Spanish culture comes alive for JV students visiting Juniata

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On Feb. 17, Juniata Valley’s third and fourth year Spanish students were stirring things up at Juniata College. Nine of Señora Virginia LeCrone’s advanced language students spent the day immersed in the Spanish culture with the help of Juniata College Language in Motion Department.

The students started off the day with an introduction of the campus and the opportunity it has as a perspective college. The president of admissions talked to the students on the unique college experience the pupils of Juniata College have, and explained the process of becoming an enrolled student.

The next part of the day was the campus tour. Now sure, this sounds simple enough but what the students were surprised to hear was that their guide would walk them through the campus speaking Spanish only.

Their guide had just returned from a five-month stay in Ecuador, which was possible through the help of Juniata College’s study abroad program. The guide spoke excellent Spanish, even if the students could not understand him fully. As a cold herd of students went from building to building, their guide explained each new location and talked about everyday college life on the campus.

After the brisk campus tour the students were relieved to find their way into the warm language room of Fernando Martinez. Martinez is a visiting professor from Mexico and teaches Spanish at Juniata College. Martinez’s language students helped plan this day and were willing to get out of class to help the Juniata Valley pupils experience Spanish culture.

Martinez gave a presentation on Costa Rico and explained the culture of this country and his own. Following Martinez’s speeches, two female students gave a presentation comparing and contrasting the different fashion trends between Spain and the United States. It was very interesting to see the diverse differences and similarities in modern fashion styles today.

After a long day of walking and exercising their brains, the students were hungry for lunch. The next stop for the students was the kitchen where they would be learning how to cook up real authentic Mexican recipes with the help of Martinez. The students all took part in preparing the lunch, which consisted of, first as an appetizer, a thick, chunky salsa dip with corn chips and a sweet Mexican tea. Then each pupil made a tasty cheese and mushroom quesadillas.

Students were split into groups that rotated duties in the baking process. While some students were spicing up the lunch, the other remaining groups played Spanish games and music. Martinez’s college students and Juniata College’s exchange Spanish students lead the activities. Spanish student Elizabeth Best, better know in Spanish class as Mercedes, talked about the culture. Mercedes remarked how it was very interesting to be involved in the modern life of Spanish culture.

“The exchange students were close to our age and it made it easier to relate to them and their personal lives. The music sounded like something you would hear on any America teenager’s radio, just the words were in Spanish.” After they enjoyed the delicious meal they had prepared, students boarded the bus to go back home.

When Juniata Valley’s LeCrone was interviewed about the day, she remarked on how proud she was of her students. “The students were very attentive and contributed during the day. They made great cooks, and above all they practiced Spanish which was very good.” LeCrone remarked how the goal of the day was to help students improve on their conversational Spanish skills.

“This day forced students to try hard to follow along and maybe even pushed students into wanted to improve their second language.”

The Spanish class is looking forward to more real life culture immersions in the future and is very thankful to the staff of Juniata College’s Language in Motion for making the day, “una buena d’ia.”