

# VOICES

## *Volunteer English Program Student Magazine*

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### ***Welcome to the latest issue of our student magazine***

***Where can you find stories about a sports dream come true, a Chinese festival, learning English using Skype, engaging with a child's school, and instructions about building a snowman?***

***Why, right here...in VEP Voices, where our students get to express themselves using their new written English skills! The current issue contains five informative and well-written stories by students (with the help of their tutors). We hope you will read and enjoy them...and submit your story to us for the next issue.***

***--The Editors***

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## The Dream is Coming

I was a 28 year old young man who just arrived from abroad. I found a great job in my specialization of web developer. It was my hobby. Since my childhood I had known that I wanted to work in the IT industry and when I grew up my hobby became my work. It was perfect because I liked my work and it wasn't routine for me. It was satisfaction. But sometimes I felt the stirrings of discontent. I always had dreamed to be a professional player and this feeling never left me.

I found on the NBA website that summer camp starts for a week in Delaware. And I said to myself "Why not? I have nothing to lose. If I can't play they will say it to me." I filled out the online application, took two weeks holiday from my work and departed to summer camp. When I arrived, I was shocked. A lot of athletic guys were there and my hesitancy started to grow. My thoughts were "What am I doing here?" and "I can't do that" but I got up to register. After 30 minutes of waiting, my turn came. When I came to the registration table, a woman asked for my ID, checked it and said "You play at 3:40, next!" I was shocked, so easy without any additional questions! It was only 1pm. I sat down on a free chair near by the court and started to prepare. Fellas who played with me looked very strong and fast. But I had an advantage. It was experienced. I had more experiences than anybody there. I

have been playing at basketball since I was seven years old and I played for a few semiprofessional teams and when the game started I showed it quickly. I had 35 points, 23 rebounds and 6 assists. After that game, I was invited to continue in summer camp for a week. From 300 people only 50 were left and I was there.

The camp was offbeat for me. I did a lot of new exercises and worked hard. After a week from 50 only 15 were left. And I was fifteenth. The specialists said "You are a great scorer and worked hard on the boards but you need to improve your physical consistency." After these words they invited me to the summer league. I didn't expect this, so I called to my work and asked them about two additional weeks of holiday. They said if I don't come now, I'm fired. It was a difficult choice--from one side I was losing my work, from the other side I was close to reaching my dream. I chose the dream and the second phase began. Since I was only 15<sup>th</sup>, I had no more than 5 minutes in each game. I understood that it was a very small chance to show myself, also we had only 15 games, but I used it. In each game I ran like crazy in defense and offense and my game time started to increase. The Coach started to trust me.

For 15 games I had great results

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and stats. I was 4<sup>th</sup>. It wasn't enough to reach my goal but fortune smiled on me. One of the few coaches chose me. On the next day I came to the general manager at the office to discuss a contract. He said to me that I can play for an NBA team but I

needed to move to the west coast. I thought about...20 seconds to sign the contract. From this point my dream came true.

--by Anton

## The Mid-Autumn Festival in Xiamen

The Mid-Autumn Festival falls on August 15th of the Chinese Lunar Calendar. People celebrate the holiday by eating mooncakes and doing mooncake gambling.

Mid-Autumn Festival and the Chinese New Year are the same. All family members try to get together on this special day. On the night of the Mid-Autumn Festival the moon in China is the roundest and brightest. All the family members sit around a big table. They eat mooncakes and drink tea. There are different kinds of flavors of mooncakes such as bean paste, egg yolk, and meat.

When the Mid-Autumn Festival is near, shop windows are beautifully decorated. Many mooncakes are displayed for people to buy. People send presents such as wine, fruits, tea, and mooncakes to their friends and relatives. But there is a special custom game in Xiamen.

It's Mooncake Gambling. Its Chinese name is "Bo Bing." It's easy to play, but the

game has complicated rules that are hard to remember. It requires you to have six dice and a china bowl. Just throw all the dice into the bowl and the different dots you get stand for different ranks of awards you will win.

The mooncake gambling game has six ranks of awards and has 63 different sizes of mooncakes as prizes. Instead of mooncakes, many people use different prizes such as candy, toys, soap, toothpaste, boiled eggs, school supplies, gift cards, and money. There are 63 prizes in groups of 32, 16, 8, 4, 2, and 1. The prizes are from low to high. There are 32 of the cheapest prizes and one of the most expensive prize. For example, there might be 32 candies, 16 school supplies, 8 boiled eggs, 4 toys, 2 water bottles, and one money prize.

One die with four dots is "Xiucai." Xiucai can pick one prize from the 32. Two dice with four dots is "Juren." Juren can pick one prize from the 16. Three dice with

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four dots is "Tanhua." Tanhua can pick one prize from the 4. Four dice with matching dots is "Jinshi." Jinshi can pick one prize from the 8. Six dice with dots one to six is "Bangyan." Bangyan can pick one prize from the 2. Four dice with four dots or five

dice with matching dots is "Zhuangyuang." Only one player will win the lucky title of Zhuangyuang." Xiamen's people believe that the person who wins Zhuangyuang in the game will have good luck that year.

--By Chaoyan

## Skype Lessons

My name is Tanya. I came from Ukraine with my husband and daughter over three years ago. I studied English at school in my home country. But that was a long time ago so when I came to the USA I didn't remember many English words. So I started thinking about how I could improve my vocabulary. Many people who come to a new country think that they will learn the language very fast and I thought the same thing especially if I could find a job. But my daughter was an infant who needed my attention so I could not look for work outside our home. Now I have a second child who adds to my problem.

Then I learned about VEP's tutor program and the Skype technology. I decided that I could learn English at home on my computer using Skype. Skype costs nothing and I can stay in touch with my tutor face to face just as though we were

meeting at a library.

We had four Skype lessons while he was on vacation in Maine. Each lesson lasted an hour. Each of us has the book that VEP provided. It has articles that I read aloud during the lessons. When I did not understand a word the tutor explained it to me. Sometimes he used the dictionary on his Kindle and I, of course, used the Russian/English dictionary that is on my smart phone. After reading the article we practiced my knowledge of the article and its vocabulary by using the exercises in the book. My favorite part of each lesson is our conversation at the end when I answer the tutor's questions about the topic. After each lesson we agree on what we will discuss next time.

I hope that we will continue English lessons by Skype so I won't have to leave home for them. In one year I will write

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another article to show how Skype has helped me improve.

--By Tanya

## Working with Your Child's School

My invitation is for parents of families with the intent that they participate and inform themselves about conferences that the schools organize. It is important to attend now that you have the opportunity to speak to the teacher of your child over their grades, conduct and homework. Or perhaps you may have questions about your child, you may ask them. The conferences or meetings in general only last 15 minutes. A conference appointment can be made by telephone or your school will contact you and let you know what times and dates they have available. You can elect the day and hour according to what is convenient for you. And if for some reason you cannot attend at the school you can request a conference by telephone. You can ask for an interpreter if you need it. If after you schedule your appointment you decide to cancel or change the appointment, do it with enough notice to the teacher that you cannot attend. It is

important to note the opportunity that your school is offering to you to become aware of what is going on with your child. There are various ways to communicate with the teacher. You can write a small note and place it in your child's notebook which they bring home. Or you can also send an email. If you don't have one, it is easy to create one of your own. You only have to go to the Google page to create your own account. You only have to insert your email and press click. It will give you various options after for your information like your name, address, birth date. An email can be used for many things and it helps a lot. But most importantly it is how to receive all of the information from your children's schools. We hope you get excited about this and that this information will serve you and more so your children. Together we work as a team.

--By Noemi

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## How to Build a Snowman

(Highlighted words were chosen by Blanca for vocabulary)

Before you can make a snowman, you need it to snow. The snow should be at least six inches deep and be wet and sticky.

The first thing you should do is make a snowball. Then roll it across the snow, making it bigger and bigger until it is about two feet across. This is now the bottom of your snowman.

Next, make another snowball and roll it until it is about a foot and a half across. Roll it near the bottom ball and pick it up and put it on top of the bottom ball. This is the body of your snowman.

Next, make one more snowball and roll it until it is one foot across. Pick it up and put it on top of the middle ball. This one is the head of your snowman.

Last, decorate the top two big snowballs to look like a man. Find two sticks or branches (or paint sticks or wooden rulers) about a foot long and put them into

the middle ball, one on each side, for arms. Next, find three things about two inches across, such as buttons or rocks or small round fruits, to put on the front of the middle ball for jacket buttons. Then get a knit scarf and put it around the neck of your snowman, between the top and middle ball. Tie it in the front so it will stay on and look nice. Then, get a carrot and put it in the center of the front of the top ball (head) for a nose. Next, get two things for eyes, such as buttons or round game pieces (checkers, chips), and put them above the nose on either side of the nose. Then, get something to make the mouth below the carrot, such as a piece of yarn. Finally, find a felt hat or knit hat to put on top of the head.

You are done! Take pictures of your snowman with your kids to remember the fun you had making your snowman!!



--By Blanca