



**OCTOBER 2008 NEWSLETTER**

This newsletter is sent to all active participants in the American Immigration Law Foundation (AILF) J-1 Training/Intern Program. Please review the information below and remember to always contact AILF if you have questions or concerns about your training program or non-immigrant status. If you are no longer participating in our program, please notify us. If you have a question for AILF, please do not reply to this message, but instead send your question to [exchange@aifl.org](mailto:exchange@aifl.org).

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**Important Dates**

- For all new trainees/interns, please wait at least **48 hours** after sending AILF your follow-up documents before applying for your social security number (SSN). Make sure you have been in the United States for at least **10 days** before applying for your SSN.
- **Two Weeks** prior to international travel, you must send in your DS-2019 for endorsement.
- Mid-Point Evaluations are due **half-way** through your program.
- End-of-Stay Evaluations are due during the **last month** of your training/ internship.

**Change of Address**

We are required to report any changes in your U.S. home address in the government's Student & Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) database. We ask that you report any residential address changes to us within 5 days of your move so that we can enter the information within the government-imposed deadline. Failure to update your address could result in serious consequences to your J-1 visa status. Please remember to contact AILF if you change your U.S. address!

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

The best way to contact us with address changes, evaluations, questions and suggestions is via email. Please send your messages to [exchange@aifl.org](mailto:exchange@aifl.org). We welcome any and all newsletter suggestions or comments.

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**EXCHANGE VISITOR OF THE MONTH**

Bernhard Goesmann Gets His J-1 Motor Running!



*Bernhard Goesmann explores the American landscape on his motorcycle.*

The Exchange Visitor Program is pleased to announce Bernhard Goesmann as October'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.

Bernhard Goesmann, 31 of Aalen, Germany, is a J1 Exchange Visitor in the lighting design industry in Redwood City, California. Bernhard came to the United States humming "California Girls" by the Beach Boys and hasn't stopped yet. Bernhard truly enjoys being in the Bay Area, "the cradle of modern technology," as he points out. Palo Alto is home to Microsoft, Apple, Facebook, Yahoo, Cisco and Rambus.

When he's not hiking in Yosemite National Park or taking

Tango lessons, you might find Bernhard at a baseball game, catching some tunes at a local concert or cruising the USA on his totally rad *Motorrad*. (That's German for motorcycle.)

Bernhard bought the motorcycle from a friend in San Francisco a month after he arrived. It's now his main mode of transportation, aside from his actual bicycle which he rides every other day to stay in shape. Although he's never owned a motorcycle before, Bernhard claims "it's just like riding a bike."

"I never had a motorcycle before," Bernhard said, "but I've always wanted to have one. Since I was riding my bicycle since I was little, I had a natural feel for riding it right away."

If there's one place to enjoy

a motorcycle, it's definitely the United State—with wide open spaces, beautiful landscapes and wide roads for miles and miles. And Bernhard has big travel plans.

"My current goal is to get more used to my surroundings," Bernhard said, "up to San Francisco and down to San Jose—which includes the famous Skyline Drive (a blast!). But I am looking forward to going further away. There are a lot of National Resorts around and Yosemite is in a day's driving-range. Since I was there at the 'Moonbow' already with my roommate, it would be my next goal to go there with the bike for a long weekend!"

While Bernhard enjoys the freedom and independence of riding a motorcycle and exploring the American landscape, he does adhere to "Safety First," especially in dodgy California traffic. Most importantly, riding his motorcycle has allowed Bernhard to experience American culture and meet new friends along the way.

"With the bike, you get instant access to a group-feel as everyone greets you while driving," Bernhard said. "Often I get chatted up and meet quite an interesting bunch of people. And when people I meet find out that I am from Germany, they are of course always asking for the 'Autobahn!' So it is indeed a ticket to a group of people sharing the same interest and a great ice-breaker!"



## Understanding American Culture

The Great American Potluck Inspires Cuisine the World Over

One of America's best loved harvest time fables is the "Great American Potluck"—the one where Christopher Columbus and crew invited their Native friends over for hors d'oeuvres, cocktails and light conversation. While this somewhat fictional tale goes over well with third grade students and

parents, the historically accurate American tale (entitled here, "Hi friends, would you mind terribly moving that way? This is our land now!") might read a bit differently: less smiling; more bloodshed.

But historical accuracy aside, there is something to be said for this ceremonious breaking of

bread and cultural exchange. "The Columbian Exchange," as it is often referred, is said to be one of the most significant events in the history of world ecology, agriculture and culture. Native Americans did, in fact, share foods indigenous to North America—corn, potatoes, tomatoes, pumpkin, squash, etc.—with these future Americans, who then carried these foods back to Europe. Likewise, the colonists introduced new livestock, fruits and grains to the Americas. Without this Columbian Exchange, international cuisine would never be the same.

So what exactly did the New World have to offer the Old World in terms of food? The Native Americans of the "Eastern Woods" planted what was known as the "Three Sisters"—corn, beans and squash. But also indigenous to the Americas are potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, pumpkins, pineapples, cacao beans, turkeys and even (cough cough) tobacco. I can't imagine a world without chocolate! The New World also offered avocados, blueberries, cashews, chili peppers, cotton, papaya, peanuts, and vanilla.

Likewise, European settlers

brought livestock like sheep, pigs and cattle. They even re-introduced horses into Native culture, an animal early American Indians hunted as food. Early colonists also introduced onions, citrus fruits, bananas, coffee beans, olives, grapes, rice, sugar and grains such as wheat. Granted, many of these items were Asian or African and brought to the Americas through European traders.

So I suppose we do have a lot to be thankful for come Thanksgiving next month—FOOD as we know it, to be more specific—thanks to the earliest American immigrants. The Columbian Exchange forever altered European, Asian, African and American ways of life.

"Before the Columbian Exchange," according to Wikipedia, "there were no oranges in Florida, no bananas in Ecuador, no paprika in Hungary, no tomatoes in Italy, no pineapples in Hawaii, no rubber trees in Africa, no cattle in Texas, no burros in Mexico, no chili peppers in Thailand and India, no cigarettes in France and no chocolate in Switzerland."

Think about THAT the next time you take a bite.

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

An Exchange Visitor by any Other Name Would Smell as Sweet

What's in a name? William Shakespeare, the classic English playwright, wrote that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet. Indeed, it has become common in American business for employees to use titles that inflate the work they are actually performing. The company secretary is now the executive assistant. The mail room clerk is now the correspondence delivery director. The customer service representative is now the service manager. There is little correlation in titles from one business to another. The assistant director in one company could be called a vice president in another.

We often receive emails from AILF-sponsored exchange visitors bearing interesting titles. While actual titles in the American business place have declined in importance, the title presented to the public by exchange visitors is very important. Using titles indicat-

ing positions that could be filled by American residents could cause large problems for the exchange visitor.

Consider the J-1 who used an email signature of "Assistant Director" instead of "Assistant to the Director." An investigator from the United States Office of Accountability caught this during an audit of J-1 programs and assumed the trainee was employed as a manager, in violation of the J-1 visa regulations. This led to a report that the J-1 program was being used to staff American companies rather than to provide training for young international professionals to learn new skills.

The use of management titles in U.S. host companies can lead to serious problems for the J-1 exchange visitor. If it appears that a J-1 visa is being used in order to fill a permanent staff position in the company, or if exchange

visitors appear to be assigned responsibilities beyond those of an internship or training, the J-1 visa can be terminated. A terminated visa can make it difficult, if not impossible, to get a future U.S. visa. In a worst case scenario, the company could be investigated for violation of state and federal labor laws and U.S. immigration laws.

Is this *Much Ado About Nothing* (Shakespeare again), or an easily avoided problem? Take a look at your email signature, business card or any information posted about you by your host company. Does the title indicate that you are employed as a manager, supervisor, or independent employee? If so, ask that your title more appropriately reflect your J-1 status as an exchange visitor.