

Multi-Cultural Brief

Charlottesville City Schools
Adult English as a Second Language Program
Adult Learning Center
www.charlottesville-esl.org

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“Steps” or “Stops”?

By Marcia Isoldi (Brazil)

It was August 1, 2003 when I arrived in the U.S. I was on vacation and missing my husband, who had been here since the beginning of May of that same year. He was living in Laurel, Maryland. We had been married for 15 years, and now for the first time we were living far from each other for more than seven days.

I had never traveled outside my country, Brazil, before. I was alone but very excited and happy.

The first United States soil that I stepped on was in Atlanta’s airport, which is huge. I was anxious because

I had heard that after September 11th, the immigration process had gotten extremely severe. In his flight to the U.S., my husband missed a transfer due to the delay during the process of admission. Fortunately, when it was my turn, they didn’t take a long time, and soon I was in the airport trying to find the way to take my next flight.

I had a transfer to Baltimore. The time between the two flights was very short; I had to be fast. At this point, I was a little bit less anxious, and the next problem would be the language.

(Continued on page 10)

From the Editor

In this issue students once again underline the variety of details that need to be addressed in adjusting to life in a new country. “**Steps**” or “**Stops**”? and **My First Day in the U.S.** describe the physical logistics of plane transfers, jet lag, making sense of and following directions in a new language, flat tires upon being picked up at the airport, and strange (and to the new arrival) sickeningly sweet food. They also look at the complex emotions of excitement and anticipation at being reunited with loved ones in a new country, apprehension at being able to negotiate customs in a post-9/11 world, and a powerful sense of helplessness at arriving in a world where on one’s first night one goes to bed alone and hungry. **The Decision to Come to Charlottesville** looks at how the decision to come here is very often not an easy one, especially for spouses of those who may have come here to work or study. Because of visa restrictions, spouses are often not allowed to work, and coming here can mean sacrificing career, separation from family, economic stress, and a readjustment of roles in a marriage.

For many, living in Charlottesville has made learning to drive a necessity, and, as a result, there are more and more new international drivers on the road. **Driving Safely** offers useful advice for new and experienced drivers alike, giving a holistic analysis of the topic of driving safely, including the care and maintenance of the car one drives.

Another theme deals with comparing differences on such cultural factors as TV, eating, and on a deeper level, the role of mothering. **Watching TV in the U.S.** explores some particularly fascinating contrasts between programming in the U.S. and in China. For instance, did you know that in China, a series usually develops from the birth of a character until his/her death rather than around how a set of characters

Mission Statement

The *Multi-Cultural Brief* is an ESL newsletter created by students who want to improve their English and is produced as part of a newspaper class offered through the Charlottesville Adult Education program. Its purpose is to provide students with an opportunity to

- share their experiences of being from another country,
- offer multi-cultural perspectives on life in Charlottesville,
- help inform people who are new to Charlottesville of issues and opportunities around town,
- build a bridge of communication between the ESL population and Americans living in the Charlottesville community.

fixed in time resolves a challenge or conflict within a half-hour or hour-long segment? Such a difference in perspective might well impact the way problems are conceived as well as their relative importance in the scheme of things. Another difference discussed in class is that in China, programs are valued according to the messages they teach; here, students often find themselves shocked by the sudden transformation of a seemingly pleasant story into one of violence, explicit sexuality and horror. **My Experiences of Eating in the U.S.** points out how there is always an ongoing process of adjustment between openly exploring the new food of a culture and wanting to replicate as much as possible the tastes of one’s home culture. Some of us succeed in developing an “international stomach” while others of us maintain throughout our lifetimes the “stomach” of the homes from which we come. Sometimes, however, as noted in **Mother, the Anguish in My Heart**, our cultural stomachs have health consequences of which we may have been previously unaware. This article and **The Importance of Taking Care of Children** describe the challenges and sacrifices our mothers have made, the debts we owe them, and the desire to protect them from suffering. They also describe the conflicts around being a mother in today’s world, the difficult choices women have to make, and the universal struggles mothers face seeking respect for the work they do. Indirectly related to this is a powerfully poignant piece, **Hug**, that expresses the loneliness and need for appreciation women can feel.

As internationals gain more skill in adjusting to life in the U.S., they move from feelings of being overwhelmed to becoming better and better able to “read” the new culture, finding themselves once again able to make a difference in the world. Thanks in part as well to almost perfect attendance in English classes at ALC and participation in the Health Curriculum (**Special Trip to Washington, D.C.**), Myung Jin Oh’s quick thinking saved the life of a stranger. Finally, **Living in a Carnival** eloquently offers a recipe for adjustment and the importance of an attitude of openness to looking for the positive in every situation, an attitude we all would do well to heed.

We hope you enjoy the articles that follow. We also encourage you to attend **Voices of Adult Learners** on March 17 from 6 to 8 p.m. at Burnley-Moran Elementary School Auditorium for more great stories by adult learners!

Leslie A. Furlong, Editor

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Confusing Terms When Shopping

“For here or to go?”
 “Do you want your receipt in the bag?”
 “Paper or plastic?”
 “How’re you doing?”
 “Did you find everything you want?”
 “Debit or Credit?”
 “Is everything okay?”
 “May I help you?”
 “Do you want to give a donation?”
 “Plastic ok?”



My First Day in the U.S.

By Zhicheng Jin (China)

It’s been more than two years since I came to America. I still remember the things that happened on the first day of my stay in the U.S. It was a night of middle fall when I arrived at Charlottesville Airport at around 7:00 p.m. after a flight of more than 24 hours and two transfers. Mrs. A, who was a member of the lab that I would join, and her son gave me a warm welcome.

Since I had already booked a hotel room at the International Center of the University of Virginia, I asked them to give me a ride there. Unfortunately, her car got a flat tire, and nobody in the car knew how to replace it with the spare tire.

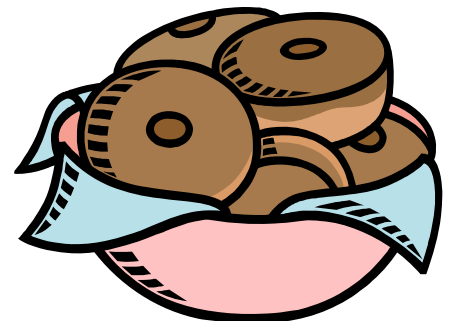
“It seemed that there was no way I could get any delicious tasting food.”

So, we had to park on the shoulder of the road and call somebody else. It took us about one hour to have it fixed. She was so nice to buy me a doughnut while we were waiting for the technician to arrive. I swore it was the sweetest food I had ever had. As a result, I felt so sorry to throw most of it away in front of Mrs. A. Even now, I still feel sorry.

They helped me settle down in the temporary place and left. It was a room on the ground floor with three twin-sized beds and a radio. Even though the radio could be turned very loud, I still couldn’t understand what it was about. I was the only person in the room. When I got ready to

go to bed, I started to realize that I hadn’t even had dinner. It seemed that there was no way I could get any delicious tasting food. Then I missed the doughnut that I had thrown away.

My first day in America was a little tough. It was still interesting, however, and I’ll always remember it.



Mother, the Anguish in My Heart

By Hong Zhu (China)

My mother has been dead for eleven years. Whenever I think of her, I feel deep sorrow because I, as a doctor, didn't have a chance to rescue her life. She was such a beautiful, smart, diligent and nice mother. She was killed by stomach cancer.

After I graduated from medical school, I worked in a hospital, and I have known

lots of people in eastern China who died of digestive cancer, especially stomach cancer and liver cancer. My grandmother died of colon cancer when she was forty-four years old. My granduncle died of stomach cancer when he was fifty years old.

In eastern China, people like to eat preserved dried cabbage and bacon. One of the famous products in Zhejiang province is Jinhua Ham. Actually, in the past, because of insufficient fresh vegetables and meat, people always preserved food for the winter season.

My mother worked as a teacher in a middle school. She had to take a bus for forty minutes from our home to the school, along with my younger sister and brother, and then stayed at school for five successive days. Every weekend, my brother, sister and mother came back home to unite with my father

and me. She often prepared preserved vegetables and meat to take to the school for the next week. The reason was that she had to save money for crises. Because we didn't have enough money, all our clothes were made by my mother's hand.

She could embroider beautiful patterns in the pillowcases and our dresses.

After I went to medical school, I heard my mother frequently had stomachaches. She wrote letters to me and told me she had been diagnosed with chronic stomach inflammation. The doctors, however, only gave her medicine to stop the pain; they didn't tell her to kick the bad addiction of eating pickled food. She still ate preserved cabbage at breakfast every day. I ate the same thing at medical school because it was cheap and convenient. Needless to say, I had felt stomach discomfort since I interned in the hospital.

After I worked at the hospital for five years in another city, my mother became anemic. I realized it was a dangerous omen, and I told her to have a regular stool test and a gastroscopy check immediately. Unfortunately, the doctors didn't find the cause of the disease.

Two months later, I went back home to celebrate the Chinese New Year festival with my family. On that very New Year's evening, my mother had a severe digestive bleeding eruption. Though we rushed to send her to the hospital and the doctors stopped the bleeding quickly for her, in reality I knew it was the beginning of a critical disease state.

Later, she was diagnosed with late-stage stomach cancer. She was told it would not help to have a gastrectomy. She suffered miserable chemotherapy for six months, which still could not stop the spread of cancer cells. Two months after she finished the chemotherapy, she died of a massive stomach hemorrhage.

I felt tremendous anguish for my mother. Though she has been dead for eleven years, she often comes back and talks to me about something in my dreams. Since my mother passed away, I have refused to eat any preserved food. I only eat fresh and frozen food. Gradually, my stomach has come to feel comfortable. I am pleased I didn't indulge my old habit. I think my mother would be happy to see I'm living well right now.



"I only eat fresh and frozen food. Gradually, my stomach has come to feel comfortable."

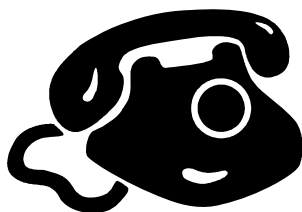
English in Korea

By Joo-Eun Chung (South Korea)

English is quite important in Korea. For students, English is one of the major subjects besides Korean and math. Students should study English hard to enter prestigious universities. For workers or job seekers, English is also important in order to enter good companies or to get promoted. In my case, my company requires a certain minimum score in several qualifying English tests in order to be a manager.

Korean people, therefore, spend a lot of time studying English. It is not easy, however, to be fluent in English because of the big difference from our mother

tongue and our inefficient education program focusing on reading and grammar. As a result, even after six years of studying English until graduation from high school, Korean people cannot speak English well, even though they are relatively good at grammar and vocabulary.



To improve English skills after high school, many people try hard in many different ways, such as private institutes, the Internet or DVD, and so on. Most people choose to register at private institutes. I was also one of those who tried to attend private institutes. Due to the irregular schedule at my job, however, I finally chose "telephone English" and subscribed to an English newspaper. Telephone English is the program in which tutors call students at the time when students want during weekdays for five or ten minutes. The two ways I chose were not enough to improve my English. They were, however, enough to give me stimulation to keep thinking about English.

These days, Korean parents are more passionate about English education for their children. If available, they would like to send their children to English-speaking countries to learn English. Many Ko-

rean students, therefore, come here to study English, sometimes at an early age without their parents or without one of their parents because one of them must send money here. Even for toddlers, English education is very much in fashion among Korean parents because it is important to start English as early as possible.

I was one of those to criticize the excessive passion for English education. However, after going through lots of stress about English in our society and having my baby, I cannot be sure that I will not become one of them. Sometimes I think if our country were economically strong,

like the U.S., we would not have to study English hard with lots of stress and we could do something in a more productive way with the time and money we have invested in English.

Before I came here, I expected to improve my English as well as learn about American culture and life here. These were my American dreams. However, I feel a lot of limitation in learning not only English but also culture here with no one to take care of my 16-month-old baby. Regardless of where I am, my efforts to be fluent in English will continue to survive both in the U.S. and in our competitive society.



“ Korean people cannot speak English well, even though they are relatively good at grammar and vocabulary. ”

The Importance of Taking Care of Children

By Hong Zhu (China)

I have seen and heard some women stay home to clean, cook, and raise children in the United States after they get married. Their husbands go out working to earn enough money for the family. Most of these families seem to live together harmoniously. Their children grow strong and very close to their parents because their mothers take good care of them.

In our country, it is almost impossible to let a healthy woman stay home. Because of lower salaries, a man can't make enough money by himself to support his family. A couple needs both partners to work. If they have a child, they have to ask their older relatives or a nursemaid for help.

Sometimes it is not a good solution. Some grandparents have less knowledge or are in poor health. They are not able to do a satisfactory job. Even worse, a few dishonest nursemaids will kidnap the infant and belongings and run away forever. These terrible things happen occasionally. I have heard some news from the TV and newspapers, which was about a couple who lost their baby to a nursemaid and spent lots of time and money to look for their child. The baby was probably sold to poor rural people who didn't have children. Despite this, most couples still need a nursemaid

or older relatives to help them.

My mother told me I was sent to my grandmother's house when I was only five months old. My grandmother had to work to keep her job. My sixteen-year-old aunt was my

“In our country, it is almost impossible to let a healthy woman stay home.”

first teacher and substitute mother.

During the late 1950s, a very poor decade, there was a famine for three years. The rural people worked very hard, but they had to give most of their harvests to the government. They had to dig the ground for potherbs (wild vegetables) to replenish their food supply. In the 1960s, when I went to live with my grandmother and aunt, my aunt had to feed me sugary water and rice soup. When I was a little over three years old, my aunt often took me to the field to look for potential food. We picked little stalks of rice from the ground to trade for snacks. I was lucky because at least I didn't suffer hunger.

Twenty years later, my sister had a baby. Fortunately, she had a nice and generous mother-in-law to help her. My sister could go to work without any worries. Her mother-in-law has retired from a factory, and

she preferred to live with her favorite son and grandchild. She took care of the baby very carefully, but the little life still got illnesses frequently. My sister's mother-in-law loved the baby too much to let the baby take medicine and get shots. Finally, the child became very sick with severe asthma. Because the little girl had asthma attacks repeatedly, she looked weak and small. Now my sister is very successful in her career, but sometimes she has regrets and thinks she should have spent more time with her daughter. My brother-in-law never pays attention to his child. He is so busy at his job. Perhaps many Chinese men don't think raising children is a big responsibility and hard work. They don't respect this job.

I was afraid nobody would help me, so I insisted that I didn't want a baby until one day my director's husband died of colon cancer. They didn't have any children. Just then, my director was fifty years old, and she looked so lonely and helpless. After that, I decided I wanted my own baby who will see me when I get old. I had made enough money not only to support myself to stay home for almost three years, but also I could hire a housekeeper for help.

I am so happy my baby has

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The Importance of Taking Care of Children

(Continued from page 6)

grown strong and healthy. But now my husband thinks I shouldn't stay home just for our child. His male classmate even thought he was so kind to feed his wife. I was deeply hurt and angry with those men.

I don't want a second baby because I can't give consideration to work and children at the same time. I'm upset because the constitution of Chinese children has dropped visibly even though they have enough food to eat. They

become quite big and get sick easily, even though their parents keep buying Chinese tonic medicine for them. I wish that one day raising children will become a valued job and respected by everyone in China and everywhere.

Watching TV in the U.S.

By Min Cui (China)

I came to Charlottesville three months ago, and, according to my Visa status, I'm a "dependent." My husband is a visiting scholar at the University of Virginia.

Charlottesville is a beautiful but quiet town. Until I find a job, I have been spending most of my time watching TV because I think it will be helpful for improving my English. Though I brought some Chinese movies and television programs here, I feel guilty when I watch them because I'm wasting such a good chance to listen to native English. When I was in China, I dreamed of speaking fluent English; of course, now I still do.

When I watch news channels, like FOX and CNN, after about 20 minutes, my eyelids feel heavy, and I often fall asleep.



Teleplays frequently show sex, violence and jokes or a mix of them, most of which I do not appreciate. But some of them tell pretty good stories, like

"Law and Order" and "Friends." Most teleplays do not tell you a whole long story, like most of the teleplays I watched in China. Instead, they are series and tell you many small stories, and you will not feel you are missing anything if you miss one.

Sometimes, there will be a movie on TV. However, too many intervening advertisements break the continuity and prevent me from enjoying them completely. Well, anyway, I do not pay for watching movies on TV, so I have no right to complain about it. Another interesting thing is some channels will show a movie "three nights in a row"!

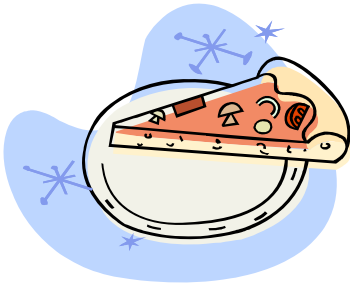
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Our Website

Visit the website for the Adult Learning Center! Included there you will see current and back issues of the Multi-Cultural Brief, the latest schedule of classes, and much, much more! **www.charlottesville-esl.org**

My Experiences of Eating in the U.S.

By Min Cui (China)



Before I came to America, KFC and McDonald's were all I knew about American food. Both are very successful in China and are especially appealing for young people and

children. For me, I liked fried chicken wings and French fries.

When I ate at a KFC in Charlottesville, I realized that great modifications had been made in China. I think KFC food served in China is more delicious and elegant. For

example, fried chicken wings served in America are the whole wing, but in China, only the middle part of the wing is fried and served. Where are the other two parts? I do not know. But I think the middle part of the wing is the most delicious part. Apple pies taste the same here but are not as elegant as in China.

There are some delicious foods in America that are new to me. Pizza and bacon are my favorites, which are not popular food in China. Americans also make great cookies; however, baked cookies available in the supermarket are too sweet for Chinese people. We buy cookie dough from Sam's Club and bake cookies by ourselves, convenient and delicious! There is a kind of egg roll containing pork and many kinds of vegetables, which is like a spring roll in Chinese food. It is cooked well, and the only thing you need to do before serving is to heat it in the microwave.

Although I am adjusting to food and eating in the U.S., I still miss those small restaurants in China, which provide cheap but very delicious food. At midnight, there are snacks served at roadside stands, nowhere to be found in

Charlottesville. Most people from China that I know have a "Chinese stomach"; no matter how many years they have lived in the U.S., they do not enjoy American food. Many Chinese visiting scholars take Chinese food cooked the night before for lunch instead of eating food served in the cafeteria. It is said that Chinese people in the U.S. spend more time cooking than Americans, on average one hour every day.

The next generation, however, often enjoys American food. When Chinese have a party, we eat Chinese food, and the children eat American food. Why is this? According to information I learned from the Internet, on the one hand, children grow up eating American food in school; on the other hand, many Chinese parents are not very good at cooking, so children have no access to delicious Chinese food. Poor guys! Maybe after they grow up and visit China, they will discover the wonderful world of Chinese food, and maybe they will never have the chance.

"Pizza and bacon are my favorites, which are not popular food in China."

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The Decision to Come to Charlottesville

By Joo-Eun Chung (South Korea)

When I first came here, I was impressed with the beauty of autumn and the various colors of the leaves. Charlottesville seemed to be such a blessed town with nature and clean air. So, I'd like to forget everything in Korea and enjoy life here with my family.

Before I came here, however, there were lots of considerations and agonies because of my career, my baby, and my economic situation.

Regarding my career, my job was quite demanding. Though it was a comparatively well-paying job, I had to give up my private life because of irregular schedule and lots of overtime work. I agonized when would be the right time to change my job. There was a chance I could leave my first job; I would have to quit if I decided to follow my husband who was supposed to study in the U.S. for one and a half years. This could have a negative impact on my career.

I had a kind of American dream, which was to improve my English skills. English is quite an important factor for my career in Korea; however, I was told that it would be hard for a mom with a little baby to study something. If I went to the U.S. with a little baby, I would have

to just stay at home to take care of my baby, so that I could not do anything to learn English. On the other hand, it could be a good chance for me to make up

"... my new experiences here will be forever in my life, so I hope my remaining time here will be filled with lots of joy and good memories."

for the lack of time in Korea to play with my baby. In Korea, my mother lived with me to look after my baby. I hoped, as a stay-at-home mom in the U.S., I would be able to be a good wife and mom.

In terms of my economic situation, it was the hardest thing to consider. Right before my husband decided to go to the U.S., we bought our apartment with a mortgage. We thought at that time that we would be able to handle everything, such as insurance, regular savings and monthly reimbursements of our mortgage with our salaries. However, if I followed my husband after quitting my job, it would be impossible.

Those three agonies I thought over and over after my husband left for the U.S. I said to myself, "I am young enough to try everything, and I deserve to get out of this hectic present life, take a rest and enjoy life there." Sometimes I said to myself, "My husband's stay there is too

short, so I shouldn't mess everything up here... and I'd better develop my career here..."

Anyway, I decided to take six months off from my company, and I came here with my baby seven months after my husband. I expected many things even though I could imagine I could not be able to fulfill those expectations. What I expected before I came here was as follows:

1. reviving my passion for my religion;
2. being a good mom and wife;
3. improving my English; and
4. developing a clear vision for my career.

Two and a half months have passed already. What I did during this period was to realize how hard it is to be a good mom, and my expectations were too much for me to achieve. So, these days, I've decided to do my best regardless of my expectations without any greed or nervousness. Even though I may not fulfill my expectations, let's accept life as it is here.

Six months seems to be very short; however, my new experiences here will be forever in my life, so I hope my remaining time here will be filled with lots of joy and good memories.

Hug

By Faye Shih (Taiwan)

I am used to hearing the sound of the garage door opening, and then my dog barking simultaneously when my husband comes home from work every afternoon. The dog won't stop barking or whining until my husband goes downstairs to his room to hug and pet him. I always tease him and say, "You would rather have a dog than a wife. I scarcely ever have a hug from you."

Hugging is very ordinary body language in the United States. You can see people embrace each other to express their feelings on many occasions, but not in my country. It is so exceptional to see people hug each other, even family

members. People don't seem to know how to use this simple body language to express their feelings because of our culture and traditions. I still remember my first hug from an American friend. When she hugged me, I was dumbfounded and at a loss for what to do. Do I need to hug back? How do I express my feeling? But I really liked it; it made me feel so warm and welcome.

I rarely receive hugs from American friends. Hugs from my Taiwanese friends are even less likely. I believe it has happened only twice since I have been living here (20 years). One hug was from my long-time friend when we said goodbye to each other before I left for Charlottesville. At that

moment, I was so overwhelmed by an unexpected favor because we had known each other for just a short time. I give credit to that hug for drawing us closer and building our friendship.

"Hug" can mean anything. It could be an expression of welcome, farewell, passion, praise, encouragement, support, happiness, sharing, consolation, etc. It is a profound and lovely body language. I know I still have obstacles to using it actively because I am usually passive and shy. I am worried if people will think it is too bold. But I am willing to try and learn.

"Steps" or "Stops"?

(Continued from page 1)

My English was very poor, but I had to try.

I showed the ticket and asked an airport employee where I should go. She was very kind and told me the directions. She noticed that I hadn't understood anything because I remained standing looking at her. Then she repeated the directions three times (I guess), but I was still there. I realized that she was getting a little bit annoyed, so I said, "Slow, please." She repeated very slowly, and I

could understand, "Go right.... Downstairs Three stops Gate six."

I thanked her and went to the right, thinking, "Three 'stops'! How can it be? She said 'downstairs.' Did she mean down 'steps'?" I found the stairs, went down, and this took me into a large and closed room that didn't seem to go anywhere. I looked around, and there wasn't anybody there, not even any benches. I thought, "Where am I?"

I was going to go back when I saw a man with his luggage going down the stairs. The man went to the same place as me and remained standing looking at the "wall." I thought, "How strange! What is he doing?" Then, after a few minutes, the "wall" opened by itself. It wasn't a wall at all, but the shuttle door. The man went on, and I followed him, laughing. The shuttle would make three stop, and I was to get off at the third stop. I finally understood "steps" and "stops."

Special Trip to Washington, D.C.

By Myung Jin Oh (South Korea)

On December 26, 2004, my husband and I went to Washington, D.C. for a tour. We woke up early and got ready for the journey. I heard there was no restaurant near the tourist attractions, so I prepared some food and drinks for lunch. All right. We are ready! Let's go!

“My grandmother had diabetes, and I learned about it last semester at ALC.”

We drove about two hours and reached Washington, D.C. We went to famous places: the Lincoln Memorial, the U.S. Capitol, the Washington Monument, and my favorite place – the National Gallery of Art. They were great!

We walked a very long time, so we were exhausted. We returned to our car and ate some food which I prepared.

Before we went home, we decided to go to the Jefferson Memorial. We parked our car and looked around fast because it was near dark and the parking lot was located in a place which was isolated.

After looking around there, when I had almost arrived at my car, a heavy man in the parking lot stared at me. He

looked restless and uncomfortable. I was scared, but soon I could feel he didn't want to scare me. And then he approached my husband, who was following me. I wondered what they said. So I walked to them. He said something so urgently. I could hear his voice.

“Sugar! Sugar!”

My husband just stood in a daze. At that moment, an idea came across my mind. Diabetes!

“It was small what I did, but maybe it was important to him at that moment.”

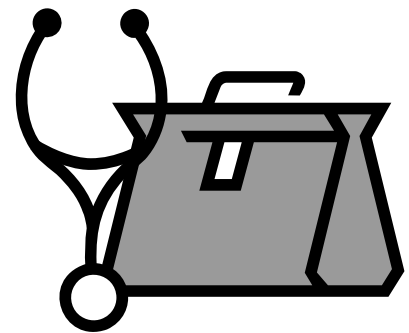
My grandmother had diabetes, and I learned about it last semester at ALC. If this condition continues for a long time, it may become dangerous to a diabetic patient. I ran as fast as possible toward my car. I hoped I would find some candy, but I wasn't sure. When I opened the door of my car, my lunch bag came into sight. O.K. It's what I want!

There was a bottle of grape juice, which was an extra lunch. I gave it to him quickly. He said, “It's the best for me.” And he drank it in a hurry.

After that, he sighed, and he seemed to be relieved. He said, “Thank you very much. You saved me!”

I asked him, “Do you have diabetes?” “Yes, so I need sugar.” And then he gave some money to me. I declined several times. He said, “I have to give it to you. You saved my life.” And he put the money on my car and went back to his car.

We left the parking lot. The man waved a hand until we were gone. I was very delighted because I helped another person. It was small what I did, but maybe it was important to him at that moment. While I was coming back home, I was so happy. It was a great trip.



Driving Safely

By Zhicheng Jin (China)

The automobile is indispensable for common life in America. Made in 1996, my first car is a Mazda sedan with manual transmission. I have been driving it for nearly two years, and I am still driving it. Maybe driving a stick shift is a little bit harder to learn than an automatic, but I think it's more fun to drive because people can have more control over the vehicle. Plus, my car can save more gas than an automatic. One thing that I don't like about my car is the engine, which is relatively small and not very powerful. Everybody needs to learn how to drive no matter if he or she likes it or not. Here is some advice about how to drive safely.



Second, if somehow the car stops working, you could be stuck anywhere. It's always helpful if you can have more knowledge of cars than just driving. Checking the coolant, changing the engine oil when necessary, and replacing the air filter are among the easy maintenance routines and can improve the car's performance. Replacing the spare tire is a must if you drive long distances frequently. When hearing any noise coming from the car, don't let it slip from your mind. It may be a sign of malfunction involving the engine, transmission, brakes, or exhaust system.

Driving safely is always the first priority when you get behind the wheel.

Driving can be difficult, especially at night and in inclement weather. The key point of driving at night is to locate both lines that define a lane. It is not so easy to identify lanes at night because of darkness, light beams from oncoming cars and turns or curves in the road. Driving as slowly as you can see the road clearly is always a right decision, especially for beginners. When it rains or snows, the visibility of a road gets worse. Also, because roads become slippery, people always pay more attention while they are trying to make a stop. Applying brakes gently is highly recommended. One thing that I would mention here about daytime driving is passing through an intersection. Always be prepared to stop at an intersection even though you have a green light. I saw an accident where a moving SUV crashed into a sirening police car when it didn't slow down passing through a green light. Obviously, the driver of the SUV was responsible for this accident because he was supposed to yield the right-of-way.

The automobile makes our lives much more convenient than it would otherwise be; however, there are disadvantages, too. First of all, driving is very dangerous without proper precautions.

Want to Contribute to the Multi-Cultural Brief?

Do you have a story, an opinion, a skill you want to tell people about, a recipe, a good idea, a complaint, or a response to what you learned here?

Share it with others!

All submissions are considered. You don't have to be part of the Newspaper Class to contribute!

There are still openings in the Newspaper Class! Classes meet on **Wednesday mornings from 9:30 to 12 noon, Wednesday evenings from 6:00-8:00 p.m., and on Fridays from 1:15 to 3:30 p.m.** Come as many times a week as you like.

If interested, call (434)-245-2817, or e-mail: Susan.Erno@ccs.k12.va.us.

To receive the *Multi-Cultural Brief*, visit the Adult Learning Center, 1000 Preston Avenue, Suite D.

Living in a Carnival

By Eva Horvath (Hungary)

After I took my first step and inhaled the heavy and humid air of this country, the differences between my world and this world were stifling. At that time who'd have thought that one day I would like this very scary and new and different place. I felt alone and I couldn't find any familiar thing... I wrote this article as a mini manual for people who have just arrived or who are just trying to find their place here in America. I hope I can give you some ideas to overcome some of the issues.

It is an inexhaustible topic to discuss historical, cultural, societal, social, mental, culinary, etc. differences between our countries. You will see that everyone always speaks about these in the beginning. No wonder, since far away from family one feels alone sometimes and fights among others with language, financial or adaptation problems. It is not easy to overcome these things, especially if you count only on other people's help. The less help you expect, the less time it will take you to become self-supporting – which is very useful if you don't want to feel like a child, who needs continuous care.

I met people here who found local people and this country boring and hideous. I think there is no place on the Earth where everything is wrong, and

everyone is ignorant without exception. If you live with open eyes, then you can find valuable people and interesting, amazing places anywhere. Or at least invaluable experiences. People keep coming and leaving this town and you can meet as many interesting personalities as you want. What a great opportunity to learn about other cultures! Where else can you find this kind of "people-swirl"?

In my case, the success in this new environment depended on my attitude. The most important thing is that you don't let the difficulties make you weak and don't be depressed. You are not alone in this situation, and you can be sure that many people are in a harder position. You will meet with many foreign people, and you cannot know where they exactly came from, why they are here, what kind of past they have, what unimaginable things happened with them before they left their countries. One could have been a tortured prisoner, a woman without rights, a hunted aristocrat or maybe a political refugee. And this is not a fiction at all. As you have, everyone has his own trouble, too.

It happens all the time: nothing works the way it should. Thousands of our desires and hopes fall apart, but there is one or at most two most important things – without which we would have no life – that

succeed after all. Just incidentally, naturally. I guess, if one can recognize these things in her life, then this knowledge will protect her, and suddenly every difficulty will be less important.

So you don't have company? Find yourself someone! Do you have a lot of free time? Learn and get to know your surroundings! You don't speak English? There are many different ways to develop your English skill, even for free! Find your own opportunities! Do you miss the familiar tastes? Believe me, you can find almost all the ingredients you need for the kitchen in the stores – you just have to look for them in the right place. But if you can't find something special you need, be creative and substitute it! If you have problems, try to find solutions continuously. Ask for advice, surf on the web, read newspapers, watch TV, go to advertised programs, look for connections with others in a similar situation. Of course, all this doesn't mean that you can skip states of culture shock and you can immediately adopt your new environment and those many different things. But with these little steps you can do a lot for yourself and for your success.

Almost everyone faces problems like this and meanwhile unaware becomes a part of an incredible, colorful carnival...

The Last Class

By Wanxia Wang (China)

December 9th, 2004 was the last meeting of the Communication Skills Class at the Albemarle County Adult Education Center. Our classmates had already prepared some dishes for a celebration because we had finished the twelve-week class.

When I came into the classroom, I found there were some gift bags on the table. What were they? Were they gifts from students? Would they be given to our teacher, Rebecca? Why did nobody tell me to prepare a gift for our teacher?

The class began. First, we learned some special vocabulary about Christmas. Then we talked about Christmas in different countries and where it came from; how the American people decorate their Christmas trees; what the meanings of the decorations are; and how the decorations were invented. We were so happy to hear so many interesting stories.

The candy cane was invented by a Christian in England in the 17th century. At that time, the government would not allow people to celebrate Christmas Day. So a candy maker made a candy shaped like a shepherd's crook to be a secret symbol of Jesus. Three small stripes represent the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; the large

red stripe is for the life of Jesus, which he gave up for us. The candy was a double gift, a sweet treat and a symbol of Christmas.

“... they give a good reputation to America. I really appreciate it.”

There are other symbols as well. The fish is a symbol of Jesus. The pot is a symbol of hospitality, etc. There is an interesting thing: if you stand under a mistletoe, everyone can kiss you. We also studied an excellent editorial in the *New York Sun*, which told us how important love is.

Second, we played a vocabulary game and found 25 words from a circle. Hye-Soo won the first prize. She got twenty words. Rebecca let her choose a gift. Finally, I understood that these gifts came from our teacher. What a nice teacher!

Later, we played Scrabble, which is very common in America. Everybody wrote down some words in a particular category with a time limit. Whoever got the most words would be the winner. I said I hated this game. Carol won the prize, so then she chose a gift. We went on with the game. Then Svetlana won.

This time we used the letter F to write a menu item. I said a flower. The students said flowers are not a menu item, but in China we use some flowers as seasoning and make flower-shaped dishes. They look beautiful and are delicious. So Rebecca gave me “creative prize.” I was so happy. I began to love this game. I could learn knowledge and vocabulary very quickly.

After the class, Rebecca reminded us to open our gifts. We were like children on Christmas morning, curious to open our gifts. I gently opened the gift bag. There was a special Christmas card on the gift. It was designed by Rebecca. There was a humorous Santa Claus on the cover. Inside, there was our class picture and a message: “Have a joyous holiday and a wonderful 2005! Thank you to each of you for a wonderful class! I hope to see you in the new year.” Inside the package was a set of four cassettes of Christmas songs. Some of the songs I was familiar with. I had listened to this kind of music at Chinese festivals. It made me miss our family spending happy holidays together. I had hoped I could get a cassette of this kind of music, but I hadn't tried to look for one in the U.S.

The students were looking at

(Continued on page 15)

The Last Class

(Continued from page 14)
each other with smiles. Some students got a box of chocolate. Some got an album. Some got



stockings. Some got a bell. Some students got a pair of gloves. Each gift was wrapped so prettily and made a big impression on us. It must have taken our teacher a long time to choose these gifts and wrap

them. The whole day I was filled with happiness because of this small gift though the weather was dreary. I hoped I could keep this happiness the entire time I live in America.

From one drop of water you can see the shining sun. And from one drop of water you will know the sea. That is how I feel about ESL class, where I can learn American culture and improve my English. American education is very famous in China. Everyone wants to understand it. Some famous universities in the U.S. have attracted thousands and

thousands of excellent Chinese students to come here every year. Only from the teachers of ESL class can you see American education at work. They encourage students and even use their own money to buy gifts for the students, who maybe will leave the U.S. tomorrow. They have wonderful personalities that affect the students. Meanwhile, they give a good reputation to America. I really appreciate it. Thanks, Rebecca. Thanks, ESL teachers.

Watching TV in the U.S.

(Continued from page 7)
So on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday of a week you will enjoy the same movie. Sometimes if you stay up late enough at night, you will find the same movie will be replayed at midnight.

I've been watching Australian tennis games recently, and the players' performances are really amazing. I hope I will play tennis well in the future, though

badminton is my favorite sport now.

On every channel, advertisements are the most frequently seen program. Some are interesting, but, for others, I just cannot figure out what they mean and are advertising for! I think it may take me time to understand all of them.

There is one strange thing I found in TV programs in the

U.S.: that is, I have never seen any teleplays or movies produced by other countries. Of course, the United States makes excellent teleplays and movies, but I think China also does, and, in China, we often can watch teleplays produced by the United States, like "ER."

TV helps me with my English and makes my life colorful.

SNOW DAYS

For information about whether classes are canceled due to inclement weather, call 245-2401, or watch Channel 29 News.



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**Voices of Adult Learners
Awards Celebration!**

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All are welcome! Please come!

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