



Office of International  
Students and Scholars

# International Friendship Program Newsletter: Bridging Borders

## Spring 2024 Newsletter

---

### SPRING 2024 IN REVIEW

*Thank you!*

I want to thank all hosts and students who participated in the Spring 2024 IFP! We had a wonderful semester, full of great turnouts at our events, including: Bowling & Pizza Party, Quiz Bowl/Trivia Night, and Ice Cream Social & Crafts. I look forward to the programs and events we can offer next year, but until then thank you for making 2023-2024 another successful year for the International Friendship Program!





---

## *Afghanistan To Mars*

You can't go to school! Educated women are not on the agenda in Taliban Afghanistan. A sixth grade finish is all a young lady is allowed. Nasrin Muhtasebzada's response was a resounding NO!

During the period of Western influenced liberalization, Nasrin studied robotics. Initially unable to obtain a desired visa, she managed to cross into Pakistan and continue her studies.

A new opportunity opened when Nasrin became acquainted with Sophia Swire, CEO of Future Brilliance who introduced her to Dr. Jocelyn Lehrer, who helped her find the opportunity to apply to Purdue. Nasrin was encouraged to apply for a Gilsdorf Women's Engineering Scholarship. This gift of Purdue Alum, Norman Gilsdorf and Mrs. Gilsdorf is designed to support female students from countries where further education is forbidden.

Arriving at Purdue, Nasrin discovered IFP where Director Leah Bechtold offered to find a Host Family for her. Another IFP Director, recently retired Beth Tucker happily became her Host.

A special bond developed between Beth and Nasrin who found she could tell Beth about anything that concerned her. There were breakfasts, lunches and a variety of activities. Most of all Nasrin found friendship and a feeling of welcome to Purdue.

Beth helped make Nasrin comfortable in an American university environment. There was orientation to self-study and time management. Additionally, Nasrin was encouraged to make friends and be alert to new activities and opportunities.

Now that Nasrin has become involved with the Purdue Community, she has some advice for new international students. She tells them to search for opportunities and the people who can



help with studies and campus activities. She suggests attending any workshops that can help with adjusting to university life.

She has a number of goals for the future. They include staying in the United States for advanced study and finding internships to help develop her career. She hopes for a future Afghanistan of more opportunities where she can open STEM schools for girls.

Nasrin would like to be the first Afghan Woman to land on Mars. No matter the destination, we can be sure that Nasrin will reach for the stars.





---

## *From Brazil To Hosting*

Almost 5,000 miles separate Lafayette from Belo Horizonte, Brazil. There is hardly a separation from Brazil for IFP Hosts Jimmy and Maggie Lutz. A five- year college ministry in Belo Horizonte honed a special connection to Brazil and its young adult students.

Today that is much in the Lutz Family life, as they host their 4 member cohort of Jader, Davi and Pedro from the Federal University of Rio De Janeiro and Daniel from its sister campus in Campinas. It can be a pancake breakfast with an introduction to maple syrup or a game of pickleball. There is fishing or a day on Wildcat Creek for canoeing. Sons Grant, 19, Nolan, 16, daughters Jane, 12, and Audrey, 10 often take part.

These have been joyous family experiences. Brazilians value young people and family life. There is a communal spirit of the more the merrier. Group activities are much welcomed, and the combination with the Lutz Family hospitality has led to many happy moments together.

Jimmy and Maggie use their hosting to help their international students get maximum benefit in addition to the classroom from their Purdue experience. Relaxed conversations overcome shyness and build confidence in English. They take advantage of individual strengths to develop the rapport that comes from joint activities. The goal is to get to the point where the students encourage each other to participate in and benefit from what the hosts are offering.

The Lutz's enjoy a variety of interests and pastimes. In addition to outdoor pursuits often shared with their students, they like gardening, appreciating art, attending symphony concerts and browsing in downtown shops.

Their advice to new hosts is to keep it simple. It is a good idea to share meals, as food is universal. Involve the students in your family life, share and create new experiences. For Jimmy and Maggie Lutz the only distance between them and their Brazilian students is the short drive to bring them along to an exciting and fulfilling day.





---

## *Four Can Be Fun*

IFP Director Leah Bechtold was not going to be fazed. An additional group of young Colombian scholars was arriving on campus. It was going to be a challenge.

Most of her hosts were already booked for the semester. Leah decided to offer cohorts of four for all to be accommodated. Todd and Tracy Raines were among those stepping up to the plate.

Todd and Tracy had originally found IFP when Leah visited their church. They had hosted before, but never four. Now they had Aleja, Diana, Gaby and Tatiana in their lives and with their family. A variety of activities could work for all. Fun times included a chili cook off, an IFP picnic, a bonfire and some grocery shopping. Food together is special so why not pizza, cupcakes and brunch?

Holidays are often in our minds when hosting. They can be lonely for international students far

from home. Todd and Tracy not only did Thanksgiving for their four, but invited them to bring friends. It became a feast for twelve who would not be alone on America's family holiday.

Family also became involved as daughter Alyssa bonded with her new international friends. The Colombians also reached out to son Aiden who was soon joining the conversations and fun times playing board games.

Todd and Tracy realize that university life can be different in other countries. They strive to help acclimate their students to American campus life, and getting maximum benefit from their Purdue experience.

Free time passions for Tracy are reading, especially diverse genres of fiction, coffee and Bible studies. Todd enjoys running, weight lifting, video games and working on cars. Both love a family date at a coffee shop.

Their advice to new hosts is to involve students in your family life, even little things. Would they take a cohort of four again? Absolutely, and that goes for Alyssa and Aiden as well.

