

Write IN

# International House

at Third and Chestnut Streets  
in Downtown Harrisburg

**M**ore and more, as the character of Harrisburg continues to evolve, it has become an international hub for students and professionals young and old. Native Americans occupied what is now Harrisburg 5,000 years ago. The Swedes and the French used the Susquehanna River as a route during their explorations of the Middle Atlantic Region but did not settle here. As some of us know, Englishman, John Harris, was the first white man to appreciate the region's strategic location. He established a trading post here around 1710 and began a ferry service in 1739. After Harris' death in 1748, his son John, continued his father's liberal policies with the natives and considerable settlement came to the region by the time of the French and Indian Wars of 1753-58. Thousands of German settlers were attracted by the rich farmlands. The iron industry became so important that workers were forbidden to leave work to join the militia during the American Revolution unless they had special permission. Following the Revolution, the Pennsylvania state assembly created Dauphin County out of a portion of Lancaster County and directed the establishment of a county seat near Harris Ferry. They temporarily named the county

seat Louisburg in honor of the French king who had been so helpful during the Revolution. However, John Harris refused to sell the land for the county seat under these terms. Eventually, it was agreed that the new name would be Harrisburg in honor of his father.

More recently after a resurgence of economic and cultural growth in Harrisburg, the Central Business District revitalization resulted in nearly 9.2 million gross square feet of developed business space in the Center City area. These figures led to *Inc.* magazine's ranking Harrisburg eighteenth on its March 2004 *Top 25 for Doing Business in America* for medium-sized cities.

Harristown Development Corporation (HDC) was organized in 1974 to find ways to revive Harrisburg's flailing downtown and re-establish the Harrisburg core area as the heart of the City, the economic and cultural center of the Metropolitan area, and as a thriving capitol area for all Pennsylvania. HDC, after much success and growth over much of the Center City area, saw a need for an intercultural center that would facilitate and enhance opportunities for immigrants and citizens of America that come to Harrisburg to study and work. What better place to institute a residential facility known as International House? One of the goals of International House is to provide a comfortable, friendly and supportive collegial residence for international and U.S. students, scholars and interns that enables them to meet one another while enjoying all that the city has to offer.

In 2001, Messiah College was awarded a \$2 million grant from the Lilly Endowment to enrich curriculum and campus experiences that help students view their lives as part of a larger divine purpose. Messiah designated a portion of the grant to focus on planning a more intentional presence for the College in the city of Harrisburg and the surrounding region. Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based, private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by three members of the Lilly family — J.K. Lilly, Sr. and sons J.K., Jr. and Eli — through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company.

Messiah College established the Harrisburg Institute to create a web for engagement where students, educators and city leaders collaborate on strategic initiatives that not only address core community issues, but also provide the opportunity for learning and scholarship. The Institute allows Messiah to serve as an important resource for those in the Harrisburg community through activities that combine faculty expertise, student service, and community collaboration.

In 2007, the Messiah Harrisburg Institute moved to downtown in a partnership with

Harristown Development Corporation, to refurbish an older industrial building into an 11,000 square foot urban learning and service facility. The College's downtown presence provides residential housing, classroom and office space. The Institute is located at 28 Dewberry Street, just north of the International House and along Blackberry Street, just south of Strawberry Square.

International House was designed to provide a warm and friendly environment where foreign and U. S. students, scholars and interns can live and learn from one another through their everyday activities. International House is a project of the Harristown Development Corporation in keeping with HDC's mission of improving central Harrisburg. The home-like atmosphere promotes international understanding, while cushioning the culture shock and language barriers typically experienced by new visitors. This unique residential experience provides the opportunity to explore and experience new lifestyles and viewpoints, preparing residents for success in the global economy.

To encourage interaction, several lounge areas and two full kitchens are available for the residents' use within the complex. Community lounges offer TV with DVD player, games, books, magazines, and area information brochures. The lounges provide the perfect setting for casual conversations or simply hanging out in a safe place. The study lounge has computers with 24 hour internet access and offers a quieter environment for studying or working.

Whether it is a visit by a famed artist or a diplomat visiting the Governor, a stop by the International House Lounge is not uncommon. Current regular events include cultural presentations by local and international leaders, international holiday celebrations, international dances, monthly dinners and monthly movies. Residents are encouraged to take advantage of these special opportunities.

The typical International House resident is a student, a professional intern, a scholar or a researcher that is affiliated with an institution of higher education in the United States or abroad to further his or her education. Those who choose to reside at the International House endeavor to be part of an international community and to share in an experience that will enrich their stay in Harrisburg.

While providing tenants with privacy and comfort, International House also offers a great support system. The International House Manager and Resident Assistants are on hand from the beginning to welcome the residents to their new homes, answer questions and ease their transitions. The Resident Assistants live at International House and provide an on-

site resource. Round the clock assistance is provided through a 24-hour security staff. The International House Manager and Resident Assistants have experience and training to assist in a variety of situations.

Weekly and monthly activities, social programs and trips are planned by the staff to help the residents to get to know one another and discover the region. Residents are encouraged to share their heritage through special events planned in conjunction with the staff.

Some of the international students and interns at International House are affiliated with the Council for Educational Travel (CET) USA, a non-profit organization dedicated to helping Americans and those from other cultures gain a better understanding of one another. The association allows for work and travel abroad while helping participants find employment and enjoy a comfortable stay in their new home.

Participating organizations have included, among others, the Warrell Candy Company, Tyco Electronics, Felicita Resort and Spa, Hilton Harrisburg, the Crowne Plaza, the Hilton Garden Inn and Hershey Entertainment and Resorts. Other organizations supporting internships for students living at International House include many Commonwealth agencies and the General Assembly, the Office of Governor Edward Rendell, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, the Pennsylvania State Archives and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, to name a few. Other students residing at International House includes students from Harrisburg University of Science and Technology, the State System of Higher Education, HACC and Penn State Harrisburg. International House (owned and operated by an affiliate of Harristown Development Corporation) has become a cultural hub and residential haven for students, interns and young professionals by successfully transforming buildings along Chestnut and Third Streets into fully functional residential spaces. International House seeks to give residents a stimulating cultural experience while returning the favor to the city of Harrisburg. International Place at Third and Chestnut became a whole neighborhood featuring the Bricco Mediterranean Restaurant, Ciao! Bakery and Olweine's Meat and Cheese Shop.

Visit International Place and International House at your first opportunity; for more information go to [www.househbg.org](http://www.househbg.org). **HBG**