



WELCOMING and CONNECTING International Students  
with FRIENDS in the Greater Atlanta Area



Dear

The world has been profoundly changed by the events of 2020, and AMIS has risen to meet the challenges.

When the pandemic closed everything in March, international students, alone and far from home, faced the sudden move to remote instruction, isolation due to social distancing and travel restrictions, and uncertainties about changes to student visas. All of this has filled international students with anxiety throughout the year.

AMIS has remained steadfast in our mission to promote cultural and global understanding through friendship and hospitality with international students and scholars in the greater Atlanta area. Since the spring, we have been **re-imagining international friendship** by creating new ways to welcome and connect with students during the COVID pandemic. We initiated various virtual groups through Zoom, sent jigsaw puzzles in the spring, and mailed welcome packages with cloth masks and handwritten notes at the beginning of the fall semester.

This fall, we have continued to offer our Amigo Friendship Program, which has always been at the heart of AMIS, while encouraging virtual connections in the beginning.

In AMIS, we continue to believe in the power of friendships across cultures to make the world a better place and to positively impact international students, the future leaders of the world. We also believe in the ability of these friendships to expand our cross-cultural experiences, making those who volunteer with AMIS better because of it.

## 2020 RECAP

- 125** Welcome Packets mailed with masks and personal notes
- 53** Students connected to **37** Volunteers through the Amigo Friendship Program
- 20** NEW Amigo volunteers
- 31** Virtual Events involving **58** students and **36** volunteers
  - 10 AMIS Talks
  - 9 Summer Groups
  - 9 Fall Groups
  - 3 Kick-Offs
- 75** in our WhatsApp group
- 30** puzzles delivered to students
- 25** students and volunteers attended Small Group Outdoor Events in October



amis (Atlanta Ministry with International Students)

607 Peachtree St. NE, Atlanta, GA 30308 | 470.851.1248 | [www.amis-inc.org](http://www.amis-inc.org)



Hi. My name is *Gigi* from Ecuador. I came to the US as an international student last year to study at Georgia State. I would say that the first 4 months of the pandemic was one of the darkest seasons in my life... I felt alone. My transition from being social to becoming an isolated person was very challenging. Being unable to see my friends here in Atlanta or go back to Ecuador this summer was hard to take.

My experience with AMIS has been a blessing. I have met some wonderful people through AMIS. The volunteers are very nice and caring. They are always open to talk, to listen, and to give advice. During the pandemic, I really enjoyed being in the Zoom meetings where I learned about cultural differences, we talked about movies, and I got tips for my developing career.

I am so thankful for the time and dedication of the volunteers of AMIS. I really enjoyed the activities before the pandemic. And during the pandemic AMIS offered a nice way to connect with people. I am grateful for the work and passion of AMIS in our community of international students.

At a time when we are staying apart to fight the coronavirus, please help us continue the important work of AMIS as we work together to welcome international students and connect them to local American friends. We need your support for our increasing needs for technology and virtual communications. Your support now will also help us be prepared for 2021 when new international students who deferred enrollment this fall are expected to arrive in Atlanta.

AMIS's operating budget is \$159,000 this year. We need \$45,000 more to make our 2020 budget and to be prepared for the coming year. Would you consider making a generous year-end gift to AMIS to continue our work into 2021? Or, become a sustaining partner by pledging a monthly gift of \$25, \$50, or \$100 through 2021?

If you would like to support a special fund, you may choose:

- **Hospitality (transportation/events)**
- **Technology (Zoom/video tools)**
- **Emergency Funds for International Students**
- **AMIS General Operating Funds**

Thank you for your partnership with AMIS!

Peace and Blessings,

Rev. Irene Wong  
Executive Director, AMIS

*P.S. Your generous gift is needed NOW to support international students through the pandemic!*



## DURING A PANDEMIC

In the spring, Susan Rembert (our Program Administrator) and I invited students to chat with us through weekly Zoom groups. Then we surveyed students and came up with topics for virtual groups for the month of June and drew in volunteers to facilitate the groups. This fall, we created a Zoom series of the most popular topics on Culture, Careers, America 101, and American TV, all led by AMIS volunteers.

In America 101, international students learned about the differences between credit and debit cards. In Careers, advice on finding a job and networking was shared. Practical and educational learning was gained as well as opportunities to engage with others. One volunteer in America 101 said, "We never stopped talking about food!"

Our Amigo volunteers have been finding ways to safely offer friendship and hospitality during a pandemic, one hosting dinners on her porch, and others taking walks or meeting for socially distanced picnics.

Taslim from India said, "**Just knowing AMIS was there, caring for us and encouraging us, has meant so much.**"