WHERE IN THE WORLD IS THE COLUMBIA COLLEGE WOMEN’S VOLLEYBALL TEAM FROM?

The Columbia College women’s volleyball team is comprised of players from around the world. This map depicts where each of the 14 players are from.

Wenwen Han
Beijing, China

Penny Liu
Nanjing, China

Sashiko Heredia
Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico

Maria Franco
Cali, Colombia

Viktoriia Lavrenchenko
Storobelsk, Ukraine

Polina Severina
Moscow, Russia

Eirini Chatziiefstratiadou
Thessaloniki, Greece

Sofija Ivanovic
Belgrade, Serbia

Amber Graham
Las Vegas, Nevada

Jordan Kriete
Washington, Mo.

Kelsi James
Rolla, Mo.

Mikah Simpson
Scott City, Mo.

Sasha Robinson
Festus, Mo.

Sami Meyer
Ozark, Mo.

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worship in
COMMUNITY

THE crossing
thecrossingchurch.com
Kahlee Andresen prays before the altar at St. Luke Orthodox Church during Matins service on Sunday. Members of this Orthodox church who are of Russian and Ukrainian descent worship together in harmony despite their countries’ conflicts.

Connecting in worship

Columbia’s only Orthodox church welcomes ‘anybody who seeks the truth.’

Story by JOSEY HERRERA  Photos by MICHAEL CALI
At Columbia’s only Orthodox church, the pews are filled every weekend — and most weekdays as well — with a mix of nationalities including Greek, Russian, Romanian, Ukrainian, Egyptian, Eritrean and American. Some of the worshippers grew up in Columbia, while others are recent immigrants to the United States.

St. Luke Greek Orthodox Church on Audubon Drive has always been home to a racially and ethnically diverse congregation, said the Rev. Michael Monos.

“We have the evangelical duty to preach the gospel and welcome anybody who seeks the truth,” Monos said. Although the church is within the Greek tradition, the diversity of its membership is more pronounced because it is the only Orthodox church in Columbia, Monos said.

The spiritual leader of Eastern Orthodoxy is called a patriarch, rather than a pope, which separates it from the Roman Catholic Church. The patriarch is the highest-ranking bishop, and each church is typically governed by a Holy Synod.

Geographically, most Eastern Orthodox Christians live in Greece, Eastern Europe, Russia and former Byzantine regions around the Middle East and the eastern Mediterranean.

While there are no modifications to the service at St. Luke Greek Orthodox Church to accommodate various languages and traditions, Monos said some portions are repeated to include every worshiper’s background.

“People learn to pray first in their native language,” he said. “It’s the most comfortable for people who are from different languages and backgrounds.”

When the time comes in the service to say the Lord’s Prayer the congregation can be heard reciting in English and in unison. It is always followed by a second recitation in Greek.

Afterward, families or groups are welcome to repeat the prayer in their native language. Each group pops in after the other, leading the congregation through the prayer for a third, fourth and fifth time or more.

On any given day it can be heard in Arabic, Romanian, Russian, Ukrainian, Tigrinya (a common language in Eritrea) and other languages.

Monos said that faith for the St. Luke’s congregation “supersedes race.”

“After baptism they’re all equal and in equal standing within the church,” Monos said. “They are the same race... the race of Christ.”
Abby Price, a teacher for Columbia Public Schools, kisses the gospel held by Fr. Michael Monos during Matins service at St. Luke Orthodox Church.

Socrates Monos bows his head in prayer during the reading of the gospel at Matins service at St. Luke Orthodox Church. Monos' son, Fr. Michael, is the priest of St. Luke's Parish and his grandson, Matthew, is an altar assistant.

Abby Price, a teacher for Columbia Public Schools, kisses the gospel held by Fr. Michael Monos during Matins service at St. Luke Orthodox Church.

Rebecca Windle reads along during Matins service at St. Luke Orthodox Church.
Columbia College weaves the importance of diversity and inclusion into our everyday campus life.

Columbia College is proud to partner with these organizations and host these events:

- Greater Missouri Leadership Challenge
- Youth Empowerment Zone’s Black Men Rock Awards Ceremony
- Women’s History Month
- Minority Men’s Network – location sponsor
- International Student Center CouGarden
- Columbia College Diversity & Inclusion Committee
Sharif Abdul-Hakim takes his pecan pies out of the oven at Olive Branch Cafe. The process for making the pecan pies includes 15 minutes of meal prep, baking the pies at 400 degrees for 10 minutes and then at 350 degrees for 23 minutes.

Baker blends tradition, tastes

Sharif Abdul-Hakim offers halal and kosher baked goods to Columbia businesses.
Every week, Sharif Abdul-Hakim makes the delivery rounds in Columbia. He is a “do for yourself” guy, and not even retirement has slowed down his entrepreneurial spirit.

As the founder of Bilalian Baked Goods, Abdul-Hakim has spent the past four years filling the need for halal desserts in Columbia.

Abdul-Hakim’s main product, the honey bean pie, is a dessert that has been widely enjoyed in the African-American Muslim community since the formation of the Nation of Islam in the 1930s and is rumored to have been created by boxer Muhammad Ali’s cook Lana Shabazz.

“Everyone had a bean pie recipe they swore was better than anyone else’s,” Abdul-Hakim said. “I started making bean pie for my family … I never thought about going into business with them.”

But things have panned out for his business, and every week he drives around Columbia delivering honey bean, sweet potato and pecan pies to his vendors. The pies are a natural fit in A&Y Global Market, World Harvest International & Gourmet Foods and the recently closed Casablanca, which cater to the local Muslim community. ‘Halal’ is an Arabic word that means ‘permitted,’ and when referring to food preparation, it includes certain restrictions related to the processing of certain meat, poultry and food preparations.

While he works with the store’s employees, he stops to greet customers coming with “Assalamu Alaykum,” or the Islamic greeting “peace be upon you.”

As he moves from store to store, Abdul-Hakim adapts to each environment.

“I’m going to (different) places speaking Arabic, Spanish and interacting with two or three different cultures, sometimes with classic American culture and with people who have never heard of bean pie.”

Neiswanger said, but the consistency and color is similar to the holiday favorite, pumpkin pie. Along with a standard thick, wheat pie crust, the filling cuts smoothly and is sweet like any other pie.

“I felt like I wanted to buy one every day for the rest of my life,” Neiswanger said. “(Abdul-Hakim) is also really easy to work with. We want to tell customers about a great product when there’s a great person behind it.”

Across town, 4.5-inch personal bean pies sit among rows of booze, bagged processed snacks and soft drinks in Loop Liquors on Business Loop 70. It’s an entirely different customer demographic at the liquor store, Abdul-Hakim said. The college students and lower-income locals that frequent the shop are a new market for Bilalian Baked Goods.

Islam forbids alcohol consumption, so the decision to stock pies at Loop Liquors was not one Abdul-Hakim made lightly. It would be the same as selling at the farmer’s market, where he may not partake in what other booths sell.

The first time he made a delivery, he was convinced he made the right decision. As he placed the pies in a display...
fridge, a woman walking in spotted him and screamed: “Are those bean pies? I haven’t had one of these since Chicago!”

No matter where Bilalian Baked Goods tries to sell, though, it usually has to restock weekly.

“During economic depression, people could fall back on this … It was a big ‘do for yourself’ for guys: Selling the Muslim newspaper and selling the bean pie,” Abdul-Hakim said.

He’s now found his own way of staying independent through the bean pies. But it’s not just about the money. Actually, he usually just breaks even. The bean pie is a way to share culture and his values.

“I’ve always been attracted to other cultures and people. (Bilalian Baked Goods) is an ideal fit because I’m around a lot of people all the time and I’ve always been interested in others,” he said.

He was first introduced to bean pies and Islam when he was 18. He had just been medically discharged from the army after spending almost eight months in Vietnam, and he said he was looking for some peace.

“What attracted me to the idea of Islam was peace. I needed peace in my life,” Abdul-Hakim said. “Having a definition of peace and how to attain it, that’s been a rock in my life.”

The bean pie, made with halal ingredients and practices allowed under Islamic principles, is part of his idea of peace.

“The bottom line is the bean pie is the cultural bridge to bring people together,” Abdul-Hakim said. “That’s positive. That’s a starting point … I’ve never seen a fight over bean pie.”

Sharif Abdul-Hakim pours a filling mixture of molasses, melted butter and brown sugar into pie shells in the Olive Branch Cafe kitchen. He bakes the pecan pies for exactly 33 minutes.
Sharif Abdul-Hakim delivers homemade bean pies to Loop Liquor in late February. He said the bean pies are a way to share his culture and his values.

“WHAT ATTRACTION ME TO THE IDEA OF ISLAM WAS PEACE. I NEEDED PEACE IN MY LIFE. HAVING A DEFINITION OF PEACE AND HOW TO ATTAIN IT, THAT’S BEEN A ROCK IN MY LIFE.”

Sharif Abdul-Hakim
Making lessons translate

Teachers find ways to help students who speak different languages learn together.

Story by JOSEY HERRERA  Photos by MIKE KREBS
Third-grade teacher Ariel Schwarting said she did not feel at all prepared for an international mix of students in her classroom when she started at Ulysses S. Grant Elementary School three years ago.

But the word among teachers and staff is that Schwarting is one of the best instructors at Grant Elementary when it comes to including students still learning English in her classroom.

“You kind of just wing it really, but it’s hard and it gets overwhelming,” Schwarting said. “What if I was in a Chinese classroom and the teacher was speaking a different language and I had no idea what I’m supposed to do?”

This is the scenario that goes through her mind whenever she feels frustrated and needs to find a solution to include her English Language Learners.

At Grant Elementary, more than 20 countries are represented in a student body of about 360. The neighborhood school pulls in students from just south of Worley Street all the way to the Green Meadow area.

Within the school’s boundary lines is a spectrum of race, ethnicity, education and class status.

According to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, almost 40 percent of students at Grant Elementary qualify for free or reduced lunch, and about 38 percent are students of color. The school pulls students from refugee populations and from families affiliated with MU, both graduate students and faculty.

Principal Jennifer Wingert said that when most students transfer, the previous school can be contacted about the child’s educational level. It’s not as simple for international students.

“It’s harder when they come from another country to get this kind of background,” Wingert said. “We just really have to pour a lot of creativity into it because they are just as important as anyone else.”

She said Schwarting has a resourceful approach that suits the mix of students in her class.

“She is a stellar teacher,” Wingert said. “She gets to really know her students and then figures out creative ways (that work for them).”

CLASS ROUTINES

Schwarting’s class of 30 is the largest at Grant Elementary this year. There are three ELL students, all from China, and others from Mexico and Iraq who are already proficient in English.

This is nothing new for anyone at Grant. About 50 students are enrolled in the ELL program school-wide, twice as many as there were four years ago. At least one international student is present in all 14 of the general education classes.

“The kids here are just so used to having kids who are different,” Schwarting said. “They think it’s really exciting and cool when people speak a different language. It’s a new learning experience with them, so they’re willing to accept them and learn.”

While working on state research projects earlier this spring, one table of children in...
Schwarting’s class chatted about politics. With their heads down, they focused on outlining the states, but each one named the candidate they hoped would be elected president this year.

One student said she would “probably vote for Hillary.” One was undecided between Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders. Another student’s favorite candidate, Marco Rubio, had just dropped out of the race.

At least half of the students at the table belong to foreign-born families. Each stated their opinion with no intent to argue, their eyes focused on the tip of their colored pencils.

Jerry You, 8, was the only one in the group in the English Language Learners program. While his classmates worked independently, he sat on a “reading rug” at the far end of class.

He’s in a group with fellow ELL students, PianPian Wu and Alice Sun, all researching Missouri with the help of instructional aide Mitzi Gribble.

It’s important to keep the ELL students working on the same projects and goals as the rest of the class, Schwarting said.

“That’s a lot more meaningful to them than me sending them out to work in a table in the hallway,” she said. “You’re treating them the same as everyone else.”

“Obviously you have to make modifications ... but letting them accomplish the same goal as other kids is important too.”

In Columbia Public Schools, 38.8 percent of students are in minority groups. Meanwhile, minorities constitute about 21 percent of Columbia’s total racial makeup.

Spine impairment is a leading cause of disability for veterans—and it’s on the rise. We urge Americans to back vets up by joining our efforts to treat and defeat these injuries. Get involved, our website is a great place to start.
Schwarting and Gribble are like a superhero tag team. When any student needs more help, either one swoops in while the other monitors the class.

“It’s a team effort,” Schwarting said. “If I get stuck, I’ll ask (Grant Elementary ELL specialist) Ms. Cook. Or if I need it broken down more, I’ll ask Ms. Gribble to break it down to smaller chunks.”

On the reading rug, Jerry, PianPain and Alice circled Gribble as they looked up facts about Missouri on a school iPad. Sometimes the blank expressions on their faces indicated that something was lost in translation. Gribble used the Google Translate application on the iPad, and a moment later, a voice from the computer repeated it in Chinese.

Schwarting sees the iPad as her “best friend.” Having Google Translate on mobile devices has helped keep the ELL students on pace with the rest of the class.

Wingert said the reason teachers like Schwarting are so successful with diverse classrooms is because they use appropriate resources. The iPads, modified lessons, adjusted rubrics and time with the school’s ELL specialist all play a role in making sure everyone in the class is successful.

All the methods Schwarting uses help keep the classroom organized, but the way her students accept one another is what keeps them moving forward.

“There isn’t one type of kiddo in my classroom, but we’re still a classroom. We’re a family in here,” she said. “We work together for certain goals and we help each other to reach certain goals and we don’t leave anyone behind.”

Katie Cook smiles while working with her students at Grant Elementary School.

Katie Cook uses an iPad to take a photo of students Ella Miao, 8, at left, Wendy Yang, 8, Alice Sun, 8, and Jerry You, 8, on March 17 at Grant Elementary School. Cook baked soda bread for the class to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day.

SAVE THE DATE
SATURDAY, AUGUST 27
DOWNTOWN - COLUMBIA, MO
WITH ALL AGES ACCESS TO
ROSE MUSIC HALL & FORREST ROSE PARK
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Or contact our office at: civilrights-titleix@missouri.edu (573) 882-3880

OUR MISSION

▶ We SUPPORT members of the Mizzou community who experience discrimination
▶ We INVESTIGATE reports of discrimination
▶ We EDUCATE the Mizzou community about equal opportunity policies
▶ We CONNECT people with resources