

# Rochester International Association

*Newsletter Autumn 2007*

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## RIA Beginnings and History

by Phyllis Layton

The Rochester International Association began as a registered nonprofit organization in 1982 as a merger of the Y International Center, the Rochester Refugee Resettlement Association and the Rochester World Festival. I was a part-time staff member of the International Center begun by Geri Critchley in 1980. SE Asian refugees were arriving in Rochester for resettlement in our community. Mayo Clinic patients, staff and their families were coming from all parts of the world to the Mayo Clinic. Rochester was a multicultural city. The RIA provided opportunities for multicultural communication, interaction and friendship in the community. Fuad Mansour, who had started the World Festival celebration joined the board and helped make this an annual event. We were assisted by Mayor Chuck Hazama who appointed the first International Affairs Committee for the city of Rochester.

The Refugee Resettlement committee was reorganized and became the Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association with Ron Buzzard as director of a staff of bilinguals from various SE Asian countries. The IMAA was first located in two houses on 7th Ave SW. Ron continues to lead this growing organization providing assistance for the many immigrants from various areas of the world who come to live in the Rochester area. When the RIA needed an office location, the IMAA arranged a space for RIA in one of the houses. Refugees from the war in Bosnia War began coming to Rochester seeking a safe home. When the IMAA moved to a larger building at 300 11<sup>th</sup> Ave. NW, they found office space for RIA in their building. Wars in Sudan and Somalia brought many Africans and their families to our community. Mexicans were also arriving as residents. Additional staff was needed so the IMAA made plans for a larger building to include private offices of their staff providing also for the various needs of their varied clients. The RIA appreciates the important work of the IMAA and thanks them for sharing their new space with our organization so we can continue to meet new people of all cultures that live in Rochester.

Since these early days, the RIA has offered friendship and communication with new internationals with annual events and

programs. Each of Rochester's mayors has continued to appoint and support members of the International Affairs Committee chaired for many years by Herta Matteson, former president of the RIA. We appreciate their continuing support and look forward in the upcoming year to:

- ★ the annual reception for new international residents and visitors hosted by Mayor Brede
- ★ Annual Thanksgiving Dinner hosted and prepared each year since by Fred Regal and his family
- ★ the annual Rochester World Festival held in April
- ★ the Rochesterfest parade entry
- ★ the International picnic at Silver Lake park with the Mayor's Committee

We welcome new members and wish more of you would take an active part. We thank our loyal continuing members who have sent their dues each year, served on the RIA Board, hosted and spoke at the monthly Y luncheon, taken part in organizing the annual World Festival each spring. But we do need more new active members to keep the organization alive and growing and to be leaders for the coming years. Please come to our events and invite your friends to join us.

Many thanks to Frank Hawthorne, RIA's outgoing president for his leadership and dedication to the organization. With his wife Dottie, they have been longtime active RIA members and volunteers. I have also served as a president and board member since the organization has begun. Frank and I will continue to help as advisors to the board, but the RIA needs a new leader and active board members.

RIA's capable continuing officers are: Vice president - Addie Borja; Treasurer - Ann Lance; Secretary - Heidi Chaney; Technology Officer, website, and memberships - Thomas Yung; Marcella Nixon keeps us in touch with the Hispanic Community and with her husband Gary takes a big part in World Festival and other community events; John Berquist will chair the '08 World Festival. We thank them for their efforts. Call Phyllis at 288-1197 or Frank at 282-5116 if you want to volunteer. Check also the RIA website at <http://ria-minnesota.org>.

## Latest News

### **RIA's Annual Meeting at 7pm Tuesday, Sept 11, 2007 at 2500 Valley High Rd, NW**

RIA's annual meeting was held at the new IMAA Board Room at 7pm. New board members and new officers were elected and will begin to serve two-year terms. Frank Hawthorne has served two terms as board president and will stay on the board as past president. **Addie Borja** will serve as president for the coming year; **Herta Matteson** will be vice president. **Heidi Chaney** will serve as secretary. **Max Sullivan** was elected as a new board member. Anyone else who is interested is welcome to talk with one of the board members or attend a meeting. If you are interested in joining the RIA board, please contact Addie Borja, Ann Lance or another board member. Other business will include first plans for the World Festival in April 2008. All members of the RIA may take part and vote at this meeting.

**The IMAA and RIA have a new office: RIA has moved with IMAA to new office location at 2500 Valley High Drive, NW, Rochester, MN 55901.** Grand opening events took place the first weeks of September. This new "green" one-story energy-saving building serves as an outstanding facility for the staff and clients of the IMAA. All RIA Board meetings will be held in the Board room on the second Tuesday of each month. RIA mail should now be sent to the new address. The telephone number remains 289-5960, Ext. 116. Please leave a voicemail message for RIA at the office phone.

**Diversity Council News:** Check out their website at [diversitycouncil.org](http://diversitycouncil.org) for all their latest news and events.

## Upcoming Events

**Monthly RIA Board meetings** are held at 7:00 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month at the IMAA office meeting room at 2500 Valley High Drive NW.

**International Speakers luncheon at the Y** Come join this group each second Wednesday of each month. We meet together from 11:30-1pm in Balfour Hall of the Rochester Family Y for a delicious international lunch prepared by our international caterer, Fred Regal and a talk by a volunteer speaker who shares pictures of an interna-

tional trip or talks about his or her life experiences in another country. Cost for lunch is \$8. Reservations are needed. Call Joyce Gossman 282-1676 or Betsy 289-3359.

- **On September 12** Roy Watson, Rochester's long-time citizen and hotel manager describes some of his many experiences in other parts of the world.
- **On October 10** Herta and Eric Matteson will show picture of a recent trip "On the trail of the Tigers in India."

Call Phyllis at 288-1197 if you would like to share your experiences with the group another month. You will be rewarded with an interested audience and a free lunch. Volunteers to set up and clean up are also welcome.

**RIA's English Conversation Group** will meet monthly for coffee, snacks and informal, friendly conversation at 10AM on the third Friday of each month at various locations—coffee houses or homes of the members. Betsy Munroe will be glad to tell you more about the group. Call her at 289-3359. Join us at our next meeting on Friday, September 21 at the Corner Cupboard restaurant on the first floor of Charter House. Phyllis Layton will be hostess. Colombian soldier who are patients at Mayo will be our special guests. Come join if you can. Call Betsy 289-3359 or Phyllis 288-1197 for more information.

**LATINO FEST, Sept. 22 from 1:00- 7:00pm at the eastside Shelter at Silver Lake** Music, Games Information, Food and Fun sponsored by Olmsted County with ACHLA, Allanza Chicana Hispana Latino Americana. Everyone is welcome. Free.

**Thursday, Oct. 11. Mayor's reception for new internationals:** Mayor Brede and his International Affairs committee members with RIA will welcome new international residents again this year at City Hall at 7 pm. Join us for refreshments and a chance to meet the Mayor informally and enjoy conversation and entertainment. Please invite your new international friends and neighbors.

**Thanksgiving Dinner at the Congregational Church, Nov. 22.** Each year, In memory of his mother, caterer Fred Regal and his family prepare and host a traditional Thanksgiving Dinner for new international families in

Rochester who are far away from their homes and families members. It will be held again at the Congregational Church, 965 17<sup>th</sup> Ave SW, beginning at noon. Volunteers and guest should contact Herta Matteson at 280-8319. Reservations are needed.

**RIA International Students at RCTC.** Glen Saponari is the staff advisor to the International Students at the college. He also serves on the RIA Board. We always enjoy getting to know these students and having them take part in our RIA Activities.

**Global Connection Days “Immigration from the Other Side” will take place at RCTC Oct. 9-11<sup>th</sup>** Save the dates and plan to attend the Panel discussions each day on immigration as well as the multicultural student performances: the ethnic fashion show and drama presentation. International food dishes will be served in the cafeteria. The coordinator each year is Lillyam Arroyave, Spanish teacher at RCTC.

## RIA Memberships

**RIA membership—Renewals and new memberships are needed:** Like most non-profit groups, RIA’s fiscal year began in July. Some of our loyal members, responding to our low-key membership drive in the summer newsletter, have mailed their annual dues. We thank them and hope to hear from others. Membership dues have not been raised since the organization was formed so that everyone can join, receive our newsletter and participate in our many events. Membership information and registration form is on page 4 of this newsletter. Mail it to the new address of the IMAA. You may also join and pay dues at any RIA meeting or event. We welcome and need new members for the RIA board. Thank you for being a member of RIA!




## Technology Update

This newsletter and current events can be found on the website. <http://www.ria-minnesota.org>

**Email subscriptions.** Please send us your e-mail address and get up-to-the-minute updates on any postings on our website. <http://ria-minnesota.org/email-subscriptions/>

**Going Green.** If you wish to opt into only receiving your future newsletters via email, sign up at <http://ria-minnesota.org/newsletters/>

**RIA events calendar is now online.** Please bookmark this web address: <http://riamn.org/ria-events-calendar>

You may also subscribe via:   

If your group would like to add events to the calendar, please email us at [webmaster@ria-minnesota.org](mailto:webmaster@ria-minnesota.org)

## Credits

**President:** Addie Borja

**Vice President:** Herta Matteson

**Secretary:** Heidi Chaney

**Treasurer:** Ann Lance

**Volunteer Coordinator:** Phyllis Layton

**Memberships, Website, Technology:** Thomas Yung

**Newsletter Editors:** Phyllis Layton, Thomas Yung

**Board Members:** Art Hambrun, Phyllis Layton, George Margellos, Marcella Nixon, Glen Saponari, Lee Herold, Heidi Chaney, Thomas Yung, Max Sullivan.

Mail this membership form to RIA's office at: **2500 Valley High Drive NW, Rochester, MN 55901.**

Phone Number: (507) 289-5960, Website: <http://ria-minnesota.org>

RIA board meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM in the board room.

**RIA membership is open to all. Please join today! RIA's mission:** Celebrating cultural diversity and providing opportunities for multicultural education and exchange. Membership is important and your way to help RIA put on the annual World Festival and other programs for international students and the community.

**Annual Membership dues:**

Individual \$20 [ ] Student/Senior \$15 [ ] Family \$30 (\$48 for 2 years) [ ] Organization \$30 [ ] Business \$50 [ ]

Name or Names:

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Address:

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Phone:

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Email (*indicate if you d like to receive future newsletters in your email instead of mailed out to you*):

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Country/Heritage:

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Interests/talents you can share:

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