

# CONNECTIONS

## SUMMER 2020

EVERY STUDENT NEEDS A SENSE OF HOME, WHEREVER THEY ARE FROM.



## CELEBRATING OUR 2020 GRADUATES!



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## INTERNATIONAL FRIENDS BOARD MEMBERS

Patricia Gilman, Co-Chair  
Randy Spalding, Co-Chair  
Pam Obando, Secretary  
Robert Woerner, Treasurer  
Gaurav Deshpande, Community Member  
Jody Friend, Community Member  
Luann Haley, Community Member  
Pamela Harlan, Community Member  
Rachel Ivanyi, Community Member  
Michelle Morden, Community Member  
Momoka Sugimura, Student Representative  
Francisco Villegas, Student Representative  
Siyu Wang, Student Representative  
Youhao Wei, Technical Advisor  
Sylvia Ahanonu, ISS Liason



Recent graduate, Ming Xin

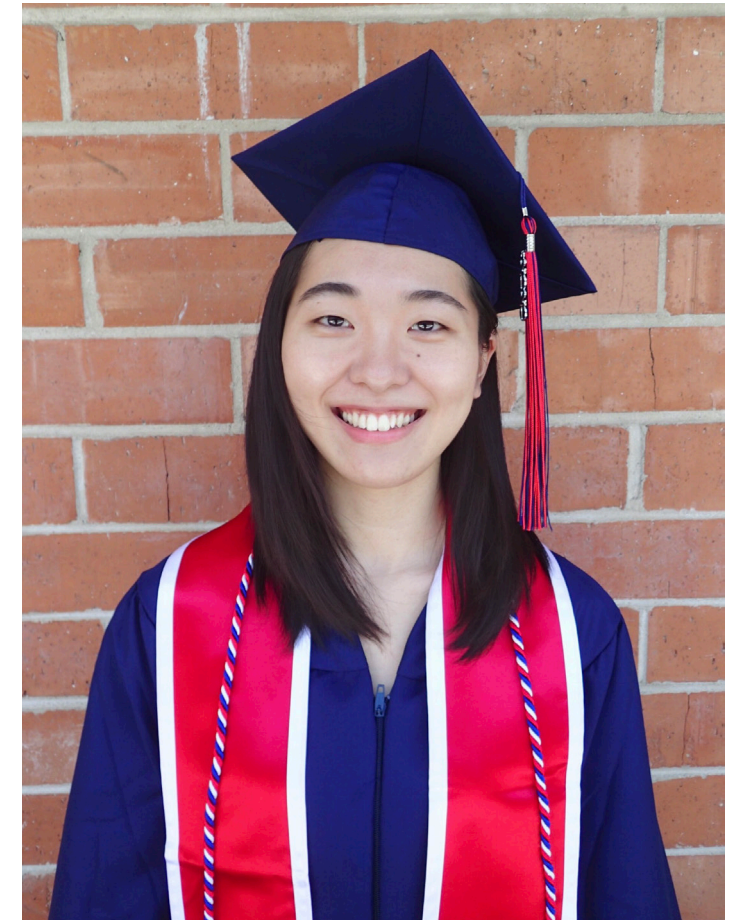


**Join us in honoring our recent  
University of Arizona graduates!  
Due to COVID-19, students did not  
have a traditional graduation  
ceremony or celebration, so we are  
showcasing some from our  
International Family here.**



*Momoka Sugimura  
Bachelor of Science in  
Optical Sciences*

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*Francisco Villegas  
Ph.D. in Civil Engineering*

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*Gioia Zoli*  
*Master of Arts in French*

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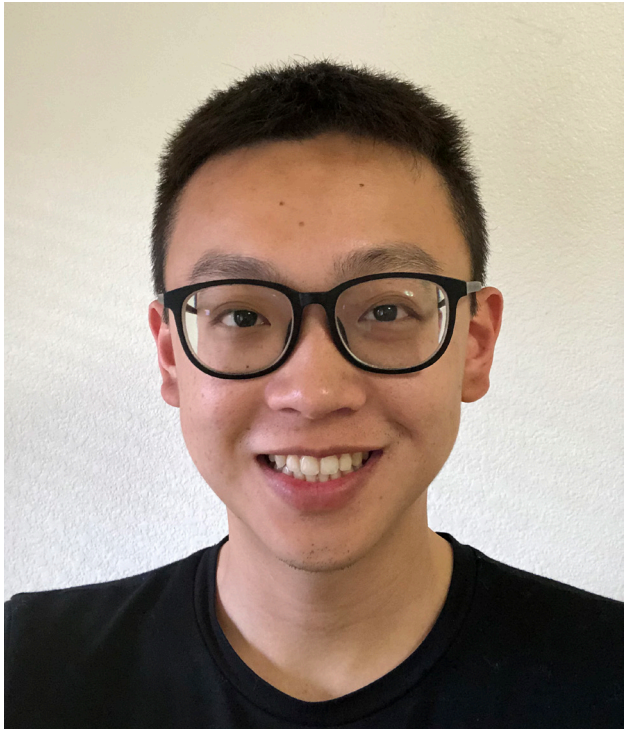
*Aadi Sharma*  
*Bachelor of Arts in Computer Science*

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*Allen Ti-Tai Wang*  
*Master of Science in Information Science*

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*Rahul Roy Mattam*  
*Master of Science in Computer Science*

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*Irina Potapova*  
*Master of Arts in Russian*

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*Siyu Wang*  
*Ph.D. in Psychology*

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*Birkan Kolçu*  
*Master of Science in Computer Engineering*

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*Ming Xin*  
*Bachelor of Science*  
*in Computer Science*

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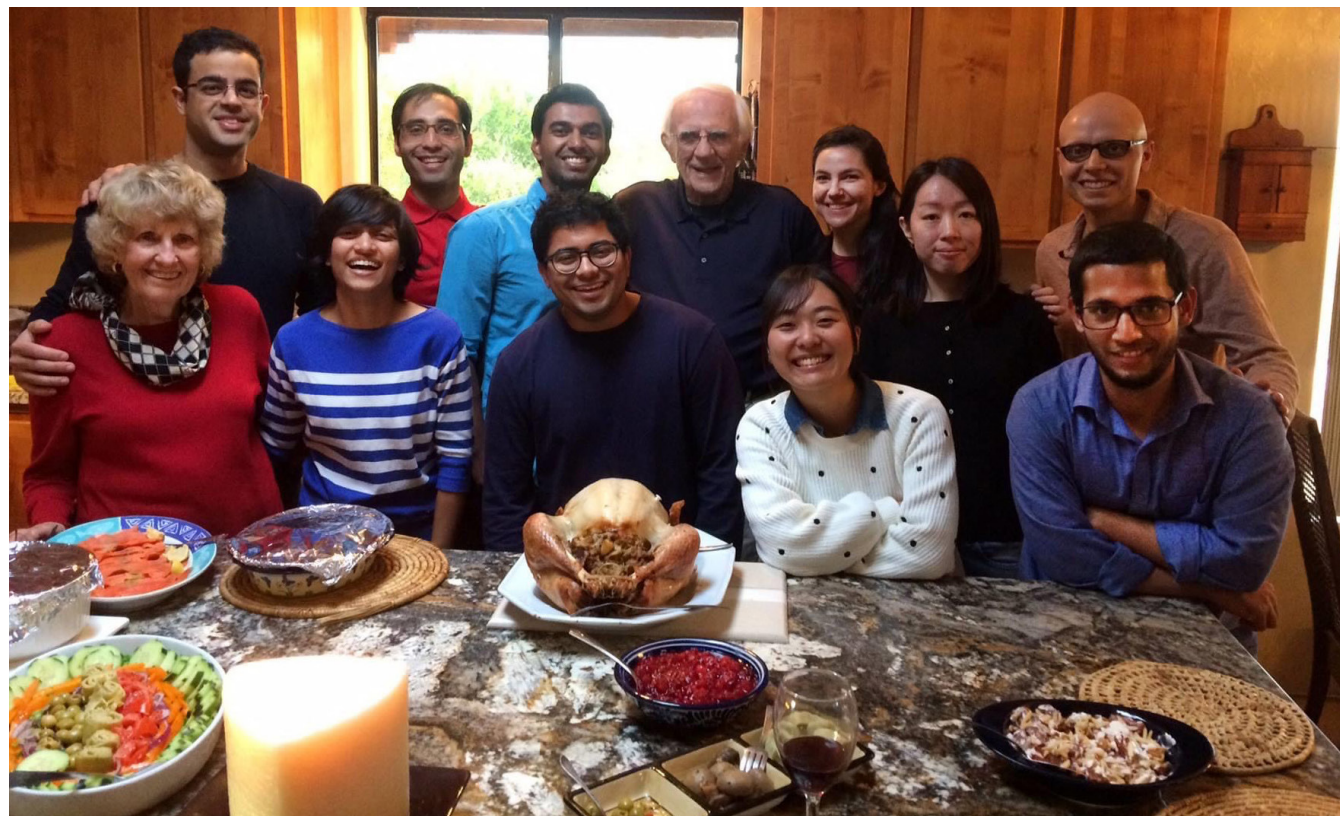


# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

*by Momoka Sugimura, IF Board member and recent graduate*

I'm from Tokyo, Japan, and I recently graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Optical Sciences. I had a great time learning under the best professors in the field. I'm currently working at a software company in Tucson with OPT and planning on pursuing a graduate degree at the UA in Fall 2021.

Through IF, I met my hosts, Virginia and Jack Wyly, as well as their students. Every year on Thanksgiving, they invited students as well as their friends and had a big dinner party. I'm an only child and my family is quite small, so I always looked forward to seeing them and having the "big family" experience.



Last year, I established a kendo club in UA. Kendo is a Japanese martial art derived from swordsmanship in which I have been trained for 10 years. I had a chance to teach some of the Japanese culture and make friends. We were going to compete at all-US intercollegiate tournaments in late March at Harvard but it got canceled because of COVID. Unfortunately, we cannot hold practices at this moment but hopefully, we will find a way soon.



# RANDOM THOUGHTS ABOUT HOSTING FROM A LONG-TIME HOST

by Robert Woerner,  
IF Board Treasurer

After hosting over 100 students over a 25-year period both in Denver and here in Tucson, I have learned a few tricks and techniques that have proven helpful. Perhaps others will find them useful as well.

**Idioms** can be a source of confusion. Talk with a student about “the elephant in the room” or ask them if they can “wrap their head around something,” and you will probably be met with a confused look or awkward silence. I like to use idioms to expand students’ knowledge of our language and culture, but it’s important to follow up with an explanation if needed!

**Bicycle helmets and locks** are important for safety and security. Over 90 percent of my numerous UA students who ride a bicycle have had one stolen. Really strong locks are essential, as are helmets for safety. I have several times driven students to Walmart so they could purchase a helmet.

Several years ago, one of my students fell in his shower and was injured seriously enough that he required two trips to the emergency room and was in a lot of pain for several months. Ever since, I have purchased **rubber bathmats** (around \$5.00 or \$6.00 at Walmart) for all of my students who live in off-campus housing and have a tub/shower combination.



*“A lot of the fun of hosting is learning much about the big world we all share without even leaving home!”*

**American supermarkets** can be very confusing at first for new students, who are sometimes unfamiliar with all of our varieties of canned and frozen foods, various types and brands of paper products, and other mysteries. Having personally wandered up and down the aisles of Asian supermarkets and marveled at the overwhelming number of unfamiliar products myself, I think I can appreciate students’ occasional bewilderment. Simply taking students shopping can be very helpful for the first few months.

**Students, in turn, have proven to be wonderful guides** to the best Asian, Indian, Middle Eastern, and other ethnic eateries. They learn quickly from long-time fellow students where the good restaurants are and are eager to share this knowledge with their hosts.

Sometimes students might ask for help in **learning to drive**. Having tried this several times and seeing my life pass in front of my eyes, I recommend hosts pass on this one. There are usually older students with cars who are willing to help, and several of my students have paid a local driving school to teach them. These schools have provided both a vehicle and a professional instructor. A significant advantage, in addition to preserving your sanity and car, is that students usually receive a certificate that allows them to get a license without needing to take a driving test (important because students often don’t yet own a car).

**Listening to students** is just as, or more, important than talking to them. We have much to teach and share about our lives and culture. However, students also have much to teach us about their lives, their friends and families, and their customs, cultures, and cuisines. A lot of the fun of hosting is learning much about the big world we all share without even leaving home! Listen to, learn from, and cherish your friendships with the wonderful international students we are privileged to know and befriend.



Robert Woerner with recent graduate,  
Aadi Sharma





Fall Picnic 2019

## DONATIONS

to International Friends currently fund the following:

- **Food and supplies** for IF events such as Welcome Lunch, Welcome Brunch, picnics.
- **Brochures**, guidelines, business cards, banners, and other printed materials
- **Rental of sites** for our Welcome Lunch, planning meeting, and special events
- **Website** and listserv costs
- **Student prizes** given at our picnics
- **Miscellaneous expenses** such as a new sound system and equipment for group activities

of “all that she has done for the community.”

What does IF need money for? Generally, most of our expenses are annual ones, but we regularly have to make new one-time purchases. Last year, for instance, we had to replace our old defective sound system with a new efficient one. And as International Friends grows and the numbers of students we serve increases, so do our expenses.

**Can we count on you for your support? Please donate online today!**

## WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT INTERNATIONAL FRIENDS?

[www.ifriendstucson.org](http://www.ifriendstucson.org)

**Public Facebook Group**  
**International Friends @ Tucson, AZ**

*Interested in writing an article for the next IF newsletter, providing photos, or want to be showcased in the Artist Spotlight?*

Please submit your ideas to the IF Newsletter Editor and Designer Rachel Ivanyi, Board member and host

[rivanyiart@gmail.com](mailto:rivanyiart@gmail.com)



*Looking for information about events and things to do around Tucson? Check out [www.visittucson.org](http://www.visittucson.org)*

Rachel and Craig Ivanyi with recent graduates Irina Potapova, and Rahul Roy Mattam



Recent graduates Francisco Villegas and Siyu Wang with Natalia Bolivia  
Fall Picnic 2019

## SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL FRIENDS

**International Friends recently added a SUPPORT button to our website.**

While the University of Arizona grants an annual modest stipend to IF, this amount does not cover all of our expenses. Our board... all volunteers...contribute both time and money to help sustain our organization. Last year, we made an end-of-the-year appeal and received generous donations from many current and former hosts. Notably, Deb and Jim McLaughlin made their donation in honor of long-time board member and former board chair LuAnn Hawley in recognition



# CONNECTIONS

International Friends Newsletter



# International Friends

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## Tucson, Arizona

*“Our goal is simple but important. We bring people together to share their cultures, interests, and life experiences. International students and local hosts are matched with the intent of them meeting at least once a month during the school year for socializing, activities, and fun.”*

### **International Friends, Inc.**

International Friends is an all-volunteer organization that brings together international students attending the University of Arizona and Southern Arizona residents.

**Phone Number**  
(520) 621-4627

**Email Address**  
[info@ifriendstucson.org](mailto:info@ifriendstucson.org)

**Website**  
[www.ifriendstucson.org](http://www.ifriendstucson.org)

SUMMER 2020 ISSUE