

# VOICES

## *Volunteer English Program Student Magazine*

Fall 2017

Vol. 3, Issue 1

## Welcome to VOICES, the Volunteer English Program Student Magazine

Happy Fall! As we enjoy the beautiful colors of falling leaves, and crisp, cooler weather, we also reflect on the blessings in our lives. Special thanks to our students for sharing their culture and contributing to the rich fabric of life in Chester County and to our tutors who share their time and talent to enrich the lives of these courageous individuals.

In this issue of Voices, current VEP students tell of their experiences and reflections on life in the U.S. Selections include personal narratives as well as poems. Enjoy!

Note from the Editors: To preserve the writers' tone and voice in their pieces, changes were made only to improve clarity and formatting.

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*"I am so thankful to VEP because through their tutors and their staff I learn how (to) get my goals. I became a U.S. citizen, serve and share talks in English in my church, try to live a good (life) in my work, school, families, etc."*

*-Alberto Urbina Villabon*

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**Don't miss it!**  
**VEP's Annual**  
**Global**  
**Gathering**  
**Sun., Nov. 12**  
**Details on p. 4**



## Differences between America and Japan

by Ikuko Ouki

Last September I left Tokyo, Japan, with mixed feelings of anxiety and anticipation. Now I am here, one year out of Tokyo to the suburbs of Philadelphia (Philly!!)

There are many cultural differences between America and Japan. Here are my impressions!

### I. American Personality

American people seem very extroverted. They start talking in a friendly way even to strangers! It is common to exchange greetings or say a word about the weather to everyone they meet. They hold doors for each other and say thank you. It feels polite and friendly.

We Japanese usually do not speak to someone if we aren't expected to see them again. We are just passing by and we have no eye contact.

Is this for real? I don't know yet. I suppose American communication is more positive than Japanese communication.

### II. Driving Culture

American people drive a car with very high speed. We Japanese sometimes exceed the speed limit too, but Americans drive faster.

I learned some manners from the driver's manual. They are about "road rage" and "the manner if we're stopped by police." We never learn about that in Japan.

We don't have some rules that Americans have, such as Center turn lane, Right on red, and 4-way stop. I suppose that American people use their car so often that their rules are more efficient and flexible.

I have gradually noticed it's for real that there are some cultural differences between America and Japan. Each country has each culture. I am really enjoying to feel and accept the differences of culture through my staying in America.

## A Mysterious Life

My voice was down  
My hope was big  
My family was messy  
Nobody can see my needs.

Life is mysterious  
Too many things we can not see  
Sometimes our hearts are broken  
But still sunshine warms them.

I tried to find the place  
But it was no where  
Nobody can believe it  
And they continue doing normal things.

People are blind  
They can not see the truth  
They can see just what interests them  
They don't understand other's feelings  
They care about money  
But they don't know the meaning of empathy.

See written in the sky  
"Human Being"  
Nobody can see  
If it's not money.

Just look around  
I need basic things  
Nobody can help me  
And I just feel empty.

I see in a God  
I pray for health  
Nothing matters  
Unless I believe in myself.

By Premisa Kerthi

## My Heart

By Premisa Kerthi

Hold on, my heart

And take a deep breath

Keep walking on my path

Then, forget what goes on  
around you

Come with me

See the beauties that I see

Love what I see

As much as I love what you  
see

Start walking with small  
steps

On the yellow, red leaves

Feel the warm noises under  
your feet

And enjoy the view of  
happiness

Don't take the chill with you

Take special things

That even others don't  
notice

And feel peace in your  
blood

Love this life

With the power that the  
universe gives

Love my heart

As you would love an angel

Sit on my heart

And hear the bum-bum...



Independence Hall, Philadelphia

## Letter from Maria

I am Maria. I am from Mexico. I'm happy to study English thanks to my sister who helped me with the application of the program. I am grateful to the English Volunteer program for giving me this opportunity [and also] to the Food Closet here in the church that allows me to help other people, practice and take my English lessons.

I am grateful to my tutor Liz for her patience, time and support. We went on the train to Philadelphia. We visited the Independence Museum and the Mexican Consulate.

Thanks Liz for giving me the books for my son to study for his driving license and on American citizenship.

Sincerely,

Maria







## A Health Care Worker's Story

By Indira

I arrived in this country more than 4 years ago with my family. As you can imagine starting a new life in another country is not an easy process, and even becomes more difficult when we have to face cultural barriers.

I come from a country where Spanish is the first language and the system is very different than in the EEUU. [Editor's note: U.S.A.]

My current job is to support the different communities in the County of Chester. In the last 2 years I have mostly worked in the area where there is a high percentage of African American families with different needs, as well as Latin families with diverse needs that go from filling [out] an application in the county as well as sending a communication to the military registry explaining the reasons to apply for benefits and to show the need of the families.

As I continue in my career, I felt the need to improve my communication and writing skills in English, as it is my second language. It is Volunteer English Program who has allowed me to navigate the art of writing through highly qualified tutors as is the case of my tutor, who with patience and commitment, supporting me with details that have allowed me to grow in this aspect. This has been a positive impact for me not only personally but also professionally.

VOLUNTEER  
ENGLISH  
PROGRAM  
in chester county

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**VEP 2017 Global Gathering**  
**Sunday, Nov. 12, 2017**  
**3:00-5:30 P.M.**

**All VEP Students and Tutors**  
**are invited to attend this free,**  
**potluck event at**

Goshen Fire Company Hall  
130 Park Avenue  
West Chester, PA 19380

Bring a food to share  
from your country or heritage!

Reserve your seat **by Nov. 5**  
Call 610-918-8222 ext. 3 or  
email:  
[volunteer.english@](mailto:volunteer.english@volunteerenglish.org)  
[volunteerenglish.org](http://volunteerenglish.org)



## Contact Us

If you have a story, letter, or poem you would like to submit for the next edition of Voices Magazine, please ask your tutor to contact us!

We'd love to hear about your holiday celebrations, family traditions, and favourite holiday meals.

Entries can be letters, stories, or poems. Photos are also welcome.