



Office of International Affairs

International Line Newsletter

New Student Edition, Spring 2007

Greetings to new students!

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Address Changes

Please notify the Office of International Affairs in 10 days of any change of address!

The staff of the Office of International Affairs would like to welcome all new students to Texas Tech University and to Lubbock, Texas! We would like to take this opportunity to tell you about the *International Line*. This is your newsletter. We will normally send out an edition once a month during the academic year and once during the summer to your email address. Therefore, it is imperative that we have an email address for you that will accept this newsletter. Be aware that some internet providers may designate your *I-Line* as spam and dump it into the junk mail box. We strongly encourage you to use your Texas Tech email address to receive the newsletter and any other important information that the Office of International Affairs may send to you. Also, check <http://www.iaff.ttu.edu>.

In each issue there will be information on extracurricular activities, scholarship opportunities, immigration information (new laws and changes in the old laws) and opportunities for you to get involved in various ways. Some issues will contain a calendar of events. Sometimes we try to include something fun or entertaining just for your enjoyment. Also, if there are very special or emergency situations that arise from time to time, we will have "ALERTS" to let you know what is happening.

There is one very important thing you must remember about the *International Line*. Often, the only way the Office of International Affairs has of letting you know about such things as immigration changes or planned activities, is to put articles in the *International Line*. Also, if you should have any questions, don't hesitate to contact one of the international student counselors at the OIA.

Updating and keeping your address on file is a must

The Office of International Affairs cannot emphasize enough how critical it is that you keep your current address on files here at the OIA. This is a requirement under U.S. immigration law. Failure to do so is a violation of U.S. law and can have serious consequences for any international student who does not comply.

It is easy to change your address. Simply notify an international student counselor at the OIA via email or via fax at 806-742-1286. Or, you can come by the office and meet with an international student counselor. We will notify the Department of Homeland Security by updating your SEVIS (Student and Exchange Information System) file and the OIA database. Only the OIA counselors can notify SEVIS.

SEVIS

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System, better known as SEVIS, is the Department of Homeland Security's system that monitors internationals who receive a student or exchange visitor visa to study, teach, or to do research at American colleges, universities, or language centers. It is a system that is online to the DHS and other U.S. Government agencies and is accessible by certain OIA personnel. If there are status problems or certain immigration problems, the OIA and Texas Tech University will instantaneously know of it and a HOLD will be placed on a student records so that the student will have to report to the OIA to deal with the issue.

Office hours at the OIA

MLK Holiday

January 15, 2007 is a national holiday in honor of Martin Luther King. There will be no classes on this day. The OIA will be closed.

The Office of International Affairs is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday thru Friday, with the exception of certain holidays. Please be advised that immigration counselors from the International Students and Scholars Program at the OIA will not be available on Thursday mornings due to staff meetings. This will allow personnel to go through training where appropriate and to complete certain office work that has to be done as soon as possible. Unless you have an emergency situation or an extraordinary situation that requires our immediate attention, we ask that you wait until that afternoon before you see a counselor for any business that you have on Thursdays.

Identify yourself when you call the OIA

When you telephone the Office of International Affairs, as a courtesy, please identify yourself with your name to the staffers and the counselors so that we can have a more familiar relationship with you. This is considered common etiquette in the U.S., and most particularly in Lubbock, Texas.

How to be a successful student

It is only natural that newly arrived international students are unsure of themselves when they arrive here in Lubbock fresh from overseas or from another location in the United States. They may question what they do and wonder if it is the right thing. All new international students should realize that it is only natural to question and to feel concerned about what is the proper etiquette and procedure for doing things. We have compiled a list of things, not necessarily complete, to think about and which we hope will help you.

Undergraduate Students!

Check out the University Honors College! To learn more –

- Visit www.honr.ttu.edu
- Email honors@ttu.edu
- Call 806-742-1828
- Go to Holden Hall, Room 103
- Ask questions
- Utilize library and computer resources
- Attend class regularly
- Participate in class
- Communicate in English
- Don't be afraid to make mistakes
- Recognize that culture shock does exist
- Make a study schedule and stick to it
- Make friends
- Understand what "plagiarism" is
- Integrate with the university and local community
- Utilize on-campus tutoring centers
- Do not be ashamed to seek help
- Get involved with extra curricular activities – beyond class and email
- Remember – there is more than one definition for success
- Get the proper amount of sleep and eat nutritiously
- Recognize difficulty with different foods
- Be physically active – use the Sports Rec Center
- Be honest about what you know and don't know
- Don't be afraid to approach instructors and professors
- Join professional organizations within your field of study
- Use the OIA as a resource

Riding your bike on campus

Please remember that when riding your bicycle on campus, be sure to obey all traffic rules! You are not allowed to ride your bike on any sidewalk and the university police department can cite you! In addition, when you ride your bicycle during hours of darkness, you must use a light or a reflector so that motorists can see you.

DRIVE SAFELY!

If you have a car, remember to drive safely in Lubbock and around the campus, particularly because much of the infrastructure around the university is undergoing changes, and traffic is being rerouted. Also, if you are walking, watch out for all vehicles when you cross the street.

Purchasing a new car

Purchasing a car in the United States can be very expensive for international students. Perhaps the most important aspect of driving is becoming accustomed to U.S. laws and driving habits. Also, the intensity of driving and the demands to be alert and to drive defensively (always looking out for the other person) is great. Finally purchasing car insurance and maintenance of an automobile can make owning a car prohibitive for most international students. Operating an automobile is a major responsibility that all international students must recognize.

Employment as an F-1 student

Students are reminded that as an F-1 student, you are only allowed to work on-campus and only up to 20 hours a week. You are **NOT allowed to work off-campus**, except for very specifically defined situations for which normally no new incoming student at Texas Tech University would be able to qualify.

On-campus employment

A maximum of 20 hours during each of the two major semesters. Summer vacation hours can be more, but only at the discretion of the university department.

In order to work off-campus, you must be authorized to do so by the DHS or (in the case of curricular practical training) the Office of International Affairs. Students should realize that they are here at Texas Tech University as non-immigrant students to pursue their education. Remember that your primary purpose is to get an education and to develop professionally, not necessarily to work for the sake of work itself.

Required student health insurance

Texas Tech University (TTU) mandates that all nonimmigrant international students must comply with United States financial responsibility requirements and purchase health insurance coverage as a condition of enrollment. *Coverage begins with the payment of your health insurance premium at the time that you pay your tuition and fees at the beginning of the semester.*

Family health care

Have you factored in health insurance for your F-2 dependents?

The insurance premium will be waived for nonimmigrant students who are sponsored by the U.S. Government, a foreign government recognized by the United States, or certain international governmental sponsored or non-governmental organizations. Any such waiver will be based on the government or organization guaranteeing payment of all health care expenses including evacuation and repatriation.

The insurance premium may also be waived for students who provide documented evidence which indicates that a U.S. employer is providing health insurance coverage. Nonimmigrant students employed 20 hours by TTU and eligible for both employer-provided insurance and TTU international student health insurance may select between the two. International students who buy employer based insurance must also show proof of evacuation and repatriation benefit. Such documentation must be presented to the TTU Office of International Affairs in a timely manner prior to initial registration as well as for any extension of program, change of program level, or travel endorsement. A waiver form is available online at the following web site: <http://www.ttuhs.edu/studenthealth/docs/06-07WaiverRequest.doc> and

<http://www.ttuhsu.edu/studenthealth/docs/06-07waiverform2.doc>.

Information on the Student Health Insurance Plan is available online through Academic Health Plans at www.AHPCare.com/ttu. You can also get a temporary student health ID card at this site. Contact Judith Baxter-Aung at 817-479-2100, or toll free at 888-308-7320 regarding any specific questions. Her email is Judith.Baxter-Aung@AHPCare.com.

Carry your immigration documents when you travel in the U.S.

Reentry into U.S.

Make certain that your I-20 is signed for reentry on Page 3, particularly if you plan to travel outside of the United States during Spring Break in March!

All international students are reminded that they must carry their immigration documents with them and have them immediately available for inspection while traveling in the U.S. This is especially important when you travel into the U.S. states that border along Mexico and Canada. If you do not have your documents on your person, the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement or the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection can detain you until you are satisfactorily identified and your immigration status is confirmed. Most importantly, if you should be detained during the weekend and there is no one available at the Office of International Affairs to confirm your status, you might find yourself being held until the following Monday morning, or in the event of a holiday, the next workday. Not having your immigration documents on your person at all times is technically a violation of U.S. immigration laws.

For your protection, the OIA staff advises you to make copies of your documents to better facilitate any replacement of lost documents. This could be particularly important if you lost your passport and your country consulate in the U.S. wanted a copy of the passport.

Maintaining full-time status

Enrollment

Graduate Students – 9 hours

Undergraduates – 12 hours

Note: There may be exceptions to these rules. Consult with an international Counselor at the OIA.

As F-1 or J-1 students, it is very important that you remain in full-time student status at all times. To be considered a full-time student you must complete a minimum of 12 credit hours if you are an undergraduate student or a minimum of 9 credit hours if you are a graduate student. There are exceptions to this rule such as situations dealing with illness, the last semester before completion of program, and the 99-hour rule limit. However, most students do need to comply with the general regulations as stated above. Please come in and talk with one of our international student counselors before you do anything that might drop you below full-time status. Also be aware that our data base system will automatically note on a daily basis any change in a student's enrollment and, thus, indicating whether a student has fully complied with SEVIS regulations.

Remember, withdrawing from a class in the middle of the semester is the same as never having enrolled in the class to begin with. Watch your hours!

Bringing dependents to the U.S. is a big responsibility

For many of you new students who are arriving at Texas Tech University from your home country, you are going to begin thinking about trying to bring your dependent(s) to Lubbock to be with you during your studies here at the university. Many of you will be going through culture shock where you will feel a sense of loss, loneliness, and even alienation as you try to adjust to life here in West Texas. Some of you will have just gotten married back home and it will only be natural that you desire to bring your family member and, particularly your spouse to the U.S.

We encourage you to think carefully about bringing your dependent over to the U.S. As an F-2, your dependent cannot work at all. Although a spouse can be a source of inspiration, there are also times when the potential for spousal abuse is great as the stress of graduate study begins to wear on the F-1 student. The staff at the Office of International Affairs will assist students who want to try to bring their dependent to Lubbock. However, we have some guidelines to which we insist that all students adhere.

Doing the right thing!

Getting health insurance for your F-2 dependent family members should be a duty and a responsibility.

Students who desire to bring their dependents to the U.S. must provide appropriate financial documentation. For those *without assistantships*, you will be required to bring into our office extensive *financial statements in the form of bank statements from Lubbock banks*; and if you have been here a short period of time, we will require a *bank statement notarized and signed by an official from a bank in your home country*. If a family member back home is supporting you, we will require a *notarized statement in English that is no more than three months old*. Generally speaking, it is much more difficult for students who do not have assistantships to get an F-2 visa for their dependent. For some students, it could be a waste of your time and effort to even try. A scholarship by itself is not sufficient either.

If you *hold an assistantship*, we will require a letter in writing from your departmental chairperson, or authorized personnel in place of the chair, stating the *nature of your assistantship package*, for what *duration* (9 months or 12 months) and whether or not it contains any *fee waivers*. Also, we will require documentation from the department whether or not you have a competitive *scholarship* of at least \$1,000, which allows for payment of in-state tuition. Both a half-time assistantship and a scholarship of at least \$1,000 allow for an out of state tuition waiver.

Some comments are in order. In some countries, it is very difficult to get an F-2 visa for one's dependent, even though a student has an assistantship. Students should realize that when they signed their initial I-20 and received their F-1 visa, they in effect *agreed to abide by U.S. laws and implicitly agreed that they would live alone in the U.S. while they pursued their degree as a non-immigrant*. While it is only natural that one would want to have his or her spouse here in the U.S., there is no inherent "right" that an F-1 student has to have his or her spouse accompany him/her during his/her studies.

Students should also realize that there may be other more compelling reasons why an F-2 applicant is rejected for the visa. Chief among these is that the student cannot show adequate proof that he or she will return to one's home country with his or her spouse after the student finishes his/her academic program. In addition, the U.S. Consulates will want sufficient financial information that will prove to them that you will not be a public charge in the United States. For instance, if a female spouse becomes pregnant, the wife of the student is not allowed to use public medical facilities for free (except in extraordinary situations) nor is she allowed to receive any kind of welfare in the U.S. Therefore, ***it is important that F-1 students provide health insurance coverage for their F-2 dependent(s)***.

Riding in the dark!

Get a light and reflector for your bicycle when you ride it on campus!

Watch out for moving vehicles and pedestrians!

All students are reminded that at the beginning of any new semester, they should be extra careful as they walk across streets and as they drive their automobiles "to and fro." Look both ways as you cross the street. Many other new students are driving their cars around campus and they, too, may be new to the Lubbock area and may not be familiar with the infrastructure. Other people could be driving in excess of the speed limit. The chances of being hit by a car can increase dramatically at the beginning of the semester. If you have your own car, drive defensively and look out for the other driver and for pedestrians!

Professional development

Become a member of a professional association in your major discipline.

Using TTU services and getting involved in other activities

Let us remind you again of some of the things that are important for your health and wellness. Don't hesitate to go to the Sports Rec Center and to get exercise so as to help eliminate stress and to have fun with your friends and associates. Also, do other things and involve yourself in other extra curricular and professional activities so as to have balance in your lives. Your educational experiences will be a lot more fun and meaningful if you mix it with other activities and events. Take time to take an occasional break from your studies and to meet other people as well.

Email addresses of international student counselors

Laraine McCallum
laraine.mccallum@ttu.edu
Phone: 742-3667

Sharon Hale
sharon.hale@ttu.edu
Phone: 742-3667

Michael J. Murphy
michael.murphy@ttu.edu
Phone: 742-3667

Job offer is required for social security card

Identity theft!

Protect and secure your social security card! Do not become an identity theft victim!

If you are a newly arrived student who does not have a social security card, there are a few things that you must first be aware of. In order to get a social security card, you must first have an offer of employment from Texas Tech University. *If you do not have an offer of employment, then you are not allowed to apply for a social security card.* If you have an employment offer on-campus, then go to your departmental employment service coordinator where you will be working, fill out the appropriate paperwork, get a letter of offer of employment, and then bring all the paperwork to the OIA and see Leslie Gipon, the international student scholar counselor. Ms. Gipon will then draw up a letter from our office which will be signed by an international counselor. This letter will allow you to apply for the social security card. It normally takes 2-3 weeks to get the card, but there can be exceptions.

Important!

Do not give any financial, personal, or credit card information over the phone, no matter how persistent the caller may be!

The Social Security Office is located at 2002 W. Loop in Lubbock. Go west on 19th Street and just after you pass the Loop, turn left between the McDonald's and Burger King restaurants. Proceed south for about 200 meters and you will see a one-story gray building with the name **Social Security Administration** in large letters on it. You can't miss it! NOTE: You **cannot** go to the Social Security office to apply for a social security card without first complying with the requirements indicated above in the first paragraph.

Scholarships offered in Spring 2007

Florence Terry Griswold Scholarship 1: \$2,500 (one award)

For a woman who is a citizen of a Pan American country (other than the United States) and is pursuing a graduate degree at a state-supported college or university in Texas. More than \$2,500 may be awarded in years when funds are available. Go to

<http://www.pardt.org/> and go to "Florence Terry Griswold Scholarship" for more information. Applications CANNOT be submitted by fax and must be post-marked by no later than **January 31, 2007**.

Best chance!

Your best chance of getting a scholarship is always with your major department.

Good Neighbor Scholarship Program

Provides for out of state tuition waiver for citizens born in and at least a five-year current resident of a politically independent nation in the western hemisphere (excluding Cuba and the United States); student must be unconditionally admitted to Texas Tech University and enrolled full-time maintaining satisfactory academic progress; student should be planning on returning to country of origin upon successful completion of the academic program. Students cannot be receiving an out of state waiver from any other scholarship. Deadline for application: **February 28, 2007**. Awards are for the following academic year beginning with the Fall 2008 Semester.

From your major department

Your *best chance* for getting a scholarship is, believe it or not, from your own major department. If you qualify with the proper grade point average, you are eligible to be considered. Contact the department.

Study Abroad Competitive Scholarship (SACS)

All international students are eligible to apply for the [SACS](#) program. Applications are due by a designated deadline (Check the OIA website for deadlines). For international student awardees, the SACS may provide a certain monetary award for an appropriate academic term or summer session. Every TTU student pays the SACS fee every academic term that he or she is enrolled at Texas Tech University, and therefore, is eligible to apply each term. Interested students should also attend one of the soon to-be-scheduled information sessions at the OIA later in the semester.

Tuition Assistance for Students of Mexico

For citizens or permanent residents of Mexico; students must be planning to return to Mexico after completion of program; students must be enrolled full-time; and, they must demonstrate financial need. Assistance allows Mexican nationals to pay in-state tuition.

The World Bank Group --- Family Network --- SCHOLARSHIPS FOR FEMALE STUDENTS FROM DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Applications will **close on February 28, 2007**. Visit their website at www.wbfn.org for more information (click on the [MMMF Scholarships](#) button) or contact WBFN at 1818 H Street, NW, MSN H-2-204, Washington, DC, 20433; Tel: 202-473-5804; Fax: 202-522-3142; Email: MMMF@worldbank.org.

Don't get a bad cold or the flu!

Reduce your chances by washing your hands with soap and hot water.

Martin Luther King Day

Monday, January 15, 2007 is a national holiday in honor of the great American civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King. There will be no classes on this day and the Office of International Affairs will be closed. See Spring 2007 Schedule on Page 8.

International Students Support Group

Due to changes in cultural values, communication patterns, and general lifestyle differences, adjusting to college can be a difficult process for many international students. These changes can potentially bring about confusion, loneliness, and stress. Some individuals experience physical changes such as fatigue, trouble sleeping, and weight change.

The good news is that this transition is usually a short term one, often just a few months, and there are supportive services available during this time.

Memorize password!

Make certain that you sign-in at the reception desk when you see an international student counselor. Memorize your sign-in password!

For more information, please contact Christine Odiorne at 742-3674; or, via email at christine.odiorne@ttu.edu. No appointment is necessary for international students to initiate services at the Student Counseling Center located on the second floor of the new Wellness Center, starting Spring Semester 2007, open M-F, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Courtesy for the staff

Please extend your courtesy to the receptionists who work at the Office of International Affairs. They are the “gatekeepers” at the OIA and can provide tremendous assistance to you if you will only treat them in a courteous and professional manner that they deserve.

LIFT Program

The Lubbock International Friends Together (LIFT) Program offers an opportunity for an international student to establish a friendship with an American family or individual or group of individuals. This is **not** a live-in program; however, LIFT American volunteers often are more than welcome to invite international students to their home for special holiday celebration or just for friendly, informal visits. It is also a chance for international students and Americans to learn more about each other as friends. International students can find information about LIFT by contacting Lori Romero at lori.l.romero@ttu.edu.

Protect your documents

Protect and secure your immigration documents. Put them in a safe place in your living quarters.

Immigration responsibility belongs to the student

Now more than ever, it is the student's responsibility to maintain his or her proper immigration status. Under the SEVIS system, being out of status could result in it being extremely difficult for the student to be reinstated. SEVIS regulations are such that there is little room for flexibility and maneuverability. Inadvertence, oversight, neglect, or willful failure on the part of the student is not reason to allow reinstatement. For students who have questions about their immigration status, they should contact an international student counselor at the Office of International Affairs.

Catalogues

Check the respective graduate and undergraduate catalogues for more information about your academic program.

Spring Semester 2007 Schedule

January 1	New Year's Day (OIA CLOSED!)
January 2	OIA opens for the New Year
January 3-4	New Student Check-in, Room 105, Int'l Cultural Center
January 5-6	New Student Orientation, ICC Auditorium
January 8	Residence Halls open for occupancy
January 8-9	Consultation with academic advisor; registration for classes
January 10-16	Student initiated “Addition” of class on the web

January 10-26	Student initiated "Dropping" of class on the web
January 15	Martin Luther King Day, National Holiday
January 26	12 th class day, last day to be registered for classes
March 10-18	Spring Break
April 2-17	Advanced registration for Fall 2007 Semester
April 16	No classes
May 1	Last day of classes
May 2	Individual study day
May 3-8	Final examinations
May 12	Commencement

HOLD!

A "HOLD" will be placed on your TTU eRaider account on January 26, 2007 for "Maintenance of Immigration Status" and it will not be removed until after April 1, 2007.

Warning to all! Do not be unduly pressured by religious groups!

International students may often feel alone and lonely. You may feel totally overwhelmed by a decision you need to make and you may wish you had someone to tell you what to do and to help you decide. You may feel like the world is falling apart.

It can be times like these that people might offer the promise of instant friendship and simple solutions to complex problems. They may want to tell you what to do. But, beware! Some religious groups in the U.S. do make a practice of luring individuals to religious beliefs that international students do not practice. Their goal is to convert other individuals to their particular religious beliefs and practices. Often their targets are directly aimed at international students.

Religious helping groups can and do share a useful purpose in helping to meet certain needs of international students as they settle into a new community (informing about transportation, providing initial friendship, offering language assistance). But, students need to be able to distinguish between motives and question sudden friendships and offers of assistance.

If necessary, you must learn how to say "No!" when a situation becomes uncomfortable. A volunteer intent on pursuing religious conversation will rarely be stopped by subtle signals or cues. If you feel you are being pressured into a discussion of religious beliefs or cultural values and you want to end the conversation, you might find the following suggested responses helpful:

- "I am not interested at this time. I will call you.
- "I am not interested."
- "Normally, I might like to participate, but this is contrary to my family heritage."
- "I will read the material when I get the chance, but I do not want to participate."

As an individual in this country, you have the right to ponder and think deeply and very carefully about something like this with other people before you make such a personal decision. You can talk with an international student counselor, trusted friend, professor, or go to the TTU Counseling Office at West Hall and discuss this kind of situation. Don't let yourself be pressured by aggressive religious tactics that encourage you to abandon your cherished beliefs and values.

F-2 dependents must apply for change of status to F-1 if they want to study in an academic program.

Change of status

If your F-2 dependent is accepted for admission for the Fall 2007 Semester, an application for change of status should be submitted in early May 2007 to the USCIS through the OIA.

F-2 dependents who want to study full-time in an academic program must apply for a change of status to F-1. F-2 students enrolled in secondary education schools (high schools) must apply in a timely fashion so that they will be approved for change of status by the start of the freshman academic term. F-2 dependent spouses must also apply early enough so that they will be able to start classes for the academic term. In all cases, an applicant for change of status to F-1 *must be approved for the change to F-1 BEFORE he or she can register for classes*. If approval for change of status is not completed in time, the student must wait for the ensuing semester and cannot enroll for the current term. As a rule, it is advisable that a recent F-2 spouse arrival to the U.S. wait at least six months after arriving in the United States before applying, so as to not raise questions about the F-2 fraudulently applying for the F-2 visa instead of F-1.

You must have a passport that is not expired

Please keep in mind that all international students are required to have a current passport and one that has not expired. If your passport has six months or less left on it, it is technically expired as far as the U.S. Government is concerned. Therefore, you should make arrangements with your local country consulate to immediately apply for a new one. Many countries have consulates located in Houston and Los Angeles. Most of them have web sites where you can go online and get telephone numbers or download application information for a new passport. Some countries require that you appear at the consulate in person to make the application. But, many consulates will allow you to apply via regular mail. Remember that if you apply for a passport via mail, you should always send it by "registered or express mail" so that it is tracked and you know definitely that it has been received by your country's consulate. Usually the fee that you pay for the passport also includes return registered mail for the new passport. Often, however, one has the option of including an overnight express envelope with the application at the student's expense.

Protocols for emailing the OIA

Correct email address

Be sure to have a correct email address so that the *International Line* Newsletter can be sent to your site.

When you want to email a counselor at the OIA, please include a few words describing your message *on the subject line*. Many times, students will send us a message and put their own name in the subject line. Putting down your name in the subject line is NOT a good idea. It is only later when we find this kind of message *in the junk mail folder*. Apparently, many spam and scam email messengers put down their own name and the TTU Information Technology people see it and automatically throw the message in the junk mail. The same thing will happen to you. Please, use a topic name on the subject line.

Prevention of illness --- Washing your hands!

Protect yourself better from colds, flu, and the "grippe" by simply washing your hands more with soap and hot water. Most cold and flu germs are transferred by hand contact to something that is later touched by someone else's hands. While washing your hands may not necessarily prevent you from eventually getting sick, it may lessen and reduce the effects of any illness that you will get later. We encourage all of you to "Wash your hands!" well, particularly during this cold and flu season.