

The CIVIC Citizen

The Council for International Visitors to Iowa Cities

A recent history of the National Council for International Visitors quotes a local council volunteer as follows: "At the time of his visit, a leader of an Islamist group in Tunisia was very anti-American. The visit to the U.S. transformed him completely. Upon his return he wrote a series of six articles entitled, 'What I Saw', in which he reversed his positions on America and our people 180 degrees."

In January of this year, an anti-American Muslim educator from Morocco visited Iowa City. He was hosted in part by CIVIC members Robert & Elizabeth Engel. When Mr. Saoud, the Moroccan, returned home he wrote the following to one of his programmers: "My trip was truly a great success. I had interesting encounters and very instructive meetings. Beautiful country, and huge: also, Americans are very likable, cool people. Really, I was greatly impressed." Later he wrote, "I'm going to organize an exhibition in my school's library about the USA as I discovered it."

CIVIC hosted two other international visitors in January. Mr. Fausto Romero, a television journalist and minorities specialist from Ecuador, was hosted by Pat & Gerald Meis (who plan to visit him in Ecuador), Lester & Betty Batterman, and Mr. & Mrs. Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld. From all accounts it was a great visit and, presumably, Mr. Romero left Iowa City a few pounds heavier than when he arrived.

Ms. Makiko Ouchi, a journalist from Japan, once lived in the U.S. so nothing Americans did was much of a surprise to her. She enjoyed home hospitality provided by Jeanne Stoakes and Patrick Hughes, and Dr. and Mrs. Arthur Hartz - and was guided around the Iowa City area by Jeanne Cadoret. Ms. Ouchi said the most impressive part of her trip to Iowa City was the people she met. She also asked a question, a question that is asked by many international visitors that concerns American volunteerism: "Why are you doing this?"

According to our foreign guests, American volunteerism is unique. Does any one out there know its origins? An explanation would help CIVIC home hospitality volunteers answer the "why" question in the future.

Thanks to all who have contributed. With anti-Americanism seemingly on the rise across the world, your participation in the international visitor program is crucial. Robert Engel said that Mr. Saoud, the Moroccan, showed an intense interest in the Engels' home kitchen. Are good international relations so easy to accomplish as inviting someone into your kitchen? Perhaps so.

Editorial staff
CIVIC Citizen

PS: If you prefer to receive this by e-mail, please send address to: Marianne-weiss@uiowa.edu