Foreign languages add to floor life

By Kirsten Nielsen

Christmas carols float through the hall in four languages. Murals of several countries brighten the walls. No, it's not the United Nations, just the Modern Langu-

age Floor in Neihardt Residence Center, Raymond 2.

This is the fourth year of the floor and participation has doubled every year since its start, according to Gayle Smith, an assistant director for the floor.

"We have 58 people on the floor involved in the program," she said. "That's about 85 percent occupancy, up from 55 percent last year."

The idea for the special floor originated with Mark Cory, vice chairman, and David Gitlitz, chairman of the Modern Languages and Literatures Department.

Douglas Zatechka, housing director, was also instrumental in getting the floor started.

"Housing has been very supportive of the program," Smith said.

There are four main language groups on the floor: Spanish, French, German and, starting this year, Russian. Each group has an assistant director, who is a student living on the floor.

"We're there to provide help, basically," Smith said.
"For instance, if someone is writing a paper (in a foreign language) and they're having problems, we'll read it and discuss it with them."

Each group also has a faculty adviser, who meets with the group each week for dinner and discussion in that particular language. They also help schedule programs and speakers for the group throughout the year.

Eduardo Varela, the floor director, is the faculty adviser for the Spanish group. Karen Hibbel advises the French group, Peter Rinecort, the German, and Bruce Kochis, the Russian.

Speakers this fall have included Bonnie Brown, assistant dean of the modern languages department, who spoke on careers in modern languages. Denise-Claud LeGoff gave a presentation on combining French with business classes. Ramon Hernandez spoke about the life of a writer in Spain.

Although most of the students belong to one of the four language groups, some residents speak Dutch, Italian, Portuguese or Chinese.

"There is a lot of language exchange on the floor," Smith said. "We have offered mini-courses for residents in the past and the floor also has a language lab with text-books, tapes and dictionaries."

Only 12 percent to 15 percent of the residents are

language majors, Smith said.

"Many are people who took a foreign language here or in high school, but whose schedules don't allow them to take any more language classes," Smith said. "Living on the modern language floor is a way to keep up. The only prerequisite for living there is a strong interest in a foreign language."



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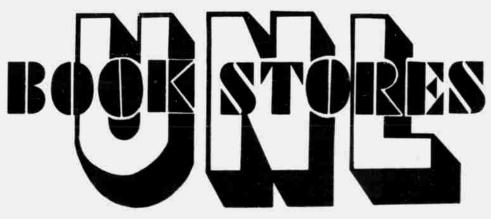
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