



Mennonite
Central
Committee

On the Journey

"It is a peace program that works, not in a big sweep, but one small ripple at a time, each ripple enlarging with every expanding circle." ~ Doreen Harms

A Newsletter of the International Volunteer Exchange Program in Canada and the U.S.

Fall 2016

Coming up:

IVEP Mid-year
Conference:
February 8—15
Vancouver,
British Columbia, Canada

Traveling together

The International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP) is administered by Mennonite Central Committee in Canada and the U.S. This newsletter sets out to connect hosts, partner agencies and IVEPers, creating space for the cross pollination of ideas and a greater sense of community.

Articles and new readers are welcome.

Staff insights

As many of you have heard we've faced our share of challenges in bringing participants into the U.S. and Canada. In Canada, slow processing times prevent the necessary papers from emerging and many months are spent waiting. This means that we've held two Canadian orientations after the joint IVEP/SALT orientation that took place in Akron, Pennsylvania, back in August.



The most recent orientation took place in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, this October. During the week we spent together, eight participants from seven countries took an evening away from sessions to watch the migration of geese at a nature reserve near the city. We sat together in newly acquired winter coats sipping hot

drinks on a cold night as we watched thousands of geese gathering prior to their annual migration. The poem of imagery and sound beat loudly as the sunset lit up the sky amidst the honks and flapping wings. We sat still—contemplating the start of life lived somewhere new.

Kathryn Deckert, IVEP Canada Coordinator

Participant insights: all is new

It's really amazing being the part of this program. It's a time of serving through learning and adjusting to life in the new community. All is new. It's been more than a month that I've been volunteering at MEI School as an Educational Assistant, while also volunteering at the MCC Thrift Store during the school holiday. It's been quite hard, because I had to learn many things and remember all the names; also I'm not the type of person who can start a conversation. But I really enjoy interacting with kids; it brings a lot of fun for me.

I learnt how to get involved with all the people and activities here. I learnt how to do laminating for the first time, check in/out books for the students, help supervise kids with special needs, work at the store, and even try to play ultimate Frisbee. Lots of people encouraged

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*“ready for all the new ... experiences that will come”
~ Betsy Mulya*



Betsy at the MEI library

and helped me to learn here. If I used to think, “I can’t do this and that,” now I say, “I can.” Being more confident and open-minded, I feel more excited and ready for all the new things and experiences that will come.

At first, there were so many things that made me afraid. But then I remembered the verse I had read before, Isaiah 41:10, and also a note, “365 times ‘don’t be afraid’ was written in the Bible.” That really brought me peace and joy.

I believe that within my one year of service with MCC I will learn a lot through different experiences, and be a blessing to others. God took away my fear, my worries, and He gave me more chances. I really believe that nothing is impossible with GOD.

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Isaiah 41:10

Betsy Mulya from Indonesia—MEI Elementary School & MCC Thrift Store, Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada

Host insights: he feels very at home here

We are loving having Wycliff as a part of our family. He frequently says he feels very at home here and we agree that he fit in like family right away. God saw to it that we were very well matched from the start. Wycliff and my husband share a similar background and many of the same traits. They are both hard workers. Neither is afraid to get his hands dirty and neither likes to be idle for long. So when Wycliff sees something that needs to be done, he tends to just go do it. If he doesn't know how, he asks what he can do to help make it happen. Wycliff has siblings that are similar in age to our children, so he was able to understand the challenges and blessings they bring to the home.

Prior to his arrival I sent a letter to Wycliff painting a picture of what life is like here, both in our home and in the surrounding community. I tried to be as brutally honest as possible, making it clear what I was and wasn't capable of as a host mom—I had a clear picture of that from hosting high school foreign exchange students. I made it clear he would be doing his own laundry and that we had no house help, no public transportation, and that he would need to prepare his own lunch for work each day, and likely breakfast. I shared what I wished was true about our daily routine and what the reality actually looked like.



Wycliff (Kenya), host father Lawrence Kibunjah holding daughter Christina, Mohau (Lesotho), and Donald (Tanzania) at Fall Festival

When he arrived we tried to make the most of our weekends before the cold season arrives by engaging in family outings. Getting out and simply having fun was great for establishing relationship right off the bat.

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Who's Who in Canada?

We'd love to hear from you, especially if you would like to host or hire an IVEPer

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We found opportunities to connect with other young adults in our church and with the other local IVEPers. Now, the three male IVEPers in our area all seem to really enjoy attending the young adults group at our church on Tuesday nights together. Every time I pick them up they tell me how wonderful it was, how they got to know new people in the group and how they enjoyed the lesson in faith topic that was discussed.

Robyn Kibunjah and family, Perkasie, Pennsylvania, are hosting Wycliff Otieno from Kenya

Partner insights: it was a natural fit

The Kindred Credit Union Centre for Peace Advancement (CPA) at Conrad Grebel University College aims to advance expansive and innovative understandings and practices of peace locally and globally by promoting collaboration among its peace partners in ways that seek wisdom, nurture faith and serve church and society.

Based on who we are and what we value, it was a natural fit for the CPA to welcome an IVEPer onto our team! Our desire for help with incentivizing collaboration led us to envision the role of "Community Animator" even before the opportunity to host an IVEPer crossed our desk.

Socheata Poup, the Cambodian IVEPer who has taken on this role, brings a unique flavour to our community, and new perspective to some of the everyday pieces of community life that we can take for granted at the CPA.

Socheata is soaking up all the opportunities being placed at Grebel has to offer: attending weekly coffee breaks and suppers with students and staff, attending lectures and art exhibit openings, and visiting local innovation hubs. Her enthusiasm for soaking up all there is to experience within the campus and wider community has helped us at the CPA see our work in a new light!

Michelle Jackett, Coordinator, Kindred Credit Union CPA, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada



Chansocheata Poup, Cambodia, centre, connecting with Grebel grad students at a launch event for a new peace education program at the CPA

Alumni insights: IVEP France reunion



Myriam Hege, former IVEPer and Lydia Plett, MCC West Europe co-representative

MCC's IVEP Program began in 1950, and at the beginning, it consisted mainly of Europeans being selected to spend a year in an exchange program in North America. Many years there could be as many as 20 young people from Germany, and another 20 from France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, or other European countries. In the past 10 years there seem to be many other opportunities for young people from Europe to spend a year overseas, so there have generally not been more than two or three from all of West Europe with IVEP. Since 1950 there have been a total of 175 people from the French Mennonite church who participated in IVEP.

Who's Who in the U.S.?

We'd love to hear from you, especially if you would like to host or hire an IVEPer

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Quilting at reunion



Sharing stories over lunch



Talking with Fritz Hege, center, France's oldest IVEP alum



Singing at reunion



Afternoon coffee



One of the first IVEP groups from Europe

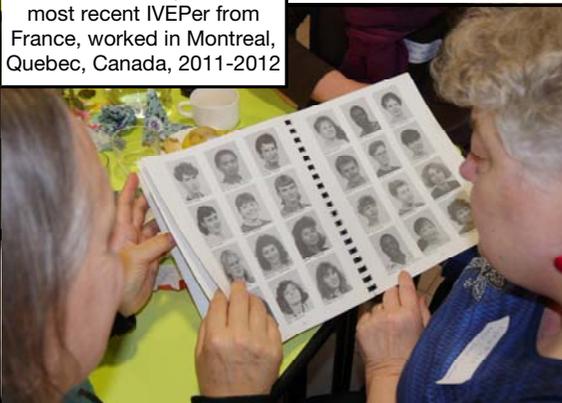
Myriam Hege, a former IVEPer herself, and the president of our MCC-France Legal Board, and I started planning for a reunion of all former IVEPers from France in September 2015. It was impossible to track down each person with either an email address or a physical address, so we resorted to placing an ad in the Mennonite monthly magazine 'Christ Seul', as well as sending an invitation/announcement to all 30 Mennonite churches in France. We had some great responses, and many people were really excited to be part of this reunion. However, when we came to the final week and looked at the numbers we needed to prepare for, in terms of church set-up and food, we had only 40 people. This included spouses and other invited guests. It would have been great to have a bigger response, but we counted the event a huge success because the people who came were so enthusiastic and passionate when it came to talking about their IVEP experience!

Saturday, 30 January 2016, the day of our IVEP France Reunion, was an all-day event, starting with brioche and kugelhopf, coffee, tea and juice at 10 am. We had invited four quilters from Switzerland to come and set up some quilts for some hands-on volunteering for an MCC relief effort. We served a hot meal at noon, and then had a more formal program in the afternoon. It seemed that everyone who had been in Canada or the U.S. for IVEP wanted to tell their special story. It was really inspiring to hear how this year abroad shaped who they have become today. The oldest IVEPer in attendance, Fritz Hege, had gone to Kansas in 1953 to work on a farm. We ended the day with coffee and muffins around 5 pm. Even though most people who came didn't know many others there, the conversation flowed freely all day as they shared about their year overseas.



Lydia and Menno Plett, MCC West Europe representatives, recruit and prepare IVEPers from West Europe for their year of MCC service

Clementine Poupaert, the most recent IVEPer from France, worked in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 2011-2012



Looking through an IVEP yearbook from years past

IVEPers in action—orientations and early days

Pray for . . .

** IVEPers living out their desire to promote goodwill and better understanding this year*

** IVEP hosts and partners as they continue to be a welcoming community for IVEPers*

** All the IVEP applicants who were denied or never granted visas and so were unable to participate ~ that they will find new direction*

** Early plans for IVEP Mid-year Conference*

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IVEPers having fun at the Akron orientation, Pennsylvania, U.S.



Bonds of affection between Marie (Honduras), placed at Lancaster Mennonite School, Locust Grove campus, and Lily, her host sister



IVEPers at the Cambridge, Ontario, Canada, orientation sorting donations for school kits at the MCC Ontario Material Resource Center (MRC)



Majaga arrives in Toronto airport from Tanzania—the final IVEPer for 2016-2017, working in Ontario



IVEPers at the Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, orientation hanging out with a stuffed bison at the FortWhyte Alive centre. Manitoba Provincial coordinator Katie Froese, lower left, co-led this orientation which took place in her home province



Goshen College welcomes visiting IVEPers I to r Shi (China), Barbara (Brazil) and Sita (Bangladesh) all working in Ohio