“Romeo and Juliet” Performed by Flagship Students for 光棍节 (Single’s Day) on Nanjing University’s Campus!

November 11 (11/11) is a unique holiday in China: it is called “Single’s Day”, or 光棍节, and it is said to have originated in recent years from Nanjing University, though it is now a popular holiday nation-wide. This Single’s Day (special because it also 2011), 11 Flagship students decided to put on an all-male performance of Romeo and Juliet, for fun. With only a short period of time for planning, students copied the script, secured a wig for Juliet (played by BYU student Benjamin Hansen), and on a sunny, warm Friday morning performed the play from a central spot on Nanjing University’s campus, right next to the path leading to the student dorms and cafeteria. (cont. next page)

Left: Flagship student Benjamin Hansen made a beautiful Juliet!

Right: Flagship students hold signs that they painted themselves, attracting passers-by to come look at the performance and donate to a worth cause

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Flagship students also decided to take advantage of this attention-getting performance to raise money for a local woman who has ovarian cancer but cannot afford the treatments. Several Flagship students who were not performing got together to make signs and call out to passers-by to come and watch the special performance and also to donate to a good cause.

Besides the performers, about 10 Flagship Students made hand-painted signs ahead of time to advertise the event; student Kaylen Duarte also performed the prologue to the play. Lots of curious onlookers and passers-by came to watch the performance and many also gave money to the good cause. By the end of the performance, the students had raised RMB 5,250! (USD) The money was delivered to the woman’s house at the end of the day and this was covered by local media, with an article about the students in the next day’s newspaper.

*above: Chandler Hatch performs Shakespeare with the crowds looking on*
Seth Vogel, a BYU Flagship student, first had the idea to put on a performance of Romeo and Juliet. Why Romeo and Juliet on Nanjing University’s campus? Seth says, “I wanted to do something really different for 11/11/11, something that I would likely never do again in my life. Most of the ideas we came up with were either illegal or extremely dangerous. While talking with Chandler and Jonathan at dinner we came up with the idea to do a public performance and Chandler suggested Romeo and Juliet. “ Seth says that he was surprised that so many older Chinese people were watching the performance for such a long time, even though they may not have understood English.
Halloween in Nanjing!

On Halloween weekend this semester, Nanjing Center Flagship students organized and arranged a party for fellow Flagshippers, along with Chinese roommates and friends. Not only was the party in celebration of Halloween, but it was a potluck dinner as well, giving students a chance to showcase their culinary talents. Both Chinese and Western dishes were represented!

Besides eating delicious dishes, the party included dancing, games and a costume contest. A bilingual version of “charades” was played (with word prompts and guessing in Chinese and English), and a Chinese version of the game “Mafia” was also played. There was also a costume contest and parade. Halloween candy and decorations also abounded in abundance.

With about 50 students in attendance, the party was a great success. For many Chinese students, this was a first Halloween party and first exposure to Halloween. Students were surprised and amused by the creative costumes, which included “nerds”, characters from ancient Chinese folk tales, and a “Chinese grandmother” in pajamas and slippers.
Above and Below: Students in costume, partaking in delicious Halloween party fare
American Consul General from Shanghai Visits Nanjing Flagship

On Tuesday, November 7, the American Consul General from Shanghai, Robert Griffiths, visited the Chinese Flagship Center in Nanjing. After posing for some photos, the Consul and his staff sat with students for an informal meeting. The point of the meeting was to get to know students and answer general questions about China, consulate work, and diplomacy.

Flagship students had many interesting questions to ask and the Consulate staff shared some funny and fascinating stories. The Consul General started off with an introduction, and then discussed the importance of understanding cultural differences when working in a Consulate position. In particular he talked about the roles of “guanxi” (relationships) and “face” in both China and America, and the importance of recognizing these cultural factors when engaged in diplomacy or business.

During the open discussion, students queried about relations between the U.S. and China, education and teaching, and also what it was like to work in the consulate. The conversation was relaxed and full of humor, but also informative.
Above: The Consul General Robert Griffiths and staff talk to BYU Chinese Flagship Director Dr. Bourgerie as well as some students. They also look at newspapers and magazines in which Flagship students are featured.

Below: Flagship students meet with the Consulate staff for a discussion.