The Love Magic at Highline

By: Kuan-Lin Chen
From: Taiwan

When I first came to Highline Community College, I heard that there was a love magic at Highline, and that is the “Enchanted Winter Dance”. People said every time after winter dance, there are always many new couples that appear. Since then, I have been so excited about the arrival of the winter dance. I hoped I could volunteer for the winter dance so I could make it better and help more people find their love. Therefore, when ILSC members asked me to volunteer for the winter dance, I said yes without any hesitation.

The team that I joined was the painting group, and our job was to paint the foam boards for the stage and photo booth. This year’s theme was “The lost forest”. In order to make the stage look more like a magic forest, we drew it on six foam boards to cover the whole stage. The funny thing about this forest picture is when we finished it, we found out it didn’t look romantic at all; it looked like a scene from a scary movie, so we had to change the picture a little bit. However, when we were kind of tired at that time and we didn’t want to do a big change on it, so we solved this problem by adding some flowers. We put paint on our fingers and lightly tapped on the board so we could get many little pink dots in a very short time. When we started it, I thought it wouldn’t work, because the dots looked weird and different from the background color. However, after we put flower on each board, I was so surprised that it looked fantastic! It was so romantic and magical.

The other job that we did was to paint the background picture for the photo booth. This time it was a little difficult for us to finish it because we were running out of time with only a week to finish. Therefore, Luna asked me if I could come to school on Sunday so that we can finish the picture on time. I came to school at 2p.m. on Sunday, and we started to work on it. Because we had the experience from our first picture, we didn’t have a hard time drawing trees, but the challenge on this picture was to match the tree color to the background. The background of the photo booth was a rainbow of colors, which means each tree had to be painted in a different kind of brown. It took us a long time to try to find the right color from the photo sample that we printed. Drawing other plants under the trees was a big challenge for me, too. Because the brushes were too big, we couldn’t use them to draw the tiny leaves on the plants, so we stopped using brushes and started painting with our fingers.

I learned many things after volunteering for the winter dance event, especially about drawing skill. My career goal is to be a graphic designer; I really think this volunteer experience helped me a lot. Also, I’m glad that I could be part of the “Highline love magic!”. I wish that the work I did could really help the winter dance, and let more and more people find their lovers, and live happily ever after.
Would you come to the winter dance party? It is fun and cool!” I remember that I said this sentence thousands of times. I can remember when I smiled at others what their faces looked like. I can still feel the feeling at that time. The last two weeks, our promotion team sold winter dance party tickets in the union. We were happy, tired, disappointed, stressed out, and excited. While I promoted to others, I learned a lot. The first week of promoting, everyone on the promotion team was energetic and excited. When people passed by, we always had a smiling face. We promoted well and talked to people gaily. Actually, I was too nervous to talk to others on the first day. When I got advertising flyers, I was weak to hand them out. I ran to a corner and took a deep breathe. I kept telling myself that I was the best seller and everyone will buy a ticket. I kept persuading myself that promoting is an easy job; I could handle it. I walked into the crowd and tried to promote. I was lucky because the first people I approached were really nice and listened patiently which gave me encouragement. Even though he didn’t buy a ticket, I was brave enough to promote to others.

Tickets were sold fast, and promotion was successful the first week. We were tired but felt delightful. Though the first week was successful, we still had some tickets left. Winter dance party was coming up. We became stressed out to sell because time was short and it was harder to sell tickets. When I saw people who were given the advertisements throw the flyers away without reading them, I was so sad and angry. People passed by without listening or saying “no” to me. My heart was hit hard. I had no idea what I should do to persuade people to buy a ticket. I could feel that everyone on the promotion team was disappointed. And our leader, Yuta, was stressed out. I tried to smile and tried my best to promote, but nobody was interested in it. I was blaming myself because I thought I was not professional enough to do this job.

Time passed and my enthusiasm was getting lower. I was getting tired and lazy to promote. The second week was disappointing, stressful, and tiring. I was worried about the party because of the bad weather before. I couldn’t get relax until the prom was held successful. When I saw people’s happy faces at the prom, I smiled gaily because I knew that our work was worth it. And I learned a lot from the experience. I know that if I try, I will be successful in the end. No matter what happens, I should keep trying and never give up. “Keep your smile and then promote!”

Otaku Culture
By: Maori Kato
From: Japan

Don’t run away. Don’t run away. Don’t run away. Don’t run away…” He looked down, closed his eyes, and kept whispering to himself. He looked forward and said, “I can do it!” After he made the vital decision, I could not feel his fear, sorrow, and hesitation from his eyes anymore; instead, all I saw was his gallantry. This is one of the impressive scenes from the most famous animated TV show in Japan, which is called “Neon Genesis Evangelion.” I learned a lesson from this animation: Believe in myself. No matter how high my hurdle is, there is nothing I cannot get over unless I give up.” By being otaku, I have gained something valuable in my life which made me feel that there is a need to specify that “otaku” is not as bad as the Japanese people have been lead to believe. There is a diversity of those called “otaku”, demonstrating that otaku should not be generalized and stereotyped.

Otaku is a slang word derived from the Japanese word for “home”. Otaku refers to people who are passionately interested in any hobbies such as comics, video games, movies and cartoons that appeared in the 1980s. People have a negative image of the word “otaku” because otaku is spending most of the time staying at home, chatting with strangers on the internet instead of talking to anyone face to face, playing video games or watching cartoons. However, many animation and video games have become popular in Japan and otaku are generally accepted by the general public as well. In addition, otaku has started to appear all over the world as technological progress has developed.

I love playing video games, reading comic books and watching cartoons because they bring me to a new world where I can get away from reality. However, I had been hiding my real self from my friends. I was afraid that they would think I am otaku since they have a negative image. One day, when we were studying Japanese history of the 1400s in class, I recognized I had already learned everything from one of my favorite video game called “Samurai Warriors,” which was made based on a certain period of Japanese history. I felt that they had really existed and had their own dramas from Samurai Warriors which I would never be able to learn from a history textbook. I have changed my mind that being otaku isn’t shameful since I can explore certain fields more than my classmates. Therefore, my fear has gone and I finally revealed myself as otaku. Otaku-ism may not be for everyone, but I appreciate the otaku spirit of individualism, exploration, innovation, curiosity and dedication to my interests. I find brand-new discovery and useful knowledge while I enjoy watching cartoons and playing video games. Although otaku discrimination remains in this world, I insist that I won’t quit being an otaku forever!
How to go from Loving to Hating Math
By: Christopher Hespanhol
From: Portugal

That was the question asked by a student in his first math 071 class. The question was asked in search of an explanation for a hatred for math, common to many individuals who had their first contact with it in their early education and have been trying to get rid of it since then. In Response, Professor Dusty Wilson suggested that the best thing to do would be to face the fear of math and realize what was so wrong about mathematics, from the standpoint of someone who sees this problem. The objective was to eliminate the problem as soon as possible.

The reply from the professor had little effect on the student that until that date had not realized he was in the presence of someone who would change his point of view not only in relation to mathematics but in life. After a few days, motivational speeches about how students should view the classes and make a greater effort towards graduation, made by Prof. Dusty, left an expectant crowd, and opened the door to a healthy teacher-student relationship, where mutual respect and help was a key factor, and fail meant nothing more than to have an opportunity to try again, without fear or shame, for we are nothing more than humans and we tend to fail sooner or later.

Once that door was open, the interaction began to shift the point of view, in relation to mathematics, and that was caused mostly by the interest shown by Dusty in the problems of each student individually, and the many and creative suggestions he had for different ways to solve them. Such an act unmasked the math, that for the student who posted the first question initially was as scary as seven head beast, but then was reduced to a sweet kitten.

Tough Days
By: Mary Peng
From: Taiwan

My stomach ached and churned and my head spun when I looked at my calendar that was full of “assignment due,” “homework due,” and “lab report due.” I sat in front of my desk, paralyzed by the overload of information I received during the daytime at school, not knowing where to start or which textbook to open. This is my second to last quarter at Highline Community College. As a biology major, I am required to take Animal Biology 212, Organic Chemistry 262 and English 205 in my spring quarter, in addition to working 15 hours per week in the tutoring center.

Choosing Biology as my major was one of the biggest decisions of life, and once you make that choice, there is a long way along your educational journey. There will be a lot of barriers along the way with some temptation to distract your focus. I was not sure if I could handle this heavy task when I decided to major in Biology. However, owing to the enthusiasm I have in Biology and Chemistry when I was in high school, I decided to follow my heart and give it a try.

My classes have never been easy; Chemistry, Calculus, Biology and English have been my company since the first quarter. These classes overwhelmed me in the first and second quarters since it was way harder than I expected to learn these new academic materials in a different language. During some moments of depression, I doubted if this was the right field for me to go into and sometimes the thought crossed my mind to change my major to something easier.

However, when I look back to these days, those nightmares I have suffered turned into great accomplishments. At the end of every quarter, looking at the textbook that is filled with notes, I felt not only a sense of relief but fulfillment. The grade doesn’t matter that much anymore, because if you put down the effort and follow the instruction, the grade will follow you. In addition, the passions I have in those classes have accumulated. If you start to like the subject, everything will turn out much easier for you.

Fortunately (or should I say unfortunately,) I am still majoring in Biology and still have a long way to go. Classes are getting harder and harder and more and more competitive. I am still not sure if I can survive under this extremely selective major. But whatever happens, life is all about exploring new things and stimulate every possible human being can achieve, isn’t it?
Asian Stereotypes
By: Huy Nguyen
From: Vietnam

America, America, America!” I kept saying that word. Just putting the first step into Sea-Tac airport, everything was brand new to me, an international student from Vietnam.

“You will study in a country of freedom, a dreamland for everyone”, the promise of an agency entered my mind at the moment I decided to go to US. In my understanding, America is the place where I can be whoever I want, do whatever I like whenever I prefer and there definitely will not be any social rules or restrictions as in Asia. However, since the very first day here, this definition about the US-the land of freedom has totally changed since I met a type of culture shock called “Stereotype”.

Having a hobby of taking pictures, I was carrying my favorite camera around the campus on the first day of school. “Sorry, the testing center does not allow tourists to visit!” A white lady at front desk told me. I thought: “What? I just got in the building and didn’t even say anything! Why did she call me a tourist?” She didn’t give me a chance to explain, and kept talking:

“But, we have lots of other places you can visit!” Using an excited tone as a real tour guide, she said “From this building, go straight and then turn left, you will come to Bldg. 8 called the Student Union, where we hold many big events at Highline Community…” With a bad English basis, I didn’t know how to stop the lady, so I decided to let her keep talking about her “super interesting” topic. “So I hope you have fun with the campus tour!” She stopped after five minutes of nonstop talking. “Thank you very much for your time, but I’m a student with a camera and I just want to take the compass test to choose classes” I replied and realized that her face turned from white to pink and then totally red. “Oh, I’m sorry, I thought Asian people who carry cameras on their neck are tourists. Anyways, please follow me to do the Compass test.”

The other day at the DOL, one of the test examiners said, “I’m new here but I know that Asians are poor drivers and love causing accidents, so please be careful, I also have a family with two kids at home”. It was a really embarrassing moment but I didn’t say a word.

Stereotypes aren’t always right, in fact they can be rude and disrespectful toward a certain group of people. I’ve been dealing with a lot of stereotypical comments since I came to the US, and I hope we can avoid stereotypes and respect other cultures.

White Stereotypes
By: Alex Birch
From: America

You are a new international student; you meet a new American sitting next to you in English 101 class. You nervously say, “Hello, I am from Burma.” They look at you in confusion, politely but embarrassingly asking “where is Burma?” Then, you might feel offended, or the conversation turns awkward.

But in most cases, you will think “are Americans this stupid?” Unfortunately, being an American myself, I am a victim of this stereotype. I have heard all of the stereotypes given to Americans: lazy, stupid, fat, complains, only speaks one language, thinks the USA is the best country, we take advantage of people and many more. Although, I have to admit, there are some that seem more true than false.

I don’t know many Americans that are willing to take a second language, or bike or walk instead of driving a car. However, as with all general stereotypes, people can get falsely “accused” when they visually fall into the corresponding race, gender, height, etc. Being an American, I have had more than one stereotype said to me. I once had a German foreign exchange student said “You Americans are so lazy, you guys drive a car to go to the bathroom.” Although she was joking, it still felt like I was part of that assumption. Some of the American stereotypes are exaggerated and false.

Many people believe that America if full of fat people, but few know that, the obese population is mostly found in the Southern USA, and that the United Kingdom and some of the Pacific Island nations have the same percentage of overweight people as the U.S. On the other hand, some stereotypes unfortunately fit the majority population of America. Most of us only know one language, English. We care a lot about the celebrities in Hollywood, and many of us know a very limited amount beyond the United States. A comedian from the United States once asked several people on the Las Vegas “strip” where France and Belgium were. Many had no clue where they were located Europe, some couldn’t even point on a toy globe. Some didn’t know who our first president was. It seems that our education system is failing on a very large scale. However, some of the Americans do not fit any of these generalizations, including me. I know more languages beyond English, I am very knowledgeable about the world, and I bike hundreds of miles during the summer season.

Stereotypes are an easy way for people to generalize a broad category. Although some might seem fitting to the group, people should always remember that there are exceptions, and that stereotypes are unfair. Everyone is different, it is impossible that two people are exactly alike. We are all unique, therefore stereotypes are not always true.
African American Stereotypes
By: Dio-Jean-Baptiste
From: America

So let’s get to know typical “BLACK-AFRICAN AMERICAN” stereotypes, though I am no expert, (not even close). I will start by just making a simple list. Do BLACK/ AFRICAN AMERICANS really do these things or are these stereotypes?: Love eating chicken, watermelon, cornbread, barbeques, and not to mention great cooks. Also Black people love to drink grape soda, or purple drink, and cool aid. Black people are good at: sports and all form of athleticisms (especially basketball), dancing, music (and no I can’t rap), and the arts in general. Some things that Black people can’t do or don’t do to well are: (supposedly) swim, winter sports and activities.

Sad to say I have no clue about any of these stereotypes really. For starters I am originally from outside of this country and had no clues to such things until much later on in my life, in my middle school years or so. From some research that I had done in the past I came to find out that most African American stereotypes come from the south or from urban, poverty stricken neighborhoods. And as true for all stereotypes there may be some truth in such statements, but for them to be applied to all scenarios and people who might fit the general description, are very presumptuous and often incorrect in more cases then not.

Stereotypes are, a fact or a simple observation that has some truth that is applied to the masses of a certain group or types of people. These statements can either negative or positive. There are stereotypes for everyone in every category the human mind can create. From hair colors, skin colors, eye shapes, ethnicities, nationalities, sexual orientations, religious beliefs, professions or careers, skills, body types; pretty much you name a group or create a group and there will be stereotypes for them. Stereotypes are how the brain works and functions to group things together and make it simpler for assessing friend or foe in a survival setting. Some stereotypes are made by an entity outside of the group, which the stereotype is made for, and sometimes stereotypes are made from within a group.

Nonetheless, the most important thing to remember about stereotypes is not to make judgments on these things. Once that happens one becomes prejudiced by making, believing, or acting on information which has not been tested or confirmed to see if is true.

Working Hard or Hardly Working?
By: Rolo Sierra
From: Honduras

Working hard, or hardly working? Depending on where you come from, you may have different perceptions of what Latin-American people are like. Illegal immigrants are just lazy, right? They are just parasites who walk up to this country and start taking the jobs of everybody here. They are the reason why the United States are in such an economic crisis. They just come up here to sell drugs. That’s what I have heard some people say about illegal immigrants. These are the stereotypes that I have seen perpetrated not only by word of mouth, but also by some media organizations.

Do these stereotypes hold any truth?
I hail from Honduras, a country with a poverty rate of 70 percent, in company of crime and violence. Now, I’m not one to speak for every country in Latin-America, but it is really similar in the region. It has scaled to such degree that American citizens are recommended by the government to purchase ransom insurance to go to places such as Colombia. If that sounds bad, imagine how it is for the people who live in those countries. They live in poverty and can’t really do much about it, held down not only by crime, but also by political corruption. That’s why many Latin-Americans decide to embark on the famous crusade into the United States of America. They are looking for a safer environment in which they can work, so that they can feed their family back home. They are a prime example of what a worker should be. They do the jobs that nobody wants to do, and they do them without any benefits, for less than minimum wage. They do this all for their families. Would you do that? I won’t deny there are immigrants who do sell drugs. That’s a hard fact. But the majority of the immigrants are just looking for a better chance at life. And they are pursued like dogs for that. They sometimes live in inhumane conditions for that. Whenever you see an illegal immigrant, working at a restaurant kitchen or waiting behind a hardware store for a job, think of what they have gone through, instead of judging them, and feel some sympathy if you can.