

## **I am an American We are One Nation** **PROVIDING A PLACE TO CALL HOME**

Couple offer students from Asia opportunity to meet, practice English

**CHRISTIAN VOSLER**

USA TODAY NETWORK

*Each week, this series will introduce you to an exceptional American who unites, rather than divides, our communities. To read more about the American profiled here and more average Americans doing exceptional things, visit [onenation.usatoday.com](http://onenation.usatoday.com).*

### **TK Mac**

**Location:** Silverdale, Washington **Age:** 57 **Profession:** Engineer **Mission:** Giving foreign students a welcoming community in the United States.



LARRY STEAGALL/USA TODAY NETWORK

**TK Mac of Silverdale, Washington, with his wife, Beth, organizes a weekly “English Corner” fellowship for students from Asia in the Pacific Northwest.**

TK Mac was once one of them — a young person in a new country, struggling with the language and the culture.

Now, the engineer and his wife, Beth, a nurse, are providing a home away from home in the Pacific Northwest for dozens of young people from Asian countries through an “English Corner” fellowship they founded.

“They need somebody, someplace to go, a place they can trust,” said TK Mac, who himself immigrated to the United States from China as a refugee.

The Macs had been involved in the Asian community for several years in their hometown of Silverdale, Washington, but decided to start English Corner after hosting a Chinese New Year dinner for college students. They saw needs that went beyond what support services at schools or their church could offer. Now the family’s Friday nights are spent playing charades or cards with community college students to practice English skills and develop social connections in a country that can feel lonely. During the week, the social connection deepens, and the Macs will help schedule dentist appointments, give advice on cooking meals or push the students to finish homework.

While the group is informed by their Christian faith, Mac's passion is to give international students a place to relax and interact with people from other cultures. Students from China, Vietnam, Korea, India and Japan attend every week. Social connections can be an obstacle even among the foreign students themselves as cliques develop. English Corner is a place for anyone, and it's intended to tear down those walls for a group of people who need to offer support for one another.

"They're great," TK Mac said. "They try really hard to make everyone good together."

**"They need somebody, someplace to go, a place they can trust."**

**TK MAC,**

**SPEAKING OF THE ASIAN STUDENTS HE AND HIS WIFE LEND A HELPING HAND**

## **Q&A WITH TK MAC**

### **What does it mean to you to be an American?**

Being an American means that I live in the "land of the free." This freedom has been won by those who have sacrificed their lives to protect our country and the Constitution. Being an American means that I have vast opportunities that offer the possibility of a great future.

### **What moment touched and motivated you to launch this effort?**

It was about two years ago when I met a few Asian students attending Olympic College. Meeting these students, and hearing about many others like them, reminded me of when I first came to America. When I came to this country over 30 years ago, I was lonely and in culture shock. I was unable to speak the language, unfamiliar with the food and climate.

### **What gives you hope?**

My new faith in Christ gives me hope. I am very thankful to live in a country where I can express my freedom of religion.

### **What do you hope to accomplish through your efforts?**

My hope is that every student that comes to English Corner fellowship (will have) an opportunity to practice ... their English language, make American friends and learn about the American freedom, culture, belief and its traditions. My hope is that when these students return home to their country, they will take what they have learned with them, and it will broaden their perspective.