

Tales from abroad: Amy Eisenschenk

Sofia Boda
Variety Editor

In the midst of the controversy surrounding the College's debate whether or not to allow students to study abroad in Russia, Junior Amy Eisenschenk is one of the few Gustavus students spending the semester abroad immersing herself in the rich and diverse culture of St. Petersburg, Russia.

Eisenschenk, a Russian and Eastern European Studies major, chose to study abroad because she thought it would be a good opportunity to expand her understanding of the Russian culture.

"Our program is absolutely wonderful, but it is very hard to understand some of the fundamental differences between our countries and mentalities without experiencing it first hand," Eisenschenk said.

When making her decision to study in St. Petersburg, she took into account the city's captivating art scene and wealth of historical landmarks.

"I chose St. Petersburg because it is a beautiful and historic city. Countless novels are set here, art is everywhere you look, and history was made on many of these corners, but the limited number of options available did not make it a hard choice either," Eisenschenk said.

Her journey from the United States to Russia was long and arduous, but nonetheless, she was excited for what the next few months would hold.



Submitted

A photo of Hermitage, the past Winter palace for the Russian royal family.

"When I first arrived, I had been awake for roughly eighteen hours. I was exhausted and overwhelmed. But the next day I was excited, but also uncertain," Eisenschenk said.

Studying in Russia did require Eisenschenk to abandon some of the comforts she was used to living in America. Primarily, the constant, total immersion into the Russian language was her most significant change.

"My program is an intensive program, so all of my classes are in Russian and my host family does not speak any English. But after a few days, seeing what was expected of me, making a few friends, and getting used to

the time zone, I felt significantly better," Eisenschenk said.

On a smaller level, cultural differences that may seem minute to many have provided additional challenges to overcome.

"There are a thousand little inconveniences at first, but I do not even notice most of them anymore. I hate that dessert is considered a special treat rather than something you can take or leave as you like. The only other thing that I really dislike is that there are no tissues or Kleenex here anywhere. It seems like a little thing, but I have not even been able to find them in stores," Eisenschenk said.

Nevertheless, Eisenschenk has thoroughly enjoyed her time in Russia so far.

"I have been to parks and museums that took my breath away, the tours I have been on were marvelous, and getting to understand the history better has made so much make sense now. I love plants, and the botanical gardens were so beautiful, they made me cry", Eisenschenk said.

Her very favorite experience, however, is going to the "banya", or participating in the ancient Russian tradition that consists of sauna, a cold pool or shower, and either getting or being hit with birch branches that have been soaked in hot water. "It sounds disturbing if you have not heard of it before, but I have never felt so good before and my skin has never been so soft", Eisenschenk said.

Eisenschenk's experience as a student in Russia has inspired her to fight back against negative stereotypes of the culture perpetuated by the ongoing insinuation that Russia is an unsafe place for students to be.

"I fully understand that anyone who has even considered studying in Russia has been asked, 'Aren't you scared?' 'Isn't that dangerous?' and the ever present 'You're not going to come back a communist are you?' until you are sick of it."

But, Eisenschenk assures that she is happy and very comfortable in her personal security.

"For first time in my life I have walked through a very large city in the middle of the night in a short dress by

myself, and I was not worried whatsoever that something would happen to me. I know that that has the potential to sound insignificant, but it speaks volumes. Provided you have a basic understanding of a handful of social rules, there is very little to worry about here," Eisenschenk said.

Politically, she admits that "there is controversy, both domestically and internationally, but I, as a civilian, have had nothing but pleasant interactions with almost everyone I encounter."

While she is excited to return to her pet cats, driving a car, and her friends and family, Eisenschenk is in no hurry to return home to the States.

"I only am going to be here for a few more months, and I would rather I spend my time being present and enjoying and appreciating the time that I have. The fall here is absolutely gorgeous and there is always something new to do," Eisenschenk said.

In the future, she "would like to work either on scientific translations or help provide cultural understanding to some professional field."

Her time in Russia will undoubtedly create opportunities for her professionally as well as socially, as she has become comfortable and confident in her ability to navigate between American and Russian culture, as well as speak Russian conversationally and professionally with people from a variety of backgrounds.

Still We Rise: a fusion of activism and art

Emily VanGorder
Staff Writer

On September 29, Gustavus held its first "Still We Rise" event in Anderson Hall. The event was created "to try to address a number of needs that we saw in our community" event coordinator and Professor Michele Rusinko said.

She was joined in planning this event by Gustavus Alumni McKayla Murphy and Julio Zelaya.

One of the primary objectives of this event was to address the currently divisive nature of the country and the breakdown of foundational democratic systems, as well as to talk about the numerous ways to get involved in various organizations or movements.

"The past few years, since the election... have been difficult for many, many people" Rusinko said, and "I think it [the event] was successful on many levels."

Still We Rise event coordinator and Gustavus Alumni Julio Zelaya is the current coordinator of the Racial Justice Project of the American Civil Liberties Union, and works primarily in rural Southern Minnesota.

While at Gustavus, he studied

and performed theater utilizing art. He has a background and passion for law and art, and graduated with a degree in Political Science.

Gustavus Alumna McKayla Murphy is also a Still We Rise event coordinator, and is currently a Program Resources Specialist at Girl Scouts River Valleys and lead instructor for the City of Plymouth Dance Program.

While at Gustavus, she was involved with the Theatre and Dance departments, and has a background in racial justice, women's and girl's leadership, and youth development. She graduated with a major in Communication Studies and a minor in Dance.

The Still We Rise event was "sparked by a conversation Julio and I had about how we really wanted to better engage with art in our activist work. We had a few students attend, but most attendees were community members" Murphy said. In planning the event, "we saw the natural overlap between arts and activism. Musicians, dancers, and visual artists have engaged in activist work through their art for a very long time", and while "the idea of artists as activists is definitely not a new idea... in the current political

climate, we could be doing a better job leveraging art as a mechanism... and as a way to replenish and inspire", Murphy said.

Both have been involved in the Minnesota Fringe Festival, an annual event where over 1,000 artists of all disciplines are brought together to display and perform their art in an open and diverse setting.

Among participants was Gustavus Alumna June Wilson, who gave a keynote address during the event's lunch. Wilson is the former Executive Director of the Quixote Foundation, an organization focused on "free people in fair societies on a healthy planet", according to the foundation's website.

She now advises foundations about racial equity and various management strategies. Her work has affected many organizations, including the Minnesota Dance Alliance and the National Performance Network in New Orleans.

The event was composed of several breakout sessions followed by an Open Spaces Facilitation and group sharing. The first session, "All Together Now", was led by Professor Michele Rusinko and Wendy Goldberg, and analyzed how to add body rhythm to the mes-

sages in order to strengthen the message being communicated. The session ended with a combination of learned moves into a flash mob.

Afterwards, a MEISA (Movement- Exploration- Imagination- Sensation- Awareness) session was led by Professor Melissa Rolnik.

The session integrated movement, breathing, stretching, and combined those with opportunities for moving with less tension and heightened mobility.

The third session, "What you Bring to the Movement" was led by Gustavus Alumna and Alumni Murphy and Zelaya and focused on engaging with issues in the community and the intersection of arts and activism.

The next session, "Saying What You Need to Say, Many Times Over", was led by Senior Emily Dzieweczynski, and was centered around printmaking as an easy-to-use and popular method of conveying political and activist messages.

The session ended with participants creating their own prints on materials they had brought with them.

An "Image Theatre" session led by Professor Amy Seham reviewed the medium of Image Theatre, which has one person act as a "sculptor" by moving

and positioning others.

The session saw participants go on to create their own works which represented forms of oppression, and was followed by group discussion.

The last session "Hip Hop Activism" was led by the Minnesota Hip Hop Coalition, and set out to educate participants about differences between the culture of hip hop and rap music, and its role in civil rights, activism, and community organization.

The session ended with a message about deciding between the world and its principles, and one's own principles and ways conceived from. Decide between the world and its principles and one's principles and ways.

This event was planned and created by Professor Michele Rusinko, McKayla Murphy, and Julio Zelaya.

The work of Professor Melissa Rolnik, Wendy Goldberg, Senior Emily Dzieweczynski, Professor Amy Seham, as well as The Minnesota Hip Hop Coalition added greatly to the sessions and the importance of this event.

GUSTIES of the WEEK

Vikki Smith

Monali Bhakta
Staff Writer

One of the most fulfilling aspects of a student's experience at Gustavus is being able to encounter beautiful souls everywhere they go. Vikki Smith, a cook and server in Dining Services, has been a household name during the four years she has been at the college.

She is a personable and charismatic individual who has been approached by various students and faculty. She oversees the Gustie Grill at night, cooking burgers and deep fried foods.

Her other responsibilities include serving the students, making sure everything is stocked and cleaned, and training student workers. She is considered the honorary steak griller, much to her amusement.

"Here it seems like it's a very open community as far as 'I'm going to respect your views and your background as long as you don't push it onto me, but hey, let's talk about it, let's see what our differences are, and then we can respect each other that way.'"

While she attended Minnesota State University in Mankato, she thinks Gustavus is a close-knit community with wonderful, open-minded people. She loves how everyone is so fun and willing to engage in casual conversations, while also having a great sense of humor so that she can joke around with them.

Because Smith had grown up in a conservative, traditional household, she wants to teach her daughter that it is okay to be her true self. She has been able to connect with workers in the cafeteria who have also been raised in similar situations, including many international students. One of them is a first-year student from South Africa who recounts that back home, the societal norms are like the United States back in the sixties with the color differences.

When she first came here, she thought, "it was amazing to see the openness and the love, and I said I've always taught my own children and my daycare kids that we don't see color. If everybody were to fall and scrape themselves, and we all bleed red inside, we're all the same inside. We're just made differently on the outside, and that's okay, because if we were all the same, life would be boring."

After Smith had this conver-

sation, she thought about how courageous and inspiring it was that students from all over the world, whether it be from South Africa, New Zealand, Vietnam, or any other country come to Gustavus for their education.

She understands how it can be overwhelming to get over homesickness and adjust to a totally different culture in the United States.

Boundaries are not a barrier that prevent long-lasting friendships, and that is what Smith appreciates about being in this inclusive environment. She is proud that Gustavus is an accepting and loving community and that people are willing to

"It's not that bad in life. Yeah, I'm going through breast cancer. I'm going through treatment, but it could be way worse than what I have, so you know what? I'm here, I woke up today, and I'm breathing so it's a good day."

walk up to someone if they are having a rough day, and ask if they are doing okay.

"I try to do that for the students. I try to get to know them as not only a worker, or a student, but as a friend too... Becky and I are considered the campus moms—the college moms. I've had a lot of students tell me that."

The part she loves most about this role is helping the students, especially when they are stressed about their busy classes and student orgs. She enjoys being there for the kids as a shoulder to cry and lean on, making sure they are doing alright under the enormous pressure. Smith said she tries to keep things in perspective for them, letting them know that the world won't come crashing down if they make a mistake.

It is important to manage one's time, and to push forward in the face of adversity. She reminds them that it is okay to

take a break, and go for a quiet walk if their mind is racing with countless thoughts and they need to clear their head.

"The one thing I told my daughter—she was diagnosed with anxiety, and she ended up getting it for her first tattoo at eighteen, was to remember to 'breathe,' because if you learn how to breathe, you can learn how to relax yourself, you can learn how to calm yourself, and then you can be okay."

Smith is one of those understanding individuals who knows that life is stressful because she has been through the same circumstances that students have.

She went to college, raised her kids, and managed a house all at around the same time. Though there can be several factors that affect a person's mental health, she keeps telling herself to take a step back and remember to breathe.

She treats the students like they are her kids by telling them to smile and laugh at least once each day.

This is the motivational motto she lives by to feel grounded. "It's not that bad in life. Yeah, I'm going through breast cancer. I'm going through treatment, but it could be way worse than what I have, so you know what? I'm here, I woke up today, and I'm breathing so it's a good day."

One of her favorite memories was this last spring after she was diagnosed with breast cancer, and the Men and Women's Hockey teams surprised her with a bag full of gifts that she opened right in the Dining Room.

She thought it was touching and heartwarming that they took the time to go to Target to buy all sorts of valuable things such as an essential oil diffuser, a blanket, and a Biotene mouthwash. While they were unaware about whether she had to go through chemo, they wanted to show how much they cared about her, and how important her presence is in their lives.

"That's when it hit me that I'm literally in their lives for ten minutes to half an hour a day, and to know that we as workers on this campus—these little people that nobody thinks about, the little minions—actually touch the lives of the students like very similar to what a professor would do, so that meant a lot to me."



Nathan Habben

Students across campus consider Smith a friend and a confidant.

Do you have a suggestion for a Gustavus student, professor, or staff member who could be our next Gustie of the Week?

If so, send their name, position on campus, and a short description of why you think they should be recognized to weekly@gustavus.edu for a chance to be featured!

A representative from the Gustavian Weekly will be in contact with you via email if your suggestion is chosen to be featured in an issue of the paper.

GUSTIES of the WEEK

ReAnn Eidahl

Anh Tran
Staff Writer

Junior ReAnn Eidahl is pursuing a communication studies major and double minors in management and history. She feels honored to represent Gusties as Gustie of the Week.

She is a tour guide for the admissions office, Vice President of Marketing for Gustavus Women in Leadership, Special Event Executive for the Campus Activities Board, and Alto II in the Choir of Christ Chapel.

The junior is well-known by her peers and professors for her positivity, perseverance, excellence, sympathy, and faith.

Having lived in China for nine years before moving to the US, Eidahl identifies as Chinese and considers Chinese culture a major part of her identity.

Born and raised by an independent and successful business person, Eidahl looks up to her mom as the idol, and ultimate role model of her life.

Eidahl grew up witnessing her mom's extraordinary performance as the breadwinner of the family and later as a single mom who managed to maintain her own business, bring up her daughter, and settle down their lives in a new country.

Thus, Eidahl aspires to become a successful business per-

son. The junior also attributes this aspiration to the Chinese culture which values entrepreneurship and leadership.

Engrained with business culture in her mind, Eidahl came to Gustavus two years ago, set on studying "something business-related because that's what [her] family does."

"It wasn't until I took my FTS with Becky Fremo, when I wrote papers and gave presentations and received hints like "comm major?" from her that I decided to take some communication-classes and later really enjoyed them," Eidahl said.

She was intrigued by the content discussed in communications classes and finds that these classes fit her personality and strengths well.

While studying the "soft" skills that enable her to "connect with people and learn how to market different things" in her major department, Eidahl explores the rules and mechanisms of the business world in her management minor classes.

The junior decided to minor in history last year after a class with Professor Obermiller, where she learned that history classes challenged her critical thinking and broadened her global perspective immensely.

This year, as a special event executive for the Campus Activities Board, Eidahl planned and organized the Homecom-

ing events—which are taking place this week—and is also in charge of the President's Ball.

Eidahl feels happy and proud to see her plans coming into motion after half a year of planning, preparing, and working under pressure.

Besides her work for CAB, Eidahl is also working on a big communication project as Vice President of Marketing for Gustavus Women in Leadership.

The communication studies major is renovating the Gustavus Women in Leadership website promoting campus events while managing simultaneous the organization's social media.

Gustavus Women in Leadership's Faculty Adviser Kathi Tunheim praised Eidahl's performance in the organization as "excellent, innovative, above and beyond expectation," especially because this year the organization's membership count has grown to 240 members.

Having taught Eidahl in her Organizational Behavior course last year, Professor Kathi Tunheim is impressed by Eidahl's performance as a top reader and top writer of the class despite her being the only young sophomore alongside juniors and seniors.

Professor Tunheim shared that Eidahl was also a great public speaker and team member who contributed significantly to the group project.



Ingrid Iverson

Eidahl enjoys participating in music and leadership activities.

Eidahl's communication skills proved outstanding through her interaction with independent clients during her big group project for Organizational Behavior.

"[Eidahl] is an inspiring student leader who will go far in her career and her personal life. She has what it takes now to be successful in the future," Professor Tunheim shared.

Agreeing with Professor Tunheim, Senior communication studies major Mallory Ar-

nold describes Eidahl: "She is a very inspirational person. She is very driven in that whatever she does, she puts her whole heart into it."

As Eidahl's best friend and roommate, Arnold also shared that Eidahl is a great friend and companion as she is a very empathetic listener who cares about those around her and always thinks about them first.

"She tries really hard to develop deep, meaningful personal relationships with everyone she is around, whether it be in the classroom, at work, or with her friends. She cares a lot about treating other people with kindness and respect," Arnold said.

Eidahl loves interacting with people and therefore she does not mind keeping herself busy with the wide range of activities that she is involved in.

However, the Gustie of the Week points out that Gusties do not have to pressure themselves to be that perfect image of a Gustie who is overinvolved in social activities.

"Gusties are scared of not being the perfect type of Gustavus student, of not fitting the mould that they think is perfect. But you don't have to. Just give yourself some time, do what you like. Don't be afraid of trying or being rejected because it is more important to learn how to get back up and move forward. You always learn from the experience and it is important to make the most out of your life," Eidahl said.



Ingrid Iverson

Eidahl is described as an "inspiring student leader".

HOMECOMING BUCKET LIST

1. WINDOW PAINTING
 Students got to kick off homecoming with window painting on Monday. Students represented their student organization with a chance to paint one of the windows in the caf.



3. LIP SYNC BATTLE
 Compete in the annual lip sync battle with your student organization. Three groups will be picked to win a cash prize.



5. HOMECOMING GAME
 Come support the Gusties as they face off with Concordia this Saturday.



2. THROWBACK DIVE
 CAB hosted a Dive this Wednesday where students could throw it back to the Golden Days by dressing up in their favorite vintage outfit.



4. CASINO NIGHT
 Gamble the night away with this low-stakes night of blackjack, bingo, poker, and roulette. Play for a chance to win tons of fabulous prizes.



6. GOLDEN RAVE
 CAB wraps up Homecoming week with the Golden Rave. Come to the Homecoming tent by the football field for music and dancing.

