International students: take another look

BY LAURA REED

Hello, my name is Laura and I am an international student. You might think that I go clubbing all the time and spend lots of money, or that I smoke, dress in black Gucci or drive a BMW. You might also think that I never go to class and that I am just not interested. You may believe these, or any one of a number of similar stereotypes that seem to be indelibly associated with the words "international student" to be true. However, I urge you to take another look at international student community at Tufts. You just might be surprised.

The International Club is a cultural, not a political organization, that is open to all Tufts students. You do not have to be international in order to be interested in other parts of the world.

There are 392 undergraduate international students at Tufts that come from such diverse places as China and Costa Rica; Jamaica and Jordan; Taiwan and Turkey. We represent 68 different countries and nations. It is surprising to me that such a diverse group is often lumped into such a narrow stereotypical category. International students at Tufts are a vibrant group of individuals who are involved in both campus life and student organizations.

International students have particularly distinguished themselves in their community service contributions to charitable organizations and events. In addition, international students are known for organizing numerous cultural awareness events and celebrations. We are particularly renowned for those that display our foods and dancing.

Recent examples of community service and charitable events include the UNICEF booth, staffed by International Club members at this past weekend's Kid's Day event. Throughout this semester, the Thai Club's effort, through the organization of the Tsunami Relief Fund, has raised about $13,000 through the sale of T-shirts and raffle tickets. This semester has also seen the foundation of the International Club's "Medford Schools Project," — an initiative that aims to get Tufts international students to come and talk to local children about their respective countries.

On the cultural front, the weekend before last saw the second annual Culture Fest, held in the campus center. The well-attended event showcased Tufts' diversity, with food and performances representing the different cultural groups on the Tufts campus, many of whose members are international students. This past week the ASA (Arab Students' Association) held a lunchtime patio event outside the campus center, which exhibited Arab culture. The International Club also held its annual Parade of Nations event this semester, which is an evening of cultural dancing and fashion.

International students are also members of "Pangea," Tufts' global awareness initiative which is active in raising money for the conflict-torn Darfur region of Sudan, and setting up an internship program to send Tufts students to Uganda to work with refugees. Many international students also take part in the EPIC (Education for Public Inquiry and International Citizenship) and TILIP (Tufts Institute for Leadership and International Perspective) programs.

International students are all over campus, sitting next to you in class. Get to know us. The International Club is a cultural, not a political organization, that is open to all Tufts students. You do not have to be international in order to be interested in other parts of the world. We invite you to come join us.

Laura Reed is a junior majoring in international relations and environmental studies. She is an international student from Australia.