

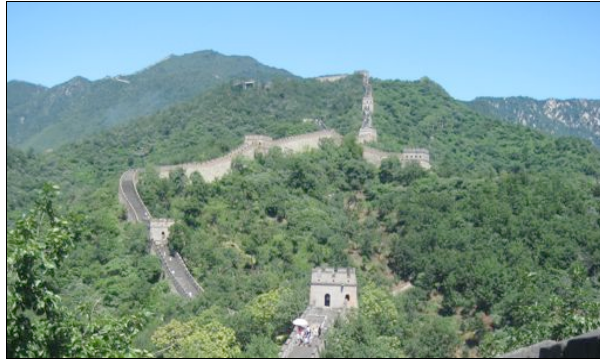


DC CHINA SCHOLARS PROGRAM SUMMER 2008

Sponsored by
Americans Promoting Study Abroad (APSA)

in partnership with the
DC Center for Global Education and Leadership (CGEL)

and the District of Columbia Public Schools



THE GREAT WALL

Life is like the wall
Working so hard to get to the top
The farther you go
The steeper it gets
With so many temptations
To give up
And so many rest stops
But you're determined
So you don't stop.

Your mind tells you to keep going
Because you're almost there
But your body is like
I've made it to my last rock
Step after step
You have to prepare
Your mind, mentally
And your body, physically
Because you never know
What's straight ahead
You're tempted to go back
But you have come too far.

My mom always told me
To finish what I start
And not to give up
Well, I didn't give up
And made it to the top
With thoughts to stop.

I couldn't stay at the top forever
With nice and sunny weather
I went down
With a frown
Thinking about how far I've just come
But going down was
Much easier than going.

Life is like the great wall
Just remember don't give up.

by Juanique McNeill

THE DC CHINA SCHOLARS PROGRAM

The Program Organizers

The DC China Scholars Program, part of APSA's Global Education Youth Fellowship Program, is the result of a collaboration between two nonprofit organizations dedicated to providing young people with opportunities to travel abroad, to increase their understanding of global issues, and to expand awareness of their connections to the rest of the world.

- **Americans Promoting Study Abroad (APSA)** is a new organization, created by a group of Americans who live and work in China, with the purpose of providing high-quality, fully-funded international Chinese language and culture study opportunities for high school students from American urban public school districts. Last year APSA volunteers raised funds to launch their pilot program, the Global Education Youth Fellowship Program, in Beijing, China, for ten students from Washington, DC and Rochester, NY. Building on last year's success, APSA's 2009 summer program in Beijing will expand to 30 students from DC, Rochester, Atlanta, and Boston public schools.
- **DC Center for Global Education and Leadership (CGEL)** is a DC-based nonprofit organization dedicated to improving and expanding global education for students in DC Public Schools (DCPS). CGEL works closely with APSA in the selection, pre-trip preparation, and year-round follow-up for the DC student participants. It also organizes the DC orientation program for the full group prior to their departure to China. CGEL's involvement in the APSA program is part of its effort to enhance and support the development of the Chinese language program in DCPS.

The Program

In summer 2008, five students from DC Public Schools and five students from Rochester City School District traveled to Beijing, China for five weeks (June 29 – August 1) for an intensive Chinese language and culture program – all expenses paid. Students were housed and took classes at Number 2 High School Affiliated with Beijing Normal University. Mornings were devoted to intensive Chinese language study; during afternoons and weekends, students either took culture classes at the school (gong fu, calligraphy, dance, art) or went on field trips to sites of historic or cultural significance. An important objective of the program was to expose the students to Americans working, studying, and living in China, and students made many special visits to American businesses operating in Beijing. Prior to departure, each city prepared its students with preliminary Chinese language and culture instruction. The Rochester and DC students joined in DC for a 2 day-orientation prior to departure to China. After returning to DC, during the 2008-09 school year, the 2008 DC China Scholars continued to meet at least weekly to continue their Chinese language study and to work on other China-related projects.

The Student Selection Process

Students were selected by each school district through a competitive application process. Selection was based on a combination of factors: academic record, afterschool activities, community service, leadership qualities, personal maturity, and teacher recommendations. The selection panel also looked for a diverse student group, representing different schools and sections of the city, and worked to identify those students who would be most positively impacted by this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Selected students committed to participate in all pre- and post-trip activities, including continuation of Chinese language classes during the 2008-09 school year.



A SUMMER TO REMEMBER A MESSAGE FROM MA LAOSHI

The summer of 2008 was one of the best summers I ever had. My name is Qian Ma (Maggie). I have been teaching Chinese as a foreign language for the last 6 years. Two years ago, I transferred from an international school in Beijing to teach Chinese at Wilson Senior High School in Washington DC. I was selected to help develop the APSA China Scholars Program and to lead the first group of participants during five amazing weeks in Beijing. Here is what I learned and observed about their progress:

First, I was able to observe our students acquire the language and culture like a sponge. As a language teacher, I use all different ways to motivate students to learn in the classroom, but after the trip, I realize the most effective way for students to learn another language is to let them be immersed in an environment where people speak the target language all the time. In China the students were surrounded by Chinese language, values, habits, food, and appearances on a daily basis. Everyday, I heard the students using new Chinese words they had just learned to communicate with the inhabitants, exhibiting excitement at what they saw and heard. After five weeks, all of the students had developed their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, and had enhanced their comprehension of Chinese culture.

It was also exciting for me to see the students learn about themselves more and more during the five weeks. For all the students, this is the first time they had left their parents and lived in a completely different culture. Faced with unfamiliar circumstances and new challenges, the students needed to develop strategies to solve problems and adapt to their new environment. It was challenging, but it might also be the optimal way to discover their strengths and abilities. For example, because of summer vacation, there were almost no local high school students at the Beijing No. 2 High School for them to interact with. The program organizers thought this would be a problem. But in almost no time, our students told us how cool their new friends were. The boys talked about how fun it was to play basketball and soccer with the Chinese boys in the open fields. The girls talked about how interesting that they were able to use half Chinese and half English to chat with the school security guards.

Another important element of the program was the students' learning and appreciation of Chinese culture. Before the students jumped on the airplane, China was just a picture in a book, a kong fu star in a movie, or a piece of map on another side of the globe. But when they lived there, all of them were enthralled by the unique culture. As long as they learn about the new culture, it challenges them to reconsider their own perspectives and values. As we see, after the students return to the United States, they turned out more mature than before. They see things around them through a new eye and respond in more effective ways.

I am so proud of all our students.

BECOMING GLOBAL CITIZENS

A MESSAGE FROM THE 2008 DC CHINA SCHOLARS

Dear Fellow DCPS Students,

Though the world is a huge place, people are becoming even more connected with each other through high technology. But no matter how advanced technology gets, the best type of interaction and connection is one-on-one, face-to-face. To experience that, you must be willing to go the extra mile to learn about another language and culture, and to allow yourself to step out of your comfort zone and enter a completely new realm and territory unfamiliar to your own.

The best way to do this is to take any opportunity that presents itself that will allow you to go to the country to get first-hand experience of the language, culture, and its people. Do whatever you can to travel, step out of your own world, and explore someone else's. Being able to connect with other cultures helps us to be more united and expands our knowledge about the world.

We were fortunate enough to be able to experience such an opportunity with this program. It allowed us to connect with the people and their culture as well as their language by giving us the chance to experience everything about them rather than the bits and pieces we read about in textbooks or on TV. This trip allowed us to become "Global Citizens" and also allowed us to be more open-minded and accepting. Being just "American" is not enough, and the time has come where joining the international community is a must. The gift of learning another language is stronger than anything and really is what allows people to immerse themselves in another culture.

Until you do, or if you can't, you can also take advantage of the ever-growing diversity that surrounds you here in our own country. The US has always been described as a "melting-pot of cultures blended together" and there is much diversity with people from all over the world at your disposal. Don't hesitate to make the first contact with someone and exchange ideas, views, and cultures. You'll be surprised with what you learn and how being exposed to other cultures can change your life. You learn that our similarities overpower our differences and that in actuality we are all quite the same.

Joseph, Peter, LiAnn, Juanique, and Nina

INTRODUCING
THE 2008 DC CHINA SCHOLARS

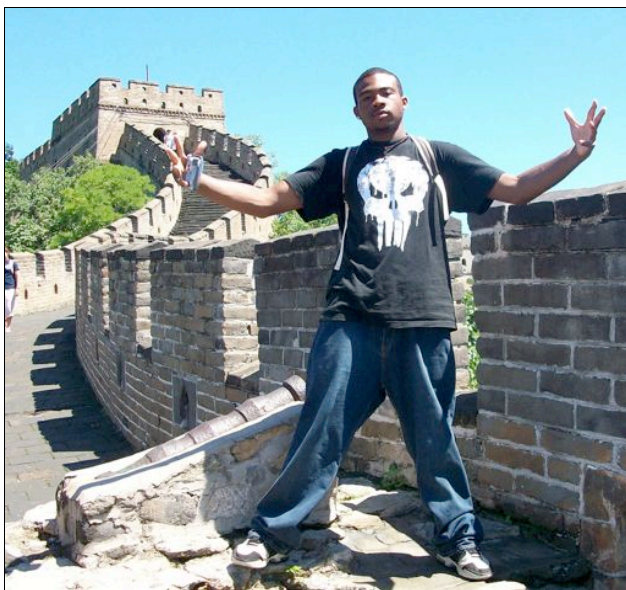
Joseph Boone
Anacostia S/H/S

Peter Mambwe
Wilson S/H/S

Li Ann Rose Marco
Wilson S/H/S

Juanique McNeill
Anacostia S/H/S and McKinley Technology H/S

Nina Robinson
School Without Walls



JOSEPH D. BOONE

Anacostia Senior High School

Class of 2009

“Bu Shu”

About Me:

Hello, my name is Joseph and I am a senior at Anacostia Senior High School. I am the section leader of the Anacostia Senior High Marching Band Drumline. I'm known as the funny guy in practice because I use my sense of humor to lighten up tense moments in practice. Other than band, I produce music, write poetry, and participate in many leadership programs within my school and community. My career goals are to start my own international trade company, and bring some manufacturing opportunities back to the United States and minimize outsourcing.

Most Memorable:

My most memorable moment from the trip is when Peter and I were at the school playing basketball with the Chinese students and we met one Chinese guy named Jason. We talked about rap music, and he showed us some break dancing and beat boxing.

Most Challenging:

The most challenging aspect of the trip was the huge language barrier, but if they saw you were putting forth an effort, they would help you.

What I Learned About Myself:

The most important thing I learned about China and myself is that in order to know who you are, you must know where you came from. The pride that the Chinese people have in their country was so admirable. After visiting China my career goals are the same, but I want China to play a big part in my trading, because the technological advancement and innovation over there is very intriguing.

Reflections:

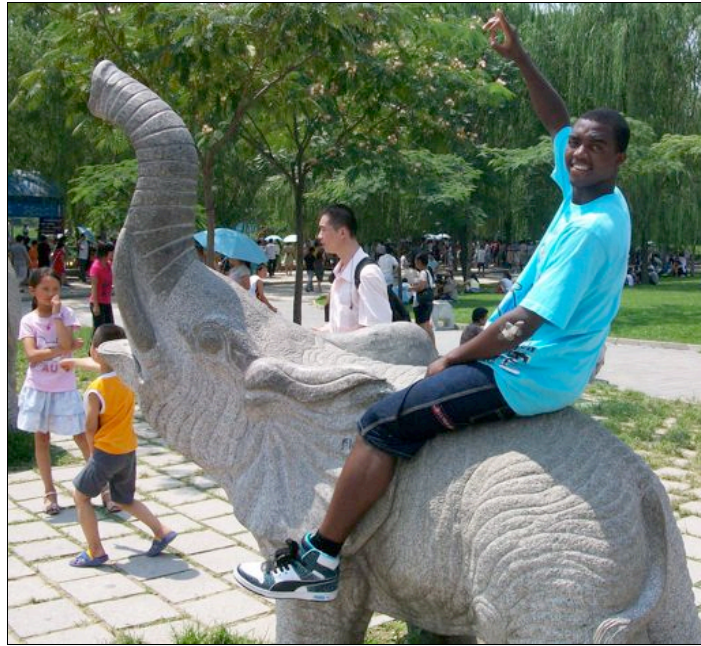
I applied for this program because it seemed like an opportunity of a lifetime. Many people don't get to leave their state, so when the chance to go to China appeared I jumped on it. The program really changed my outlook on the world. I was interested to learn of the Chinese perception of Americans, the American influences in their social culture, and the way that the Chinese people embraced foreigners with open arms. Overall the trip has inspired me to broaden my horizons and learn about other cultures. So one of my personal goals is to visit China once again and to visit other countries.

PETER KALUANI MAMBWE

Wilson High School

Class of 2009

王蔚藍 (Wàng Wèilán)



About Me:

Ni hao (你好), My name is Peter Kaluani Mambwe. I was born and raised in Zambia and did not get the opportunity to move to the United States until June, 2005. My middle name, 'Kaluanii,' carries a unique meaning. (I know Peter means Rock . . . but that's not the point.) It means 'Little Demon,' and I have a slight idea of why I was given this name. At this point, I truly believe the United States is a land of opportunity, so long as you possess the desire to make great accomplishments. I love to play soccer, I can draw and paint, but what I think truly carries me on, to be who I am, is my enthusiasm in learning just who and what else the world is made of. I consider myself one of the luckiest to have had the opportunity to live and learn in Beijing, China through the summer 2008 because of the APSA program. I have taken the first of many steps to understanding what it means to be a global citizen.

Most Memorable: *Trying out new food!! But on a serious note . . .*

I consider everything that I remember having done on this trip to China as the most memorable moments I have had so far. One of many important moments of this trip would be meeting a Chinese friend, whose name translated into Jason. Jason, like me, had a passion for soccer, which is why we met on the school soccer field right outside our dorms. It didn't matter that he didn't know me as well as one would think a person should, but he was very kind, knowing that I was a study abroad student, and went so far as to treat me with a bottle of Coca-Cola that day. On top of that, he offered treating the entire group to dinner at a restaurant the next time we played soccer, saying it was a way of showing his warm welcome and that it would mean so much if I accepted his offer. I got to practice my Chinese and he got to practice his English whenever we played, and learned of our similarities and differences in lifestyle. The friendly respect and curiosity I noticed was not an attribute found in Jason alone, but as well in the rest of the people we interacted with through the entire trip.

Most Challenging: *Finding clothes that could fit me . . . the girls got my back on this.*

When it comes to what challenges we had to face on this trip, no doubt learning the language practically was the biggest one. We sometimes had to go out and record (remember and write down) conversations that we had in Chinese with store managers or any other random person out on the streets. Sometimes so many curious faces would approach us and try to hold a conversation in Chinese, and we had to have the guts to at least try interpreting what was being said in order to respond. This was the most embarrassing part but also the most fun part, because we all later came together and talked about each one's different experiences.

What I Learned About Myself:

It is difficult to make a self-evaluation without sounding as if I am praising myself. I am not going to write what bad habits I have or what will be negative about me (that's for me to know and for you to find out). It has been 3½ years since I moved to the United States. During this period of time, I have been witness to many occurrences and understand people more than I can say I would have living in Zambia. Comparing the transition from Zambia to the United States, and the trip to Beijing in the summer of 2008 with the APSA program, I have twice been the person that only knows what is said about my destination, both positive and negative, without being given the chance to make fair judgments myself. What I have learned about myself is how I have been able to deal with the actual discoveries that I have made while traveling in comparison to what I only heard before travel.

Reflections:

I was really impressed to find that so many cultures exist and live in such harmony when I arrived in the States in 2005. Not having grown up around any other type of culture but those of the tribes of my parents, I took to myself this exposure as an opportunity to finally feel and physically learn what I was only able to see on T.V or hear from others with experience of the outside world. I wasn't sure which culture to start with, so I decided I would want friends that were interested in learning about my origin, as I would learn about their origins. Before I knew it, I had friends from all corners of the world, with so many different stories to share. With this came the difficult part of finally choosing a language to study. I finally decided to choose Chinese, because it is not a language I ever dreamed I would be able to understand. I naturally look for challenges, and it was Chinese that stood out among other languages and one that has a lot of recognition around the world, providing a very wide range for practice. This opportunity to go to Beijing came at the perfect moment of my Chinese studies. Just as I began to think I needed an environment that would push me to study harder or else make a limited amount of progress in mastering the language, it was announced that students chosen would be able to intensively study in Beijing for five weeks without worrying about transportation costs. Talk about a miracle when I realized I was to be 1 of the 10 given this golden opportunity!

Now this trip has influenced a very big part of the future that is to come for me. I look forward to more study abroad programs back to China and across the rest of the world later. I have become more aware of what is going on everywhere around the world and how the world is being affected as a result, like the way elections in the U.S are watched everywhere. My friends, family, teachers, and school counselors keep encouraging me that International Relations would be a field that will put me in the path I look forward to, and I think it is one field I plan on exploring next. Penn State University, University Park is the place that has opened its door to me now. Having made the decision to enter, I am looking forward to what is in store for me.



LI ANN ROSE MARCO

Woodrow Wilson Senior High School

Class of 2009

“Liann Rou”

About Me:

My name is Li Ann Rose and I'm a Filipino-American born in the Philippines, but raised in Washington, DC. Since high school, I have been involved in many school-related activities. I was the School Treasurer for Student Government, a Recycling Club participant, a Senior Co-Editor for Wilson's LAVA Magazine, a participant in Asian Club, as well as participating in leadership programs, such as Student Conservation Association (SCA), that deals with the environment, and Teen Women in Action, which helps to promote leadership and empower young women in the District of Columbia. My personal hobbies include sketching, listening to music (specifically East Asian music), learning a new language, and watching dramas from overseas (centered around Chinese, Japanese, and Korean dramas). I would like to pursue an occupation with languages and travel. I want to use the skills that I learn through learning another language and culture to make myself more appealing and marketable to others so that I may be able to travel around, to see the world, and to become a better global citizen.

My personality is very easy-going; my mood and role changes to fit the situation at hand. I can be a leader or a follower depending on the environment and what is needed. I'm very straight-forward and blunt, which can be either an advantage or a disadvantage. I love to interact with people and learn about new cultures. Food is one of the best ways to experience another culture, in my opinion, and immersing oneself in the culture & language is definitely another.

Most Memorable: *Climbing up the Great Wall*

This was an indescribable, breath-taking (both figuratively as well as literally) experience that will truly stay with me my entire life. I got to see the more natural side of China and see the untouched landscape, as well as the history behind everything. I got to interact with many people, specifically people that lived in the mountains. They shared their experiences with us and talked about how they had to climb the Great Wall everyday, while carrying all their items just to sell to the passing tourists. They also shared with us how that was pretty much the only income that they received to live off of. It was a very enriching, eye-opening experience - one I will never forget.

Most Challenging:

The most challenging aspect of the trip in my opinion was the sudden change of environment and the differences in culture. We were so suddenly immersed in China that it was hard to immediately register it into our brains.

What I Learned About Myself:

In my opinion, the program was successful in more ways than one. The program has allowed me to realize my real passion for Asian studies, which I plan to pursue when I attend Knox College in the fall. During the trip, I noticed that I'm more adaptable and open to other cultures. And I learned that I'm more independent than I had originally thought.

Reflections:

I applied for this program as I had recently grown a major interest in the East Asia region, specifically China, Japan, and South Korea. When I heard about the program from my homeroom teacher, I thought that it was the best way for me to see how truly interested I was. I also wanted to experience the language and culture of China first-hand. I wanted to see if it was something I could truly pursue.

The program really changed me, I think, for the better. It has really given me the chance to explore the vast opportunities out there and become more globally aware, as well as being open-minded. It has opened my eyes and makes me even more interested about the world. I now feel that there are more options in front of me, and that there are new different routes and paths that I never knew were even there. It has really given me a whole new perspective and outlook, making me want to pursue Chinese, as well as international affairs in the future.

The most important thing I learned about China was how different I had it in my mind. I thought it was this overbearing, depressing country with miles and miles of countryside that held barely any buildings or towers. But I was definitely proven wrong from the moment that I stepped into Beijing. All my stereotypes, pretenses, and skewed views were all washed away, and I was able to see and enjoy China for what it really was – a country like any other, with people just like us, but with a different flair and outlook on things, and with a lot of history.

The program has definitely affected my personal goals as well as my career ones, as it has reinforced my feelings towards studying Asian languages. Before the trip, I was skeptical and confused on what I thought I would be doing in college, but it has made me realize that this is what I would really love to pursue as I enjoy learning the language, and using it to interact with people I could have never met without it. I will definitely be pursuing Mandarin in college and hopefully thereafter. After becoming fluent in Chinese, I would like to study more languages and become multilingual by learning Japanese and then Korean.

JUANIQUE MCNEILL
McKinley Technology High School
Class of 2010
“A ni kua”



Most Memorable:

My most memorable moment was arriving to the top of the Great Wall of China. It took me four hours to get to the top, I felt like I could conquer anything. I almost gave up and wanted to go back where I started, but I kept going. It was a moment in my life I would never forget and I would climb the wall all over again.

Most Challenging:

The most challenging part of the trip for me was being away from my family and friends. I never thought so early in my life I would have been that many miles away from my loved ones and not be able to communicate with them regularly. I was so used to being around people I knew everything about and being able to express myself to them. Being in China I had to learn about a different culture and come out of my comfort zone, and the only way for me to express myself was through my journal. While in China I realized how important my loved ones are to me, and that's why this was the most challenging part of the trip for me.

What I Learned About Myself:

One thing that I have learned about myself while in China is that I can get along with anyone no matter what they look like and that I don't get homesick.

Reflections:

China changed the way I thought about and the way I looked at different cultures. During the five weeks, I learned a lot of China's history. I visited some great places and some great people. The food was great and I enjoyed eating with chopsticks. This experience made me realize the freedom that I have living in the United States and how fortunate I was in spite of living in one of DC's most hostile public housing developments. This experience allowed me to compare and contrast China and the United States.

Before I went to China I thought that I wouldn't like it and learning Mandarin would be really complicated. Also, that I would give up on the culture and get tired of it easily. Now that I have been, I have a different perspective about China. I liked it, and Mandarin wasn't complicated once I got used to it. I thought everyone would be dressed in traditional Chinese clothing but they were more modernized than I was. Their building structures were complicated and different. Everywhere we went someone was building.

When I first got to China I realized that people would always look at me, stare, and whisper or take pictures of me or with me. Before I began to learn Mandarin and understand why they did that, I found it very offensive. Once I learned a little of Mandarin, I understood that the whispers were about their amazement with the color of my skin, and they wanted to know how I did my hair (braids). Chinese people don't see that many people with my skin color, and once I found that out, my whole perspective of China and its people changed.

While in China I visited some great places like the Heaven Temple, Summer Palace, the Great Wall of China, The Forbidden City, MTV China, Google, Beijing Opera, Acrobats, and many other places. My favorite place was the Great Wall of China. The Wall made me think it was a lot like life, and now I am able to say I visited one of the Seven Wonders of the World. I met with some people from Google and Yahoo, who work in China and have Mandarin as a second language. I look forward to next summer, as I will be in China once again.

Thanks to APSA, my life has been changed.

SUMMER PALACE

I took one step
On the Summer Palace
With over 200 years of history
Right at my foot steps
I found myself looking back in time.

Even though it would take days
To see the whole thing
While walking through the palace
I caught instant fame
Picture after picture
No one even knew my name.

From the bottom to the top
Of the palace
It was oh so everlasting
I got to the top and
Tried to gather my remains.



NINA ROBINSON

School without Walls Senior High School

Class of 2010

“Bin Ni Na” (pronounced Bean-Knee-Na)

About Me:

My future career goal is to work in the field of International Relations. In college I would like to double major in Chinese Language and International Affairs. Shortly after graduating graduate school, I would like to work as a Foreign Service Officer/Diplomat. My hobbies include reading, learning a new language, shopping, and listening to an array of music genres. I would say that I am a person who loves to be around people, learning new things, and anything that involves holding a leadership position. In 9th through 10th grade I have held office as both vice president and president. I have always been someone who was interested in leading, and that has a lot to do with my future aspirations.

Most Memorable: *My time spent walking the Great Wall.*

A memory that I will never forget is the day I climbed the Great Wall. Many know that it is one of the greatest adventures in the world to complete. On that day I was so exhausted, but filled with so much excitement. This is the day that I also got to talk with one of the Chinese women who lived in the poorer parts of China. With what little Chinese I knew, I was able to hold a conversation, but there was also a heart to heart connection. After climbing from the top, I was so tired and she laid a mat out for me to sit and shared a piece of bread that belonged to her. To someone else this might seem small, but was something that really touched me that day. This also brings me to the many times where I was able to practice my Chinese. Another great memory was being able to talk with the people. I was able to converse in another language other than English. Even though sometimes speaking Chinese was difficult for me, the people were patient and helped me along the way. My classes will always be something that I will never forget. The class is where I grew and learned a language that I will forever cherish.

Most Challenging: *Remembering the types of food I wanted to order in Chinese.*

What I Learned About Myself:

During my time in China there were a few things that I learned about myself -- some of them included my strong will for determination and my new self-dependency. Before going to China I knew that I would go an extra mile to do well, but how far I was never quite sure. However, this was proven to me when I was able to learn Chinese and use it to get around Beijing. This amazed myself and proved that with my determination, anything is possible. Not only that but being away from home and family showed that I could leave the nest and fly successfully. I learned that I can do well on my own and that proved to be a good sign when I go off to college.

Reflections:

I was very fortunate to have an experience unlike any other last summer. I learned a new language, gained many memories, and have gained everlasting opportunities. The China experience was life changing and an unforgettable adventure. Traveling to China also allowed me to fulfill some of my goals and move a step closer to achieving my future endeavors. This trip has allowed me to have more insight and better understand a culture unlike my own. Not only was this trip an educational experience, but life experience.

With the opportunity to go to China, my knowledge of things expanded. I had the chance to learn Mandarin, a language spoken by more than a billion people, and one of the top known languages in the world. As a result of being in China, I am able to have a conversation, get around, and even survive in China if I had to. Being in the country I was allowed to better immerse myself in the language. I used the language when I bought things, when I held conversation with the citizens of Beijing, or in my class when I had to communicate with my teachers (a very effective way of learning the language). Not only did I learn the language, but the history and culture, including the history of Mao, Empress Ci Xi, and the history of the Great Wall. This learning experience will be one that will always be beneficial.

Having the chance to experience this has helped me grow as a person and has given me direction in my future career. As a result of this program I have a little more insight of the world and an early preparation in my future career field. I have always wanted to work in international relations and this experience has farther increased my interest. I am now equipped with the tools that I need to be successful and a global citizen. Another really great perk from this experience is that it has been a great look for my resume, which has drawn great interest from organizations who work with international and diplomatic affairs. This experience was a great opportunity and has opened many doors for me.

As soon as I got on the plane, I was already beginning to miss China and was not exactly ready to come back home. I knew I would miss the people, the culture, and the people who I was fortunate to share the experience with. A little more than a month after leaving China, I was already using my language skills and experience as an advantage. The week before school started, I was able to hold a conversation with a lady in the mall that was Chinese and a few days after that I understood a conversation this Chinese couple was having in front of me in Costco's. It was great and felt really good to know that I knew a language that many people did not know.

Our fellow travelers from Rochester, New York



Back row, from left: Lyle Eaton, Yanni Turner, Daniel Hagan, Joseph Santiago

Front: Katie Tiedemann, Jay Piper (chaperone)

Dear DC Group:

We all miss you terribly and want to see you again. Hopefully before we see you again this summer back in China!!!! So we have all been really busy studying Chinese. Since none of our schools have Chinese classes we're all studying together at central office downtown with Pei Laoshi and Tian Laoshi. Actually the one day for class we walked to our local Chinese restaurant and practiced our Chinese with them while having dinner, let me tell you GREAT way to have class! We're all studying really hard and of course Katie is busy making way too many flash cards. Lyla is dancing like crazy and loves it. Dan is having fun getting lots of tattoos plus that tree one he was talking about. Joseph is chilling like normal and Yanni is kicking but in soccer.

We miss hanging out with all of you. It was so nice having constant companionship and always having someone to laugh at our jokes. Girls we miss your room – it was sooo laid back and casual; guys, if we wanted noise and some nice drumming and stench, all we had to do was walk into your room and we were hooked up.

Li Ann, we miss tickling you until you cried. Not that we liked seeing you in pain, but you giggled so cute. Katie is glad that you are no longer screaming at her to get out in the middle of the night randomly in accomplice with Yanni. And we're all glad that you are no longer kicking the bed and waking yourself up thinking that someone is knocking at the door. "!!RAWR!!"

Peter and Joseph, Dan says he misses shaving his legs with you getting into dresses or mini skirts and of course party-boying all sorts of random people!! That and we loved watching you falling through walls and vaulting yourselves over each other. Oh and you can't forget the amazing shows that we had of watching you all play soccer and football with the Chinese students. Hey Peter you still talking to that girl? Details please...

Jauniqua and Nina, wow! You guys were awesome. You were always smiling and laughing and it was just wonderful. Your room was always hot and filled with people, but it was the spot to be, if you didn't mind the cockroaches and broken air conditioning, but hey we were in China, who cares?

Life has been so busy for all of us back here and it's hard to believe that we were actually ever in China. Dan and Katie are filling out college applications and waiting to find out where they have gotten in.

We hope you all had a great Christmas and understand that our love for all of you cannot simply be expressed in a letter, but that it is there and runs deep for all of you. Hopefully we will see you all soon and can reminisce about the old memories and make many new ones.

In conclusion, we would like to say that for being a group of twelve random people thrown together and sent to China, no group could have made better friends or had a better time than ours did.

!!!!MISS YOU ALL!!!!

Katie Tiedemann, Yanni Turner, Lyle Eaton, Daniel Hagan, Joseph Santiago

SUMMER MEMORIES



The DC and Rochester groups came together in Washington for two days of orientation before our departure to China. Here we are, game faces on, at a policy and economic briefing at the Center for Strategic International Studies (CSIS), arranged by China expert, Carola McGiffert. We were treated to our first of many Chinese meals afterwards.

Nina posing with Jeff Bader of the Brookings Institution, another DC “think tank,” after an informative briefing. We were impressed and excited to find out that Ambassador Bader was an Obama campaign advisor, and that he has now joined the Obama administration at the National Security Council.



We visited the Chinese Embassy, taking our first steps onto Chinese soil. We were hosted by Liu Jiangyi, a huge supporter of Chinese in DC Public Schools. All the while, we were all getting to know each other better.



Here we are with our families before hopping onto a Super Shuttle for our ride to Dulles. For most of us, it was our first time being away from our families and going so many miles away from home.



A breath-taking sight over the North Pole and our halfway mark to China.



The Beijing Airport welcoming us as we truly are...foreigners. Stepping into this completely modern and advanced airport broke down the first of many stereotypes.



Our first look at the streets of Beijing. We're in China!



No 2 High School was our home away from home. Language barriers aside, we were still able to interact with the Chinese students that we met there.

Testing out our new beds for the next five weeks. Joseph is making sure he can fit.





Many of our afternoons were spent in cultural classes. This class allowed us to experience one of China's most traditional dances practiced by Chinese women for centuries.



Peter testing out his skills in calligraphy, the traditional artistic form of writing Chinese characters. Calligraphy requires years of practice and a spiritual attitude.

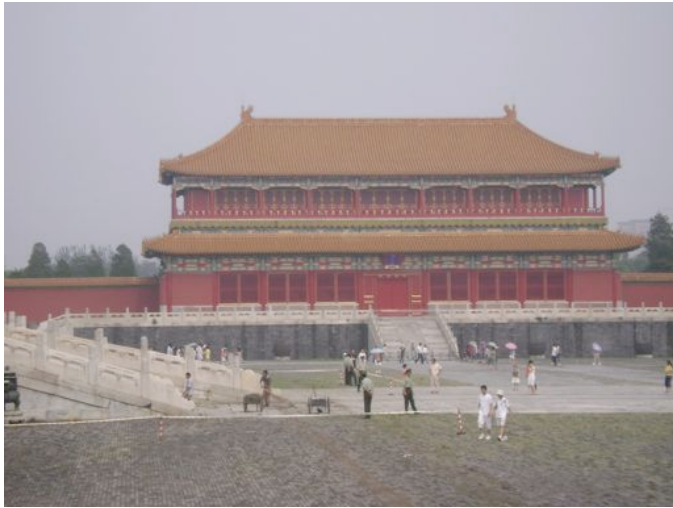


Painting Chinese zodiac signs at the Beijing Museum.

We were shocked to learn that The Great Wall was not a flat surface, but like a thousand-mile Stairmaster – that we had to climb! But we were also honored to be standing on one of the seven wonders of the world, built centuries ago to protect China from the Mongols. People toiled greatly and many lives were sacrificed.



Peter hanging out with some age-old “warriors” he met up with on the Great Wall.



The Forbidden City, Heaven Temple and Summer Palace are part of China's imperial history and a source of Chinese pride and joy. Chinese structures are known for their intricate detail and careful architectural design.



At the Summer Palace, we were able to travel the once secluded river that only the powerful Empress Ci Xi was allowed to travel in between her daily imperial duties and time of relaxation.





Behind the scenes of the Peking Opera.



We had the unforgettable experience of visiting an orphanage for disabled children.
The kids were beautiful and we were forever touched by them.



Signs of the upcoming Olympics were everywhere. We felt that Beijing was holding its arms out to give us a great big welcome. Its "One World One Dream" sign made us feel like we didn't have any differences and that Beijing was our home.



Our group taking a Kodak moment shot with the Bird's Nest and the Watercube. We were fortunate enough to get an exclusive look at the Olympic Village before everybody else.

An important part of our trip were the behind-the-scenes visits to major, influential businesses, started in the United States, but now global companies breaking into the China market. Coca-Cola was one of the major sponsors of the Beijing Olympics.



MTV introduced a different music scene to China's population.

The NBA has built basketball courts all over China. We witnessed firsthand the popularity of basketball – and the skills of young Beijing players.





Just because we were in China, it didn't mean that we forgot our origins and celebrating the 4th of July in an international school at Beijing was something we definitely weren't going to miss out on.



The closest we ever got to the countryside was at this Art School near the Great Wall.



The longer we stayed in Beijing, the more we saw western influences touch small parts and aspects of China. Like this Jazz Bar for instance. And the Hip Hop Club across the alley.



Unlike parks in the US, people use their parks to the fullest, and they are a great place to congregate. From old to young, it's a place where people can gather to celebrate, pass the time with activities (tai chi, shadow boxing, ribbon dancing), and pass down stories.

Caramel apple meet Old Beijing Candied Haw. This was one of the many experiences that we loved, FOOD! Our group practically lived for it.



Bug cuisine anyone? An experience we'll never forget was being introduced to street food in China. We had some brave souls in our group who sampled this delicacy and gave us the thumbs up.



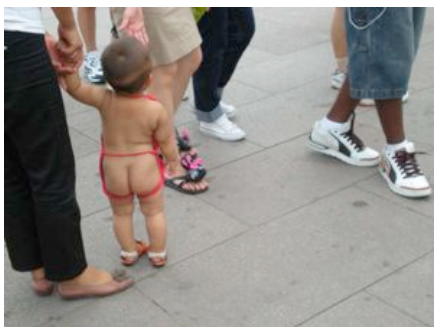
A good way to determine whether or not a trip is successful is FOOD. And believe us, this trip was successful! We got to unwind, with our chopsticks, over traditional Chinese meals.



We met many interesting characters on the streets of Beijing.



We felt like celebrities – everyone wanted their pictures taken with us. And we enjoyed it!



We couldn't resist. Definitely one way to potty train.

THE END.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the bathrooms like? How do you use the bathroom?

To get an image as close to the common bathrooms/toilets as can be, imagine the normal toilets you use at their lowest level above the ground, with the flushing function. That is as simple as it can be put. They were almost like a hole in the ground. As the girls describe it, you basically stand over the "toilet", and you squat. Yup, plain and simple. We still wonder to this day which way to properly face, but either way, it all worked out. And in the end, we actually miss using them. Maybe the fact that they were so foreign to us was the reason why we were so amused by them, but it was definitely one experience we will never forget.



Is everyone there short?

Despite the 7-foot tall basketball player, Yao Ming, representing China and its people, this question seems to keep coming up where China is concerned. An exact height that determines whether a person is short or tall should be passed as a law so this question can be answered correctly. It doesn't seem to occur to others that tall Chinese people exist, in large numbers too. Such ignorance is simply unacceptable!

Did you experience censorship on the internet?

Our first experience that demonstrated China's censorship ability was when one of us tried to access Facebook. Access to Facebook, or any instant conversation-related websites, had been denied and stayed that way for at least a week in our trip. At our Google company field trip, we learned of how the company had to limit its search results. At one point, the entire browser unexpectedly closed, just to prevent access.

Was Beijing really crowded?

Not like we imagined it would be after all that is shown on TV. The city is very developed, and is designed in a manner that has created a lot of space for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians. The morning rush is when things got crowded because it was at this time that people were going to work and students going to school. One warning: pedestrians do not have the right of way.

How dirty was the air?

The air was not as bad as anyone could have imagined. Looking out the window of the plane before landing, there appeared to be some fog in the air. When we stepped out of the plane, we all definitely could smell the difference. Talk about people getting sick because of the air are simply inaccurate. It was to our surprise that we got used to the air within a day and without getting sick.

Did you like the food? Do they serve rice with everything? Did you eat dog?

It was hard to imagine in the beginning that we would be eating Chinese food everyday. The food turned out to be a lot better than the Chinese restaurants in DC. There were always leftovers whenever we had a meal because of how much was given. The question among us all was how the Chinese people managed to remain light in weight considering the amount of food consumed. Rice was always an option, and one recommended for all meals. Out of the ten of us, only one dared to eat dog. None of the rest really wanted to ask what it tasted like, but it appeared that it was enjoyable.

What was the subway like?

When you look at the map of the subway, it is outlined in a way almost similar to the subway in Washington DC. The speed of the trains was also just about as fast as the trains in DC. The differences that we experienced were how crowded the trains got especially during rush hour, and the TV entertainment in each car. Also, the Beijing subway had different train designs; one had no doors separating one car from the other, enabling you to look all the way back and even see the train curve as it turns.

Did you see any of the Olympics?

Naahhh -- like everyone else, we wish we had stayed long enough to see the Olympics! We left for DC on the 1st of August, which is the same week the Olympics were going to start. It's not disappointing though, because we DID get to go and tour the Olympic Village (the Bird's Nest; the Water Cube; the Tower, which was managing all the broadcasting; as well as the headquarters of all the Olympic sponsors located there). With all that, we all were able to be like, "I was right there! See my footprint?!?" while watching the Olympics on TV back home in DC.

How did the Chinese people react to you?

Lights, Camera, aaaand Action! Whenever we went out to the big tourist sights in Beijing, it took us some time getting used to the Chinese people asking that we take pictures with them or their families. It was as if we were a part of the tourist sight itself, because people kept staring and taking pictures. The warm welcomes we got from them is a big part of what made the experience in Beijing as incredible as it turned out to be. There isn't a time that any one of us can say he/she had felt resentment from the Chinese people.

How was the shopping?

FUN! Being able to bargain for what we wanted was the newest and most exciting experience when we went out to the markets. Unfortunately, when it came to shopping for clothes, you had to be ready for a long day of searching. All of the girls except one could not fit the biggest size that the stores had to offer, and with the guys, if you wore anything bigger than "L" in American size, you were pretty much out of luck.

What are Chinese kids like?

Smart, hard working, very creative, and very energetic! Each one of us has had an experience with the Chinese kids while we self-toured Beijing, in the school, on the soccer field, on the basketball court, and even on the Great Wall, that can be shared. Almost all the kids we met could speak English, maybe not totally proficient, but very understandable. It was a lot of fun interacting with them whenever we got the chance, because we had so many questions concerning our different lifestyles.

SURVIVAL CHINESE

Hello/Hi

Ni hao 你好

Thank you

Xie xie 谢谢

We don't understand. We don't know.

Wo men bu ming bai, wo men bu zhi dao 我们不明白，我们不知道。

Excuse me (in a crowd)

Qing rang yi rang 请让一让

Where is the bathroom?

Ce suo zai na li? 厕所在哪里?

We're exchange students

Wo men shi liu xue sheng 我们是留学生。

Encouragement

Jia you! 加油!

How much is it?

Zhe ge duo shao qian? 这个多少钱?

Too expensive – I don't want it

Tai gui le, Wo bu yao. 太贵了，我不要。

Do you guys want to play basketball?

Ni men yao bu yao da lan qiu? 你们要不要打篮球?

OUR GROUP'S MOST USED CHINESE

Nina: I don't eat meat.

Wo bu chi rou. 我不吃肉。

Li Ann: I am American/Filipina, not Chinese.

Wo shi Mei guo ren/Fei lu bin ren, bu shi Zhong guo ren. 我是美国人/菲律宾人，不是中国人。

Juanique: My hair is not real.

Wo de tou fa bu shi zhen de. 我的头发不是真的。

Peter: You are very beautiful.

Ni hen piao liang. 你很漂亮。

Joseph: Does this have peanut oil?

Zhe zhong shi wu li mian you mei you hua sheng you? 这种食物里面有没有花生油?

XIE XIE

*Thank you to all those at home and in China who made our trip a success.
With your support and dedication our lives have changed.*

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- USDA Graduate School
- The Washington Passport Agency

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We love you guys. Thank you for continuing to support us, in every aspect of our lives and in particular APSA.