

Welcome to CCIS monthly newsletter!  
 Our goal is to provide news, program updates, and stories about life in the U.S. to international graduate students, post docs, visiting scholars, and their families at Stanford.

Please let us know if you would like to write an article for a future newsletter.



**THE BLESSING OF VOLUNTEERING AT BECHTEL**  
 by **Mardi Huiting-Bijleveld**

"Hi! My name is Mardi and I'm a Stanford postdoc spouse." That is how I introduced myself the first few weeks after my husband and I arrived in the US, in April 2022. When we got here after two years of postponing in the wake of Covid-19, I had given up my own coaching business, wasn't allowed to work and didn't even know whether I would ever find the energy to coach someone else professionally again. I found the first months in California intense. We brought only a few things from home, moved two times and Dutch as we are, we did almost everything by bike even when our first apartment was in Sunnyvale.

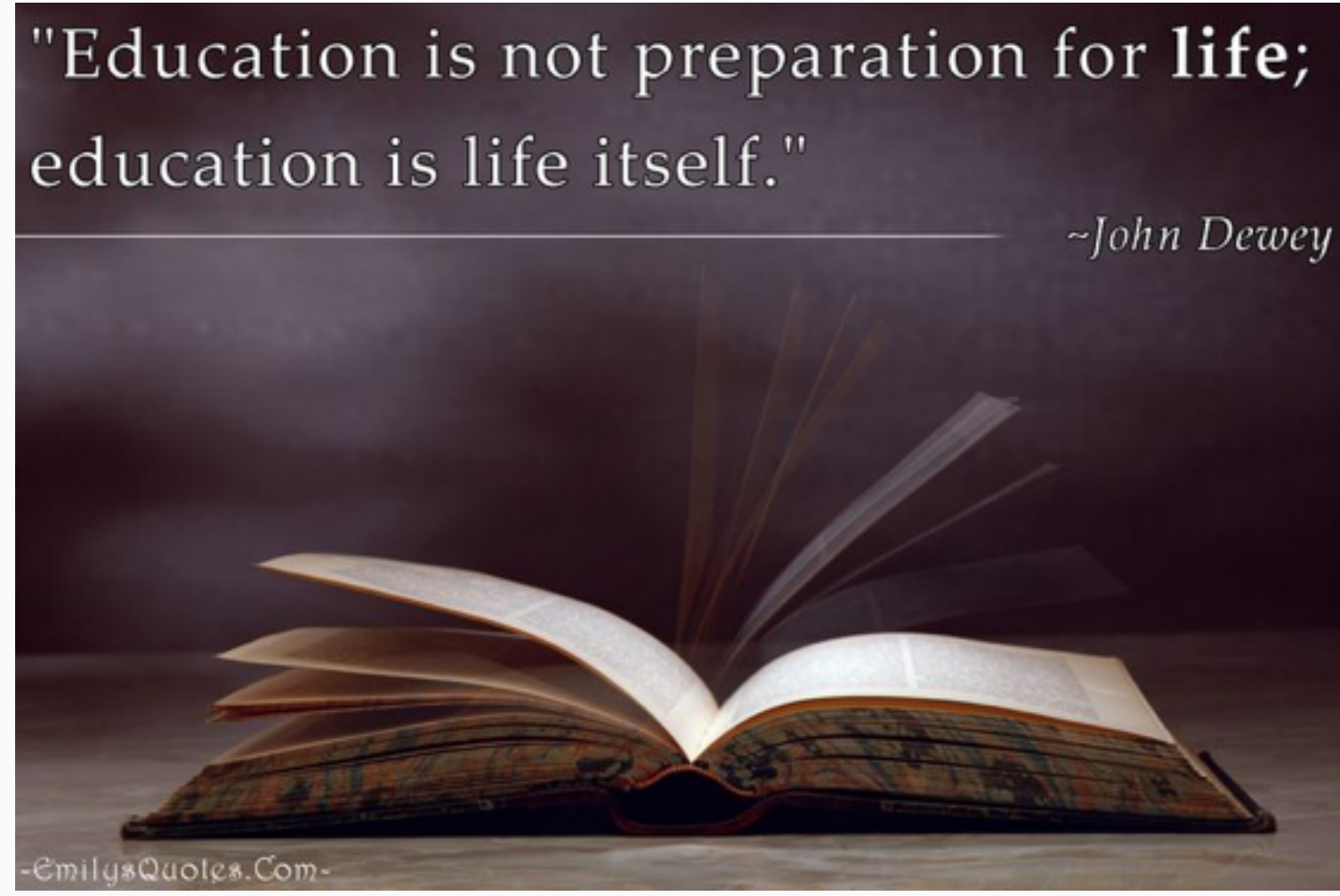
Early on, I signed up for the Bechtel newsletter for spouses but didn't have any energy to join any of the wonderful classes and coffee hours until June. Then I finally signed up for a workshop led by Kate Khatseyeva, the President of CCIS. Unfortunately, I got sick and had to cancel. Soon after my cancellation, Kate invited me to have coffee with her. It was an unforeseen, welcome invitation.

After I got better, we met online and she was so interested in me. Me! About what I did career-wise, what my interests were, what my plans were. She gave me all kinds of advice and she got excited when I mentioned that I was a professional coach, open to volunteering! And right there I started my own professional journey in the US.

This fall I am hosting two series of coaching sessions for small groups of international spouses at Bechtel. They are called 'coaching circles.' We share personal struggles and dreams, I share some exercises, and insights, and guide our conversations in which we support each other in personal growth and professional development. And I love it!

At Bechtel, I have the opportunity to practice my professional skills, and professional English and connect with so many wonderful, eager and kind people, all from different countries. As I share my talents with them, they share their life with me, and that is the biggest gift of all. So now, yes, I am still Mardi and a Stanford postdoc spouse; and I am also a professional coach/counselor and facilitator, and a friend, a volunteer, an employee, a neighbor, a self-employed professional, and a biking Dutch woman in sunny California. How about you?

Besides leading the Coaching Circles, I enjoy all the workshops and activities other spouses host at Bechtel, like cooking classes, women's leadership workshops, drawing, Spanish etc. And I know it is very easy to organize something because Kate and Ragna (the Program Coordinator for International spouses/families) are the kindest and most helpful people. So, I invite every spouse that has any talents - which means I invite every spouse - to think of something you love to do as a professional even if you think you are only an amateur and share that with your fellow spouses. As most things are more fun together! And if you need a little nudge, come find me at coffee hours. I would love to coach you toward your next step as you.



**HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR ENGLISH - AVAILABLE RESOURCES**  
 By **Alan Tan**

Do you need to improve your English to adjust to your new life or get a promotion? Look for work? Make new friends? Communicate with your children's teachers? Get a broader perspective and become more confident?

Whether your goals are personal or professional, there are lots of resources at Stanford and Palo Alto that can help you. If you are a beginner in learning English, you can contact one of the local adult education programs that offer free ESL classes:

- Palo Alto Adult School: 650-32-3752
- Menlo Park, Atherton, and Redwood City – Sequoia District Adult School: 650-306-8866
- Mountain View/Los Alto Adult School: 650-940-1333

If you are an intermediate to an advanced English speaker, you can participate in the CCIS (Community Committee For International Students) English classes - some with emphasis on listening & pronunciation, some with emphasis on American culture, some on reading, conversation, and imparting traveling information. The classes are taught by experienced volunteers.

You can also apply for the EIA (English In Action) program at the CCIS to get an English partner to practice casual English conversation, learn about American culture, and develop friendships with English-speaking community volunteers. Partners usually meet weekly for one or more years.

If you want to learn English, you can choose English Enrichment classes offered by Palo Alto Adult School too. These classes are offered for non-native speakers who have tested above the state-supported program or who wish to focus on one specific area of English, such as speaking, reading, writing as well as culture & history.

However, I find that the best way to learn English is from life. You can learn English from a class, from making new friends, from a party, from the book club, from a soccer game, from cooking together, from volunteer work for the community. And one's interest is the best teacher. Hope you explore a new life with an open mind at Stanford.

Happy learning!

**100 DAYS' CHANGE**  
 By **Hyun Kee Cheong**

I was a hard worker in Korea.

2022 was the 10th year that I had a job, and it was a time when I played a pivotal role in the workplace. I was a workaholic, I worked from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., every weekday, and was quite recognized at work.

The evaluation of being good at work, the reputation from my colleagues, and my professional achievement occupied a large part of my thoughts. Then my wife decided to study at Stanford University for a year.

We are a family of three. My wife and I have a four-year-old daughter. The option of going to the U.S. without me was not considered at all. However, it took time for me to decide about coming to the U.S. together after taking parental leave. I was worried about my career and worried about losing the flow of work. A new life in the United States was expected, but on the other hand, there was a little anxiety about the professional achievements I had built up.

Just like that, our family arrived in the United States, and 100 days have passed since then. During these 100 days, I have changed my mind a lot, but since this article is about how I spent my time during my parental leave, I will focus on the relationship with my daughter. The time spent together with my daughter's shining four-year-old life is invaluable. In Korea, it was all about seeing my daughter for a while after work late at night, or seeing her on weekends (some weeks, even at the weekend, I went out to work). Here, I got to spend as much time as I wanted with my daughter. The bond between me and my daughter deepened as each day in the United States passed. There are more and more good memories between us. I've come to think of my daughter, but she's the same. The deeper my bond with my daughter, the more I want to spend time with her. A happy virtuous cycle ensues.

"I'm worried that my dad might fall while running. Dad, be careful."

This is what my daughter said when she saw me hurrying because I was afraid of her waiting to get her crayons. We are spending time in the United States, thinking deeply about each other like this. I believe this time will be a solid foundation that supports our relationship in the future.

The anxiety of 100 days ago has now turned into a strong sense of stability.



If you enjoyed this newsletter, please feel free to share this link with your international friends at Stanford so they can receive it too.



CCIS this month is edited by Kirsty Lienard, Arthi Britto, and Kate Khatseyeva.

CCIS supports international graduate students, visiting scholars, post docs, and their families at Stanford University by offering gracious and helpful connections between Stanford Internationals and the community.

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