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International club promotes cultural awareness on campus

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Homesickness, loneliness, alienation.

These are just a few of the unpleasant emotions a student may feel while living in a foreign country. Fortunately, international students have a support group to turn to at Butler University. The group is made up of foreign students as well as American students who have or would like to study abroad.

It is the International Club, an organization which brings Butler students from diverse backgrounds together to form one unique group. The organization, with about 100 members, has specific expectations of the club's influence. Freshman member Sayaka Inoue said she thinks such an organization is necessary in a conservative environment like Butler University, whose inhabitants might be unexposed to ethnic diversity.

Inoue, who comes to Butler from Tokyo, said the International Club is invaluable to the institution.

"We would like to let students know about other cultures," she said.

The club meets Inoue's desires by planning social events like an international Halloween party. Also, an annual banquet in March celebrates cultural diversity by encouraging party-goers to dress in traditional clothing from their respective homelands. In addition to an array of ethnic foods, the event hosts various cultural guests and performers.

"The purpose of the club is to get to know people from all over the world," sophomore club treasurer Maki Akimoto said.

But, has the club helped her to feel secure in her Butler environment?

"Definitely," she said. "If there were no International Club, I'd feel left out."

She and the other club officers have big plans for the role the club will play at Butler.

The International Club, much like Butler itself, expands far beyond the boundaries of the campus. For example, one of its recent campaigns collected items for a weather-torn village in Bangladesh. In past years, the club has also gathered shoes to send to needy countries in South America.

Like all clubs, the International Club is in need of money. Recently, the students held a bake sale in Atherton Union featuring dishes they had made themselves. According to Akimoto, this has been the group's main fundraiser, and they will likely have more of its kind.

While their numbers are small in comparison to the American students at Butler, the members of the International Club are making strides to further cultural awareness and diversity in the Butler community.

Akimoto said all Butler students are fortunate to have an organization which allows them to exchange cultures.



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