Mentor & Mentee Stories

Melissa moved with her family from Brazil to St. Louis in 2016. “At first, it was very difficult because of the cultural shock,” says Melissa. Although she learned English at school and spoke it well, she found it difficult to understand the American Slang. At times, she felt as if she was a fish out of water, with so little understanding of the American culture. Things like “the Superbowl” or “potluck dinner” did not make any sense to her until she met Liz, an American born and raised in St. Louis.

After entering the international mentorship program, Melissa and Liz instantaneously connected. From game nights, coffee mornings, planning events, and spending time with each other’s families, their friendship grew to be stronger than ever. “Liz has an energy that captivates me- her positivity, her smile, her kindness, and her generosity make her an amazing person.” Melissa tells us that Liz brought her a new American experience, a new perspective of St. Louis. Their friendship grows to this day, and they will continue to be there for each other many years to come.

Liz decided to be a mentor after hearing Susan Gobbo’s story during a Leadership St. Louis breakout session. Born and raised in St. Louis, Liz did not want newcomers to the region to feel such loneliness and isolation. She signed up as soon as she got home that evening and encouraged her friends to do the same.

Liz was introduced to her mentee, Melissa and that is when the real magic happened. They just clicked! They had an immediate connection as both have children with Down syndrome. “I knew the Down syndrome community well and could make introductions that would provide support for Melissa and her family that they didn’t yet have. But it was
more than that. I was blown away by Melissa’s warmth, honesty, and courage. Being with Melissa just makes my heart happy. And those amazing Brazilian hugs!"

They adore one another and cherish every moment they get to spend together. They have enjoyed sporting events, dinners with spouses, shopping, parties, and holiday celebrations with their combined circle of friends and families. Liz even had Melissa dress up like a crazy alien to introduce her to her favorite American holiday, Halloween. Getting to see one another is always the best part of Liz’s day. "This program has been a wonderful experience for me, and I am sure Melissa, and I will be friends forever."

A Little Valentine’s Day History

What we know today is that Valentine’s day used to be quite different back in 13th century Rome. The holiday originated from the Roman festival Lupercalia, where it was a celebration of the coming of spring, hoping to release health and fertility for women. What we celebrate now as Valentine’s day came about in the 14th century, where the meaning of the holiday has changed to be a romantic day between lovers.

Valentine’s day only arrived in the United States during the mid-1800s. It is common to see the image of cupid, the Roman god of love, hearts, red roses, and flowers in the exchange of cards and gifts. Traditionally, birds also became the symbol of the day because the avian mating season begins in mid-February. Today, Valentine’s day is not just a celebration between couples, but a fun day that can be spent with your friends and loved ones.

Upcoming Virtual Events
Wellness Month

- **IMP Presentation on Bosnia & Herzegovina** - Tuesday February 16, 2021 ~ 12pm – 1pm
- **IMP Presentation - Healthy Strategies to Lose Weight Without Dieting** - Thursday February 18, 2021 ~ 5pm-6pm
- **IMP Presentation on Barbados** - Friday February 19, 2021 ~ 12pm – 1pm
- **IMP Weight Training Virtual Class** – Monday February 22, 2021 ~ 9:30am-10:30am
- **IMP Simple techniques to achieving inner peace and joy** - Wednesday February 24, 2021 ~12pm-1pm
- **IMP Appetizer Class with Chef Ashok** – Thursday, February 25, 2021 ~ 5:30pm-7:00pm

* ALL THE EVENTS ARE OPEN TO ALL GROUPS.

The Zoom links will be sent in a separate email.
Please send any social media content to Karen Hoshino.

Phone: 314-793-6554 or E-mail: KHoshino@worldtradecenter-stl.com

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If you want to contact us, please send an email to mentorprogramstl@gmail.com