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Fulbright Scholars Come to Lamorinda

By Cathy Tyson



A group of Fulbright scholars meet at a Moraga home for a potluck dinner with one of their hosts, Mary Brennan. Photo Cathy Tyson

These were not your ordinary tourists. Thirty seven of the best and brightest female scholars from eight different countries in Southeast Asia participated in the Fulbright program that brought them to Saint Mary's College for a four day workshop, "Preparing for the Next Step." The "Fulbrighters" are all in their last year of study, receiving graduate degrees from universities across the U.S. The pairings no doubt featured some culture shock: two students from Burma are at St. Cloud University in Minnesota, a student from Indonesia is at Texas A & M, another from Laos is at Duke University in North Carolina.

Students enjoyed multiple day-long programs covering a variety of topics related to their pending return to their home countries that focused on leadership development, problem solving and personal growth.

Lamorinda residents - complete strangers to the students - volunteered to open their homes and welcomed the Fulbrighters. Although they were in class most of the day, host families

were responsible for getting them to and from campus and providing meals. Thursday evening had small groups of students and their hosts coming together for an American style potluck dinner - a new concept to most. Friday evening was slated as time to hang out with host families. One Muslim attendee got an eyeful of scantily clad teenagers queuing up for a dance at the Rheem Theater. Her host assured her they usually don't dress that way.

"They were absolutely charming and good house guests. I enjoyed it and would do it again," said Margaret Stithem of Moraga, who has travelled extensively in the past. She hosted two students, one from Indonesia and one from Burma.

Mary Brennan was grateful for the experience, "I don't know who gained more from this International Exchange experience, the Fulbright Scholars or their host families. Bill and I made quite a connection with our scholar and only wished we had more time to spend together. We tried to learn as much as possible about each other's cultures in our limited time together.

We shed a few tears as we dropped her off at St. Mary's on her last day and vowed that we'd stay in touch and someday see each other again."

Firuz Akhtar Mohamad Bohari from Malaysia is getting her Masters at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. She was impressed with our area, "I was so amazed to see the Moraga neighborhood. You are all rich!"

"I feel so blessed to be a Fulbrighter," she said. "The scholarship not only helps me with the school funding, it also gives me a lot of valuable experience and knowledge

through enrichment seminars. Being a representative of Malaysia to an event attended by people from all over the world is an unbelievable experience. Automatically the confidence level boosts up and I feel somehow important and responsible to the people in my country as I am rewarded with rare opportunities."

Susie Miller-Reid, Director of the Center for International Programs at Saint Mary's College, said that the seminar met its main goal, building bridges around the world through person-to-person interactions.

Founded in 1946 by U.S. Senator William Fulbright, the Fulbright Program has competitive merit-based grants for international exchange students, scholars, scientists, teachers and professionals to increase mutual understanding. The program goes both ways, U.S. citizens go abroad and non-U.S. citizens are eligible to come here. Established in the aftermath of World War II, the program is meant to promote peace through educational exchange. Funded through the State Department, 155 countries are currently involved in the program.

It's not just a Mosquito Bite: Heartworm Disease

By Mona Miller, DVM

Heartworm disease is a roundworm infection of the arteries of the lungs and heart of dogs and cats. It is transmitted by certain mosquito species and has been reported in all 50 states in the nation, and is a major problem in the eastern and southern states. According to the American Heartworm Society, the 2007 incidence in the Bay Area was "mild," averaging 5-25 cases per veterinary hospital, although just north of San Francisco the incidence was as high as 50 cases per hospital. Heartworm disease in dogs was first described in the USA in the mid-1800s; and was noted in cats in the 1920s.

Mosquitoes transmit microscopic larvae (called microfilaria) into the tissue of a bite wound in the pet. It takes six months for the infective larvae to develop into an adult worm, and during this time the larvae moves into the circulatory system of the animal, finally entering the large vessels of the lungs and heart. The adult worms may live up to 7 years in a dog, and 3 years in a cat. The female worms produce new larvae that need to enter a mosquito in order to mature into the next infective stage.

Virtually all dogs infected with microfilaria, and more than 67% of cats, will develop disease. This is not an infection that they can clear with their own immune system. Dogs can show variable severity of symptoms: from mild exercise intolerance or persistent cough to reduced appetite, weight loss and difficulty breathing. Cats can exhibit non-specific symptoms, including vomiting, lethargy and weight loss. Cats who are severely affected will demonstrate difficulty breathing, coughing or even sudden collapse and death. Diagnosis is relatively easy with a quick and inexpensive blood test, and often a set of chest radiographs.

Treatment is possible for most animals affected by heartworms. The prognosis depends on the severity of illness. Dogs are treated with an injection that kills the adult worms. The

disintegration of the worm inside the dog's arteries results in an inflammatory response, so this is often treated as well with an anti-inflammatory medication. The microfilaria are treated during this time with heartworm prevention (see below).

Cats can be more difficult to treat, since they tend to have a significant reaction to the worms being destroyed internally. Thus, the parasites are often not treated specifically—they will die on their own eventually. However, most cats infected with heartworm disease will benefit from an anti-inflammatory medication and other supportive care.

Prevention and regular blood testing (in dogs) are truly the key components for this disease. The American Heartworm Society recommends that all dogs be tested annually, even if they are on regular monthly prevention. If the blood test reveals heartworm infection in a non-symptomatic dog, the prognosis with treatment is excellent for full recovery, compared to a dog who is already affected by the disease. Monthly preventive medication is approved by the FDA for both cats and dogs; this will kill the microfilaria at the infective stage, shortly after being transmitted by the mosquito. This is a great example of how "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."



Dr. Mona Miller lives in Lafayette with her young son and two cats. She has worked at Four Seasons Animal Hospital in Lafayette since moving here in 2001. She attended Cal as an undergrad, and received her DVM from U.C. Davis. She can be reached at Four Seasons, 938-7700, or by email to MonaSDVM@aol.com.

body makeovers by Sheena

"I reduced my body fat from 30% to 16% in 11 weeks."


Emily Gorin Piedmont

I knew I'd reached a critical point when my scale registered a weight I hadn't seen since I was pregnant. My excuse had been a new job - lots of stress and long hours. Instead of calming down after work through exercise, I was coming home late, and de-stressing with a drink and food. Living Lean helped me take control, and get back on-track fast. I started seeing results after one week. The personal attention and accountability made the difference for me in sticking with the program. I felt so supported and encouraged by my trainers and Sheena. The measurable results motivated me to work hard and actually look forward to being weighed and measured each week. I lost weight, and cut my percentage of body fat almost in half - in 11 weeks I went from over 30% body fat to 16% body fat. Before Living Lean, I would stand in front of my full closet with nothing to wear because my clothes were too tight, or didn't fit at all. Now I can look in my closet and pick out any outfit I want - even my "skinny" clothes! I feel healthier, stronger and happier. Other benefits I experience include better posture, better sleep, and more energy. I can sincerely recommend Living Lean to anyone ready to take charge of their body.

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