

Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) Highlights

The Secretary of State Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad



For several years, AAFSW grouped nominations from the bureaus of South and Central Asia (SCA) and Near East Asia (NEA) together and chose one winner to represent the two regions. This was due to a limited number of volunteer nominations. For this publication, we have chosen to present the two regions separately.

The SOSA awards program seeks nominations from all over the world, with only six award winners chosen each year, one from each regional bureau. The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) includes countries that span across northern Africa and into the Middle East. The region has experienced terrorism, wars and unrest; several posts have been in accompanied status for part of the time. For these reasons, one sees great diversity in the types of volunteer activities submitted for consideration. AAFSW has received 42 nominations from 12 countries in this region since SOSA began in 1990. From this group, thirteen individuals have won the prestigious award.

To date, nominations from African countries in the NEA bureau have celebrated activities that address the needs of children, caring for orphans who are helpless in their circumstances, and finding resources for persons with disabilities. Volunteers who spoke the local language maneuvered easily in local circles to advocate for increased resources. Through women's associations or business relationships, they formed new friendships with local counterparts who could further help with their chosen causes.

One volunteer in Rabat spent countless hours in a local hospital where she combined her language skills with her ability to recognize when parents needed crucial assistance and, as a result, saved children's lives. In Cairo, one volunteer launched an Environmental Awareness curriculum in 22 local schools to clean up the island community of Zamalek. Her efforts culminated in 2,000 school children rallying for a three-day walk-a-thon to spread the good news about caring for their environment.

In the Middle East, two volunteers collaborated with the U.S. Navy. When ships pulled into port, they organized community service projects to rehabilitate the homes of handicapped persons. One volunteer raised the nearly \$70,000 needed to operate the Peace Center for the Blind, where visually impaired women could find training and support.

One cannot mention NEA without focusing some attention on Iraq. In January of 1991, the United States closed its embassy doors in Baghdad, the same year the SOSA program received its first volunteer nominations from all over the world. Iraqis who fled during the Gulf War and its aftermath through 2002 sought refuge in neighboring countries. One SOSA-nominated volunteer taught English in Jordan at an NGO devoted to assisting large numbers of Iraqi refugees seeking employment opportunities.

Diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Iraq resumed in 2004. Americans who chose to serve in the war-torn country did so under stressful circumstances. Designated an "unaccompanied post," no family members were permitted to accompany employees. Baghdad's first SOSA nomination came in 2008 when Susan Mattes won for her dedication in managing the morale-boosting employee association. One year later, Jay Taylor won his SOSA for teaching swimming at the Embassy's pool. Both Susan and Jay understood the importance of "community" and helping their colleagues relieve the stress of a difficult living and work environment.

SOSA-nominated volunteers have consistently displayed great concern for their American colleagues and the American communities in which they live. As you read the profiles and country highlights on the following pages, you will notice that SOSA volunteers have a knack for building a sense of community in the places they live. This remains a common thread that runs through all nominations, from all bureaus.

Leslie Harnish (2001)

Environmental Awareness Education Teaches Children in Cairo, Egypt to Respect their Neighborhoods

Zamalek, an island in the Nile that lies between downtown Cairo and Giza, is known as one of Cairo's more fashionable districts. It was here that Leslie Harnish introduced an Environmental Awareness Curriculum in twenty-two (22) of the island's schools. Leslie recognized that local residents needed to take action in cleaning up their neighborhoods, as did businesses in the district. She decided to focus her efforts on school children, from pre-school through university level, who could lead the way.

Leslie coordinated with the Ministries of Education and Environment to adopt a curriculum that included the establishment of clubs to reinforce environmental education. She worked with a local book publisher to find textbook resources and materials focusing on environmental awareness. Then she partnered with a local NGO to recruit and train volunteers who introduced the curriculum and established the extra-curricular clubs.

To establish an infrastructure, Leslie also created business partnerships with the Marriott Corporation and its "Give us a helping hand" program and with the Coca Cola Corporation. With a local garbage pickup company, Leslie arranged a debris removal program.

To give the curriculum practical meaning, Leslie worked with the children to begin a paper recycling program in the schools. On the island, 18 of the 22 schools participated in the clean-up "Zamalek World" program. Approximately 2,000 students from the Port Said schools participated in a three-day walk-a-thon which attracted widespread press coverage and raised money to clean up and add beauty to the immediate area surrounding the schools. The walk-a-thon required coordination with the local Chief of Police, school principals, teachers, and students and parents. The extensive planning effort and the positive outcome energized the school communities and introduced the concept that one can take action and make a difference.

Leslie's volunteer efforts did not end in Zamalek. Her expert marketing skills helped an Egyptian woman working on a project with young girls in a rural area of Egypt. The girls were making items to generate income. Leslie provided advice on product designs, advertising strategies and helped to establish retail outlets for the sale of merchandise. The same project provided the young girls with a teacher and the opportunity to learn to read and write.

Leslie's commitment to civic responsibility extended to projects within the Embassy community as well. She established the "Downtown Committee" that developed services to meet the needs of USG personnel living in the downtown areas of the city where access to recreational programs was limited. The Committee initiated a series of activities — exercise and water aerobic classes, art shows at the Embassy cafeteria, tennis and volleyball socials, movie nights, and monthly social hours in coordination with the Marines — which provided fun and exercise and established a sense of community for Embassy personnel and their families. *"Her motivation in organizing these activities comes from the belief that if individuals participate in healthy activities, not only does the physical aspect of their lives improve, but also the emotional aspect,"* wrote Gay Lee Potere.

As Treasurer of the American Employees Cooperative and Welfare Association (AECWA), Leslie also managed the fiscal operations of a 1.5 million dollar organization. In addition, she was active in her church and the Women's Association. Her numerous activities enhanced the well-being of her community and were an inspiration to Americans and Egyptians alike.

Four years after winning a SOSA for her volunteer work in Cairo, Leslie was again nominated in 2005 for her work in Baku, Azerbaijan.

In nominating Leslie for her SOSA, Gay Lee Potere said "Leslie instilled in the minds of children and the community that we need to respect our community, environment and surroundings. Providing people with the right set of tools can make a difference."

There is no doubt in any one's mind that the Cairo suburb of Zamalek is cleaner."

Eglal Rousseau (2005)

Helping Parents of Sick Children Navigate Medical Challenges in Rabat, Morocco

Eglal credits her parents for her interest in serving others. Her father, an Egyptian lawyer, worked for the rights of the poor. Her family was very involved in setting up an association to help less fortunate members of Egyptian society. Eglal's mother tried to instill in her the idea that the more you give, the more you receive back in life. Eglal is grateful that her own three children have appreciated the work of their mother in helping the less fortunate.

Eglal said, "... if we want to help and we start helping, doors will open by themselves, how I don't know. For me it is God who just needed us to start and he would continue through others. For others it could be luck or a super power. But all we have to do is to start."

Eglal Rousseau is a person who actively seeks out meaningful volunteer opportunities no matter where in the world she lives. While living in Dhaka, Bangladesh, she inspired the founding of the ABC School to educate street children, working with Mr. Fussel, the principal of an elementary school. To honor her success, she was awarded a SOSA in 1999. With her move to Morocco, she demonstrated that human kindness, combined with leadership and perseverance, can change the medical outcomes of sick children. During her four years in Rabat, she was a passionate and caring force at Centre Hospitaliere Universitaire, a children's hospital serving patients from all over the country, many of whom had traveled for days from rural villages to seek medical care.

Eglal's volunteer work focused on two aspects that impaired the hospital's efforts to deliver the necessary medical care and services. First, a severely limited budget and lack of resources hindered physicians' ability to care for the most critically ill. Secondly, high illiteracy rates, especially among rural women, hampered communication between parents of sick children and physicians and staff. Many parents did not speak French, the common business language used at the hospital, but instead spoke either Berber or Arabic. Combining her language skills with the ability to mobilize resources, Eglal became a voice of hope and inspiration for parents seeking information about their child's condition and medical treatment.

Eglal's SOSA nomination retold the story of baby Ayoub, one of the many children saved by Eglal's intervention. Eglal met Ayoub on the fourth floor of the children's hospital in the ward devoted to specialized cardiac and kidney cases. At the time of their meeting, Ayoub was near death. His parents, unable to afford cardiac surgery for their son, had been waiting for an operation for more than 5 months. Eglal found Ayoub's mother in tears after receiving the cardiac surgeon's list of material necessary for the heart operation. The mother had also been handed a map to the store where the supplies could be bought. *"The woman had nothing, had never been away from her village, and could not read, but was determined nevertheless to obtain the supplies needed for the surgery. Eglal not only found a donor to fund the surgery, but recognized that the mother needed assistance as much as the child. Eglal offered to serve as an intermediary, assistant and interpreter for the mother, helping her to understand what the doctors were saying, providing transportation to an outside lab for specific tests, waiting with her while the operation was performed, and supporting her more than a year during follow-up."* As a result of Eglal's personal commitment, Ayoub became a healthy toddler.

Eglal served as an advocate for countless children, continuing to use her language skills to bridge the gap between medical staff and parents. When families could not afford to pay for surgeries, Eglal sought funds from organizations such as the American International Women's Association and other donors. She persuaded pharmacies to donate medicines and asked laboratories to provide services for those who could not pay.

There were more difficult cases as well. Imagine being a child without parents, arriving at a hospital for care, and stranded there with no place to go upon discharge. For children with no support structure, Eglal formed a partnership between the hospital and an association that cared for children when an orphanage could not. One such child, Haytam, was abandoned at the hospital for ten months until Eglal arranged for him to enter the care of the association. In nominating Eglal for her volunteer work in Rabat, Wayne Bush noted that, *"There is a list of children and families in similar desperate circumstances for whom Eglal has been an American face of hope and opportunity when all avenues of assistance seemed closed."*

Eglal's successes in Rabat also extended beyond help to individual families. She helped renovate an activity room at the hospital where she led craft activities and play sessions for the children. In addition, she helped hearing impaired young adults through the El Nassr Association and was able to forge a bond between the group and the American International Women's Association which resulted in the donation of badly needed land to construct a professional/social center. With all that she accomplished, Eglal built numerous and lasting bridges between Americans and Moroccans.

Joseph A. Taylor (2009) Swimming Mixes Empowerment with Sport in War-torn Iraq

Life in Baghdad during a tour in Iraq can be a stressful experience, not only because of the danger or ever-present mortar fire, but also because of the monotony of living in a three square mile area surrounded by barbed wire, concrete walls and guard towers. Relief from daily stress is often found in exercise.

Joseph “Jay” Taylor worked full-time at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad as the manager of the Fulbright exchange program. During his off-work hours, he devoted his time to teach adult swimming classes to a diverse community group, from those who were just learning to swim to experienced swimmers looking for an outlet to relieve stress. In the end, his volunteer hours helped to build confidence and create community in the relaxing waters of the embassy pool.

For many, Jay’s swim classes on Friday mornings and Wednesday evenings were the high point of the week. Jay taught five hours a week, over 250 hours a year. All employees at the embassy were welcome to attend his swimming sessions. Over 60 swimmers from 18 countries participated in the swimming program. For some, the swimming lessons meant learning survival skills. For all, the classes forged friendships, with the more competent swimmers helping newcomers into the pool, relieving their fear of the water.

Using his personal funds, Jay purchased training equipment for the classes, including fins, buoys, kickboards, timing devices, and paddles, and donated equipment to students of limited income. Students included those with a life-long fear of swimming as well as those with disabilities.



Jay’s nomination stated, “Stop by one of Jay’s classes and you see swimmers from all occupations — combat military troops, translators, senior Foreign Service officers — practicing strokes and kicks up and down the lanes.”



According to Jay’s SOSA nomination, “The classes mix empowerment with sports. Women from countries where physical activity for females is discouraged, including Ethiopia, the Palestinian Territories and Iraq, felt comfortable in Jay’s class.”

Jay taught two students with disabilities to swim. One student, who lost an arm in an accident years ago, stated, “Jay taught me how to swim in the midst of a war, and with that he made me feel happier with myself. His wise advice and patience are always there in our conversations, in the pool and at work, and for me he turned bad times into good times. Because of the swimming, Jay was my best friend in Baghdad. I learned how to be patient. And he taught me how to swim one mile straight, as every good coach he gave me freedom to find my balance.” Jay also had success teaching adults with a life-long fear of water. Said one student,

“Although I was a bit apprehensive at first since I didn’t even know how to float properly, I thought...just try your best at each one of the exercises and see how it goes. Thanks to Jay’s careful observation and well thought out drills, I feel a lot more confidence in the water and know the areas I need to concentrate on and make a conscious effort to improve.”

One anonymous testimonial summed up Jay’s contributions, in or out of the water: “He is coaching me on everything: my work, my career development, my social interactions at the workplace, sometimes even with social life outside work. He is always there for me and we can talk about everything. Jay is the big brother I never had. Swim class is just one piece within the bigger picture which shows his good heart, friendship, and brotherhood.”

Jay Taylor gave of his time and talents to swimmers who came to learn new swimming techniques, but in the end, his students were rewarded with friendship and fun amidst the challenges of living in a war zone.

Country Highlights

“From an American point of view, orphans in Tunisia have drawn a particularly unpleasant lot in life. Local perception seems somehow to hold them responsible for their horrible situation. Teresa spends at least four hours each week accompanying an international group of women whom she recruited to the local orphanage where time is spent providing love, affection, and amateur physical therapy for seven severely mentally and physically handicapped children who otherwise would never leave the beds where they lie 24 hours a day. Teresa recently helped form an Association of Friends of the Orphanage aimed at drawing Tunisians into this charity work, serving as interpreter at this founding meeting. Teresa also helped sew and organize the sewing of diapers for the orphanage.”

—From the nomination of Teresa Kramer

Nancy Coffee (Algiers, Algeria 1992) offered her hospitality and opened her house for large Embassy events, including the Marine Ball after a local hotel backed out of the event just one week before the event was to take place. She hosted the Embassy Christmas party, a Marine-organized community New Year’s party, and well-received “Hail and Farewell” parties. For the local international school, she hosted a Valentine Day’s dance, a Graduation Day dance, and opened her kitchen to the school for a Christmas cookie baking project. By volunteering her home, Nancy helped to build a sense of community, while sharing her knowledge of living in Algiers, a big crowded city which can be intimidating to the uninitiated. Nancy served on the Board of the Diplomatic Women’s Association, a prestigious group that included senior-level Algerian women and the spouses of resident foreign ambassadors. Through her involvement, she routinely shared American culture and language with others. She launched the Embassy’s relationship with the charity organization Caritas, a relationship which produced regular contributions by Mission members to Caritas’s work in Algiers. In conjunction with a local church, Nancy helped organize material support to a local Algerian school that specialized in education for developmentally disabled children. When the Algiers Embassy community was evacuated during the Gulf War, Nancy took it upon herself to develop a network among evacuated family members, staying in touch by phone and serving as a center for the exchange of information, and even creating a newsletter to provide updates to Mission members. Through these and other activities, Nancy made exceptional contributions to those serving in Algiers and to community relations with the Algerian people.

Teresa Kramer (Tunis, Tunisia 1993) was commended by Ambassador McCarthy for her “outstanding contributions to make life in Tunis better both within and outside the official American community.” As a Board member of the International Women’s Club of Tunisia (IWCT), Teresa served as the organization’s newsletter editor, coordinated the IWCT English-language discussion group, and promoted many charitable donations to local groups such as the women’s prison, a children’s center in Raf Raf, the National Museum of Carthage, and centers for the physically and mentally handicapped. She continued her long association with Girl Scouting by volunteering as a leader and coordinating an extensive program of activities, which included liaising with the Tunisian Girl Scout program. Teresa served on the committee to organize the American July 4th community picnic and frequently opened her own home to entertain Embassy employees and their families, and to host IWCT teas, American School cocktails, a Young Author’s reception, and many other community-centered events. Her nomination was supported by a letter from the American Cooperative School of Tunis praising Teresa for her activities at the school, especially her efforts to begin a hot lunch program which became one of the school’s most successful volunteer efforts. Teresa was nominated for a SOSA in 1991 for her volunteer activities in Yaounde, Cameroon. Five years after her 1993 win (chronicled here), Teresa won another SOSA in 1998 for her volunteer work in Rabat, Morocco.

Zohra Benesch (Tunis, Tunisia 1994), a native French and Arabic speaker who was born and raised until the age of 10 in Algeria, led a group of women who visited a local Tunisian orphanage on a regular basis. Children at the orphanage were generally treated as social outcasts because of their illegitimacy or their physical and mental handicaps. Using her language skills, Zohra was able to work with orphanage staff to effect many changes in the care of infants at the facility. Babies were often fed from a common bottle. Small babies needed smaller nipples on the bottles. Zohra convinced staff members to use individual bottles for each child. Zohra raised funds by speaking with local organizations and found new volunteers to help visit on a regular basis. Zohra also began a playgroup through the International Women’s Club where young mothers from the international and Tunisian communities could gather to speak English. Those who came contributed weekly to a fund to provide milk and other necessities to the White Sisters’ centers. Zohra’s good works also included aid to a

Country Highlights

Tunisian woman who was a battered spouse, help to a young American girl who was living in Tunisia under difficult circumstances, and compassionate visits to a 4 year old Algerian boy who was dying of leukemia alone in a Tunisian hospital. Zohra was nominated for a SOSA in both 1994 and 1995 for her work in Tunisia.

Monica Browne (Tunis, Tunisia 1996) devoted a great deal of time, effort and caring to Manouba Ophanage, the only orphanage in Tunis that housed newborns and mentally and physically handicapped persons. Despite its location in a poor area south of Tunis, Monica visited the orphanage to help bathe, change, feed, and play with the children. With the children, she focused on much-needed stimulation that was unfortunately lacking in their daily experience. As Chairperson of the local International Women's Club Orphanage Committee, she enlisted the help of the wife of the Tunisian Minister of Social Affairs and other prominent women in the community to raise the Committee's visibility. To gain official status for the orphanage committee, she formed the Tunisian Volunteer Organization, a non-governmental association recognized by the Government of Tunisia. With the structure in place, she was instrumental in hiring a Swedish doctor to work fulltime, thereby improving the level of care the children received. Monica regularly consulted with orphanage staff to learn what children needed. She solicited and coordinated clothing and toy donations and delivered these items herself to the children. Her dedication made a huge difference in the lives of orphans in Tunisia.

"In addition to their work and unfailing positive attitude, their family approach to volunteerism has set a positive example for others in the Mission."

—Ambassador
John B. Craig,
from the nomination
of Scott and Queen
Mahone

Scott and Queen Mahone (Muscat, Oman 1999) had a strong interest in helping the handicapped throughout their tour in Muscat. As part of his official responsibilities, Scott supervised the distribution of \$225,000 in excess medical supplies to the Ministry of Health. With contacts in the field of health, Scott and Queen further worked on a volunteer basis to develop a national central clearinghouse where Omanis could get information on special requirements and needs for the handicapped. They also worked to gain permission for international agencies that support the blind and handicapped to begin business operations in Oman. Scott and Queen expertly used a visit by Ambassador Sargent Shriver (Chairman of the Board of the Special Olympics International) to help revitalize the Special Olympic program in Oman and further their activities on the national clearinghouse. On two separate occasions, they worked with visiting U.S. Navy Ships to have crew members perform community service projects to rehabilitate the homes of handicapped persons in Oman. These three-day visits entailed gutting homes to put in new wiring and install wheelchair ramps. Queen and her son began tutoring at a local hospital soon after their arrival in Oman, The tutoring sessions blossomed into computer training classes for the physically handicapped.

Susan Summers (Rabat, Morocco 1999)

Through her leadership and organizational initiative, the American community in Rabat contributed funds and food, and served meals for three days to over 100 children and their families who had come to Rabat to benefit from Operation Smile's free surgery for children with craniofacial deformities. Susan, a Foreign Service Nurse Practitioner, regularly volunteered her time at a detention center for girls in Casablanca, for the American Girl Scouts, and for the American Women's Association in Rabat. Susan has increased volunteer activities by facilitating networking between interested Americans and Moroccan charity organizations.

Claudia Romeo (Rabat, Morocco 2000) arrived in Rabat in 1995. She quickly immersed herself in school activities, serving as a room parent and active PTA member. The mother of four children, three attending the Rabat American School at the time, Claudia played an active role in building trust and friendship with the American, Moroccan, and other-nationality parents at the school. Under Claudia's guidance, one 5th grade classroom collected and

Country Highlights

“Deborah is a dynamo of positive energy and good will who has made a tremendous impact on the Embassy Amman community and touched the lives of Jordanians, Iraqis and third country nationals. Her numerous contributions were especially noteworthy as they occurred at a time of heightened regional tension and security concerns, which skyrocketed after the tragic events of September 11th.”

—From the nomination of Deborah Wegman

donated toys to a childcare center serving poor families in need of childcare during working hours. The class also gained hands-on community service by painting walls in some of the poorer schools in Rabat. Claudia also accompanied the students on monthly visits to the Lalla Meryem Orphanage. Orphans at Lalla Meryem, ranging in age from newborn to age 4 with special needs children of all ages, benefited from meeting children and adults outside their normal environment. Claudia visited the orphanage weekly, playing, singing, and dancing with the 2-4 year olds. She used her own funds to buy nutritious food (such as fruit and yogurt) and toys and when needed, bought medications (such as creams for chapped skin and diaper rash) for the children. Outside of these school activities, Claudia also donated her time to the American Women's Association's Christmas bazaars and other fund-raising events and worked with fellow community members to solicit clothing, books, and other goods for donation to the less fortunate in the Rabat area.

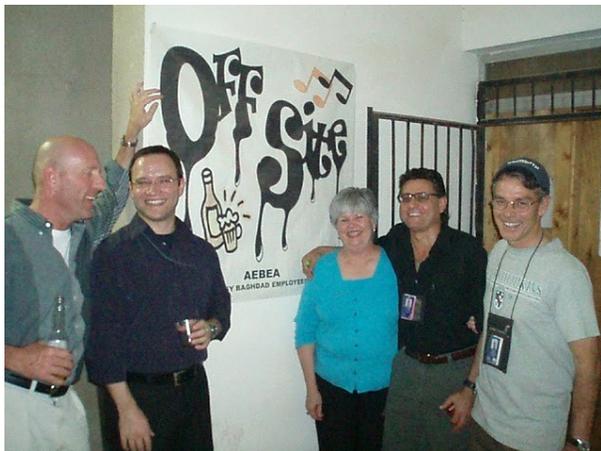
Marine Security Guard Sergeant **Jeff Glessing (Rabat, Morocco 2001)** was deeply moved by the poor conditions of orphans in Morocco. Whenever his busy schedule allowed, he participated in the building of a home for abandoned and unwanted children in Ain Leuh, a three hour drive from Rabat. Children at the orphanage were among the recipients of the Mission's first "Toys for Tots" program in Rabat. Founded in 1947, the "Toys for Tots" program became an official mission of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve in 1995 and now gives toys to needy children all over the world. Jeff immediately identified a need for this program in Rabat and set out to mobilize the community and advertise the giving opportunity to all Mission agencies in Tangier, Casablanca and Rabat. At the end of the campaign, over 70 toys and \$750 had been collected. The money was used to purchase ninety more toys and provide for future upgrades at the Lalla Meryem Orphanage in Rabat. To show his appreciation for community involvement, Jeff arranged for certificates of appreciation for all the volunteers who participated in the success of the program.

Deborah Wegman (Amman, Jordan 2002) spent her first year in Amman devoting her energies to a wide variety of volunteer efforts. Deborah taught English at Karis Krafts, an NGO devoted to assisting large numbers of Iraqi refugees with employment opportunities. At its center, she worked with refugees on a project to design modern, innovative cross-stitch patterns that would appeal to Western tastes. To boost sales, she made the showroom more attractive and accessible to buyers. As an organized and detail-oriented individual, she coordinated large-scale functions including the American Embassy booth at the "Mabarrat Um al Hussein" charity bazaar, raising three times more money than in previous years. To aid the American community, she also organized two bazaars to raise funds for "The Net," the embassy morale-boosting committee. The money raised was either donated to charity or used to fund future activities within the Mission community.

Ann Staal (Jerusalem, Israel 2002) volunteered at the Peace Center for the Blind, which provided support and training for visually impaired Palestinian women. Ann's goal was to ensure that being blind and female did not bar women from educational and employment opportunities. Through imaginative fund raising, Ann obtained nearly all of the \$70,000 needed to operate the center. In addition, she provided training, including musical training to women at the center and also helped with day-to-day operations. Ann was selected as the NEA SOSA award winner in 2002, but declined to accept the award, preferring to be recognized for her volunteer contributions as a private citizen and not by the U.S. government.

Country Highlights

Susan C. Mattes (Baghdad, Iraq 2008), amidst the challenges of working in Iraq, took on the management of the existing employee association and created an environment in the “OFF Site” where employees could find a refuge. Personnel in 2008 in Baghdad were restricted to a three-square-mile area called the International Zone (IZ). They ate in communal dining halls and lived in shared apartments and trailers. Leading a team of volunteers, she turned the facility into a welcoming place where the community could relax and escape the realities of a dangerous, stressful assignment.



Susan Mattes, in blue, with colleagues in Iraq.

Nominator Melinda M. Pavek described, “There is minimal privacy, little separation between “home” and work, and few off-duty options. Long hours, 10-12 hour workdays, seven days a week, are the norm. In this dangerous and intense environment, safe relaxation and the camaraderie of an employee association hang out, the OFF Site, are a balm to the soul that might have only been a pipe dream if Susan had not been here to act as the driving force.”

Under her leadership, the association established a complete accounting, inventory and financial management system. Her skills in identifying supply sources and organizing special events under extremely difficult circumstances had an indelible impact on morale at post. With interpersonal talents and a warm smile, she built a band of willing, though equally tired and overworked, volunteers and created a structure for rotating staffing and support of the OFF Site. The OFF Site became an oasis of welcoming space, suitable for conversing, laughing, dart-throwing, beverage consuming, music listening, movie watching, memorabilia buying and remembering normal life activities.

Everyone that serves in Iraq deserves our congratulations for their service to their country. Susan Mattes showed exceptional character and consistently demonstrated a selfless devotion, ensuring that her colleagues had a place to relax, recuperate from long work hours, and enjoy some time with colleagues and friends.

SOSA Award Winners and Nominees

Winners are noted with an asterisk (*)

ALGERIA

1992 Nancy Coffee (Algiers) *

EGYPT

2009 Dominique Mahoney (Cairo)

2001 Leslie Harnish (Cairo) *

1996 Ann Lies Wintheiser (Cairo)

IRAQ

2009 Joseph A. Taylor (Baghdad) *

2008 Susan C. Mattes (Baghdad) *

ISRAEL

2009 Caroline Nolan, Merri Carnahan, Mary Kortbawi, Michelle K. Daniels, Rebecca A. Van Vranken, Melyn W. Kronmiller, April Fitzgerald, Christopher Bauer (Jerusalem)

2005 Stephanie Tansey (Tel Aviv)

2002 Ann Staal (Jerusalem)

1996 Becky Bruton (Tel Aviv)

1994 Pat Olsen (Tel Aviv) *

JORDAN

2005 Fatima Goodspeed (Amman)

2002 Deborah Wegman (Amman)

1998 Theodore DeJournette (Amman)

1998 Louis A. Durham (Amman)

MOROCCO

2005 Eglal Rousseau (Rabat) *

2002 Susmita Dastidar (Rabat)

2001 Jeff Glessing (Rabat)

2000 Claudia Romeo (Rabat) *

1999 Susan Summers (Rabat) *

1998 Teresa J. Kramer (Rabat) *

1995 Richard Krueger (Casablanca)

1995 Janet Harrison (Rabat)

OMAN

2005 Kevin Rubesh (Muscat)

1999 Queen Mahone (Muscat)

1999 Scott and Queen Mahone (Muscat)

SAUDI ARABIA

1998 Jeffrey S. Tunis (Dhahran)

1991 Patty Stammerman (Dhahran) *

SYRIA

1999 John M. Cole (Damascus)

1997 Paco Cosio-Marron (Damascus) *

TUNISIA

2001 Candice Bass (Tunis)

2000 Sara Chadason (Tunis)

1999 Richida Dittmer (Tunis)

1996 Monica Browne (Tunis) *

1995 Zohra Benesch (Tunis)

1994 Zohra Benesch (Tunis)

1993 Teresa Kramer (Tunis) *

1992 Joan M. Undeland (Tunis)

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

2008 Alexander Henderson (Abu Dhabi)

1999 Tracy Alyworth (Abu Dhabi)

1997 Fred Snell (Abu Dhabi)

YEMEN

1994 Patricia Hughes (Sanaa)