

The ARNIC Observer

The English-Speaking Union of the United States (ESUUS)

Andrew Romay New Immigrant Center (ARNIC)

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Winter Holidays Make Us Merry

*“The land flourished
because it was fed from so
many sources— because it
was nourished by so many
cultures and traditions
and peoples.”*

— Lyndon B. Johnson

BY FATIHA AMARIR (MOROCCO)

IT IS TAKEN FOR GRANTED that each country has its own culture, traditions and holidays, whether these holidays are national or religious ones, yet each society celebrates them in their own way. However, in the United States, a melting pot society where people from different nations and races meet, immigrants may celebrate their own holidays in addition to those of other cultures.

During the winter many holidays take place and some of them are religious, such as Ashura for Muslims, Hanukkah for Jews, and Christmas for Christians, and not to mention Thanksgiving and New Year’s.

To start with, and in chronological order, Ashura was observed on the 10th day of Muharram in the Islamic calendar which fell on November 14 this year. People on this day fast from sunrise to sunset, visit each other, and prepare special dishes such as couscous and dried fruit, and they buy new clothes and games for the children. Fasting on this day is optional, not like Ramadan, when it is compulsory.

Muslims fast because it was recommended by the prophet Muhammad, who went to Medina and found the Jews fasting on this day. When he asked about the significance of this, they told him that “This is a good day, the day on which God rescued the children of Israel from their enemy Pharaoh by creating a path in the Red Sea.” So Moses fasted this day to thank God for rescuing them, and now Muslims fast for two days, while the Jewish people fast for one.

This year, Hanukkah fell on Wednesday, November 27. Celebrated by the Jewish community, it began at sunset on that Wednesday and ended in the evening of Thursday, December 5. Hanukkah is the Festival of Lights. It commemorates the victory of the Israelites over the Syrian Greek armies, and the miracle of restoring the menorah in the Holy Temple. Only one vial of oil was found in the temple and was enough for only one day--and yet miracle of miracles, it lasted for eight days. Jews celebrate Hanukkah at home by lighting the menorah each night, playing with a dreidel, and eating special foods such as latkes, potato pancakes fried in oil. Some people also sing Hanukkah songs and exchange gifts.

Thanksgiving is a holiday celebrated in the United States on the fourth Thursday in November. It has been an annual tradition since 1863. Families and friends typically feast on roasted turkey, a featured item on any Thanksgiving table. The day is sometimes referred to as “Turkey Day.”



Photos by Fatima

Department stores go all out in decorating for the holidays with showy Christmas trees (left) and stylized reindeer (right).

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The traditional meal often includes stuffing, potatoes, cranberry sauce, gravy, and pumpkin pie. Thanksgiving Day is a time for many people to give thanks for what they have.

Christmas Day occurs on December 25. It celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ. On this day or even weeks before, people decorate their homes and gardens with lights and evergreens, put up Christmas trees and much more. They also cook delicious and festive foods such as baked ham and eggnog, exchange gifts among themselves, and children receive a lot of gifts from a character named Santa Claus.

On New Years Eve, December 31, many people organize parties at home or attend special celebrations to celebrate the New Year. A particularly striking aspect of the New Year festivities is the ball drop in Times Square in Manhattan. The ball is made of crystal and electric lights and is placed on top of a pole, which is 77 feet, or 23 meters, high. At one minute before midnight, the ball is lowered slowly. It comes to rest at the bottom at exactly midnight. The event is shown on television across the United States and around the world. This spectacle has been held every year since 1907, except during World War II.

The Ins and Outs of Health Policy and Care

BY SOLANGEL ROCHELS (COLOMBIA)

OUR HEALTH IS AFFECTED by many factors, including where we live, genetics, our income, our educational status, and our relationships. These are known as “social determinants of health.”

The dimensions of health can encompass “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity,” as defined by the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO).

All nations in the world have a public health service. Each country or area has specific conditions and needs. In the U.S., the Public Health Service (PHS) is led by the Surgeon General of the United States and there also exists the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, headquartered in Atlanta. They perform national and international health activities. There are Public Health policies and programs such as Prevention



Fruits and vegetables and little or no trans fats make for a healthy diet.

of Infectious Diseases, Sanitation, Adolescent Pregnancy, Natural Disasters, and Environmental Protection, to name only a few.

Today, Public Health has begun to focus more on chronic diseases such as Cancer, Diabetes, and Heart Disease. At the moment, a world campaign seeks to limit saturated trans fats in the diet. Trans fats are very dangerous for health. You should check not only the total calories but also the total fat and the trans fats on food labels.

Spending on Public Health, however, should not be confused with expenditures on Health Care. The latter involves the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of disease, illness, injury, and other physical and mental impairments. In the U.S., in order to receive good and consistent care, a person needs health insurance. Immigrants with legal permanent status

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The English-Speaking Union
Andrew Romay New Immigrant Center

Editorial

Migration Is a Two-Way Street

Migrating to a new country is a literal tradeoff. You may gain some things yet you lose others, and the question remains whether it is ultimately worth it based on your motives and objectives.

Let's look at ourselves and find something we have in common. One thing we all leave behind in our home country is our family. It is very hard to start your life all over in a new country without anyone out there for you. Family ties are important. You need to know where you came from and your kids need to know their family history. There is truth in the saying: "Without a past there is no future."

Let's examine what we gain instead: friends. Are they real friends like the ones we made at school or college?! People you meet probably won't be as close to you as friends from your home country. On the other hand, in the U.S., especially in New York City, we are exposed to individuals with different backgrounds, from different cultures and who eat different foods. It is truly amazing to have breakfast in Little Italy and lunch in Chinatown. It seems like you just traveled through two countries populated by people from different nations. In one day in NYC you can experience so much.

Two other things we gain in the U.S. are educational and job opportunities. The educational system here is very advanced. It might seem hard and very different at first, but once you become accustomed to the structure and learning process, it gets easier down the road. Your education leads you to better job opportunities. Being an educated team player with a positive attitude are attributes you need to succeed in America.

On the other hand, we lose the comfort zone. In addition to your family, you leave people who share the same perspective you have, the places where you grew up which make you go back in time and become a child once again, and just about everything that was so close to you for so many years. It does take a lot of time to feel comfortable in a new country and then again: Is that the same comfort zone you had once in your home country? No, it is not better and not worse, it is just different.

One of the most important things we gain is independence. You learn to make decisions on your own and take responsibility for your actions. It might be hard at times, but eventually it makes you much stronger, ready to deal with just about anything that confronts you. You gain respect for yourself and others for what you have been through and how far you have come. Nobody thinks you are a child anymore.

So the question remains, is migrating to a new country like the U.S. worth it? America guarantees respect for human rights and freedom of speech, and gives endless opportunities for you to achieve the objectives you have. In order to succeed in the U.S. you have to set your priorities straight from the beginning.

We are on the Web:

newimmigrantinthecity.wordpress.com

BETWIXT & BETWEEN

BY OLGA SOROKINA (UKRAINE)

ALL OF US FACE some challenges when we come to a new country. For me the biggest challenge was getting used to year-round smiling faces.

In my country, we don't smile as often as people do in the U.S. We smile when we really mean it. For a few years people asked me why I was mad all the time. I didn't understand what they meant or why they said it. Then it got to me: I don't have a smiley face 24/7. It's not as big of a struggle today as it was five years ago, but it is still something I face every day.

Wherever I go (stores, banks, etc.) in America people almost always smile. I was really tired of these fake smiles and I didn't even notice how much I was used to seeing these meaningless smiles every day.

I met somebody I know in the elevator. The woman was silent and didn't say a word during our ride (no usual "How are you?" with a wide smile). That was the first time I realized that it feels weird and uncomfortable not getting that "fake smile," but I didn't give it much of a thought at the time.

The second time I faced it was when I went through an airport security check. The security guards spoke in a very grumpy way and that's when it hit me: Wouldn't it be better if they were smiling and polite?! I'm sure that would make the beginning of my trip more enjoyable. And then another thought: "What? Wait! You just said it yourself you don't like when people smile when they don't mean it!" I was confused....

The Department of Motor Vehicles was the worst of my non-smiling experiences. As soon I walked into the DMV, the receptionist gave me a gloomy look and continued flirting with a co-worker. In about 10 minutes she finally looked at me and asked what I wanted with an annoyed face like I was a child, who



Courtesy Photo

You'll find that life is still worthwhile if you just smile...

pulled her skirt and demanded attention. By the way, the whole 10 minutes I was standing quietly on the side.

Then I got yelled at for standing in the wrong line. When I finally got into the right line, a woman who worked there asked me: "Do you have all the documents ready? If not, get on the side. Don't slow the process down!" Are you kidding me?! Slow down the process? I had been in that office for about an hour and just found the right line! The line seemed to never end! And now she was saying I was slowing down the process! I took in a deep breath and said that I had all the documents ready. I couldn't wait to leave that place.

It definitely would have been helpful to hear a "please" or "thank you." And that's when I remembered the words of my aunt: "Keep in mind! After you live for a while in another country you won't feel at home, not in the country you were born and grew up in, and not in a country where you migrated to...."

That is so true. Living in Ukraine I didn't know any better than serious faces all around me. I came to the U.S. where everybody is smiling most of the time. Now I feel like I'm in need of fake smiles, which I don't want to see. Paradox! I keep wondering: Is there a middle ground and if there is, how do I find it?!

In Appreciation

ARNIC is Important for Any Newcomer

BY SAMIR BOUSTA (ALGERIA)

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK the ARNIC organization because they take good care of new immigrants and help them to learn English. I have been coming to them for more than a month and am happy to be a part of this organization.



Samir Boust

I didn't know about ARNIC until a friend who works with me in the bakery, a former ARNIC member, told me about it and advised me to go there. The first time I went there, I filled out an application to join and met Tanzilya, Caitlin, Karen, and Rachel. They explained more about the organization. They also said many classes were full, but told me not to worry, because the next day I could participate in a new activity, a discussion group. This

program meets one day a week. Discussions are led by Nancy Lewis on any subject, such as drugs, immigration problems, and American culture. I find this information and interaction with other members very helpful.

In addition, I have newspaper class every Wednesday from 5 to 7 p.m. with our teacher Bob, and every Thursday I have class in a synagogue with my teacher Cassandra where we speak English one on one. And don't forget about the trips. We went to a roof garden in Queens, and the Metropolitan Museum, and had a private tour of the United Nations. My schedule is full.

This program is very important for any newcomer to this country. By learning English in a sharing situation you can feel more confident and adapt and integrate with the American people.

To finish, I want to thank all the kind and dedicated people who work in this organization. I hope and plan to continue participating in ARNIC.

Strolling in the Concrete Jungle

BY ALINA KOLTOVSKA (UKRAINE)

WHEN I WAS LANDING IN NYC the first thing that I saw in my window was Manhattan with its beautiful skyscrapers. I will never forget this breathtaking view.

New York is the world’s ultimate skyscraper city.

The most famous of all skyscrapers, The Empire State Building, was the world’s tallest for 41 years. The Empire State Building is a 103-story skyscraper located in midtown Manhattan. Its name is derived from the nickname for New York, the Empire State.

The Empire State Building cost around \$41 million to build (equal to roughly \$500 million dollars in 2010). But considering how many people here visit this skyscraper since opening, it's nothing. Outdoor observatories have been visited by over 110 million people. See the world from the famous outdoor deck on the 86th floor starting at \$27.

As for me, a more beautiful view of the city can be seen from another skyscraper— Rockefeller Center. Rockefeller Center, originally known as Radio City, is a complex of buildings developed in the midst of the Great Depression. Rockefeller Center, known as a “city in a city,” is an exceptional example of civic planning. All buildings share a common design style, Art Deco.

Art deco is an influential visual arts design style which first appeared in France after World War I. It is an eclectic style that combines traditional craft motifs with machine age imagery and materials.

The GE Building is an Art Deco skyscraper that forms the centerpiece of



Photo by Alina

The Time Warner Center

Rockefeller Center in Midtown Manhattan. At 850 feet (259m) high, the 70-story building is the 10th tallest in NYC. The observation deck on top Rockefeller Center's building promoted as “Top of the Rock” boasts panoramic views of Central Park and the Empire State Building.

Today, my favorite skyscraper is The Time Warner Center. The modern twin towers loom over Columbus Circle, a roundabout at the southwest corner of Central Park. Built in 2003, it is one of the most successful modern skyscrapers in NYC. The property had the highest listed market value in NYC, \$1.1

billion, in 2006.

There are so many skyscrapers in NYC and they are one of the reasons why I love NY. Every day when I walk in the city, I have this feeling that I am walking through a concrete jungle; I love this feeling because the jungle is so special. It contains so many different skyscrapers, all of them with their own history and own character. I love NY!

“I get out of the taxi and it’s probably the only city which in reality looks better than on the postcards: New York.”
— Milos Forman

Ins and Outs of Health Care

(Cont’d from page one)

(residents or citizens), as are 95% of ARNIC students, can apply for Public Health Insurance. If your household income falls below a certain threshold, you can qualify for free or low cost public insurance like Medicaid, Family Health Plus, or Child Health Plus. It is extremely important to be aware and ask for them. Medicaid is free for pregnant women, children and teens under 18 years old, and people who are blind, or over 65 with low income.

Medicare is an insurance plan for people older than 65, but even those people who did not pay into it and do not collect Social Security can get it, however, the cost is high. For emergencies, all residents in NYC, even the undocumented and visitors, can find assistance at public hospitals, for example, Elmhurst in Queens, Bellevue in Manhattan, Sea View Hospital on Staten Island, Coney Island Hospital in Brooklyn, and Lincoln Hospital in the Bronx. More information can be found at nyc.gov/hhc. In cases of critical emergencies, private hospitals charge special prices according to one’s situation.

Some workers have health insurance from their employers as part of a benefits package that may also include a pension program or 401(k), and vacation, sick, and personal days. There are different private health insurance plans; their premiums range from low to high and their coverage varies commensurate with cost.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2012 more than 42 million Americans did not have any health insurance. Extending coverage to these people is a great challenge for the U.S. Perhaps raising income limits for Medicaid would be very helpful, and in addition other measures may include unemployment and part-time jobs benefits, and an increase in the minimum wage.



Regular doctor visits and other preventative care are essential to staying healthy.

De Gustibus

Keep Calm and Eat Pizza

BY NYI NYI (BURMA)

NO SURPRISE. Pizza has become my favorite dish because of the great taste. You can choose from various toppings, like cheese, tomato sauce, pepperoni, sausage, or mushrooms. You can easily find many pizza places close to one another in NYC. Pizza is a good option if you want fast food. For me it saves time and is well-priced.

Giuseppe’s pizza is outstanding. It is located close to the English Speaking Union. If you live or work by Grand Central, this is a good choice for a meal. It is located on Lexington Avenue between 39th and 40th street. Giuseppe’s offers Italian food with a friendly staff! Giuseppe’s has been called the best pizza in town for over 25 years. It costs \$2.50 per slice topped with cheese and the whole pie is \$16.

I always stop at Giuseppe’s Pizza place for my meal before my class starts. I finish work at 5 p.m. and my class starts at 6. I have one hour to get to class and it takes 30 minutes on the subway. I only have around 15 minutes to have my two slices and one small soda. It costs me only \$6.50. If you are a smaller eater, one slice and soda will cost you just four dollars. This pizza is totally worth it.

Another one of my favorite pizza places is Roll and Go. The pizza is excellent! It is definitely a great place to get a quick bite to eat in midtown. It is located on 8th Ave, very close by Port Authority. They offer a \$1 pizza slice with amazing great taste.

You can have it on the go. I sometimes buy two slices and one soda for just \$3 and stop at Bryant Park and have my meal.

I like Pizza because it gives me energy and strength. Two slices of pizza satisfies me for the whole day without getting hungry later. A slice of 14” regular crust (107g) of pizza contains about 285 calories. The calories from two slices is enough to meet half of daily energy needs.

The modern pizza originated in Italy. Raffaele Esposito, who owned a restaurant, baked what is now called “pizza” for the visit of Italian King Umberto I and Queen Margherita in 1889. The first pizzeria in North America was opened in 1905 by Gennaro Lombardi on Spring Street in New York City. Pizza has become the most popular food in the world. New York is the first and the best place for pizza. Can you imagine Americans eat approximately 350 slices of pizza per



Photo by NYI NYI

The pizza maestro at Giuseppe’s, Enrique Mantilla, shows off a giant pie.

second?

Most of us love pizza and love debating where to get the best. Whether we buy it at a local eatery, purchase it from the frozen foods section of a supermarket, or get it delivered by a national chain, pizza is a dependable, often delicious, hunger solver.

Little Ukraine in New York City

BY MARIA BINCH (UKRAINE)

UKRAINIAN AMERICANS were present in New York City as early as the 17th century when the city was called New Amsterdam. However, the first Ukrainian mass immigration wave occurred at the end of the 19th century, coinciding with other mass European influxes into the city. The traditional locus is Little Ukraine, located within the East Village neighborhood in Manhattan.

The Ukrainian population of Little Ukraine topped out at around 60,000 residents after World War II, and subsequently dwindled. Today about a third of approximately 80,000 Ukrainian Americans living in New York City reside in Little Ukraine, which is bound by Houston and 14th Streets, and Third Avenue and Avenue A. The area is sometimes also referred to as Ukrainian Village.

In this area there are a lot of Ukrainian organizations. The two oldest and biggest of them are Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA) and Ukrainian National Federal Credit Union (UNFCU). Both of these institutions are not-for-profit. The UCCA is deeply committed to maintaining a vibrant and strong Ukrainian community within the U.S. UNFCU is an organization where all revenue generated is returned to members, with no fees on services, higher dividend rates on accounts, and more competitive loan rates.

Many influential Ukrainians from these institutions assist in improving the Ukrainian school, which is located near the Saint George Ukrainian Catholic church. Religion plays an important role for Ukrainians; therefore, in the East Village people can worship at a Catholic Church or the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

On Second Avenue everyone can visit The Ukrainian Museum and learn about the history, culture and traditions of the country. For people who are very talented in music or drama, the Ukrainian community in 1949 created the national choir “Dumka” and a few years ago, The Ukrainian Drama Studio. Dumka’s founders sought to preserve and cultivate the rich secular and religious musical heritage of Ukraine.

If you want to try Ukrainian food such as borscht, pierogies, and stuffed cabbage, you might want to visit Ukrainian East Village Restaurant or the popular and famous Veselka. These two places are not expensive but the food there is superb.

So, now you know everything about Little Ukraine in New York City. You just need to visit these places and enjoy.



Photo by Maria

Veselka, which translates to “rainbow” in English, attracts a hip and diverse crowd in Little Ukraine.

Inquiring Photographers

What is your next step after participating in ARNIC?

BY FATIHA AMARIR (MOROCCO) & ALINA KOLTOVSKA (UKRAINE)

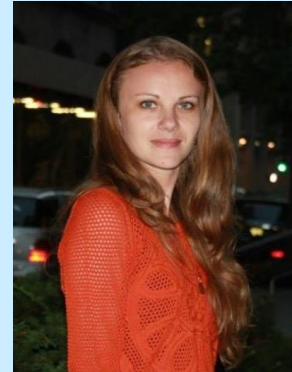


Good question, I don’t know. I think it will be many steps. During my education at the English-Speaking Union I have improved my English a lot. But the English level that I have now does not satisfy me completely, therefore I would like to continue my education in the ARNIC. In general, a main goal for me now is getting a good job. I hope I will find one soon using my experience from the English-Speaking Union.

— Inna Svidler

I am going to find a job. I hope I get a lot of information to interview for a job successfully. But it is still difficult for me to have conversations by phone. My understanding is rather not so good, thus, I am going to practice with a native speaker, who will help me improve my listening skills. Also, I would like to attend some courses connected with my specialty. Now, I am choosing a university to do it.

— Mikhail Sigalov



I’ve been working in finance for the past two years, and this is a field I really like. So, that’s why I have decided to pursue a career as a financial analyst. In January, I’m planning to take the GMAT because this exam is mandatory for enrolling in graduate school.

— Olga Sorokina

I would like to continue studying in ARNIC because the teaching method is very organized. Also the teachers and tutors are very kind and enthusiastic. The school has different kinds of programs and the class environment is also very good.

— Than Htut



I might like to come back as a volunteer to express my gratitude for all the training I received, and to give back or to teach back all of what I’ve learned. Also, I’d like to transmit information about the American workplace, to give advice, and provide job-hunting tips.

— Belkacem Mellal



I’m participating in the English in Action program to improve my English. I hope that my English will soon be good enough to enable me to find a job.

— Alina Hakobyan

My next step after ARNIC is getting a job. It is what I need now. I am working to improve my English to perform well at a job interview. It is very important to have good English skills. Even though you are an expert in your field, nobody will know about it if you don’t speak correctly. Thank you to ARNIC for the opportunity of improving my language skills, and therefore, getting the better chance.

— Simon Svidler



I am really happy to have this opportunity to study in ARNIC. On December 30th I am going to have an assessment test at BMCC. I do believe that I will pass that exam without any troubles. After graduating, I plan to transfer to Hunter College in order to become a social worker. To my mind, it is a very good choice for me, because I would like to work with people and help them in different situations. I am very thankful to all the teachers and tutors who worked with me.

—Maria Binch