



Eastern philosophy: Izumi and Steven Myers of Suzuki-Myers and Associates explain what it takes to do business in Japan.



Connected: Farmington High School student Samir Eiwaz learns how to use searches in the international business community.

STAFF PHOTO BY BILL HENSLER

Farmington students discover business life in other cultures

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Matt Cave, 16, a student at Farmington High School, learned this week that if you order chips in England, you won't get the same kind of chips offered in the U.S.

Cave and about 150 students in marketing and business classes at the three Farmington public high schools attended the International Business Seminar Thursday, hosted by Walsh College in Novi.

The program offered students insight into what life might be like working in a foreign country.

Douglas Gress, an engineering manager with Visteon Automotive Systems, told students about his experiences moving his Farmington family of five to

England, because of a job transfer.

Despite the fact that people in the two countries speak the same language, there are more cultural differences to digest than one might imagine, Gress said.

He explained that in England, french fries are called chips, chips are called crisps and cookies are called biscuits.

The small town his family lived in didn't have stores open on Sundays and, there were no fast-food places nearby.

Even how Americans use their utensils differ from how people use them in the U.K., he explained.

He relayed that violent crimes are not common in Great Britain, but pickpocketing is rampant.

In fact, his son's wallet was snatched from his back pocket

while there. The money from inside was removed, and the wallet was slipped back into his pocket, all without the son noticing until later.

"It was a polite criminal," Gress said with a chuckle.

Steve Myers and his wife Izumi Suzuki spoke about what a business person can expect when traveling or living in Japan. Myers was raised in Michigan and after law school lived for a decade in Tokyo. He was the deputy executive director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan and the CEO of a Japanese subsidiary of a major American company.

Myers explained that he went to Japan without any previous understanding of the culture. He and his wife talked about doing business successfully in the far East.

Suzuki is an interpreter who

usually works for the major automakers. She pointed out that being punctual, modest and apologetic is important in Japanese culture.

"Everybody (there) knows English, they've studied it for at least six years," she said.

The couple also talked about making the adjustment to the Japanese way of life. People have little private space and arriving there is very stressful due to jet lag. Also, it's a hot and humid climate.

Responding to questions about what it's like to be a high school student in Japan, Suzuki said teenagers don't drive or date, they study.

And if a student is caught using a beer distribution machine, it's the principal who is called not the police.

Besides learning about the U.K. and Japan, students heard

from Laith and Linda Michel about doing business in the Middle East.

Harrison student Suzan Asmar, 17, said she found the discussion about living in the Middle East the most interesting. She said she plans to visit there after hearing about it.

"It's been fun and it's good they're doing this," she said of the program.

Students also learned how to use the college's electronic library to research information about other countries.

Concluding the program was a talk from Justin Golden, a soon-to-be graduate of the University of Michigan and a graduate of Harrison High.

He has attended all the previous International Business Seminars.

He was a member of a non-profit global intern exchange

program called AIESEC. Formerly an French acronym for "Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales," the student-run, non-profit organization is now global in scope and provides leadership opportunities through practical learning experiences.

Due to his work in the program, he plans to leave for London soon to be begin training to work at Deutsche Bank's Global Equity Derivatives in New York City.

Judy Miller is the career development coordinator for the three high schools.

She said this is the fifth year the International Business Seminar has been offered for the high school students, but it is the first year all three schools were invited to attend the same seminar.

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