



# SJSU INTERNATIONAL HOUSE ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

FALL 2014



## THE I-HOUSE *IS A* Campus



*Carmen Sigler*, former provost of SJSU and current member of the International House Advisory Board, declared herself a big fan of the residence and gave reasons why American and foreign students should apply to stay there.

### **When and how did you start your relationship with the I-House?**

My unofficial connection with the I-House started shortly after I arrived on campus. In 1988, SJSU had received a grant from the system to support internationalization efforts. The Director of the SAL program and I partnered to develop a Conversation Partner program matching I-House residents interested in improving their English language skills with American students learning foreign languages.

Officially, my relationship with the I-House started about 20 years ago when President Handel Evans nominated me to serve on the Advisory Board. I was then serving as Chair of the Department of Foreign Languages and President of the Foreign Language Council of the CSU. President Evans, who was a strong believer in international education, supported my efforts and felt that I could be a good addition to the Board.

***I am great fan of the I-House. I believe that it is a campus jewel. I like everything about it: the setting, the dedication of the professional staff, the atmosphere, but most importantly, I am a firm believer in its mission.***

**What is your favorite event?**  
Definitely the Pancake Breakfast. It is a joyous event in which international students take great pride in sharing aspects of their culture (food, music, dance) with the campus and the wider community. It is a truly inclusive event – a gathering of the I-House family of residents, alumni and neighbors as well as community supporters like the Rotarians.

### **How would you convince students to apply to stay here?**

I would use different arguments for different students groups. To international students, I would tell them that living at the I-House would provide them with a supportive environment that would ease their adjustment to life and learning in a new environment. At the same time, it would help them build lasting friendships with fellow students from many other countries. It would make their study abroad experience truly international. To USA-born students, I would tell them that it would provide them with the remarkable opportunity to learn about the world and would prepare them to succeed in a globalized society and a globalized economy.

### **Why should people contribute to the I-House?**

We (all of us) regardless of where we live or where we were born, share a small, crowded planet and are affected by global events. While the forces of globalization bring us together, political, ideological and sectarian forces pull us apart and generate conflict. In this environment, I believe that is essential to support institutions and organizations that build global citizenship. The I-House is a very special place that focuses precisely on that, the building of understanding and connections between students generates good will.



Throughout the semesters, many residents have found love at the I-House. Some of them got into short term relationships while abroad, whereas others decided to go a step beyond. These are stories about **Christina Muller (Australia) & Jon Yim (USA)** and **Amy Lin (New Zealand) & Guillaume Thebault (France)**, couples who got married after finding true love at the I-House.



### Do you remember your first conversation?

**Christina:** Jon had already been at the I-House for a year when I arrived. He was one of the first people I met when I walked through the door. He offered to carry my bag up the stairs and show me to my room. I remember thinking he was pretty strong to be able to lift up my fully loaded suitcase so easily.



**Amy:** To be honest, I don't remember much about our first conversation. I think I was in the student kitchen with another girl when he came in to get food or something.  
**Guillaume:** Not really. I vaguely recollect something in the basement's kitchen one morning.

### Who took the initiative?

**Christina:** It was kind of a collective effort by all our I-House friends who thought our friendship should be more. Jon and I decided to start dating after one night out at O'Flaherty's, the Irish pub, where we often went.

**Amy:** I think it was mutual.

**Guillaume:** No, I did! It took quite a while. First we became friends until one day we decided to become more than that. Let's say that one night we were watching TV with a bunch of people and I decided to make a subtle move. We were on the same couch and I grabbed her hand to let her know. When the show was over, we had a long conversation and decided to try dating.

**Amy:** And before that, I did a lot of subtle hinting/flirting too.

### Where was your first date?

**Christina:** Jon took me to a Vietnamese restaurant for a \$4 bowl of pho. It was very sweet and romantic.

**Amy:** It was at William's Park. We smuggled some food out of SJSU Dining Commons and went there for a picnic.

**SJSU  
PHYLLIS  
FORWARD  
SIMPKINS  
INTERNATIONAL  
HOUSE**

**ADDRESS:**  
360 South 11th Street  
San Jose, CA 95112

**PHONE:**  
408-924-6570

**FAX:**  
408-924-6573

**E-MAIL:**  
ihouse@sjsu.edu

**WEBSITE:**  
[www.sjsu.edu/ihouse](http://www.sjsu.edu/ihouse)



**FACEBOOK  
Group:**  
I-House@San Jose  
CA



**LINKEDIN  
Group:**  
SJSU International  
House



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**INTERVIEWER:**

Guido Burdman,  
Argentina

**GRAPHIC DESIGNER:**

Kevin Tong,  
Hong Kong

**DIRECTOR:**

Leann Cherkasky  
Makhni

**COMMUNITY  
OPERATIONS  
MANAGER:**

Kristen Pendleton

**Reach us at**

ihouse@sjsu.edu

**Why 360?**

\*It's the I-House's address  
\*It's the number of degrees of a circle  
\*There's an expression, "come full circle," meaning to return to a starting point. We hope this newsletter helps you come full circle with 360 South 11th Street in San Jose, California!

**How was the long distance relationship when you went back to your home countries?**

**Amy:** Horrible, there were two very long years.

**Guillaume:** It was very hard going back to our countries, and to be honest we really didn't know what to do. So we chatted for a little while and decided to continue to try a long distance relationship. Our plan was to Skype a lot and to visit each other as much as possible.

**Amy:** We decided to see how things go, without the pressure. Not that easy, though, him being in France and me in New Zealand.

**Did you ever think you would end up getting married?**

**Christina:** Jon and I were only dating for 2 months before I had to return to Australia. We Skyped almost everyday until Jon came to Australia to be an exchange student six months later. Three months into our relationship, he told me we would marry some day and I knew that I felt the same.

**Amy:** No, never. To be honest, we weren't together long enough at the I-House to go to this topic.

**How did the I-House help to build your relationship?**

**Christina:** Without the I-House we would never have met. We had a great bunch of friends in the I-House who were all very supportive. We are fortunate that we have been able to catch up with our I-House friends over the years and that a group of them were able to come to our wedding from Tahiti, California, Kuala Lumpur, Sydney and Melbourne.

**Guillaume:** Of course, we wouldn't have met if it wasn't for the I-House. The House brought me a different way of mind. Being surrounded with 72 people from all over the world, you get to discover other cultures. And in our case, it turned out to be very important because we are from very different cultures.

**Amy:** Exactly, even if we didn't end up getting married, we would have still stayed really good friends.

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 **SUPPORT THE I-HOUSE**

The I-House endowment was set up by Phyllis Simpkins in the hopes that alumni and friends of the International House would continue to contribute financially. In the U.S., a self-support non-profit organization like I-House counts on alumni and friends like you to offer the best possible experience to our current residents through scholarships and facility maintenance. In Phyllis' memory, and to honor her legacy, any contributions you make to the Endowment, General Fund, or Scholarship Fund will be appreciated.

To donate online, please go to the following web page:

<http://www.sjsu.edu/ihouse>



The SJSU International House is a 501 (c)3 organization making your donation tax deductible. Explore whether your company offers matching grants.

# REUNIONS: Bringing Alumni Together

You and I know something that current residents don't know: We know that the friends current residents make while living at I-House will be friends for life and we know that whenever they have a chance, these friends will meet each other somewhere in the world for decades to come.

The difference when I-House plans a reunion is that we gather alumni who cross a variety of years, decades, and generations, many of whom you have not previously met. We find that alumni very quickly feel comfortable with each other based on the uniquely special experience that you had while living at I-House.

We've held multi-decade, mixed-generational reunions in San Jose, CA (2003); Paris, and Angers, France (2010); Bali, Indonesia (2013); and again in Paris, France (2014). We had hoped the next would be a Baltic Sea cruise to St. Petersburg in 2015, however, we've had to alter that plan. Keep your contact information updated with us and watch the I-House website to learn about what we'll do next. **Start planning your return to I-House for the 40th anniversary reunion in Summer 2018 in San Jose.**

————— *Leann Cherkasky Makhni*  
*Director of SJSU International House*

## ALUMNI REUNIONS



*Hong Kong (2013)*



*Bali, Indonesia (2013)*



*Paris, France (2014)*

