

Global Link

PUBLISHED BY THE ASSOCIATES OF THE AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE WORLDWIDE • WWW.AAFSW.ORG • MAY 2012

WELCOME TO NEW AND RETURNING MEMBERS

William P. Astillero
Beverly A. Barta
Stephanie Beckmann
Shella Biallas
Charla C. Chaudhry
Paula Costantino
Elizabeth Covington
Vanessa deBruyn
Jennifer Eisele
Desiree M. Gutierrez
Sabrina Haas
Andrew R. Lewis
Judith A. Marcouiller
Paul J. Martinek
Litah Miller
Michelle Monroe
Hellen Nicodemus
Jin O'Neill
Katherine Reimondez
Carson R. Rocker
Nancy F. Rhodes
Lorelei G. Snyder
Adam Steckler
Sheri Twardecki



<http://www.facebook.com/aafsw>

AAFSW
4001 North Ninth Street
Suite 214
Arlington, VA 22203
Tel: 703-820-5420
Fax: 703-820-5421
office@aafsw.org
www.aafsw.org

AAFSW Advocates for FS Pets

Update On Our Coordinated Efforts With AFSA To Change United Airlines' New Pet Shipment Policy

Breaking News

As this issue of *Global Link* went to press, a United Airlines senior vice president told an AFSA representative that the military waiver to United's pet shipping policy would in fact be extended to Foreign Service personnel on permanent change of station travel orders.

Per AFSA President Susan Johnson: "This is a victory and provides recognition to the Foreign Service and those who serve abroad. AFSA will continue to work to ensure we have the option to transport pets as accompanied baggage checked in at the passenger terminal and delivered with baggage and hope to work with United to make PetSafe viable globally and truly safe for pets."

We are running this article anyway to tell the story of how this decision came about. Stay tuned to the AAFSW and AFSA websites for further updates.

The Policy

Previously, United Airlines would allow a pet to go in the cabin if it met the "small pet" guidelines or was a service animal. Larger pets could travel as excess or accompanied baggage on the same plane as the passenger, and be checked in and picked up at the baggage counter. The pet would go through customs in the same manner as personal baggage.

If the pet does not travel on the same plane it has to travel as cargo, at expensive cargo rates, and be delivered and picked up at the cargo terminal. Often this requires a pet handler service. Going as cargo the pet also has to go through the customs process. This can take as long as 20 hours and has resulted in some pet deaths because cargo terminals in many countries where Foreign Service families are assigned are not equipped to handle live animals.

United has recently merged with Continental Airlines and has adopted their "Pet Safe" program. This means that all pets which do not meet the in-cabin requirements must be shipped as cargo with the resulting expense, which can be as much as several thousand dollars, and inconvenience. Most importantly, this process can pose a serious danger to the animals themselves.

AAFSW and the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) believe that while the "Pet Safe" program may work domestically it is not safe for the international travel required by the Foreign Service.

Within days of announcing this change, military personnel (who also must "Fly America" when on permanent change of station orders) protested and were exempted from some of the onerous requirements. Pets must fly as cargo with cargo rates but may be checked in and picked up at the baggage counters, avoiding the potentially dangerous wait in cargo terminals. Military personnel are also exempt from having to use expensive pet shipping companies.

Continued on page 3.



From the President's Desk

As I'm sure you will agree, building community is a key part of AAFSW's mission. At the Families in Global Transition conference last month, I moderated a "Kitchen Table Session" on this topic, with terrific input

from participants both in person and online. As I prepared for the session, I studied research showing that social isolation poses serious risks to health and well-being. It has even been compared to smoking as a health risk factor! In contrast, a strong community has a protective effect.

As an introvert, I was relieved to confirm that "community" doesn't mean constant social interaction. Most important are a few friends or family members you can depend on, as well as a group where you feel like a valued member. One study found that volunteering just once a month gave the equivalent boost to well-being as a doubling of personal income!

In my next few columns, I'd like to share some of the ideas put forth in the Kitchen Table Session. Here are some tips for bringing people together - the first step toward new friendships and a sense of belonging. I hope you find them useful as you seek to strengthen your own social ties - or as you support those around you who may be feeling isolated. Feel free to share this list with others, and if you have more suggestions, I'd love to hear them at president@aafsw.org.

- Get out there - get involved! Don't isolate yourself at home.
- Take advantage of the benefits of both social media and in-person contact by having an online group with in-person meetups.
- Remember that some people prefer large group events and others like to connect with just one or a few people at a time.
- Invite people who are different from each other to get together (age, nationality, gender, family status).
- Include people from the Mission community, local people, and third-country expats.
- Organize or join a weekly drop-in meetup, for instance at a restaurant.

- Through the CLO office or on your own initiative, organize regular evening events like weekly singles dinners, games nights, progressive dinners, etc.
- Identify volunteer opportunities and reach out to people, asking for their help. It may be just the push they need to get involved.
- Find the people who are "connectors" in your community and link their networks together.
- Look for people who share your interests. One person found a local cross stitch group in Uruguay by looking up "punto de cruz" on Yahoogroups. She reports: "We stitched together and talked and laughed a lot, even though my Spanish wasn't good and their English was nonexistent."
- Get people to share their skills and expertise through talks and demonstrations (anything from history to cooking).
- Through children's sports groups, organize a get-together with the parents and children.
- Organize an international potluck and meet in a public place like a park.
- A book club brings ideas and conversations that open so many opportunities.
- Teach English at local schools as a volunteer.
- Don't worry so much about the house being clean - invite people over anyway.
- Remember most people have a story and are invariably happy to share it.

Patricia Linderman
AAFSW President
president@aafsw.org

Join the AAFSW Team!

Assistant Treasurer Needed

Are you in D.C. or arriving this summer? Are you reasonably well-organized and good with numbers? Want to join the dynamic AAFSW team and help support your fellow Foreign Service community members? Duties are generally light, with extra activity during the Art&BookFair in October.

Please contact our Treasurer Lucy Whitley at treasurer@aafsw.org if you might be interested!

What AAFSW and AFSA Have Done

AFSA and AAFSW put out the call via Livelines and FSParent Yahoo groups and AFSA's email network for families to e-mail United with the slogan "We Also Serve" and ask for the same exemptions as the military personnel. Within 72 hours almost 3000 e-mails were sent to United! The e-mails and tweets continue. The quick and large scale e-mail response has drawn attention to the breadth of the problem and the importance of pets to the Foreign Service community.

These communications were met with either automated e-mail replies from United or with stony silence. A further statement in the press by a United spokesperson indicated that United had no intention of exempting anyone but the military from United's new policy.

AFSA wrote to State management conveying our concern and urging action.

What the State Department Has Done

State management has contacted United but has had no official response. State then asked the General Services Administration (GSA) for authorization to make a change to the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) allowing families with pets who would normally fly United Airlines to fly another American carrier or its codeshare which does allow pets to fly as accompanied baggage.

If there is a difference in cost between United and the other airlines the employee must pay the additional cost. However, sometimes this is less than the price United would have charged for the pet. As an example, Snoopy the cat was able to fly from Yekaterinberg, Russia on an Aeroflot/Delta codeshare instead of United. Aeroflot charged \$67 for Snoopy.

What AFSA And AAFSW Are Doing Now

Volunteers from AFSA and AAFSW have gone through the 3,000 e-mails to United to pick the most poignant ones and the ones which most concretely state our reasons to be exempted. Fifty emails from the 140 that were selected will be used to compose a letter AFSA to Secretary Hilary Clinton with excerpts from the letters and pictures of pets as attachments. This letter or a similar one will also be sent to the Board of Directors of United Airlines. Letters to Congressional Representatives are also being sent. Readers are urged to write their own representatives using these facts and their personal stories.

The news media has noticed this issue, and there have been several recent articles published about the United pet policy and how it affects Foreign Affairs families. Please visit the AAFSW or AFSA websites for

Ann LaPorta
AAFSW/AFSA Liaison

Important Update

The Overseas Briefing Center has updated its Shipping of Pets Checklist handout and its Intranet site to inform all pet owners that Delta may now have become the pet friendliest of all the U.S. airlines with regard to Foreign Service pet owners:

IMPORTANT CHANGE: US Government employees traveling to and returning from overseas and Hawaii on official PCS orders are now exempt from Delta's May 15th-Sept. 15th embargo. This means pet owners are allowed to ship their pets as accompanied baggage, barring any other daily temperature restriction.

Delta has long provided an exemption for its summer embargo to ALL USG personnel on official orders RETURNING to the U.S. However, this exemption is now for USG folks TRAVELING to overseas posts, also. Keep in mind that the above 85 degrees rule still applies. The reservationist said that they always recommend early morning or late evening flights for pet owners with this exemption traveling during the hottest months of the year. Most seasoned FS pet owners already look for those flights during the summer. Delta has restrictions with regard to some snub-nosed animals, however.

Remember to speak to a reservationist regarding the exemption and identify yourself as a USG employee traveling on official PCS orders as it does not show up on Delta's site, but the exemption is in its computer system.

For more information about Delta's pet shipping policy, click here: http://www.delta.com/help/faqs/pet_travel/#embargo



Sunshine in San José.

AAFSW's May Program: Violin and Flute Recital

We cordially invite you to join us on **Monday, May 21** at 10:00 a.m. in the Benjamin Franklin Diplomatic Reception Room on the 8th floor at the State Department for an enchanting recital.

We will be hosting two gifted Ukrainian musicians: violinist Dr. Solomia Gorokhivska, and flautist Dr. Andrei Pidkivka. They will offer a unique presentation consisting of music of the Baroque and Classical eras as well as Ukrainian violin and flute duos.

The program will include:

Georg Philip Telemann Sonata for Flute and Violin (I, II, III, IV Movements)

I. Pleyel Duo No. 4 for Flute and Violin (I, II, III Movements)

A. Makris Little Milton on the Beach (I and III Movement)

A selection of Ukrainian folk music for violin and traditional flutes.

Ukrainian-born violinist Solomia Gorokhivska has forged a dynamic career on both sides of the Atlantic through her violin performances and musical projects. She is a laureate of Ukrainian and international competitions in classical and folk music performance and has toured in Germany, Russia, Poland, Serbia, China and the United States.

Dr. Gorokhivska started playing violin and piano at the age of five. She earned her Bachelor of Music degree from Ternopil State College of Music (Ukraine) and continued her studies at the graduate performance level at Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine. In addition, she earned a Master Degree in Cultural Studies, preparing her to host a Ukrainian series of television programs "Alone with Music" devoted to the musical cultures of different countries. Recently, she received a Doctorate in violin performance from Catholic University of America.

Currently, Dr. Gorokhivska is performing as a soloist and a collaborative artist locally and around the United States. She is a member of Mid-Atlantic Symphony Orchestra and Manhattan Symphony, as well as co-founder of a folk music group Gerdan (www.gerdan.info) and a soloist in the Rock Creek Jazz band (www.rockcreekjazz.com). She also has a private studio where she is teaching her students to master violin, piano, and voice.



Andrei Pidkivka earned a Doctorate of Musical Arts (DMA) in flute performance at Michigan State University. Most recent performances as a soloist and a guest musician include the Columbus Symphony, Phoenix Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Oregon Symphony and Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestras.

As a concert classical flautist, teacher and performer, and maker of variety of types of Ukrainian folk flutes, Dr. Pidkivka has been critically acclaimed in the United States and Europe as the preeminent performer on his instruments.

Dr. Pidkivka presented numerous lectures-workshops on folk flutes of Eastern Europe in many universities and colleges across the United States. He performs extensively in concerts and festivals including venues such as the Kennedy Center for the Arts, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Andy Warhol Museum, Severance Hall, the National Folk Alliance Conference, and the National Flute Association in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Andrei Pidkivka has several recordings to his credit on the Traditional Crossroads Record Label: www.traditionalcrossroads.com He is also a co-founder of a folk music group Gerdan and a soloist of Harmonia Ensemble.

Please use the coupon on page 5 to reserve your seat for the program, or reserve and pay online at www.aafsw.org.

Sheila Switzer
AAFSW Program Chair
programs@aafsm.org

March Program Review

“The Evolving Roles of Women Today,” the fourth annual Women’s National History Month program sponsored by AAFSW and the Woman's National Democratic Club, was an outstanding success. Though our usual venue, the Benjamin Franklin Diplomatic Reception Room, was preempted by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for an event, the panelists were undeterred in sharing their career histories in the less opulent surroundings of the Dean Acheson Auditorium.

Molly Williamson, a retired Foreign Service officer with the rank of Career Minister, and current scholar with the Middle East Institute; Dr. Musimbi Kanyoro, President and CEO of the Global Fund for Women; and Denise Rolark-Barnes owner of The Washington Informer, the leading publication of the District of Columbia’s African-American community, discussed the evolution of their careers. All were strikingly different, indicative of the varied paths women have to successful professionalism today,

Special guests included spouses of ambassadors to the United States from Luxembourg, Libya, Indonesia, Albania, Djibouti, Germany, Macedonia and Kenya. A number of the women were resplendent in the traditional dress of their countries.

Once again Sheila Switzer chaired the program, and a hearty thank you to her for a stimulating and enjoyable event.

Jewell Fenzi
AAFSW Member

Write for AAFSW!

AAFSW is planning a new series of books on various Foreign Service topics, to be titled, "Your Foreign Service Companion." Each book will be a collection of chapters written by authors from within the Foreign Service community, presented in a variety of formats from articles to humorous essays.

We hope that the books will be both useful and entertaining, offering "companionship" to Foreign Service employees and family members during difficult times.

The books will be published simultaneously in print and e-book format, and will be affordably priced so that we can all enjoy them! All profits after production costs will go to fund AAFSW's many programs and services to the Foreign Service community.

The first volume, tentatively titled "Moving Your Family Without Losing Your Mind," will focus on the mechanics of Foreign Service PCS transfers. Some chapter topics have already been assigned, but there are several others available for “adoption.”

For more information, including writers' guidelines, please contact the project manager/editor, Kelly Bembry Midura, at fsbook@aafsw.org as soon as possible. Include a writing sample with your email: links to blog posts are acceptable for this purpose. Writers will not be compensated but will receive a copy of the book and are free to mention their own business website or blog in their author credit.

The deadline for all draft submissions is **October 1, 2012**, with a projected publication date in spring 2013.

Kelly Bembry Midura
AAFSW Creative Director
newsletter@aafsw.org

MAY 21 PROGRAM: CELEBRATING WOMENS' HISTORY

Please reply no later than Monday, May 14, 2012. The event takes place on Monday, May 21 from 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon at the Department of State (C Street Entrance.) The cost for this event is \$15 per person for members and guests. Send this form with payment to:

AAFSW Reservations
4001 North Ninth Street, Suite 214
Arlington, Virginia 22203

You may also reserve and pay online in the members-only section at www.aafsw.org.

MAY 21 PROGRAM

Name (as you wish it to appear on the name tag)

Date of Birth and Passport or Driver's License Number

Telephone

Name of guest(s), D.O.B.'s and Passport or Driver's License Numbers

Become a GLIFAA Post Representative

Did you know that Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies (GLIFAA) post reps can be officers, locally engaged staff, spouses and/or partners – basically anyone who is part of the post community? And interested volunteers need not be LGBT – friends and allies are welcome too!

GLIFAA has an active group of members worldwide who volunteer their time to serve as GLIFAA post representatives (<http://www.glifaa.org/content/post-representatives>); however, many posts currently don't have anyone serving as a GLIFAA representative.

There are many things a post rep can do, such as: serve as unofficial liaison to the LGBT community; submit items from the GLIFAA Globetrotter Newsletter to the post newsletter; ensure that the embassy community is aware of GLIFAA's presence, through you, at post; and assist with efforts to encourage the entire embassy community to celebrate Pride month and other LGBT-focused events. Post reps are often the first contact that other GLIFAA members make when planning international travel (personal or business). With the newly-formed GLIFAA Fund, the GLIFAA post rep now has the added ability to financially support local LGBT NGOs or events – a nice addition to the post rep portfolio.

To sign up to serve as a GLIFAA post representative, please contact the Post Rep Coordinator Emily Ruppel at postrepscoordinator@glifaa.org or email the board at board@glifaa.org.

Arts, Crafts and Small Business Fair May 6th



The Fair is almost here! Come enjoy free wine, cheese and other refreshments while networking with talented AAFSW artists and entrepreneurs, on Sunday, May 6, from noon to 6 pm in the Community Room of our office building at 4001 North Ninth Street, Suite 214, Arlington, VA, 22203. The Community Room is in the lower level; take the elevator down one floor.

Visitors to the Fair can be anyone from the Foreign Service community and their guests. If you are in the DC area, please come and bring a friend! If you are overseas and would like to shop at the Fair or learn more about the exhibitors' work, let us know and we will link you up via Skype or e-mail.

Participants include Janine Bland (a jewelry maker featured in the Washington Post), as well as other artists, photographers, a cake decorator, real estate agents, book authors, life coaches, a documentary producer, and more. Some people who are posted overseas are sending friends to represent them and their work. It's not too late to become an exhibitor – just contact office@aafsw.org.

This will also be a networking event, where spouses and partners can learn from each other about developing and maintaining a successful business or creative outlet in our mobile lifestyle. Hope to see you there, virtually or in person!

Unaccompanied Tour Happy Hour

Our next Happy Hour will take place on **Wednesday, May 2**, in the State Room at the Falls Church Oakwood Apartments from **6:30 until about 9 p.m.**

The tentative agenda is as follows:

- 6:30 p.m. Refreshments, mix and mingle
- 7:00 p.m. Presentation by the Family Liaison Office (FLO) followed by a question and answer session.
- 7:30 p.m. Presentation by Transition Center staff, followed by more questions and answers.
- 8:00 p.m. Panel of Eligible Family Members (EFMs) who have experienced or are currently experiencing an unaccompanied tour.
- 8:30 p.m. Wrap-up

We have a great panel of EFMs lined up and we are very excited that so many will be attending the event. Please remember that this is a free event sponsored by AAFSW. Feel free to attend even if you or your spouse are only thinking about bidding on an unaccompanied tour.

Last, but not least, FLO and the TC staff will be taking questions ahead of time. If you have a question, but cannot attend, please feel free to send your questions with a note indicating it is for this event. We do ask that all questions are sent in by April 25. All questions and RSVPs may be sent to office@aafsw.org.

Classified Advertising

AAFSW now offers free classified advertisements to its members. The *Global Link* is sent by mail and electronically to our members and to Community Liaison Offices worldwide for a sizable total monthly readership.

Do you have a business or service that you would like to advertise to the Foreign Service community? Send a brief notice (100 words or less) to office@aafsw.org for approval with the subject line AD FOR GLOBAL LINK. If you have a business website, it can be hyperlinked in the electronic version of the newsletter, so please include your URL. Advertisements will run on a space-available basis for one month at a time and will rotate in order of receipt.

We also accept classified advertising for real estate rentals and sales, as well as sales of other items (cars etc.) on our website, www.aafsw.org. View or submit ads here: <http://www.aafsw.org/classified/classified.htm>.

Not a member of AAFSW? Join now! Apply online at our website: <http://www.aafsw.org/aafsw/membership.htm>.

Coming to DC? We Can Use Your Stuff!

AAFSW is collecting art items, stamps, collectible coins and paper money for the October, 2012 Art&BookFair. If you are returning to D.C. or sending a shipment and have some space for small items, please remember that A&BF can use all these small donations!

If you have friends in the D.C. area who are retiring, moving or downsizing, please let them know that A&BF volunteers will do free pick-ups of donations and are always looking for books and art items.

If you will be in the D.C. area, even if for a short while this year, please join us as a volunteer as we prepare for one of Washington's oldest book fairs!

For more information call the BookRoom at 202-223-5796 or email bookroom@aafsw.org.

Mentors Wanted

AAFSW has a program of one-on-one spouse mentoring, created primarily for new A-100 spouses and first-tour spouses. We are trying to match mentoring volunteers from our AAFSW membership with mentoring requests from the "newbies" based on as many points in common as possible: ages of children, languages spoken, areas of professional interest, and the like.

We have already paired 26 new trailing spouses/partners with enthusiastic mentors and we are eagerly awaiting feedback from those involved. Of course, we need lots more volunteers, especially those whose spouses are still active duty, and are still likely to be serving overseas.

This program has the potential to do two wonderful and worthwhile things - help people who are new to the Foreign Service with their many life challenges, and create the next generation of AAFSW leaders.

If you know of anyone who might want or need mentoring, or if you are interested in becoming a mentor yourself, please send an email to mentor@aafsw.org. Thanks!

Scholarship Fund

The AAFSW Scholarship Fund offers college scholarships for children of Foreign Service employees. Financial aid scholarships for 4 years of undergraduate college study are offered, as well as a merit award for a high school senior who is the child of an AAFSW member.

Donating to the Fund is now easier than ever! We have a new donation app on our Facebook page that you can use to contribute using Paypal or a credit card. Just click the "Donate to AAFSW" button at the top of our Facebook page.

The AAFSW Scholarship Fund directly benefits our Foreign Service community. We thank you for your donation!

AAFSW Picnic Sunday, July 1st

If you'll be in DC this summer, mark your calendar: AAFSW's picnic co-sponsored with Foreign Service Youth Foundation is confirmed for Sunday afternoon, July 1. We have reserved the picnic area and shelter at Nottoway Park in Vienna (the same place where FSYF holds the fall picnic). Food will be potluck, and volunteers will lead some fun activities. The event is for couples and singles with and without kids. Hope to see you there!

Connecting the Foreign Service Blogosphere

One of the most popular features on the AAFSW website is our Foreign Service Blogs page. Clearly, there is a lot of interest out there in what life is like for members of the Foreign Service community. If you have a personal or professional blog that you would like to list on the site, email webmaster@aafsw.org with the URL and a brief description.

In an effort to further connect Foreign Service bloggers and increase our own visibility we've designed a widget that you can put on your blog's sidebar which directs readers to our Foreign Service Blogs page.

Check out dozens of Foreign Service blogs and get the code to add our widget to your own blog at: <http://www.aafsw.org/overseas-post-info/foreign-service-blogs/>.

Read more Foreign
Service blogs at
www.aafsw.org/



Shop Amazon.com and Benefit AAFSW!

Please remember to click through the Amazon links on our website, www.aafsw.org. AAFSW nets several hundred dollars every year through our affiliation with Amazon.com. It's a quick and easy way to help, and we really do appreciate it!

amazon.com
and you're done.™

Enjoying Your Elderly Visitors

This article is exclusive to the online, electronic version of the Global Link newsletter.

Family visits—often extended ones—are a common occurrence in the Foreign Service. Home leave is one thing, but to have your loved ones visit you at post, in your own home, and to be able to show them the local sights is a special experience for both visitors and hosts. However, it can also be a lot of work, especially when your visitors are elderly parents or grandparents.

My grandmother is now in her 90s, and has been regularly visiting me at post for the last twenty-plus years. As she ages, I have learned a few things along the way.

Number one: a visit from an elderly relative is simply going to be a major project. Understand that you will not be getting more than basic household tasks done during the visit. Finish (or arrange to shelve) any major personal or work projects before your visitors arrive.

Work schedules may also need to change. If it is the employed spouse's parents or relatives that are visiting (and ideally, even when it isn't), that person should definitely take at least some time off from work to spend time with and to help care for relatively high-maintenance visitors.

Plan, plan, plan. Try to get a couple of meals into the freezer. Catch up on laundry. Stock up on groceries. Check with your guest before arrival to find out what their food preferences are so that you can buy things they like to eat, and lay off things they might not be able to eat (spicy foods, anything with seeds, food that is too hard to chew or cut up).

Unless your visitor is an unusually adventurous eater, this is probably not the time to try out new restaurants. Go to places that you know have some "plain" or familiar foods on offer, and try to simplify the ordering process. Even the sharpest older person is simply not going to be able to assimilate new information as quickly or as willingly as he or she previously did, especially when you throw jet lag and a foreign language into the mix. When translating the menu, offering them two or three choices is probably plenty. Don't simply ask "What would you like to drink?" Look at the menu and ask "Would you like Coke, lemonade or water?" "Would you like a green salad or vegetable soup?" "Here are two local dishes I think you should try: would you like the Wiener schnitzel or the fried cheese?" It sounds

a little patronizing, and of course it depends on the individual, but I know that my grandmother has always appreciated the simplification.

Before the visit, communicate to your visitor or to their caregiver the need to bring all necessary medications plus a few days to spare in case of travel delays. Make sure they understand that medication should be stored in their carry-on luggage. Put your own medications away so they don't get taken by mistake! Suggest to your visitor that they put their medications in the same place they do at home—beside the coffee maker for example—so that they don't forget to take them (and so that you can discreetly make sure that they have).

Elderly people are more susceptible to diseases, may take longer to recover from them; and are at greater risk for complications. For those reasons it is especially important to make sure they understand the basic health precautions at post: not drinking or brushing teeth with water from the tap being a frequent example. Put a bottle of clean water in the guest bathroom with a note reminding them not to use the tap water. Anywhere in the world, frequent hand-washing during and after sightseeing is also a good idea for any visitor, but especially for the elderly. Carry hand-sanitizer with you to offer when there is no hand-washing facility available.

Speaking of health, make sure that your visitor has medical evacuation insurance before they leave in case of emergency. The medical unit at post should be able to provide some information about companies and plans, or contact the Family Liaison Office. Also, make sure that you have a list of current medications in case your visitor has an accident of some kind and is unable to answer questions. (When my grandmother visits, I carry a list of medications on my cell phone.)

Remember that places that you would ordinarily go without thinking twice about logistics may be much more difficult with an elderly visitor. Double-check the route before leaving, and make sure there is not a great deal of walking or stairs involved. If you can use public transportation at post, remember that making connections may not work very well for a slow person. It may be worth it to take a longer route if makes it possible to sit in one place the entire way. If you drive, find out about parking ahead of time, or bring someone along who can be dropped off at the door with the elderly person while you go park the car (they will not want to be dropped off alone.) Use taxis or hired drivers if necessary.

At museums and other sights, call or check websites for information about handicapped accessibility. Reserve a wheelchair whenever possible—it's just much more enjoyable even for a relatively mobile elderly person in a museum to be able to relax in a wheelchair and focus on the artwork instead of their aching knees or back. Consider bringing a walker or wheelchair with you to post—I bought a sturdy “shopping” walker for \$15 at the thrift store to put in my HHE, and my grandmother was happy to use it on a recent visit. A folding cane/seat is another option. And don't try to travel around all day. Four or five hours of sightseeing is probably more than enough for an elderly person—even if they won't admit it!

Remember that your visitor is probably more interested in spending time with you and your family than visiting every “must-see” sight on the local list. Fairly mundane activities may be interesting to them. My grandmother always enjoys going to the local grocery store, for example, and seeing all the different foods. On her last visit to me here in Vienna, she also quite enjoyed a trip to the local thrift store! In both cases, these were easy trips and she could use the shopping cart as a walker. As a lifelong gardener with an interest in the local flora, she has always been happy to be pushed around a botanical garden or city park in a wheelchair, as well.

Older men like to carry a lot of cash around. Older women tend to carry easily stolen purses or leave them unzipped. Pickpockets know all of this. Explain to your visitor that it is not necessary to carry around department store credit cards, etc. while they are visiting you. Help them assemble a small wallet with just the essentials. Check to make sure they are not carrying their original passport unless it is necessary for access to an embassy building or event—a photocopy should suffice for any other purpose.

If your visitor is hard of hearing, you will want to do any explaining or conveying of information in the car or at home beforehand, since at the site, crowds may make hearing difficult. If an audio tour is available, definitely spring for it. The adjustable handheld speaker will likely be much easier for your guest to understand than a guide will be. You may also want to figure out how to put closed captioning on your own television so you don't have to turn it up to an annoying level.

Your visitors may appreciate your help in remembering where they have been and what they saw on their visit. One handy way to do this is to collect brochures or books from sights as a memory aid. If they use the internet, you can send them a list of

links to the things you saw and when. You may also want to give them a travel book—preferably one with pictures—in which you can circle items or make notes for them. Or take photos and make a slide show or photo album with detailed captions.

Take care of yourself. Find ways to give yourself and your visitor a break. Don't be shy about asking your spouse or older children to occupy your visitor for a short time, with a quick trip out or a project in the home. Some elderly people find it hard to admit that they just can't keep going all day the way they used to. You may have to employ a strategy commonly used with young children: turn on the TV to give them a handy excuse to catnap!

Finally, be patient, take deep breaths when necessary, and make the most of your time with your elderly relative. Consider it all to be a gift. It may not be the most relaxing visit you will have during your time overseas, but it will likely be the one most appreciated by your visitors!

Kelly Bembry Midura is a State Department spouse and AAFSW's Creative Director. She has enjoyed her grandmother's visits in Washington, D.C., Guatemala, San Salvador, Prague, and Vienna.

Kelly blogs at: wellthatwasdifferent.wordpress.com.



New Feature: Online Exclusives

AAFSW frequently receives more content for the *Global Link* than will easily fit in the 8-page printed version. Starting with this month's issue, we will be taking advantage of the more flexible digital version of our newsletter to publish additional features of interest to our overseas readership.

If you are a Community Liaison Office coordinator (CLO) we invite you to reprint articles in your post newsletter at any time. Please credit the author of the article along with AAFSW, and include a link to our website, www.aafsw.org. Thank you!

AAFSW BOARD

Honorary President

Lisa Carty

President

Patricia Linderman
703-635-3827

president@aafsw.org

1st Vice-President

Jennifer Dinoia

925-549-1198

vicepresident1@aafsw.org

2nd Vice-President

Alicia Wilkinson

703-356-9233

vicepresident2@aafsw.org

Board Secretary

Margaret Teich

703-250-5099

secretary@aafsw.org

Membership

Debbi Miller

703-470-6160

membership@aafsw.org

Programs

Sheila Switzer

703-569-8867

programs@aafsw.org

Public Relations

Lesley Dorman

202-484-3497

publicrelations@aafsw.org

Treasurer

Lucy Whitley

703-536-2183

treasurer@aafsw.org

Assistant Treasurer

TBA

treasurer2@aafsw.org

Forum

Ann La Porta

202-248-4246

Judy Felt

703-370-1414

forum@aafsw.org

Art&BookFair

Judy Felt

703-370-1414

bookfair@aafsw.org

Housing

Lesley Dorman

202-484-3497

housing@aafsw.org

SOSA

Lara L. Center

sosa@aafsw.org

President Emerita

Faye Barnes

540-972-3754

emerita@aafsw.org

STAFF/SERVICES

AAFSW Office

Barbara Reiox
4001 North Ninth Street
Suite 214

Arlington, VA, 22203

703-820-5420

Fax: 703-820-5421

office@aafsw.org

Book Room

Main State

Room B-816

Brian Neumann

202-223-5796

bookroom@aafsw.org

Housing Desk

Employee Services Center

Main State, Room 1252

202-647-3573

202-647-3086

housing@aafsw.org

Creative Director

Kelly Bembry Midura

703-651-2078

newsletter@aafsw.org

Webmaster

Sean P. McKee

webmaster@aafsw.org

OTHER CONTACTS

AFSA Liaison

Patty Ryan

202-966-7696

Ann La Porta

202-248-4246

afsarep@aafsw.org

Archivist

Vacant

archives@aafsw.org

CLO Alumni Association

Donna Ayerst

703-759-1124

clogroup@aafsw.org

Evacuee Support

Ann La Porta

202-248-4246

evacuee@aafsw.org

Foreign-Born Spouses Group

Ana Luisa Gallardo

fbspouses@aafsw.org

FBS State Liaison

Sheila Switzer

703-569-8867

programs@aafsw.org

Facebook Moderator

Kelly Bembry Midura

703-651-2078

facebook@aafsw.org

French Group

Christel McDonald

Tel: 703-525-9755

frenchchair@aafsw.org

FSYF Liaison

Donna Scharpf

202-558-2060

fsyf@aafsw.org

Legislative Liaison

Vacant

congressrep@aafsw.org

Livelines Moderator

Jennifer Dinoia

925-549-1198

livelines@aafsw.org

Mentoring Program

Debbi Miller

703-470-6160

mentor@aafsw.org

Oral History

Faye Barnes

540-972-3754

oralhistory@aafsw.org

Playgroup

Katerina Meade

playgroup@aafsw.org

Scholarships

Anne Cekuta

scholarship@aafsw.org

Senior Living

Marguerite Anderson

301-652-5433

seniorliving@aafsw.org

Skills Bank

Aleksandar Blagojevski-Trazoff

skillsbank@aafsw.org

State Liaison

Mette Beecroft

301-320-7698

staterep@aafsw.org

Women in Transition

Nancy Longmyer

703-532-4694

divorce@aafsw.org

AAFSW
4001 North Ninth St.
Suite 214
Arlington, VA
22203



May 2012

**PLACE
STAMP
HERE**