Dec 2009

Ashdown @ MIT



Ashdown's Alumni

Alumni Gettogether April 2010: Check Ashdown's Website in February!

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ALUMNI CONCERT & DINNER 2010

By Ann Orlando

Keep your eye peeled for an alumni concert in Spring 2010!

Ashdown House was informed by the MIT Development Office this summer, that Prof. Vernon Ingram left a bequest to fund an annual classical concert at Ashdown House. Beth and Vernon Ingram were Ashdown Housemasters from 1984 to 2001. Vernon was an accomplished pianist and the Ingrams started the tradition of an annual Ashdown House concert. The music practice room in Ashdown House is named the Ingram Room. The first concert will be held this April, and it is the intent to combine the concert with an Ashdown Alumni Dinner. Once a date is selected, we will let everyone know. Please check the website in February 2010.



Another one enters the fold...

By Pei-Lin Chua

How time flies! It seems just yesterday when I was in a cab. anxiously peering through the rainsplattered windowpanes Ashdown. New to the United States, I was accompanied by a host of mixed emotions: excitement, trepidation, curiosity and exhaustion from the three flights I had to take to come here (next time any of your international friends look slightly dazed upon returning to Boston, you know why...It's probably the flight!).

Upon stepping into the building, any small misgivings were immediately dispelled as I trundled my luggage through the hallways to my room: friendly faces said hello, hands which kindly kept doors open and there was an impromptu tour of Ashdown by Alice Lo, currently one of the AHEC officers.

Then the whirl of orientation activities: housemaster dinner, check. BBQ, check. A humorous

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and well-designed scavenger hunt, check. In a blink of an eve, it seems as if I have been at Ashdown all this while. I have gotten used to looking out eagerly for notices on Brunch or Coffee Hour or any of the myriad of activities constantly on Haunted House Competitions, Apple Pie Societies, Pumpkin Carving, Special Coffee Hours where we can sample the delights of Baklava, Mexican desserts and other exotic desserts and what is more, an almost endless supply of ice-cream. Besides the food (which is perhaps something all graduate students in MIT look forward to), there's a rich community and endless enrichment activities to look forward to: Yoga classes, Boston Ballet and even most recently, a bike ride after

brunch.

It has only been less than a term, but that I have settled in so successfully into MIT is in no small part due to Ashdown and the rich opportunities this very special house offers for meeting graduate students from other countries and who are often very quirky, well-read and fascinating conversationalists.

So it is that I find myself, less than a term, already an officer in Ashdown: I too want to contribute to this very special community and keep it as warm and vibrant for future students!

We're lucky to have what we do, and it's because the students who came before us cared deeply.



AHEC UPDATE

Last year, AHEC's main goal was to transition Ashdown successfully to its new home in NW35. This year, AHEC set improving internal Ashdown events to be its main priority.

By and large, we have been very successful. Between orientation, Coffee Hour, The Cherry Pie Society, outings, and yoga classes (to name just a few things this fall), a lot of great new events have occurred. At the same time, campus wide events such as the cultural dinner series, our large dance parties and brunch have continued to occur.

We wish to acknowledge that many of the possibilities for community living we have now at the new Ashdown was a result of the work of past AHECs, which fought many very difficult battles with the administration when the NW35 move was proposed.

By Amanda Zangari

Originally, the new building was to contain no common space besides the laundry room. We're lucky to have what we do, and it's because the students who came before u s cared deeply.

The current AHEC will do its best to continue the good work done by the previous AHECS by looking at measures to best retain the community spirit that marked the old

Ashdown.



The current AHEC chair hard at work

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Floor(s) Party at the Thirsty Ear

By Hunter McClelland

Free food? Check, Trivia? Check. Free beer? YES. Welcome to the social life of Ashdown. On Wednesday, November 11th. Ashdown residents from floors 1, 4, and 5 met at the Thirsty Ear Pub for the fall '09 floor party. The event was organized by Aalap Dighe, Mario DeFranco. and Hunter McClelland, the floor officers for floors 4, 5, and 1 respectively. What was the occasion, you ask? Simple: we wanted to have fun.

The party was sponsored by the Ashdown House Executive Committee, by and our dear housemasters. Terrv and Ann Orlando. Free food and drinks were provided for residents in attendance from the hosting floors, courtesy of our sponsors. The exclusion of floors 2 and 3 was not due to any ill will, it was simply the small floors teaming up to throw a party. There were both non-Ashdowners and residents from other floors who came to enjoy the company and the atmosphere. Unfortunately for them, no free drinks. "They weren't on the list."

The entertainment/icebreaking for the evening was a mini-trivia competition, hosted by Aalap and

Mario. The categories were: MIT. Music, Movies/Actors, Boston, and Science. The teams ended up consisting of a pleasant mix of different floors and provided a great atmosphere for meeting friends. The prizes, a \$2 coupon for food at the Thirsty Ear, were reserved for 1st, 4th, and 5th floor residents of the top 3 teams. Questions ranged from "What does MBTA stand for?" to obscure facts such as "What is the nickname for the 4.4 million year-old humaniod fossil recently discovered?" Don't know? Google it.

The party was a great success. All of the non-residents were CLEARLY jealous that they didn't belong to the coolest floors in Ashdown, but they had a great time regardless. Remnants from the party went on to close the bar down, playing Rock Band until early in the morning. The food was excellent, the beer was delicious, and most importantly the evening was enjoyed by all.



As usual, spoilt foodwise at ashdown

From a floor officer

The first semester is done. Although all the grades are not yet in (so maybe I shouldn't be popping champagne bottles just yet), I still think there is reason to celebrate because I have come to realize that being a graduate student at MIT is almost too good to be true. Not only do I get to take challenging classes and and delve into research with brilliant professors and interact with truly outstanding students from literally all over the world. And this

By Mario DeFranco

interaction is not just limited to mν home department mathematics (I would insert something like "Thank God for that", but we math nerds take too much flak as it is). For living in Ashdown House has allowed me to befriend people concentrating in everything from behavioral economics to nuclear engineering. Walking down any of the corridors makes a resident really feel that a global



Alumni Officer

Pei-Lin Chua peilinc@mit.edu

We're on the Web! http://ashdown.mi t.edu/



community of scholars has converged here - right outside your bedroom! As a floor officer in Ashdown I get to help coordinate events for the students on my floor, such as dinners, study breaks and parties at the Thirsty Ear pub. I get to work with our magnanimous housemasters Professor Terry and Ann Orlando (hi Ann!). And, along with the residents, I get to partake in Ashdown traditions, including Sunday brunches, dinners with the housemasters Thanksgiving dinner may have surpassed many a home-cooked meal), and coffee hours that feature a different world culture every week

(apparently caffeine is universal).

Thanks to these reasons and to the many people that make it such a great place in which to live (and study), I am glad to be a part of Ashdown House; what more could anyone ask for? (Besides sustainable energy sources, a halt to the mass extinction, interstellar space travel, etc.) But hey, that's why we're at MIT! So let's make the most of our time in Ashdown; you only go to graduate school once (in most cases).

The CHERRY PIE Society is BACK!

By Ann Orlando

In 1951 The Cherry Pie Society was started by Dr. Avery Ashdown and the Executive Committee. consisted of an informal dinner over which residents discussed topics of general interest. The idea was to meet other people and share views/ opinions based different on backgrounds and experiences. The name "Cherry Pie Society" reflected Doc Ashdown's favorite dessert.

In 2009 The Cherry Pie Society has found new life in Ashdown House. Much like the former Cherry Pie Society, the new Cherry Pie Society gathers over dinner in the Housemaster Apartment to discuss

different views based on varying backgrounds of the participants. Ashdown is fortunate to be able to use two Residential Scholars to set the discussion topics and prepare appropriate readings for each dinner. There have been two meetings of the Cherry Pie Society this semester; the first focused on Lebanese short stories about the Lebanese civil war; the second considered Mexican customs associated with the Day of the Dead through Mexican poetry.

KEEPING the connection...

I'm sure you all have extremely fond memories of Ashdown and may want to propose ways of keeping in touch! If so, please email (my email is on the left) any suggestions so that we can try and keep the Ashdown Alumni Connection alive. As they say, once an Ashdowner, always an Ashdowner!

----Pei-Lin

Our Halloween Celebration: Pumpkin Carving with Housemaster Ann Orlando in her academic dress stylishly tweaked with a Harry Potterish cap!

