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EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
Charleston, Illinois

news

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

ROTARY SPONSORS TEA FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

CHARLESTON, IL.--The Rotary Club of Charleston is sponsoring a tea for Eastern Illinois University's international students from 2 to 4 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 21, at the Wesley Foundation, 2202 4th Street, Charleston. The public is invited to the tea.

Keith Kohanzo, judicial affairs officer at Eastern, will make a brief presentation at 3 p.m.

Dr. Charles Switzer, Rotary Club president, said, "It is an honor to host such a fine group of students. Eastern's Office of International Student Services has done an excellent job of planning activities for its students. It makes them feel like they are a part of the community and gives them a chance to make new friends."

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Brigitte Chen, international student adviser at Eastern, said, "It is important that Eastern's 75 foreign students representing 26 countries have opportunities for social interaction. That is why we plan the monthly teas, cultural nights, an annual international dinner and fall picnic. We also encourage the students to make presentations on-campus and in the community."

Chen said the International Student Services Office at Eastern serves as a central support unit for international students. Chen and her staff familiarize the students with the American education system and do what they can to make their experience at Eastern successful.

They also work closely with academic advisers and counseling staff, provide an orientation program for new students and initiate relationships with local host families, who help familiarize the students with the Charleston community.

"The families may acquaint the students with performing such tasks as banking or they may take them sightseeing and shopping or invite them to dinner or club meetings," Chen said.

Overall response from the students to the program is exemplified by Marilyn Lin of the People's Republic of China, a graduate student in political science and president of the Chinese Association of Scholars and Students at Eastern.

"Mrs. Chen and her staff have made Eastern a home away from home. They have assisted us in many aspects of our educational experience from learning about registration to finding housing. They constantly keep us informed about immigration laws and try to find solutions to problems if they arise."

Chen, designated school official for immigration matters, works as a liaison between Eastern and the U.S. Immigration Service and keeps abreast of changes in immigration laws.

She said, "It is the responsibility of the student to comply with U.S. immigration laws. I do keep the students informed and updated about these regulations.

"Occasionally, a person will find himself/herself in violation of his/her visa status for one reason or another. Of course, I would prefer to prevent such situations for the student's sake. But, if there is a problem, we will work with the student to get him/her back into good standing with the immigration service. That is not always easy because we are dealing with a strict set of rules set by the U.S. government."

"We are very pleased to have the number of international students on campus and to have an adviser, although half-time, to assist with problems. In the future, we hope to expand the number of students and services," said Eastern Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. Glenn Williams.

Despite the difficulty of obtaining visas and other hurdles an applicant needs to overcome, Chen is pleased at the steady enrollment of international students at Eastern.

This semester, Eastern has 20 Malaysian students--the largest representation in a long time. The People's Republic of China, Taiwan and Canada are also well represented. "I am really pleased with the quality of students we have," Chen said.

"Many international students come to Eastern as a result of personal recommendations from family, friends or Eastern representatives who travel abroad. I think this speaks very well of the University."

The students say it is the personal attention they get from Eastern faculty, staff and students and the University community, as well as Eastern's learning environment and quality programs, that make their college experience worthwhile, she added.