Dear Community Member,

We’d like to invite you to expand your horizons by befriending an international student. There is more to education than lectures, textbooks and term papers. Students say that some of the most rewarding life experiences in America occur outside of their classrooms and research labs. Liu Feng, past president of the Chinese Student and Scholar Association, shared the following:

“I would like to thank the Rolla community. As visiting Chinese students, we face many difficulties when we are studying in the US, not only in our studies but also in our lives. Your community is so nice to us and so many people are happy to be our ‘host families.’ You always help us overcome all kinds of problems, especially the language. Most Chinese students improve their English after finding a friend in the community. We greatly appreciate your help and we are pleased to be friends with you.”

Missouri University of Science and Technology’s Office of International Affairs is pleased to sponsor the “International Friends” program. Through participation in this program, members of the community are matched with one or more international students. You can encourage their participation in local activities, invite them to your home, and discuss American customs and culture. In addition to sharing your culture, you will have the opportunity to learn about their culture and viewpoints. Participating families and individuals serve as important community volunteers, representing not only the community, but the United States.

Community friends can help international students understand the American way of life. As a friend, you might offer some practical assistance in shopping, dining at a local restaurant, explaining holidays and customs, and many other practical things. Participants generally meet at least once a month in local homes or at special community functions. However, the time commitment is the amount of time that you and your student choose to make. There is no charge to participate in the International Friends program, nor is there an expectation for you to provide financial assistance to students.

If you would like to participate in the International Friends program, or learn more about it, complete and return the attached questionnaire to me. You can mail completed applications to the Office of International Affairs, 105 SWBCC, 1207 N. Elm, Missouri S&T, Rolla, MO 65409, Attn: Richard Myers by October 25.

Upon receiving your formal statement of interest and/or completed questionnaire, we will send follow-up information regarding this program and materials regarding the student(s) we are matching you with. These e-mails will have additional information regarding the program and the upcoming “International Friends” reception that will be held on October 30th. If you have any questions, don’t hesitate to contact me at 341-4335, or e-mail me at myersri@mst.edu. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Richie Myers

Richard J. Myers
Student Program Administrator for Cultural Events
Office of International & Cultural Affairs

\[\textit{an equal opportunity institution}\]
Effective January 1, 2008, UMR became Missouri University of Science and Technology (Missouri S&T)
To: Prospective volunteers for Missouri S&T’s International Friends Program

International students have expressed their wish to become more involved in the community. They want to learn more about the United States and people in the Rolla area. To this end, we are sponsoring the “Missouri S&T International Friends Program.” International Missouri S&T alumni have told us that they wish they could have seen a traditional American home and participated in community activities while they were students in Rolla. Students who have participated in the Friends program tell us that their friendship with community members was a highlight of their time in Rolla.

We would like to invite you to become involved in this tremendous outreach opportunity. It provides wonderful exposure to other cultures, for both you and the Missouri S&T student. The following is a “top ten” list of common questions and answers.

1. **What is the International Friends Program?** It is an opportunity for you to meet an international student, to exchange cultural information, and to be a friend. You might invite the student to your home to share special events. For example: local events, a wedding, Sunday dinner, a birthday celebration, or holiday parties. Students want to learn about American culture and meet people in the community.

2. **How does the program work?** We are continually developing lists of families and individuals willing to serve as community friends; likewise, we encourage all newly arrived international students to apply for participation in this activity. We examine questionnaires completed by both parties, then make student/family assignments. Every attempt will be made to meet your requests. Let us know if you have a preference or if you will only host student(s) from the country you request. If you’ve “adopted” an international student, but haven’t signed up for the program, please submit an application and let us know you already have an international student. We’d like to add you to our contact list so that we can invite you to special events hosted by our office.

3. **Is the Community friend/family limited to being a family (husband/wife/children)?** No, we encourage all members of our community to participate, so that students will have a chance to experience the variety of American home experiences.

4. **Can I choose a student from a specific country?** Insofar as possible, we will attempt to make the match requested. Please let us know if you have a preference, or if you will only host a student(s) from the country you requested. Remember that our largest international student populations are from India, China, Saudi Arabia, and that often our student participation is linked proportionally to our student population.

5. **How much time will I need to commit?** The answer is easy—as much time as you and your student(s) have available for this program: every other week, once a month, or every other month.

6. **How long is this commitment?** Again, this is your option. We’ll accept whatever length of commitment you choose to make. Most families maintain the relationship while the student remains at UMR (and even beyond); some wish to retain the relationship for a specific period.

7. **What about menu restrictions?** The International Affairs office will try to determine if there are any restrictions for the student’s diet. This information will be given to you.

8. **What about cultural differences?** As part of this program, International Affairs is distributing brochures that address this issue to all participants. We have information for both the student and community member that discusses cultural issues, expectations, and common courtesies.

9. **What if I don’t like the student assigned to me?** International Affairs will do its best to monitor the program. If you have any problems, we would appreciate hearing about it. If you and your student prove to be incompatible, a new student can be assigned to you.

10. **We have “household rules.” Can we use these?** Yes, you set the rules for your house. For example, if you specify “no smoking” on the “comments” line of the questionnaire, every attempt would be made to match you with a non-smoker. In addition, the NAFSA brochure will provide suggestions for discussing “do’s and don’ts” in the home.

11. **When does the program start?** We are receiving applications from students and community members. The office of International Affairs will host a reception for all participants on October 30th 6-8 PM. Matches will be announced at this time, and the program will begin.