



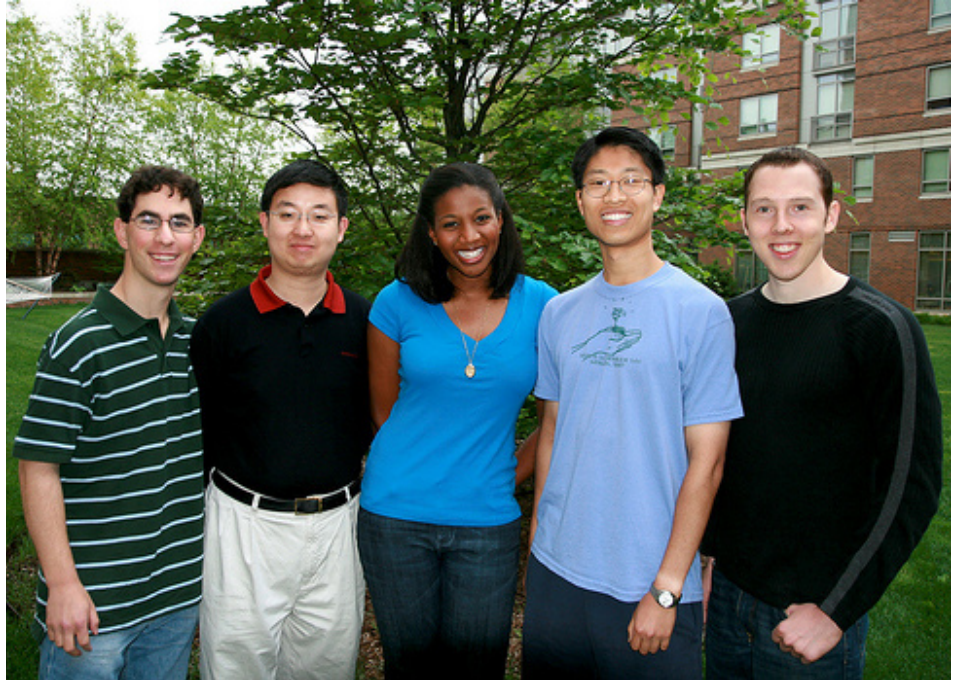
## The Sidney-Pacific Executive Council Welcomes Residents

By **SPEC**

Greetings from the Sidney-Pacific Executive Council! We lead the S-P house government, which in turn brings you all the programs and resources you'll soon know and love—if you haven't discovered them already. Read on to find out a little about who we are, how we got involved, and where we're taking S-P.

### Zenzile Brooks, President: How I Became Involved

My involvement at S-P began one of my first nights here, at the New Student Welcome Dinner. My table was full of students that didn't know each other and were making awkward conversation—but also a few well-adjusted, “cool” students who seemed to know people and seemed comfortable. They were smiling, cracking jokes and laughing. They struck up conversations with the newbies, and we found out that they were S-P officers—the External Relations Chair and Social Chair, I think. The super-cool, super-funny External Rela-



**The 2009-10 Sidney-Pacific Executive Council:** 2009-10: Michael Eilenberg (VP Info), Yuxi Zhang (VP Resources), Zenzile Brooks (President), Po-Ru Loh (Hall Chair), Daniel Macaya (VP Residential Life)

tions Chair pointed to the “SP-Helpers” sign up sheet on our table and coolly said,

“You should sign up. It's fun. You'll meet people. Seriously. Do it. It's good.”

I needed no more convincing and

put my name down on the sheet. That simple act graced my inbox over the coming months with requests for help at parties, brunches—I even volunteered on an exciting trip to Target. Whether I was cutting kiwi or selecting the per-

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### Inside the S-Peaker:



2-3 Orientation Events

4-5 Thinking Green



**Don't miss it! SP Orientation BBQ and Movie Screening.**

**Date: Tuesday, Sept. 1, Time: 6:00p–11:00p**, in the Sidney Pacific courtyard

# Orientation for Everyone, 2009

Welcome to Sidney Pacific! Whether you know it or not, you are joining a community of over 700 graduate students from all over the world. Although this community is relatively new (opened in 2002)

we have a long history of fun-filled events throughout the years. If you've just arrived, you're in luck – this is one of the most happening times of the year! The next few weeks will be packed with exciting

events which will help introduce you to Boston and help you meet your new friends and neighbors here at MIT. Check out the orientation guide at [s-p.mit.edu/orientation/](http://s-p.mit.edu/orientation/) The calendar (which just so

## august 29 – september 5

<b>time</b>	<b>saturday, august 29</b>
6:30 pm – 8 pm	Open Doors Night (Room Parties!)
	<b>sunday, august 30</b>
3 pm – 4 pm	Sidney-Pacific Information Booth (SP Lobby)
	<b>monday, august 31</b>
7 pm – 9 pm	It's a Small World Welcome Reception (Multipurpose Room)
	<b>tuesday, september 1</b>
4 pm – 6 pm	SP-MORE (Get Free Stuff for your room!)
6 pm – 9 pm	Rock 'n' Roast BBQ (SP Courtyard)
9 pm -- 11 pm	Outdoor Movie Screening (SP Courtyard)
	<b>wednesday, september 2</b>
7:30 pm – 9 pm	Prudential Skywalk (Meet in SP Lobby)
	<b>friday, september 4</b>
8 am – 3 pm	CityDays 2009 (Public Service Day)
1 pm -- 4 pm	Trip to Museum of Fine Arts (Meet in SP Lobby)
8 pm	International Students Ice Cream Outing (Meet in SP Lobby)
9 pm – 1 am	Dance Party: Summer Breeze (Multipurpose Room)
	<b>saturday, september 5</b>
10 am – 1 pm	Trip to the New England Aquarium (Meet in SP Lobby)
2 pm – 4 pm	Bike Outing (Meet in SP lobby)
8:30 pm	International Students French Desserts Outing (Meet in SP Lobby)



**Questions? Comments? Email: [sp-orientation-chair@mit.edu](mailto:sp-orientation-chair@mit.edu)**

# A Handy Guide to Events

happens to be conveniently included in this issue) is a reference for all the events we have planned. Please come, eat, socialize, and, if you like, help out! Volunteering at events, whether it be chopping fruit

or skippering a sailboat, is bound to provide an even richer experience. In any case, however you choose to participate, orientation is for everyone so enjoy yourself, whether it's your first year here or

your Nth!

Have fun, and once again, welcome!

-SP Orientation Committee Chairs

## september 6 - september 24

	<b>sunday, september 6</b>
12 pm – 2 pm	Orientation Brunch (Multipurpose Room)
2 pm – 4:30 pm	Sailing on the Charles (Meet in SP Lobby)
	<b>monday, september 7 (LABOR DAY)</b>
1 pm – 4 pm	American Culture Festival (Multipurpose Room)
	<b>tuesday, september 8</b>
5 pm – 8 pm	Trip to Arboretum (Meet in SP Lobby)
	<b>wednesday, september 9 (FIRST DAY OF CLASSES)</b>
9 pm -- 10 pm	Coffee Hour (Multipurpose Room)
	<b>friday, september 11</b>
7 pm – 9 pm	Thank You for Volunteers (Thirsty Ear Pub, Ashdown House NW35)
	<b>saturday, september 12</b>
6:30 pm	Hall Dinner Outings (Local Restaurants)
	<b>tuesday, september 22</b>
6:30 pm – 8:00 pm	Housemaster Welcome Dinner (Multipurpose Room)
	<b>thursday, september 24</b>
6:30 pm – 8:00 pm	Housemaster Welcome Dinner (Multipurpose Room)



**Note:**

This schedule is accurate as of August 31. In the event of last-minute updates, they'll be posted at [s-p.mit.edu/orientation/calendar.html](http://s-p.mit.edu/orientation/calendar.html)



# The Environment, for Everyone

By **Leonid Chindelevitch, SP Environment Chair**

The environment is a topic that does not suffer from a shortage of media coverage. Global warming, renewable sources of energy, green jobs – all of these terms are undoubtedly familiar to you. But while you are certainly aware of the major issues, you may feel that you have no role to play in them, nor any contribution to make towards preserving the environment. The purpose of this brief article is to convince you of precisely the opposite. Every action you make in your daily life (well, almost every action) has an effect on the environment, and whether this effect is positive or negative is under your personal control.

But, before we go on, there is a crucial question to ask: so what? It is certainly possible to find examples of equally complex issues which are at least as important to us as members of the global community: poverty, hunger, access to healthcare, minority rights – the list goes on. Certainly, it would be wrong to focus on the environment to the exclusion of all these other areas. These are all interrelated problems, and interrelated problems generally require interrelated solutions. However, environmental issues are, in some sense, the easiest to deal with by incorporating small yet meaningful measures into our daily routines. In my experience, it is a lot harder get a cup of fairly-traded coffee than to bring my own mug when buying said cup of coffee.

In addition, environmental problems, whether we want it or not, are largely our responsibility – the US, which has less than 5% of the world's population, generates more than 20% of all greenhouse gas emissions, 10% of all municipal waste, and consumes 23% of all energy and a staggering 40% of all the water (data from OECD and Wikipedia). Granted, a lot of the innovations for

addressing these sectors also come from the US, but they should not be an excuse for our own irresponsible behavior.

Let us now look at five major areas where a small change makes a big difference: food, water, energy, waste, and transportation. For each one, I provide suggestions that you can try adopting into your daily life. Chances are, you are already doing a lot of the things mentioned here. What worked well for me is adding something new every week or two, so that the new habit would “solidify” before I moved on to the next one. More importantly, however, constantly thinking about the issues described here will help you develop an attitude of what I would call “environmental awareness”, which will influence not only your actions, but also those of people you interact with, resulting in a virtuous circle.

**Food production and consumption** is one of the main contributors to greenhouse gases. In order to reduce the environmental impact of the food you consume, consider buying locally produced food as much as possible. Organic food is produced without pesticides or chemical fertilizers (or, in the case of animal products, without antibiotics), and is therefore also “environmentally friendly”. Meat is a lot more energy-intensive than vegetable-based products, so decreasing your consumption of meat also helps reduce the energy required to give you the same amount of calories.

**Water** is a limited resource, even  
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## Five Ways to Conserve

- 1. Food production and consumption** Go organic; try eating less meat
- 2. Saving Water** take shorter showers; use a glass of water to brush your teeth; fix leaky faucets; wash clothes in cold or warm instead of hot water
- 3. Energy** turn off unneeded lights; unplug your computer when not in use; switch to compact fluorescent lights
- 4. Waste** reuse; recycle; reduce
- 5. Transportation** try a Zip Car or Zip Bike; carpool; take a train or other public transportation



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though we don't have to pay for it at SP. Taking shorter showers, using a glass for the water you use for brushing your teeth (rather than letting it run) and getting any leaky faucets fixed are all helpful. Heating water requires a lot of energy, so setting the washing machine on "cold" or "warm" is a good option, provided your clothes do not require the "hot" setting. Filling a bowl with water for washing produce is another good way to reduce consumption.

**Energy** is another resource we don't have to pay for, but which should not be wasted. Turn off the lights when you leave the room; turn off and unplug your computer and other electronic devices when they are not being used (such as at night); do not use your heating or air conditioning unless absolutely necessary – all of these things make a difference. If you want to take it further, replace your lightbulbs by compact fluorescent ones or get a solar charger for your cell phone and other appliances!

**Waste** (also known as garbage) is also a resource, even though we usually don't think of it this way. Before throwing something out, think whether you can use it for another purpose; be creative! Some items, like shoes, tennis balls and cosmetics containers, are collected by some stores. If you are going to throw it out, make sure to recycle or compost it if possible. The SP rules for recycling and composting are at <http://s-p.mit.edu/resources/recycle2.php> Even better than reusing and recycling is – you said it – reducing the amount of things you



consume, so don't get more stuff than you will need.

**Transportation**, our final topic, is not a major concern for the MIT community, but is responsible for about 15% of all greenhouse emissions worldwide, and 30% in the US. If you drive, consider using a ZipCar (there is a parking lot just outside SP) instead of driving your own car, and/or carpooling with other people. Better yet, if you are going only a short distance, use a bike instead (if you don't own one, SP has ZipBikes for rent), or walk. For

longer trips, public transportation provides a great alternative. Finally, for going to other cities, buses and trains leave a much smaller carbon footprint than airplanes.

I hope that this article has inspired you to make a difference. This is always a work in progress, but the process itself can be quite enjoyable, and actually not so difficult if you just give it a try! You can trust me on that, because I implemented most of these changes in my own life in just one year.



# SPEC Welcomes Residents

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fect Target brand pumpkin-carving knife, these adventures helped me get to know people and made me more invested—and thus more comfortable—in my home.

The greatest secret about volunteering is that it made the coffee hours and other social events much easier to go to. I used to get nervous about walking into a big room and talking to random people, but I learned that if I walked in wearing an apron and carrying a tray of fruit, it was much easier. I was Important. I was In Charge. I was Running Things. People would ask me questions, I'd answer and ask a question back, and before I knew it I was Socializing. Socializing continued in the kitchen, in the pantry, and on the way to Target. It was fun and exciting, and to

“S&P: A House Full of Families”. Sidney-Pacific has a great reputation for throwing terrific large-scale events. This year, we'd like to increase the opportunities available for small groups of people to connect with each other. As you can see from our stories about how we got involved at S-P, some of the most powerful connections are those between only a few—or even just two—individuals. We hope the success of this vision will be evidenced across all offices by an increase in volunteerism, a growth in our small-group programming



me it was only natural that I continue on as an officer (Brunch Chair and now President) the next few years.

## Our Vision

SPEC's vision for 2009-2010 is

cause of my emphasis on publicizing events and facilities, I was offered the Publicity Chair position so I started from there. I was the S-P Publicity Chair from 2008 to 2009, designing and putting up posters for all kinds of events, notices, and announcements both within S-P and across campus. During my tenure as the Publicity Chair, I think I was able to contribute by proactively thinking for the event organizers about how/when/where best to publicize the events instead of sitting there and waiting for requests or orders to come. I think that goes down the lines of using one's strength to help out the S-P community.

**We're a Resource for YOU**

I now lead the Office of Resources, which is in charge of all the resources and facilities Sidney-Pacific has to

officer if you have an idea or want to help out!

**Yuxi Zhang, VP of Resources:  
What Sparked My Interest in  
SP**

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offer. We purchase new equipment and inventory, repair and upgrade existing resources, and support government and community use of the resources. We also manage the finances of Sidney-Pacific and its government. In this coming year, we want to continue to improve our fantastic range of resources, and to focus on:

- Making sure that all residents are aware of the whole range of facilities and services we have here, and that the residents have a direct and efficient way of communicating their needs, suggestions, and feedback to the Office
- Engaging the whole S-P community in helping maintain our facilities, and recruiting more volunteers and helpers to better manage our resources; and
- Promoting more efficient use of our resources.

### **Daniel Macaya, VP of Residential Life: How I Jumped Into SP Government**

My involvement started almost as soon as I entered S-P. I began regularly helping out at coffee hour and brunch because I found it to be a nice break from the work of MIT. I got to be creative with cutting and arranging fruit and really enjoyed the company of the other volunteers. It was also great to snack on the food as we went along. I be-

came the Brunch Co-Chair after my first semester because the opportunity popped up and I was asked if I would like to take the position. The feeling of making hundreds of grad students happy and full on a Sunday morning is very satisfying.

### **Plans for Res-Life**

I decided to run for VP of Residential Life to increase my involvement with S-P and make sure that we continue the high level of activities that made me fall in love with S-P from the start. As Zenzi mentioned, our vision for the next year is to encourage the formation of small communities within S-P: “A House Full of Families”. We will accomplish this through our new Interest Groups initiative and the help of many passionate and knowledgeable volunteers throughout S-P. We hope to create a network of people and resources that can guide all residents to participate in activities they enjoy with other residents who share the same interests. We also aim to maintain the high level of volunteering, fundamental to our thriving community, that has made

all of our events actually happen. We have many ways of showing our appreciation to volunteers through special events and prizes for our dedicated helpers and officers. Join in and find out how much fun we have throwing events!

### **Michael Eilenberg, VP of Information: How I Became Involved**

How did I get to be the VP of Info? Simple. About two years ago, someone asked me if I would be interested in an officer position. I became SPTV Chair for two years, after which I decided to move to a “big-picture” position: VP of Info. In the end, I’m here because someone in the government said he thought I “would make a good officer”. Any and all of us can help make S-P a better place: it just takes that first step where you realize the government isn’t just some hidden group working in the background - we’re just a bunch of residents who want to add to our community and have some fun doing it! We’re always looking for good ideas to help con-

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# House Council Welcome, cont.

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nect SP. If you have something to contribute, please do so!

## Some Info on SP Information

The Office of Information serves a number of purposes. The most obvious one is spreading information around the building and across MIT. This year I'd like to put more emphasis on using our information infrastructure to connect people to each other, in addition to our usual announcements and publicity notices. For instance, did you know that S-P has a Facebook page? A Flickr account? A YouTube channel? We're now working on new Interest Group features too—all, of course, accessible from our website..

I also envision access to information about all events, announcements, and resident services, all available at a glance. With the website as a hub, the new HDTV in the lobby, and the SPTV system should provide this. Imagine a building that is pulsing with videos, pictures, announcements, and useful resources with one look around the halls or at the click of a mouse. Think of the building's info network as a heads-up display, showing you everything you need to know to make the most of your life here. I'd like to see a move to more web pages and forum threads to complement flyers and email contacts. After all, we're at MIT: Why not use the great electronic resources that so many residents have worked so hard to build?

## Po-Ru Loh, Chair of the Halls: My S-P Story



My S-P story has an unusual beginning: it started with a fire alarm. I'd heard about the S-P government and volunteer opportunities during orientation and had some interest in helping out, but I hadn't gotten around to actually doing it—until I bumped into Dan Weller (then Coffee Hour Chair) out on the street during a fire alarm. It happened to be a Wednesday evening just before Coffee Hour, so I offered to lend a hand. Little did I know what “lending a hand” would become for me over the next two years.

Not surprisingly, I found that the weekly slicing and dicing was a good way to make friends and have fun. When officer applications came along in spring, I decided I'd try taking a more formal role and wound up becoming the 3-South Hall Councilor. Up until early this year, I hadn't ever considered taking a SPEC position, but then Leslie suggested I give it a thought and... well, here I am! As Chair of the Halls at S-P, I'll be in

charge of maintaining and improving the Hall Councilor program this upcoming year; the Hall Councilors and I hope to make our halls friendlier and homelier -- places where neighbors will truly be neighborly. Our vision, along with that of SPEC, is to increase the connectedness of our residents and keep the S-P community thriving. Get Involved!



**Sidney  
Pacific  
Speaker**

**Rebecca Perry,  
Guest Editor**

The Speaker is published monthly for the Sidney Pacific Graduate Community. Send suggestions to [sp-newsletter-chair@mit.edu](mailto:sp-newsletter-chair@mit.edu)