



SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Affiliated with
National Volunteer Outreach Network, Country Women's Council, U.S.A., Associated Country Women of the World
and in partnership with Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service

Cultural Exchange

Objectives:

1. Participants will increase their understanding of "culture."
2. Participants will develop an awareness that similarities and differences exist between cultures.
3. Participants will recognize the increased likelihood of encountering a variety of cultures in our own communities.
4. Participants will engage in an activity to increase understanding of other cultures, focusing on the cornerstones including language, food, celebrations/ceremonies, traditions, geography, demographics, history, currency, child rearing, religion, music, art, sports, transportation, and agriculture.

Introduction:

"There has never been a moment in history in which our influence on the rest of the world has been as great, or our understanding less sufficient. There is no substitute for first-hand experience."

--Julia Chang Bloch, former U.S. Ambassador to Nepal

Countries, regions, peoples, and communities are becoming more and more intertwined and interdependent. We can no longer exist in our communities without encountering people from other cultures.

Actively trying to understand people from other cultures will contribute to mutual understanding between societies and peoples. Understanding other cultures can prevent prejudice and hate. Cultural exchange also enriches our own lives by providing fresh insights that will broaden our horizons.

Definitions of "Culture"

Culture: The learned and shared values, beliefs, behaviors of a group of interacting people. (J & M Bennett, Intercultural Communication Institute, 2002)

Culture: Shared, learned behavior which is transmitted from one generation to another for purposes of promoting individual and social survival, adaptation, and growth and development. (A.J. Marsella, Work and Stress, 8, 1994)

Culture: A way of life of a group of people. Culture is learned, not innate. Culture includes a group's shared values, beliefs, behaviors, preferences, verbal and nonverbal communication styles, relationship patterns. (Chen, Chan, Brekken, Lynch, Valverde 1998)

Cornerstones of culture revolve around language, food, celebrations/ceremonies, traditions, geography, demographics, history, currency, child rearing, religion, music, art, sports, transportation, agriculture, etc. Comparing similarities and contrasting differences between two cultures can be very interesting and enlightening. To develop an awareness of similarities and differences that exist between cultures, select one or more of the activities on the list that follows.

Suggested Activities:

- Take a trip where new cultures can be experienced. Report back to the club what you learned.
 - a. Plan to attend the 2010 ACWW Triennial Conference in Hot Springs, Arkansas.
 - b. Participate in a mission trip to another country.
- Invite a speaker to your meeting who can share experiences gained through travel where new cultures were encountered.
- Become a host family for a foreign student or visitor.
- Invite a foreign exchange student to share their culture and life in their home country with your club.
- Invite a college student from a foreign country to speak to your club about their culture and life in their home country.
- Invite a guest to prepare a food that is a central part of their culture and to talk about the importance of food, celebrations, and agriculture in another country.
- Become pen pals with a person in another country. Share information gained about different cultures with your club.
- If you have a special program planned such as a guest speaker or a cooking class, invite a friend to attend with you and then encourage them to join SCFCL.

Source: Created by Nancy M. Porter, Ph.D., Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service, Clemson, South Carolina based experiences she gained from receiving the 2007 Buff-Swicegood Travel Study Award to attend the ACWW Triennial Conference in Finland and travel to Sweden and Estonia.

