

## Small Town or Big City, Ju Jiaqi Does It All

October, 2009



The Exchange Visitor Program is proud to announce Ju Jiaqi as this month's Exchange Visitor of the Month. Each month, we select an exchange visitor who has made an effort to get involved in his/her community and explore American culture. Ju Jiaqi, also known as George, is 21 and hails from Shanghai, China. George is a J-1 intern with a sports lighting company in Oskaloosa, Iowa. This is his first time in the United States. Upon embarking on his adventure

he did not know what to expect from a new country and people who spoke a different language. George has been pleasantly surprised, remarking, "People here are very friendly to me and that makes me feel great."

Coming from a large city like Shanghai to a small Midwestern town in Iowa required a big adjustment. George has found that the biggest difference is that there are a lot less people in his new home. While it is often easiest to focus on differences when presented with a situation like George's, he has managed to find a lot of similarities between his life in Shanghai and his American experience. George is quick to point out that people in both China and the United States are often friendly and ready to help those in need.

During his first week in Iowa, George had the chance to experience a local tradition – the annual Oskaloosa Sweet Corn Festival. "All the people in town and some from nearby towns came to the city park together. There you are served sweet corn and a hamburger." In addition to the great food there was also live entertainment and a street market. All in all, it was a great day of Midwestern fun!

George has also made time to take part in volunteer activities and attend sporting events. A recent

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visit to San Francisco gave George the opportunity to see another part of the United States and experience the vast regional differences that define American culture. “I find that not only does Shanghai have big differences with Iowa,” George shares, “but also other parts of America are really different from here.”

By actively participating in different aspects of American culture, George has learned more about US society than he ever could from a book or a website. One of the most valuable resources for learning about life in the US is having American friends. George’s advice for other trainees and interns who want to make the most of their time here is simple: “have fun together and share ideas and thoughts with American friends; that will help you understand American culture better.”

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