

## LINKS BETWEEN FORTH VALLEY COLLEGE & NHI

Date: 10<sup>th</sup> April 2009

Publication: Hi Magazine, Oman

Exchange programmes and the sharing of college resources within a cultural exchange programme normally exceed students' expectations...  
**KARIMA FARID** meets a group of students from Scotland.

**FRIDAY, April 10, 2009**

**Hi NATION**

# FOREIGN EXCHANGE

**T**HE POINT of this last exchange was to seek ways to provide diverse, multicultural, and meaningful educational experiences for the guest students from Scotland. While most institutions cite priorities for globalisation and internationalisation, many students find that cost, insufficient language skills, lack of programme compatibility and fear of the unknown are reasons for not taking advantage of the diversity of international opportunities offered. But, in this case, it was far easier to match programme goals between the UK and Oman through the support from the British Council and the National Hospitality Institute (NHI).

This past week, Oman was visited by eight wonderful students and two senior staff officials, who spent the week visiting Omani institutions in the hospitality industry, mostly hotels. Robert MacLean, principal of NHI said: "This exchange was to create a cross-cultural experience between students. The hospitality industry is rapidly growing and this occasion will also enhance staff development in-house. This inter-exchange will continue on the 27th of April when eight Omani students accompanied by two staff members from NHI will begin their one week long visit to Scotland."

One thing ALL the 10 visitors agreed upon was applauding the Omani hospitality that they experienced. By exchanging to different institutions, these students had an opportunity to gain insight into the historical and cultural makeup of different regions, to improve communication skills with individuals from diverse backgrounds, and to eliminate racial and ethnic stereotypes. It is an opportunity for students to make the most of their education and prepare themselves to live and work in a more culturally diverse society.

Hospitality today is, without justification, one of the most growing industries and this student exchange was organised by the British Councils, which, over the next year, will be supporting the development of the new 16 college partnership programmes under the 'Skills for employability' across the Middle East.



Robert MacLean, principal of NHI



**Alveen McAllister**  
Teacher (Hospitality)

I WAS able to choose the eight students who came in with me, based on their applications. Out of 15, 8 were chosen. This visit has been brilliant. Shangri-La Hotel was splendid where we had a tour of the three hotels there. 'Kargeen' was a more traditional place to dine in; we had a five-course tasty meal. The tour around this institute was good, as we go to view the students in action."



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**Anne McLaughlin**  
Student of beauty therapy

I LOVE it here! It is a beautiful country. Normally one does not expect strangers to be nice to you but here we have been welcomed, it is a very nice way to be. I would like to learn more about the culture of this country and meet all the 'real' people. We will definitely take care of the students that are coming in from Oman to us. So far it has been a good experience.



**Ryan Davidson**  
Student of Hospitality Management

I KNEW where Oman was on the map before I came here. It's very nice and warm and the atmosphere is different then where I come from. If I could describe Oman in one word, in would be 'uplifting'. Everything is bright looking here. People are very friendly and it has been all right so far.



**Lorna Nicoll**  
Student of Hospitality & Management

IT HAS been really nice, the weather is much better than home. Everybody seems so friendly and everyone says hello to each other. It's hot here but it was definitely up to expectations. The hotels are very posh, I had to do some shopping before traveling here because everything I had was for keeping me warm."



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**Marina Reynolds**  
Student

I BELIEVE I have been chosen to come on this trip due to my attendance and work! We were correctly briefed before we came here and we knew that it would be hot. It took us a whole week to get the Omani Rial from our local post office. I am having a good time and am very excited to meet new people. It's been brilliant, so far. I am mostly looking forward to the Omani night, it sure will be great to meet the students"



**Lauren Bennie**  
Beauty Student, 4th year

I WAS so lucky to come on this trip; I have been offered a great opportunity. Its nice and very friendly here, the teachers are very responsible but just like one of us! We are having so much fun. At Shangri-La, I felt just like a princess and although I am fussy with food, I really enjoyed the cuisine here. I want to own my own beauty salon shop one day and the business classes that I am taking are helping me with my mission."

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**May Tnnent**  
Teacher (Hairdressing)

I CAME on this trip as a support person and answer questions within any quality issues. Oman is fantastic and the people here have been very good to us. They are extremely hospitable and, so far, there has been no language barrier as long as I speak slowly! I look forward to viewing the mosques."