Hi! My name is Tami, and I am from Venezuela. This is my first semester at the ELI, and I am having such a great time. I chose to come study in Miami because the weather is nice and similar to Venezuela’s weather. The people in Miami are very friendly and cheerful. My teachers at the ELI are very helpful and kind. I have met people from all over the world, so I have been learning about other cultures. I want to study fashion merchandising because it is something that I have loved since I was a little girl. I plan on pursuing my education at the Miami International University of Art and Design located downtown. Before that, I have to be prepared to take the TOEFL. I’m really sure that the ELI is going to help me to achieve my goal. On weekends, I like to go to the movies, have dinner with my friends, and of course go shopping!

Student Spotlight: Tami Shimura

New Year is an important celebration for many people around the world. In my family, it is more important than normal because it is my grandfather’s birthday, too. I remember all my New Year’s celebrations, but there is one of them I will never forget. On December 31st, 2011, all my family met in my house. We cooked some delicious dishes together, and everybody helped with the food. Then at night, we started to eat dinner, listen to music, and have fun together. Before midnight, we sang “happy birthday” to my grandfather and ate cake. After that, when it was 12 a.m., we said “Happy New Year” and kissed one another. Then we went outside to see the fireworks and dance. After spending time with the family, I met with all my classmates and celebrated because we were starting our last year of classes. That night was very emotional and special for me.

Giuliana Ferrari
What I really enjoy about Christmas holidays is the food which Venezuelans prepare for this celebration. Families make hallacas, chicken salad, turkey, and the typical Venezuelan dishes. I especially love December, and it is my favorite holiday because we spend the whole month eating Christmas dishes. We also have “Las Gaitas Navideñas”. These are groups of musicians who play Venezuelan folk music. Venezuelans like to participate in all the celebrations and parties that are organized in December, and they always have a group who plays “Gaitas”. At midnight, on December 25th, we open gifts and exchange gifts. On December 31st, we start to eat 12 grapes a few minutes before midnight, and some people take their suitcases and carry them. They do this because they hope to travel the upcoming year. To end the holidays, we celebrate the Three Kings Day, which is on January 7th. Even though it is not as big a celebration as Christmas Eve, we celebrate it by giving family, friends and loved ones a little gift.

Daniela Gonzalo

I love Christmas time because it is a great time to be with my family. The best holiday for me, is New Year’s. I really like New Year because all my family goes to a common house. We dance and talk while we are waiting for 12:00 am. When 10 seconds are remaining, we start counting down in a big circle. Then we hug and wish everyone happy New Year. It is a great time that I spend every year with all my family.

Desiree Mantovani

The tradition of Christmas has spread over half a dozen cultures and evolved over the centuries. In Kuwait, Christmas Eve is a real special evening for our family. We are used to buying massive amounts of fireworks, staying at the beach house in front of our Christmas tree and enjoying the beautiful breeze in front of the beach. The view of the fireworks is quite beautiful.

Naser Alnaser

Christmas is a big deal in our country. Every family has their own celebration. Everyone celebrates by making a big meal and every family member comes together to celebrate. Last Christmas, my family celebrated in a different way. My father suggested that we go camping and celebrate by making a big meal, and watching the fireworks. Christmas is a wonderful event for me.

Saoud Alrashidi

Christmas Eve and New Year’s are the most important holidays in my country. We have a dinner with typical dishes. This dish is made of hallaca, chicken salad, pork loaf and ham bread. Hallaca is made of corn flour, and it contains many ingredients inside wrapped in plantain sheets. On Christmas Eve at midnight, families begin to open gifts. The most exciting part is when the children open the presents that Santa Claus has brought them. On New Year’s Day, we have the same dinner, and some families change the menu, but the ritual is typically the same. At midnight, in order to receive the New Year, people eat 12 grapes for 12 wishes, and they come running down the street with bags so that the upcoming year is filled with traveling. Someone wears yellow underwear to attract good luck and fortune. It is a happy and funny holiday.

Rita Otayek
Christmas is my favorite time of year. Having been in the same neighborhood where I grew up for the last 15 years, I and the neighbors organize a big street party. We eat, drink, play together, and share gifts every Christmas. I will never forget these times because they bring intense moments of sharing and love, which are the essence of life. That is why I believe in Santa Claus although most adults do not. For me Christmas is the celebration of love and sharing. Therefore, we are like Santa Claus for each other.

Frantz Alcidas

In 2008, I graduated from the university. My parents surprised me with a graduation gift, a trip to Orlando. The most valuable thing for my family is to spend time together; we name these moments “family time”. That December and New Year is the best time of the year. I love to see the decorated houses, the bright lights, and the traditional dishes of the season. I think it is more than these elements and the consumerism of this time. The most important thing is to celebrate and spent time with our families and people that we love, give thanks for all the good things in our lives, and have the best wishes for the upcoming year. These holidays are more important for me because I have been away from my family and friends for some time, so now I can clearly see the importance of them, and I think I will enjoy them more.

Paula Mesa

My favorite holiday is the Spring Festival. It is on the last day of the last Month of the Chinese calendar. My first impression of this festival was formed when my parents took me to another city named Beihai to celebrate. It was interesting. On that day, everybody went out and shot fireworks all night, and the shops remained open all night. I had never seen this before because in my hometown we celebrate it at my grandmother’s home, where our relatives also come to celebrate there. We watch TV shows about the Spring Festival. After dinner, we would go out to shoot fireworks, but we never did this all night, and the shops were closed. It was different from my hometown, so it was interesting for me.

Bingxin Yi
The ELI newsletter is a bi-weekly publication of the English Language Institute that updates students on upcoming events and important dates. It invites students to participate in its publication process. It also includes news, trivia, quotes and reading suggestions. You may e-mail any suggestion to Laura Lamour at: llamo001@fiu.edu. The ELI newsletter is produced by ELI instructor Laura Lamour.

The Lantern Festival is a China's traditional festival. It is celebrated on the fifteenth day of the first month of the lunar year. Lantern Festival is one of the biggest holidays in China. Several days before the Lantern Festival, people begin to make lanterns. The Lanterns are made in the shape of different animals, vegetables, fruit, and many other things. While making lanterns, people usually write riddles on lanterns. On the eve of the Lantern Festival, all the lanterns are hung up. On this day, every Chinese family cooks sticky rice dumplings which we call yuanxiao.

Yang Li

November Birthdays

Happy birthday to the following students born in the month of November:

Jose De Andrade  November 21st
Brandon Gomez  November 21st
Guiliana Ferrari  November 26st