

# Wellesley Host Families Welcome New International Students

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The first days of college can be daunting for any incoming student, and even more so for those who are arriving from another country. To ease the transition to both Wellesley and the United States, local Wellesley College alumnae clubs and the [Slater International Center](#) established the [International Student Host Family Program](#) 16 years ago, which matches staff, faculty, and alumnae families with international students. The families pick up their students at the airport and host them in their homes until it's time to help them move to campus for orientation.

Wellesley welcomes 137 incoming international students this year. Of those, 36 have been matched with 33 families.



Last Friday, Misaki Mukai '22 flew into Boston's Logan Airport from Japan. Waiting for her was Anne-Marie Soulliere '69, who hosted Mukai in her Chestnut Hill home.

"Preparing to come to Wellesley and the travel is overwhelming," said Mukai, who will be a special student in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, studying how to teach Japanese, "so it's nice to come here and catch my breath before I go to the campus, which I have never seen before."

Leona Roach '85 braved rush-hour traffic twice, driving from her South Shore home in Pembroke to Logan to pick up Josephine Awino Odhiambo '22 from Kenya and Etsegenet Seleshi Tsega '22 from Ethiopia, two of the four first-year Mastercard Foundation Scholars.

"[Wellesley] is far from my home, but I think I will feel safe and supported," said Seleshi Tsega. "I also understand that Wellesley cultivates a strong sense of sisterhood and women leaders." She and her fellow new Mastercard Scholars had an opportunity to explore campus before a luncheon on August 24.

Roach, who loves traveling, said she has a deep interest in people from other countries and their cultures. "I think it's quite a challenge to leave your home culture and [move] overnight into a new one," said Roach. "This is what I can do to provide them with a little support." Roach has hosted 16 Wellesley students since 2009.

Roach said she gives her students a card with her phone number so that they can contact her if they are lost or stuck somewhere. "I tell them if they ever find themselves in a place where they feel uncomfortable, give me a call and I'll come and get them and take them back to campus," she said. "I don't care what time it is—just call me."

Holidays are another opportunity for the hosts to bond with the students. Soulliere and Roach, like many other families in the program, open their homes to students for Thanksgiving dinner. Roach has one requirement: "I ask each of them to send me a recipe

from their home country, and I prepare it.”

Overall, everyone benefits, said Soulliere. “Students get a warm welcome and someone who lives in the area who knows them and cares about them, and I think it’s wonderful to have these smart, bright young women in my life when I’m in my 70s.”

*Photo: Mastercard Foundation Scholars (left to right) Estegenet Seleshi Tsega '22, Adhel Geng '22, Josephine Awino Odhiambo '22, and Noella Ghislain Ingabire '22 take in Lake Waban on their first day on campus.*

*Photo(inset): Misaki Mukai '22 (second from left) and Anne-Marie Soulliere '69 (second from right) cook dinner together at Soulliere’s home in Chestnut Hill.*