Connect with the Community - Volunteer with OISS

Yale's OISS coordinates programs that provide international students, scholars, and their family members the opportunity to connect with members of the Yale and New Haven communities, learn more about U.S. culture, improve language ability, and make new friends. While each program has a different focus, all were created with the aim of encouraging cross-cultural exchange and friendship. The Yale and greater New Haven communities have a lot to offer and a lot to gain by participating in these programs. Read about our different opportunities below and [apply today](https://oiss.yale.edu) - OISS would love to welcome you as a volunteer!

**Thanksgiving Hosts**

I felt like (I was at) home; the first time in my 4 years in the U.S.

student from Russia who participated in our Thanksgiving at Home program

Each November, OISS recruits volunteers to host two or more international students/scholars for Thanksgiving dinner. Thanksgiving is a truly American holiday, and the opportunity to celebrate the holiday with an American family is a once-in-a-lifetime experience for many of international students/scholars. We always have more international guests than hosts, so it's a fantastic way to give back and we can guarantee that you'll be matched with a guest! We also recruit hosts over Spring Break to invite Yale College students over for a meal. Many of our students don't travel home, so it's a great way to keep them company while they are in New Haven!

**First Year Friends**

Florence, Elizabeth's mother, said she wanted me to know that “our” granddaughter was born!! She is very generous and gracious to share this happy time and beautiful child with me!

host from the First Year Friend's program, about her former student match & her new baby

First Year Friends matches incoming first year international Yale College students with local hosts who provide an introduction to U.S. culture and to the New Haven area. Hosts and students keep in touch throughout the academic year and meet occasionally (about once a month) to share a meal or enjoy an activity together (see examples below).
**Conversation Partners**

As always, we so enjoy meeting these lovely folks from other cultures and sharing our home, food, family, and conversation with them.

host From multiple programs

Throughout the year, some members of our international community come to us looking for a one-on-one English Conversation partner. As a conversation partner, we ask that you meet with your partner twice a month for about an hour for conversation. Many of our partners enjoy meeting over coffee, or enjoying an activity together while getting to know each other. We ask for a commitment of at least one semester, and the match can continue longer than that if both parties agree. Partners are matched base on need and availability.

**English Conversation Facilitators**

I'm looking forward to enjoying more eye-opening conversations in this semester's slice of the global village!

volunteer facilitator for our daily English Conversation Groups

The OISS holds a daily (M-F) English Conversation Group in our office, from 12:30-1:30pm. As an English Conversation Group Facilitator, you plan and lead discussion groups for a small group of international students, scholars, and families. You do not need to be a trained educator to apply, but it is a weekly commitment throughout the semester. If selected, we provide you with some resources and access to other group leaders to help you brainstorm discussion topics and activities to lead your sessions. It's a great way to get to know many members of our international community here at Yale!

**What do we look for in a Community Connections volunteer?**

We look for members of the Yale community who are friendly, curious, and empathetic to the needs of newly arrived international students, scholars, and families, and are interested in the prospect of cross-cultural exchange right here in the heart of New Haven!

**What can First Year Friends & Conversation Partners do together?**

New Haven and the state of Connecticut offer a huge choice of things to do, many activities are free or inexpensive. Here are some ideas of things that you could do with your match:

- Invite the student over for dinner, a picnic, or a holiday celebration
- Meet up for lunch, coffee, or ice-cream
- Take a short day trip to a CT coastal town, or historical landmark
- Go for a hike
- Visit the Peabody Museum or Yale Art Gallery
- Participate in a volunteer activity
- Watch a sports event or attend a school play
- Attend an OISS activity or event
- Skiing, sledding, or skating
- Attend a local fair or community celebration.

**When does the matching take place? Is there a deadline?**

- **Holiday Break Hosts** are needed for Thanksgiving (November) and Spring Break (March). Please sign-up if you are interested and then we will be in touch with more details and a more detailed registration form once we open up official registration.
- **First Year Friends** are typically matched in the Fall semester, so we recommend registering during the summer or early fall to be matched. If you sign up a little later, or we don't have a match immediately available for you, we will hold on to your application until a match can be made.
- **Conversation Partners** are matched on a rolling basis and when we have new student/scholar sign-ups.
You can apply at any time throughout the year and we will get back to you once we have a match.

- **English Conversation Facilitators** are assigned about a month before the start of each semester. We currently have a committed group of facilitators, but occasionally look for new volunteers to join the team. We encourage you to apply and when an opening appears, we will reach out to you.

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**Can I refer someone to be a Community Connections volunteer?**

Please do! Feel free to share this page on social media, or email our Assistant Director for Programs, molly.hampton@yale.edu [3], to let us know about a prospective volunteer.

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**How does this program impact the Yale and New Haven community?**

Our office strives to provide a welcoming environment to all of our international students, scholars, and their families. For a brief introduction about the impact that our various volunteer services have had in the lives of our participants, please take a look at a past article written by Yale News titled “Community Connections volunteers enjoy cross-cultural exchange, friendship” [4] (October 2, 2018).

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**How can I apply?**

Please fill out this questionnaire [5]. We'll be in touch once we have an opportunity available.

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**Source URL:** https://oiss.yale.edu/programs-events/community-connections

**Links:**
[2] https://oiss.yale.edu/programs-events/annual-events/thanksgiving-at-home
[3] mailto:molly.hampton@yale.edu