A Warm Winter Welcome!

Akshay Mohan, Sidney Pacific Chair of the Halls 2016-2017

Orientation seems like yesterday, and here we are already in the closing stretchs of the Fall semester. It has been so exciting for me to get to know all of you over the past three months. SP is officially back to full strength and it will not be the same community without you.

Thank you to all the amazing volunteers who have stepped up to take on important roles in the SP community. Thank you to the officers serving the community, my team and to my fellow SPEC members. Thank you to those of you working behind the scenes, whether by publicizing our events, doing the sound magic, keeping the printers working, or doing any of the other things that keep SP running. Thank you to those of you who plan events, and to those who make it happen. Thank you to the amazing helpers without whom none of this will be possible. And thank you to all the residents who attend the events and contribute to SP being a culturally diverse and respectful community. SP is a great place to live because of you.

With final projects, final exams, and other deadlines coming up, the end of the semester is a busy and stressful time for everyone. So look out for each other and please be mindful of others, especially at this time of year. And don’t forget yourself! I encourage you to make time to take care of your health: take a break, eat some chocolate, get in a snowball fight. And remember that all of us, SPEC, your hall councilors, and the rest of the officer team are here to support you, whether you need someone to talk to or just want a quick distraction.

“Sunset from SidPac”, by Jin Wu

Contribute to the Speaker!

Do you enjoy writing short stories, poetry or prose? Do you enjoy painting, drawing, or photography? Submit to the SidPac Speaker Creative Corner to show off your talent and compete for a prize!

If you are interested in providing a news article as well, let us know! Submit writing, photographs, scans or ideas to:

sp-newsletter-chair@mit.edu
Warm Memories and Inspiring Conversations: A Look into SidPac’s SPICE

Gregory Izatt

Looking for a way to make friends and eat good food? Sign up for SPICE! The Sidney Pacific Inter-Cultural Exchange (SPICE) organizes groups of residents to get together to talk about their culture over a meal! Topics range as broadly as you want them too -- and all cultures and perspectives, no matter how close or far, are welcome. SPICE groups meet once every two weeks at a time that fits the members' schedules, with some groups eating in SP, while others adventure to the corners of Boston. Food is heavily subsidized, so you can focus on having a good time, and maybe learning a thing or two from your neighbors in SP.

Throughout my first years here, SPICE has been a stabilizing force in my life. I distinctly remember a chaotic finals week in which I had to chain a final, a final project with poster presentation, a design deadline, and an international flight -- at some point in the middle, I was strongly considering running away and starting a new life in the mountains. The night after the poster presentation, right in the middle of this crunch week, my SPICE group got together and went out to eat large quantities of Mexican food at Border Cafe. We found a cozy table in the warm basement, and snacked on an endless supply of chips and salsa while starting out meeting. As we ate dinner, our conversation meandered from the comfort food habits of our families, to habits of eating in and dining out, and finally arrived on "normal" meal times. Did you know that in many regions as diverse as South America, the Mediterranean, and India, families don't eat dinner until 9pm or later? Until that night, I hadn't. Conversation flowed onwards, and by the end of the dinner, I had not only learned quite a bit -- I felt able to approach my chaotic finals week

SP Residents at a Recent SPICE Dinner

It’s time to SPICE up your life!

The Sid Pac Inter-Cultural Exchange (SPICE) fosters discussions from the many cultures and customs represented in SP.

Join today as a coordinator or mentor to:
• Meet new people
• A subsidized dinner every other week
• Learn about different cultures and customs

Go to http://tinyurl.com/z3spg9o to become a member.
Email sp-spice-chair@mit.edu for any questions.
SPICE (Continued from Page 2)

again, after having taken a very effective break. I certainly could have prepared food on my own, or gone out somewhere else -- but I've never found another organization so successful at bringing together old and new friends to have have truly fruitful, meaningful, and personal conversations. Because of that -- because of such positive personal experience, and many many positives reviews from everyone I've ever talked to who has done the program -- I highly encourage anyone and everyone to sign up! Take a chance and dive in!

“The wonderful feeling of belonging.. Working for SP events makes me feel less like a guest and more like a part of a huge family. SP has so many tiny wonderful ways of building community, it never ceases to amaze me!” - Shalini Gupta,

Coffee Hour Chairs 2016-2017;
Mohammad Islam and Shalini Gupta

One of Sidney Pacific’s signature events is the weekly coffee hour. Each week, it pulls away from our tiresome routine and brings us together for a fun break filled with snacks, drinks, cultural activities, music, and more! So who are the wizards behind our weekly coffee hour? Let’s get to know Mohammad Islam and Shalini Gupta!

Mohammad Islam, originally from New York City, has been at MIT for a little over a year and at SP for just a few months. A graduate student in the Aero/ Astro department, Mohammad is a fan of playing video games, exercising, taking walks around the city, and brainstorming new ideas and themes for upcoming coffee hours!

Well, feeding so many hungry grad students seems like a daunting task-- what brings Mohammad to the job each week? "I really enjoy working with all of the great SP helpers to make Coffee Hour happen," he says. "The prep the hour beforehand is always very fun, and it's

Spotlight: Coffee Hour Chairs
Editor

always amazing to see everything magically come together by 9 PM each night. ..I felt that being Coffee Hour Chair was a good way to get involved in the SP community, and also a way to promote community here and give back to it as well. Everyone seems to enjoy the SP Coffee Hours, residents and non-residents alike."

For Mohammad, it is the moment when the MP room doors are finally opened after an hour of rapid, hectic preparation that makes it all worth it. "It's extremely
rewarding to work with a great group of helpers to prep all of the food, and then see everyone having a good time during the actual Coffee Hour. It’s also great to see the MP Room being filled each week with attendees,” he notes. He urges everyone in the community to attend coffee hours whenever they can, since it’s a way to connect with other residents, find those with similar research interests and hobbies, and even meet those with different perspectives.

Shalini Gupta, a graduate student in the biology department with a background in chemistry from IIT Kanpur, India, has been at MIT and SP for just two months. We’re glad she’s already jumped into the Sidney Pacific community! In her spare time, she enjoys trying out new recipes, swimming, and taking walks by the Charles in the morning sunshine. Something you probably don’t know about her is that she knows the lyrics of “Closer” (and a few other songs she definitely wouldn’t listen to otherwise) by heart, from listening to them over and over again on the radio during coffee hour prep!

For Shalini, some of the most enjoyable parts of the weekly coffee hour is trying out new foods with the community, going shopping for the cheese and bread, and getting to experience the results of her efforts come 9pm. “It’s a lot of fun getting food ready in such huge quantities,” she says, “and watching it disappear in minutes!” She explains, however, that it is the one hour of preparation before the event that is most meaningful to her. “Personally, the part I like best about CH is the one hour prep time. I’ve met so many people outside of my department whom I wouldn’t have gotten to know otherwise. I also really like being a part of the process that consistently brings so many people together every week,” she says.

Over many years and months, through thick and thin (oh HVAC!), Sidney Pacific has attracted so many talented and dedicated officers that work tirelessly to give as much to the community as they feel it has given them. What keeps people coming back for more, and what keeps us together?

Shalini summarizes it beautifully. “The wonderful feeling of belonging. Working for SP events makes me feel less like a guest and more like a part of a huge family. SP has so many tiny wonderful ways of building community, it never ceases to amaze me!”

On behalf of the entire SP community, thank you to Mohammad and Shalini for all of their fantastic work each week!

“Rainy Day at Sid Pac”, by Jin Wu

Upcoming Events at SidPac

- **December** SP Can Drive (Main Lobby)
- **December 13th** House Meeting (8PM)
- **December 14th** Gingerbread Making
- Coffee Hour (9PM)
- **December 17th** SPICE Dessert Exchange (7PM)

Photo Credits: SP Photofile Chairs, Mohammad Islam, Greg Izatt, Jin Wu, Vadim Smolyakov