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## Chinese express: Students visit Macomb to learn about law, lifestyle

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Host mother Nancy Horodyskyj hugs Chinese students Anzhi Ty and Kaili Qin on Friday, their last day visiting the Detroit area as part of the exchange program sponsored by the Macomb Cultural & Economic Partnership in Mount Clemens. (The Macomb Daily/DAVID DALTON)

A student exchange program exploded this summer with more than 150 mostly college-age adults visiting Macomb County businesses, courtrooms, shopping malls and homes.

“This was our biggest summer ever,” said Ed Bruley, secretary of the board of directors of the Macomb Cultural & Economic Partnership in Mount Clemens. “It’s part of our efforts to try and market the area. We’ve tried to reach out and expand.”

The MCEP was founded in 2009 with the intent of establishing relationships with organizations and people around the world for the economic benefit of Macomb County. The exchange program, in partnership with multiple Chinese universities, is designed to expose educated, ambitious Chinese students to opportunities in Macomb County. Each participant and his or her family pay for the experience, and each one spends \$1,000 to \$2,000 at area local stores, Bruley said.

“Their parents want them to learn American culture, learn the language and gain some experience,” said Bruley, a former county commissioner. “Mostly they’ve wanted to go to New York and California. But

we're trying to snag a few of them for the Midwest and Michigan. We want them to help improve our economy."

Most of the students, except for a dozen high schoolers, are in a bachelor's or postgraduate program.

MCEP's twice-a-year trips to China to initiate and maintain relationships with Chinese universities are paying off, especially at law schools where interest is high in the American legal system, Bruley said.

"They in China are beginning to have a system of law," he said. "They are very interested in comparing what we have with what they have, and seeing the benefits of what we do.

"We're getting good word-of-mouth through the (Chinese law) schools."

About 100 of the students were part of four 25- to 30-person groups of law school students who spent two weeks studying the legal system by spending time at law firms and schools, and in the courts — Macomb County Circuit Court and Probate Court, and 41A District Court in Sterling Heights. They attended seminars staged by law professors at the Oakland University Anton Frankel center, where MCEP offices are located. On Thursday, they visited law schools at WSU in Detroit and the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor after spending Wednesday at circuit court in Mount Clemens.

Bruley described the law program as "sort of touring with an educational bent to it."

Another 31 students are serving 10-week internships at local businesses and nonprofits — from Lowe's to Habitat for Humanity — as part of a new year-round program in which they also attend classes at the Macomb County locations of Wayne State University and Oakland University. They will leave next month and be replaced by a new group.

An engineering group of 25 stayed for two weeks earlier this summer, Bruley said.

Last year, less than 100 students in all participated, he said.

The law students mostly stay with host families, while the long-term students rent hotel rooms or condominiums, as well as spend time with a host family.

They also are treated to recreational and social outings nights and weekends to experience the area's quality of life.

#### Global relationships sparked

The hosts and visitors often become emotionally attached to each other during their two-week adventure. On Friday morning, they exchanged warm hugs and smiles as they departed at the MCEP offices. The students were to fly with Bruley on Friday night to Washington, D.C., before returning to China on Tuesday.

"They became part of our family, if only for two weeks," said Louis Johnson, 50, who, along with his wife, Renee Arrington-Johnson, 54, of Clinton Township, boarded three Chinese students this month. "They will always have a place in our hearts."

"They're just so wonderful, lovable," said Norbert Leach, 79, who, along with his wife, Dorothy, 78, played host to Wang and her teacher, "Susan" (her American name), in their Clinton Township home.

Nancy Harodyskyj hugged her two students — Qin Kaili and Hy Anzhi — and promised to visit them in

China when the young women graduate.

“Study hard,” she told them. “I love you.”

The Leaches also plan to visit Wang in China next spring when she graduates from law school.

Divergent legal systems

The students said they noticed big differences between the two legal systems.

“In China we don’t have a jury, and here it does,” said Wang Siyu, who wants to become a prosecutor in China. “In China, the judge is the most powerful one.”

“The lawyers are much more aggressive and active in the (U.S.) courts,” added You Pengfei, who wants to become a lawyer.

Song Zezheng, who aims for a judgeship, said his country’s legal system could learn from America’s.

“You choose the adversary system; we are statutory,” Song said. “We have the written law.

“The case study, the precedent system in law, is a suggestion for the Chinese law system. We can use it as a method in our law system, to improve our law system.”

Song said he benefited from his visit.

“I think with this experience in this program we all enhanced our ability to get a better sense of the American law system,” he said. “Maybe one day we we’ll choose to study in America and improve ourselves and get a promotion.”

No sign of strife

Song said his preconceived notions of Detroit and its recent woes were dispelled by his visit to downtown Detroit, where he danced with Americans.

“I love downtown Detroit,” he said. “The people in downtown are really enjoying themselves, different from the news I hear in China, the bankruptcy. It doesn’t matter. It doesn’t influence ordinary people’s lives. They know how to enjoy themselves. They go to work and they want the economy in Detroit to come back. They have the confidence to do that.

“It’s a global world. There’s news every day, the reports, American news, also. The bankruptcy is big news.”

Shopping fever

On evenings and weekends, the law students enjoyed activities such as feather and regular bowling, golf, boating, going to the beach and attending the Armada Fair.

But their favorite activity was shopping. They visited Somerset Mall in Troy and Partridge Creek mall in Clinton Township. On Friday, they had the choice of visiting The Henry Ford museum in Dearborn or Lakeside mall in Sterling Heights. They chose Lakeside.

“They love the malls, any kind of brand name articles,” Bruley said.

Clutching a Levi’s bag, Wang said with a laugh that she bought “so much ... a lot of things, jeans, chocolate, Coaches ... purses.”

"I did a lot of shopping as well," You said. "I choose a handbag for mom and bought clothes for myself."

Dorothy Leach said, "They see that the prices are lower here."

"They're not just buying for themselves," Bruley said. "They have friends who give them a list, things that they wish to get ... Even though things may be made in China, like a pair of jeans, it's less expensive to buy them here than it is back home for them."

### Cultural appreciation

The students noted lifestyle differences.

"In China, people are (focused) on how to survive, how to help their family, how to let their children get a better education and everything," Song said. "The pressure is heavy. We have a large population in our country, so the opportunity is limited."

"American people really know how to enjoy their lives."

"The swimming pools are amazing," said You, who stayed with Bruley. "He (Bruley) has an indoor swimming pool. Can you believe it? I live in the city. It's so crowded. It can be very, very expensive to own land to have a swimming pool. Much more expensive than here."

"Maybe a millionaire can have a yard," Song said. "Most of us live in an apartment."

"Nearly every family has a garden," You said. "The gardens are beautiful."

Bruley added: "They like the clean air, the clean water, the openness of it all."

You enjoyed his Fair visit. "I love the monster cars," he said. "I'm always a car fan. It's the Motor City, Detroit."

The biggest adjustment for the Chinese visitors is food, Bruley said. Chinese people aren't accustomed to the large amount of meat eaten here. At home, they eat mostly vegetables and rice. Most of the Chinese food here is Americanized — sweeter and milder.

"I'm not quite suitable for the food here," You said. "The people's taste here is different."

The Leaches' students particularly liked Stroh's Ice Cream and cherry pie since apparently ice cream is a rare commodity in China, Nobert Leach said.

The long-term students also enjoyed weekend trips to the Sleeping Bear Dunes, Mackinaw Island and Chicago, Bruley said.

### Playing host

Becoming a host is easier than people may think, and the organization is currently seeking volunteers, said Francesca Catalfio, MCEP host family coordinator.

"It's a very minimal commitment," she said. "All of the students have good English skills so that should not keep people from wanting to take a student. And they are very congenial."

"They (MCEP officials) organize it in such a way to make it easy to have the students," said Johnson, who has hosted for four straight years.

Families can play host for two weeks, or just weekends. The hosts only must provide breakfasts and sporadic dinners.

Although the students are busy, they spend free time with the host families. The Leaches played Yahtzee with their visitors. The Johnsons' three students cooked a Chinese meal for their hosts their last night together in appreciation.

"They got us out doing things we wouldn't normally do, forced us to go out and see new places," Norbert Leach said.

Johnson's wife, Arrington-Johnson, volunteered in part to expose her son, Derrick, 17, to a different culture. He's a senior at Chippewa Valley High School.

"We're big advocates of academics and education," Johnson said. "Perhaps he'll want to go there."

The MCEP is seeking "a diversity of host families, not any one type of family — singles, people who have children in their home, seniors," Catalfio said.

Anyone interested in hosting a student can call the MCEP at 586-783-6008, send an email to [mcep99@gmail.com](mailto:mcep99@gmail.com) or visit [facebook.com/mcep99](https://www.facebook.com/mcep99).

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