
VOICES

Volunteer English Program Student Magazine

Spring/Summer 2016

Vol. 2, Issue 1

Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2016 Issue of Voices, the Volunteer English Program Student Magazine!

VEP Students have many exciting tales to tell, and this issue of Voices gives them the place to tell their stories. Whether writing about their families, their travels to many places, or how they are coming to learning about America, their stories are a testimonial to their strength and resilience. So please join us in reading about all of their interesting experiences in this issue of Voices..

--The Editors

Table of Contents



Volunteer English Program in Chester County
790 East Market Street, Suite 215
West Chester, PA 19382
610.918.8222 | www.volunteerenglish.org



Our Trip to Pittsburgh. page 2

How Do we Celebrate Chinese New Year in America, page 3

I Am a New Student of VEP, page 4

Adventures in this Summer, page 5

My Mother, page 6

A Letter to My Tutor, page 7

Our Trip to Pittsburgh

Last Friday we went to Pittsburgh, PA to visit our friends from Moldova. However, first we went to a hotel, because we had reserved a room.

After we checked in and put our luggage in the room, we went to see the local zoo and aquarium. We spent more than an hour trying to find the zoo. Finally we found it, and then we entered. We fell in love with some of the animals at first sight: polar bears, gorillas and penguins.

After that we went to our friends'

home and stayed there for a couple of hours. During that time we prepared dinner and had a very interesting discussion.

On the next day our friends invited us to go to Niagara Falls. So, after a very long trip, we enjoyed the view at the Falls, because everything we saw was very beautiful and impressive.

On Sunday morning, we returned home with very nice memories.

By Tatiana



How Do We Celebrate Chinese New Year in America

Feb. 8, 2016 is Chinese Spring Festival, I hosted a party at my home last Saturday to celebrate it.

As usual, our Chinese neighbors dressed beautifully, came with their famous food dishes and children, arrived at 6pm. The adults surrounded my big dining table, drinking, eating snacks, and bragging while kids were playing and watching movies in the basement.

The dinner was self-service type. All over 30 dishes were placed on the island table. I also cooked fresh made boiled dumplings and sweet rice cake for this special occasion. Dumplings were originated from the north of China and sweet rice cake is the typical food in south China, both represent prosperity.

After dinner, the ladies and gentlemen started their favorite group games: playing cards. Women and men were separated, the wives played the game called "Seeking your pals" and the husbands

played the game called "Chase the pig." The men's games were more exciting, because the loser or the "pig" of the game would be punished by crawling through a piano bench.

I am the busiest person during the party: serving drinks and fruits, cleaning up dishes, taking care of guests.

Because many of us are the first generation of immigrants who have no relatives in USA, family parties become important social occasions. There, people with the same background and age group can easily find talking topics, interests, and friendship. My children are also crazy for the party, they are more open and energetic with kids having similar identities.

By Jingchun

I Am a New Student of VEP

Six years ago (2010), a new baby was born in Paoli Hospital. That is our younger grandson Teddy. One year later, my wife and I came to America from China. Since then we've been staying here together with our daughter's family.

Time flies so fast. Teddy is an enrolled student of the local elementary school now. My wife and I moved to a senior apartment building recently. Life is a new beginning for us. We have become the new immigrants in the new country. We are not the young people who want to get jobs. We are over seventy. However, we should live here independently. We have some good experiences and some less enjoyable ones as well. We may sometimes feel frustrated, confused and depressed. The best way to adjust to our new community is to get involved. I decided to learn English.

The Volunteer English Program (VEP) helps me to realize my expectation. My tutor is an English teacher with great fondness for many cultures. He knows my

weakness in basic English. During teaching every new lesson, he lets me explain the meaning of each new word in detail. I have to do good preparation for this. Every new word, including its spelling, pronunciation, stress, part of speech, meaning, possible synonym, antonym, the difference between them, and making sentences by using these words...it is a complicated and interesting work. I like it very much. I think it's a proper academic method.

In my middle school years I learned some English. My tutor is my first native-speaking teacher. I am very lucky to meet him. I want to improve my English conversation skills. He introduced "Easy Conversations for ESL/EFL Beginners on 25 Topics (From Small Talk to Voting)." We practice them in every class.

I appreciate VEP. I appreciate my tutor's help.

By Hede

Adventures in This Summer

I took a two-week vacation with my family to visit the West Coast of United States in July. There were twelve of us. We went to Los Angeles, the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone. This trip was fantastic for all of us. Meanwhile, it was also an adventure for me during the fourteen days.

The first adventure I experienced was driving. Even though I reserved a fifteen passenger van one month before the trip, I was still surprised when I picked up the vehicle near Los Angeles airport. This vehicle had four rows with fifteen seats. It was the largest vehicle I had driven in my life. During the first day, I drove it very carefully to keep enough space for making a turn. And on the way back to Los Angeles from San Francisco, I drove on Highway 1, which runs parallel with the ocean. The scenery along the highway was very beautiful, but there were many sharp turns on the road. I became very tense trying to control the van's speed to avoid any accidents.

The second adventure I faced was trying to keep the time schedule I created. Since we planned to drive a total of four thousand miles during this trip and stay only one night at each stop, I had to make sure that each journey was done according to the plan so that we could arrive at the next stop on time. However, there was an incident that happened when we went to Antelope Canyon in Arizona. I drove the van following GPS directions, but one highway was blocked

by the barrier for some reason when we got there. Then I had to drive an additional one hour to find a local resident to get the right directions and then spend three more hours driving to Antelope Canyon later that afternoon. If we couldn't visit the canyon on that day, then we would have to stay one more day to see it and then we would have to cancel one of our next stops. Luckily, we found a tour agent and we were able to catch their last tour to the canyon.

In addition to the above two points, the most worrisome adventure was to ensure the safety and health of everyone, especially for the senior and the youngest members. The oldest in our group, my wife's aunty, is seventy-two years old, and the youngest one, my infant son, is only eighteen months. As we crossed five states from California to Wyoming, and changed climates from the extremely hot in Las Vegas to the very cold in the Grand Canyon, it would have been difficult for me to get them medical treatment if anyone were to get sick, become injured or have a heart attack. Fortunately for me, everyone was fine during the long journey. The only thing that happened was my younger son developed a fever when we stayed in Page, Arizona. When that happened, I went to Walmart in the very early morning to buy medicine for him and he recovered gradually.

Two weeks, five states, twelve people, four thousand miles. We visited

Universal Studios in Los Angeles, had a seafood buffet in Las Vegas, saw the beautiful and amazing scenery in the Grand Canyon, Antelope Canyon, Arches National Park and Yellowstone, and enjoyed the ocean wind on Highway 1. These were the

adventures we had during this great summer!

By Lester

My Mother

Somebody said that there are some people who, although they are very far from you, and therefore you can neither speak nor see them very often, they still remain very close to your soul. For me, one of these people is my mother, who now lives in Moldova, I miss her very much.

All sons and daughters think that their parents are more special than others, because parents love their children more than themselves and value their children's happiness above their own.

For this reason my Mother, too, is very special, because not only did she raise and educate me, and teach me right from wrong, but also she lives for me and for my happiness.

My Mother isn't only a Mother, but she is also one of my best friends and a trusted advisor. She provides support for me in difficult situations and rejoices when I am happy.

When we lived closer, I didn't think about this, but now that we live far apart, I am amazed to find her so present in my mind, body and soul.

Fortunately, now we have the internet so that we can communicate and see each other. However, virtual connections are cold compared to human connections.



When I think about this, now I understand those people who used to live far from their relatives in the past, in the days where there was no internet, and they could only communicate by sending letters from the post office.

Now I long for her next visit; I hope

we will spend a lot of time together, and I will charge my soul with positive energy,

enough to last until the next time we see each other.

By Tatiana

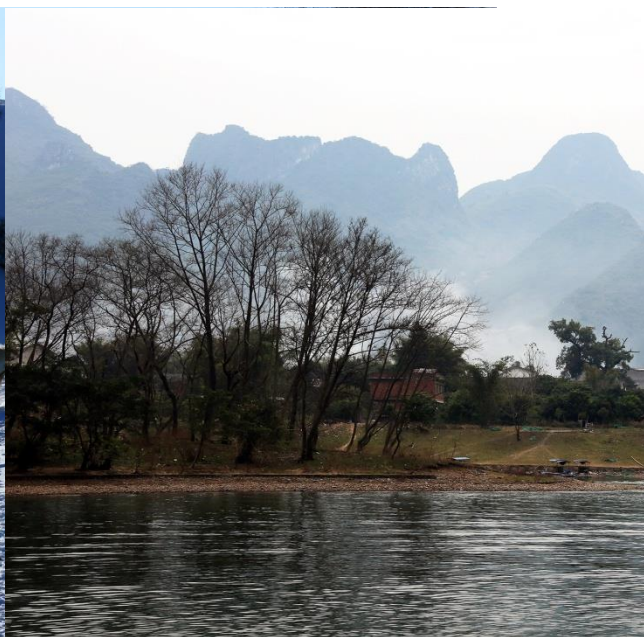
A Letter to My Tutor

Dear Ron,

I came back to China mainly for retirement-related procedures which have been successfully completed.

January 23 to 27, my friends and I went to the grasslands of Inner Mongolia in northern China. Which is a relatively high altitude, cold climate, and snow world. We visited a local ranch, shot a lot of herdsmen living in the snow scene. These photos are wonderful, I am very satisfied.





February 8 to 22, is the traditional Chinese New Year. During family reunion, friends visit each other, eating and drinking, having fun, celebrate the arrival of spring.

February 18 to 23, my siblings and I, a total of eight people, went to Guilin in South China. It is a famous tourist destination, very beautiful landscapes, I also took many beautiful photos.



I miss my wife and daughter in the United States, I am going back to the US, but also very pleased to meet with you!

By Benbiao