

# Eye On Campus

## Student Immigrants Recount Life Experiences

By **CHRISTINA LOUISE FELIZZI**

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The Classroom Lounge became culturally diverse on Nov. 14, 2006, with ethnicities from all corners of the world united in one room. A student panel was created; all of them immigrants from other countries with their own stories to tell. There were seven students present; some were more prepared than others to share their experiences. Patricia Hillen, professor of English at Penn State Delaware County, introduced the students. Many of them came to America in hopes of receiving a better education, the rights to freedom of speech, and more opportunities to help better their future.

Marat Mardenov, a student from Russia said he likes the freedom here in America because in Russia they looked down upon rebellion or speaking out. Marat left his homeland to escape the draft of Russia's war on terror at ten years of age. Once here, the language barrier was evident and hard to overcome; it took him over a month to get the basics of English down. Not making many friends only led to excessive television viewing, which was only because he was unfamiliar with the English language. That is not the case now because he is a student at Penn State, things have greatly improved.

Angelo Sotomango, who moved from the Philippines in 1997 to the United States, during his stay in New York, learned the basics of English. When he moved to West Chester, Pennsylvania, there was no family around for the holidays which was a little dampening.

Augi Boldbaatar, who is a freshman with a major in Business, came from Mongolia eight years ago, mainly for more educational and employment opportunities. It took three and a half years to complete the immigration process and once here, she was bombarded with new



information. Mongolia is a communist country where the government provides you with what you need, unlike the United States. Augi enjoys the privilege of freedom of speech and choice that is granted to her because she is now an American. One of the many differences she noticed when arriving here was how suggestively the girls dressed in comparison with girls from her native country.

"I would see people making out in the hallway and it would be kind of awkward," she explained. Obvious variations in America include the weather; it is very cold in Mongolia, ranging from  $-16^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $-2^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) in February to  $16^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $62^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) in July. Overall, Boldbaatar is proud to be an American.

Mohammed Elbana, a student from Egypt came here to the United States on Feb. 1, 2001 and is now a freshman. His father wanted to give him more opportunities in life so the decision to journey to America was set. Mohammed arrived here as a seventh grader and faced teasing from fellow students, but now is a college student who is more involved and much happier.

Zachary Xu, from China, ventured to America five years ago and is still trying to overcome the obstacles of the English language. Yet regardless of that, Xu has

found a better education and nicer people.

Another student, from Romania, Andreea Dan, came here recently, in June of 2006. She hated it when she first arrived and was made fun of as a result of the language barrier. "The Jerry Springer Show taught me English," she said, receiving a laugh from the audience. Andreea realizes that she would not be in college right now if she were in Romania because of how difficult Romanian universities are to get into. Despite her lack of church services as a result of inconvenience and missing her friends back home, America has provided Andreea with a bright future.

Tanya Sultana, from Bangladesh, described what it was like for women in her country with limited opportunities in comparison to men. Most women would not receive further education, but they would marry and work in the house after high school. In her village, which was overpopulated, there was only one television and it was in her house, so everyone would come to her house for TV night. Sultan arrived in the United States in 1996 and as a third grader who spoke little English had to take a year of ESL which helped greatly. For her, coming to America has given her a chance for a successful future.

Almost 100 students, faculty, and staff attended the forum, which was a great turn out for the event. This presentation was a way for American-born students to get a glimpse into the hardships and impediments immigrant-students had to surmount, and it helped them to realize how thankful they should be to have been born an American, instead of having to become one. "The forum was really interesting because we got to hear about all the other student's lives before PSU," says freshman Ashley Salada, "I guess we all have our own journey, just depends on how far you have to come together to meet."

## Delco Concert Raises Money for Charity

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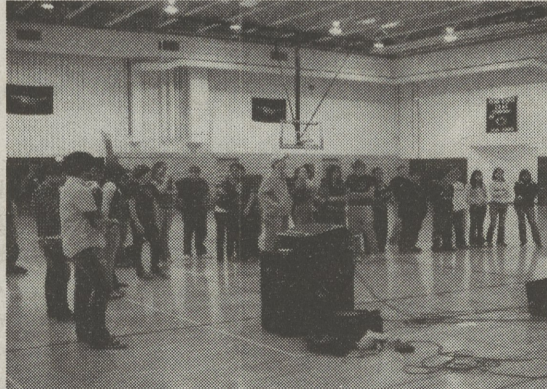
On Friday, Dec. 1, in the Penn State Delaware County campus gym, the National Christian Fellowship sponsored a Chords for a Cure show, a non-profit organization that puts on benefit concerts for different charities and organizations every month, to raise money for a charity called Invisible Children. The charity dedicates its efforts to rescuing children who have been kidnapped by terrorists in Uganda and are forced to participate in war and kill.

Invisible Children finds these children, and brings them to a safe place where they no longer have to participate in such gruesome acts. The children are helped enroll school, and restart their lives.

The National Christian Fellowship, a group on campus that unites in their beliefs and does community service, provided not only the venue, but an atmosphere for concert-goers that kept a relaxed and warm attitude. A table with Bibles and pamphlets on Faith were present to

emphasize the night's "good karma."

Five bands came together to support the cause and all the admission to the show went towards Invisible Children. The turn out of the concert was very positive. At the end of the night, around 450 dollars was raised and presented to the charity.



One band, Cool Hand Luke, saw the show's cause to be so important they ended up drove all the way from Nashville, Tennessee just to play the show, and then, go home. When talking to Casey McBride, the band's bass player, he was asked if the drive was worth it. He responded, "Absolutely. Coming to Pennsylvania for this was absolutely worth it."

Unfortunately, the night did not go 100 percent smoothly, as a fight broke out during the band After a Three Days March, a hardcore band from the area. The fight

quickly disbanded and was dealt with. The singer from Committed, unfortunately was involved in the fight, resulting in Committed not being able to perform in the show.

Cool Hand Luke, the headliner for the show, ended up giving an encore at the end of the show because concert-

goers ended up having such a great time, and were not leaving the gym. The spirit of the show was very uplifting. All participants seemed to be having a good time, watching the bands, and knowing that their good time on a Friday night was wasted.

Concert-goer, Patrick Scanlon raved about the night, "It was a great show. It was a shame that Committed could not go on, but who can argue with Cool Hand

Luke?"

Hopefully, the response that we saw with this show is only the beginning to many more to come for Chords for a Cure here at Penn State Delaware County. You can find out more about Invisible Children by going to [www.invisiblechildren.com](http://www.invisiblechildren.com). You can also find out more about Chords for a Cure events by going to [www.chordsforacure.org](http://www.chordsforacure.org) or going to <http://www.myspace.com/chordsforacure>.

