

## **Would you like to be a Conversation Partner?**

*September 2014 - Claremont Friends of International Students (CFIS) provides small conversation groups, "Conversation Partners," to assist families with English learning. We recently heard from the new coordinator about her need:*

Dear Community Friends,

I am the new CFIS coordinator of the English conversation partner program, and I am in need of more community "partners" who would like to volunteer to meet with an international student 1 to 2 hours per week throughout the semester. If you are interested, please contact me at:

[katyafair@yahoo.com](mailto:katyafair@yahoo.com)

If you are unclear as to what the program is, here is a short description:

The English conversation partner program is a program sponsored by CFIS in which international students at the Claremont Colleges sign up at I-Place to be paired with a member of the area to practice speaking English one-on-one. The coordinator of the program matches a student with a member of the community who has volunteered to spend 1 to 2 hours/week meeting the student. The community "partner" and the student arrange where they will meet every week and how they will get there – usually a coffee shop, the Honnold Library café, I-Place, or somewhere convenient to both.

The idea behind this program is that students will improve their English fluency, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and ability to understand spoken English the more they practice speaking with a native English speaker. These are not "teaching" sessions as such, but just conversations. However, this also gives the students a chance to learn about American culture by asking questions about their observations of interactions in class, on campus, or on TV programs. The "partner" can also learn much about parts of the world they may not know by asking the student about their country and culture. It can be a valuable learning experience both ways. And even though the students are all attending college here, some do not have many opportunities to spend 1-2 hours at a time speaking with an American. This practice can make a huge difference over time – a semester, a year, or more – in their spoken English and in their adjustment to life in a new culture. And it can be an enjoyable and valuable experience for the partner as well!

For the partner, some ideas of topics to discuss are:

- how the student is adjusting
- is the student having difficulty with anything
- what interests does the student have

- the classes the student is taking
- talking about the student's and the community partner's family
- holidays in both countries
- interesting things to do or see in the Claremont or LA area
- world events
- TV programs
- travel
- books
- sports
- music
- food

I look forward to hearing from you,

Katya Fairbanks, Coordinator  
Conversation Partner Program  
CFIS  
phone: 909-624-6342