly bound together by technology and common economic interests.

First Impressions—A Letter from Go-Global Participant, Chris Ferro, in South Africa

It is really unfortunate to see these poverty-stricken children come wandering in off the streets and it is nice to be able to provide a safe haven for them even if it is only for a couple of hours.



Go-Global is a voluntary service and capacity-building program that places young Americans at YMCAs and community organizations around the world.

Hello all from beautiful South Africa! I arrived safely and after a crazy layover in "Joburg" I landed in Pietermaritzburg. I flew in on a BAe Jstream plane, which was an experience all to itself, to a small, one-runway airport from which my three fellow passengers and I had to retrieve our own luggage from the bottom of the plane. To my relief, Brenden from the YMCA was patiently waiting for me inside the terminal and he was able to spot me from afar and came right over to greet me.

We had a short drive of about 5 minutes to the Y, which was interesting considering that South Africans drive on the opposite side of the road. I have to be honest and confess that, no matter how many times I experience this, it still frightens me. Once we were on the grounds, I was warmly welcomed by the numerous staff members who seemed very excited at me being there to help. I was originally told that I was going to be staying in a hostel but that was changed the day of arrival because of the fact that the hostel was at full occupancy. Because of this, I received an upgrade of a private cottage, with only one other mate. As the first day came to a

close, I unpacked my things and as soon as I hit the pillow, I fell asleep. Unfortunately, it was 6:30pm and I woke up at 3:00 am, ready to start my day.

The work day starts at 8 am and goes to 5 pm, with an hour for lunch. I am working closely with Brenden and Cecil on a handful of projects that they have running throughout the day and week, mostly revolving around physical activity and life skills. Mondays and Wednesdays are rather quiet as the only main event is a Dance program that runs from 2 to 5 pm and serves as mainly a after-school day care from young students who wait for their parents to come "fetch" them. Tuesdays and Thursdays are the busier days because in the morning, until Noon, we have a group of street kids who come to play soccer, have a shower, and receive a hot meal. This has been the best part about being here so far, it is really unfortunate to see these poverty-stricken children come wandering in off the streets and it is nice to be able to provide a safe haven for them even if it is only for a couple of hours. I am told by Brenden that it is one of the more successful programs at the Y.

With all of the down-time that we have during Monday and Wednesday, I have been given the task of creating a new program for the kids to do. So, I have been busy researching what I want to do with them. Also Thys (pronounced Tis) has given me the task of planning a few activities for him to do on an upcoming trip to United States which will include a few days in NYC, D.C., Atlanta, Chicago, and finally back to NYC. He also is very interested about the States and what certain places are like so I sort of feel like an ambassador to him from the U.S. Needless to say, I have been quite busy in the short while that I have been here. I believe I have informed you of everything that has been going on so far. After all, I have only been here for 2 days!! I am going to try to give these updates once a week.

Until next time, **Chris**

*Editor's Note: Chris is a 19-year-old university student at City College of New York and will be in South Africa for a month on the International YMCA's Go-Global program. For more information, or to apply for Go Global, contact **Chad Nico Hiu**:*

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South Africa Flag is Unique



The South Africa flag is the only national flag in the world with six colors. This flag incorporates black, green and yellow of **Nelson Mandela's** political party, the African National Congress and the former Boer republics flags (red, white, and blue). The Y shape represents the convergence of South Africa's diverse society and the desire for unity.

NEW DS-160 Online to Replace DS-156, 157, 158

Coming Soon:

The new DS-160 Online, Nonimmigrant Visa Electronic Application, will eventually replace current nonimmigrant application forms DS-156, 157, 158, and other related forms, such as the DS-156E, 156K, and 156V.

The roll-out of the new DS-160 will be gradual. Therefore, not all U.S. Embassies and Consulates will be required to use the form at the same time.

The following U.S. Embassies and Consulates are currently using the new form DS-160 are : CANADA: Vancouver and Montreal only, IRELAND: Dublin, LIBYA: Tripoli, MEXICO: Nuevo Laredo, Ciudad Juarez, Matamoros and Monterrey only and Hong Kong S.A.R.

Nonimmigrant visa applicants will need to review [U.S. Embassy website](#) how-to-apply instructions for more details, as

well as these [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for using DS-160 Online. [Learn More](#) about the form DS-160. Check back later for implementation update announcements.

travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/forms/forms_1342.html - 23k



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Study Says Immigrants More Productive

New research indicates that H-1B and J-1 immigrants outperform American-born workers, the Wall Street Journal recently reported.

Examining measures such as earnings, patenting, commercializing and licensing patents, publishing books or papers and presenting at major confer-

ences, McGill University economics professor **Jennifer Hunt** concluded that those who were most successful came to the U.S. on temporary work visas for the highly skilled, known as H-1Bs, or student/trainee visas, such as J-1s or F-1s.

Meanwhile, those immigrants

that came to the U.S. as legal permanent residents performed as well as those who were born in the U.S. But, those immigrants who came to the U.S. as dependents of those with temporary visas — spouses, relatives, etc. — were less productive than native Americans.

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Department of State Cultural Exchanges

Alvin Atkinson & The Sound Merchants, a jazz/blues band based in New York City, traveled to Iraq and Afghanistan to perform a series of concerts as a part of the Department of State's cultural exchange program.

According to "USA Today"— Though U.S. musicians have visited other countries on cultural exchange missions for years, *Musical Overtures* is the first to take them into the dual war zones of Iraq and Afghani-

stan, says **Alina Romanowski**, the State Department's deputy assistant secretary for professional and cultural exchanges.

The Department of State also announced the launch of a new cultural exchange program focused on dance. *DanceMotionUSA*, a unique initiative to share America's rich dance culture and values with international audiences.

Beginning in January 2010, three dance companies will em-

bark on respective performance and cultural exchange tours. One will tour South Africa, Nigeria, & Senegal; another in Thailand, Burma, and Indonesia; and a third will tour in Brazil, Venezuela, and Colombia.



U.S. Jazz Band



U.S. Dance



U.S. music and dance groups will promote cultural exchange around the world



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Safeguards were put in place, having all Mexican participants undergo a medical examination days prior to their departure to USA to make sure they are not infected by the virus.

The International YMCA's International Camp Counselor Program (ICCP) staff worked diligently and effectively to prevent the possible negative impact of the H1N1 epidemic on the summer camp program.

Some 200 camp participants from Mexico had summer camp placements arranged when word and concern of the flu epidemic began to spread.

The U.S. Embassy in Mexico City closed for a whole week, resulting in a major back-up with the visa application process.

Great coordination between **Rayda Marquez** in ICCP's NYC office and **Ana Jimenez**, the ICCP recruiter in Puebla, resulted in the 200 Mexicans getting their visas in spite of the US Embassy closing. Being proactive in communicating

Summer J-1s Are Lucky!

Resorts and other summer businesses saw an increase in applications from out-of-work Americans for summer positions typically filled by internationals, according to a report this Spring by the Associated Press.

All over the United States, resorts and other summer businesses were getting swamped with applications from out-of-work Americans, many of them professionals. They were competing for jobs usually filled by young people and internationals coming to the U.S. on Work & Travel J-1 visas—making beds, serving brunch, mowing lawns, running concession stands and operating carnival games and amusement park rides.

In addition, some U.S. summer camps are experiencing lower enrollments this summer resulting in less need for staff. Less staff in general includes also hiring less international staff as camp counselors and in support staff roles, i.e., office, kitchen and maintenance.

So, those of you who are here, are lucky! Enjoy it!

Flu in Mexico Did Not Deter ICCP Program

with the camps, participants and overseas partners and putting in place measures to show the camps they have nothing to fear, ICCP managed to escape the height of the panic with very minimum loss of business – only 2 camps cancelled the placements of 2 Mexican participants!

Safeguards put in place included having all Mexican participants undergo a medical examination days prior to their departure to USA to make sure they are not infected by the virus. The camps would also take the temperature of the participants as they arrive at camp. All parties were informed of the steps to take to prevent contracting the virus and to keep healthy overall.

At this writing, the Mexican participants are arriving and

settling into the camps throughout the United States.

The Lighter Side of the H1N1 Flu

With all the heavy news about H1N1 Flu, here is a lighter side from the website [Weird Asia News](http://www.weirdasianews.com).

Weird Asia News reports all the unique and abstract news stories from across Asia, and its quirky stories are guaranteed to brighten up your day.

Started in 2006 by **Sun Tzu**, the site is now one of the most popular sites available only for weird and wonderful news stories - so be sure to check it out!

www.weirdasianews.com/