



The Freer House will host its spring House Tour on May 19 with docent-led tours at 1:30 and 3:30 pm. Contact **Rose Foster** at 313-664-2509 or rmfoster@wayne.edu for details and to RSVP.

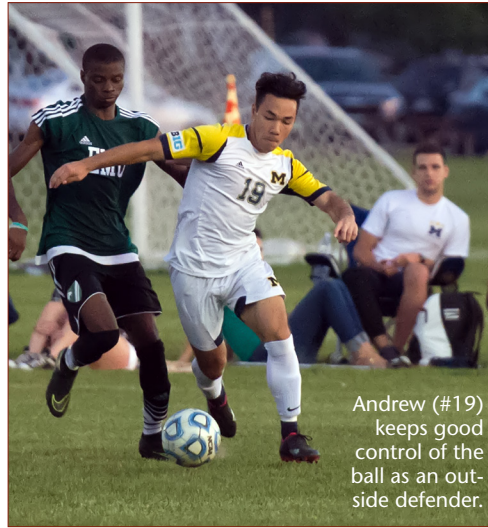
Soccer Star Gets His Kicks Working at Freer House

Andrew Smutek radiates energy. By day, he's a research technician and assistant to the director of Freer House, planning events, building relationships with the community, and installing exhibitions. By night, he's the outside defender on the Michigan Stars Football Club, a semi-pro team based in Pontiac, Michigan, with aspirations to go professional. Soccer may be Andrew's first love, but his community education work at the Freer House is a close second.

"Andrew uses the same mental focus and goal oriented strategies for his work in helping me to promote and preserve the Freer House that he uses in his success playing soccer," said Freer House Director William Colburn. "His intellectual acumen and curiosity about Freer's legacy, and his thoughtful interaction with our diverse members and visitors, makes Andrew a much appreciated ambassador for the Freer House."

Andrew did have to climb a bit of a learning curve. "I didn't know anything about Freer and the house when I started," he admits. His first exposure was as an intern in the summer of 2017, while a student at the University of Michigan where he majored in history and minored in museum studies. "My advisor knew about the Freer House and told it was in Detroit. I'd heard of the Freer Sackler Gallery at the Smithsonian in Washington, but that was about it."

He returned to school with two books: Dr. Thomas Brunk's *The Charles Lang Freer Residence* and *Freer: A Legacy of Art* by Thomas Lawton and Linda Merrill and "started reading up." Director Colburn hired him after graduation. A few weeks



Andrew (#19) keeps good control of the ball as an outside defender.



At ease in social situations, Andrew connects well with guests at a reception in the Freer House's former Peacock Room.

later, Her Imperial Highness, Princess Akiko of Japan, made a historic visit to the house. "We wanted to get everything correct and perfect, so the prep work was kind of crazy," Andrew said. A quick learner, he figured it out as he went. It was "all kinds of hectic," but the day unfolded beautifully. "That was a rewarding experience. I don't think I'll ever get to meet royalty again, especially in such a direct, personal atmosphere. You start your job and the first thing you do is meet royalty."

At 22, Andrew's work experience is eerily well-suited to his Freer duties. He's had gigs

in college catering, collections management at the Detroit Institute of Arts, tours at Cranbrook's Frank Lloyd Wright Smith House, and archiving databases at the U-M Museum of Art. His current passion project is enhancing the visitor experience at the Freer House. "The trend is interactive tours that engage the visitor, moving away from one-directional lectures," Andrew

said. "I helped with class tours at the U-M Museum of Art. These often included a 'special exhibition,' maybe 15 art objects pulled to entice the students and spark discussion and interpretations. The visitor experience is the focus."

Visitors to the Freer House are as varied as the art Charles Freer collected. Andrew regularly connects with Detroit's Japanese, Korean, Chinese and Indian communities deftly mastering cultural protocols. "It boils down to being respectful and having manners. I grew up in an Asian household. My grandparents came from the Philippines in the 1900s, so those values got instilled. Polite and respectful. That's pretty much it. Polite and respectful goes a long way."

Competitive soccer requires a different protocol. Monday through Friday, Andrew makes the long drive north to Washington for a 10 pm to midnight practice. Weekends he travels to games. The work all day / train at night schedule is more demanding than his years on UM's club team. How does he balance? "I grew up playing soccer. It's embedded in me, second nature. It's what I do," he said. The few times he hasn't played, he soon itched to return. His big dream is to go professional. "I really enjoy my work at the Freer House. It's interesting and rewarding," he said. "But what's life without soccer?"