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EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
Charleston, Illinois

news

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FILE COPY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HOST PROGRAM

CHARLESTON, IL--Individuals can become both teachers and students without going to school or travelling across the world by participating in Eastern Illinois University's International Student Hospitality Program.

With nearly 100 international students at Eastern, the International Student Hospitality Program gives residents of Charleston and the surrounding area an opportunity to share a slice of American culture with international students and to gain an education on their home country as well.

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"It's a wonderful way Americans can learn about the world," said Brigitte Chen, Eastern's international student adviser.

Unlike a foreign exchange program where a student lives with an American family, Chen said the host family program is designed to provide foreign students with a contact family or individual they can visit. Students may be invited over for a cookout, or to see a movie, for example.

About 30 new international students are expected to attend Eastern this fall and will be invited to participate in the host family program.

Students from 24 countries attend Eastern, with the largest number coming from Malaysia and the People's Republic of China. The other top five countries by student representation are India, Taiwan, Canada, Brazil and Israel.

"It's a culturally enriching experience to meet and talk with individuals from other countries," said Allen Davis of Charleston who, with his wife, Dianne, has been host to students from India and the People's Republic of China.

Chen said one role of the host family is to help foreign students attending Eastern adjust to Charleston and the United States. "The host family serves as a support system for the students and is there to help them."

She added, "Individuals who are interested in hosting a foreign student are not required to have an international background. They just have to be willing to share a little of their time with the students."

In addition to the host family program, Eastern's Offices of Orientation and International Student Services support a student-run host program where American students can volunteer their time to show an international student around Charleston and Eastern.

"The student host program helps open doors so that international students can develop lasting friendships with American students," Chen said.

There are other activities that give students an opportunity to discuss current events in their countries and share food or other customs with American students and area residents, such as monthly international teas and frequent dinners and picnics.

Anyone interested in participating in a host program or other international student activities can call the Office of International Student Services at 581-2321.