

Global Link

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WELCOME TO NEW AND RETURNING MEMBERS

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THANK YOU TO THESE GENEROUS DONORS

Judee Blohm
Terri L. Williams

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Secretary of State Clinton Attends Annual AAFSW Awards Program

Over 170 AAFSW members and guests attended AAFSW's annual awards program on December 8, 2009 in the Ben Franklin Room at the Department of State. The venue was festively decorated with green and silver garlands adorning the windows and doorways. Our holiday program began with a charming musical presentation by AAFSW member Francesca Kelly accompanied by pianist Sophia Vastek. Francesca's song selections emphasized the season of giving, especially appropriate to the recognition of volunteer services performed by the award winners. She also delighted the attendees with her parodies of holiday carols as well as a hilarious rendering of her original "Twas the Night Before Pack-out." The latter resonated well with the predominantly Foreign Service audience and brought the house down. (See the poem on page 6.)

Following comments by AAFSW President Faye Barnes and AAFSW SOSA Chair Cathy Salvaterra, Secretary Clinton arrived to a big welcome. After referencing De Tocqueville's assessment of Americans as those "who believe in the greater good," the Secretary spoke about the power of volunteerism and how it is part of the "American DNA." She further asserted that volunteer efforts have "global impact" and have "moved public diplomacy forward."

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Secretary of State Clinton with the six SOSA Award recipients, Tragen Award recipient Mette Beecroft, Dorman Award recipient Sheila Switzer, and past AAFSW President Lesley Dorman. . . More photos on pages 3-5 of this issue.



From the President's Desk

Did you start off 2010 — a new year and a new decade—with good intentions and a slew of resolutions? Most of us make dietary

and exercise resolutions that are usually forgotten by the end of January (of course I am speaking from experience here!) Gurus advise us to keep our goals smaller and more achievable so that we have a better chance of keeping our resolutions on track.

Since this is AAFSW's 50th year, I personally resolve to devote time and attention to defining the future direction of this organization. This may not be an achievable goal, I realize, since it is no small task! And, it is not entirely up to me, but to the membership, as well.

Some questions to ponder are: Where are we going in the next few years? How can AAFSW best serve the FS community? Our early goals were support for spouses and families with advocacy to effect change where it was needed. AAFSW rattled bureaucratic cages at the State Department and on Capitol Hill and caused some positive movement.

When the Family Liaison Office was created, it adopted the major task of supporting families and advocacy within the Department. However, our role as an independent organization, outside the bureaucracy with the ability to lobby Congress, remains critical. The "Livelines" email discussion group which provides a great service to all, sharing advice and giving support to the community is very important. The Housing Office at Main State provides a great service but needs some modernization to live up to its potential to serve the community on-line. The role of a Washington, DC "CLO" as outlined in this issue of the Global Link is also a service to the community.

Are these roles sufficient as we enter the second decade of the 21st century or do we need to carve out a new niche for AAFSW? Our membership is dwindling—what do we need to do to attract new members and to retain the vitality of AAFSW as an important organization providing support for the FS community? Help me keep my resolution by sharing your ideas to keep AAFSW going in the right direction in the future. Email me at president@aafsw.org with your thoughts and suggestions.



Your "DC CLO"

Moving to Washington DC this summer? AAFSW, in its capacity as the "DC CLO" offers a wealth of resources to help you get settled and enjoy your stay. Visit www.aafsw.org and

click "Washington DC" on the top navigation bar to find out more about:

Reviews of Corporate Housing

AAFWSW members have contributed first-person reviews of corporate apartments used by Foreign Service families in the District and northern Virginia. Get the skinny on cleanliness, customer service, child- and pet-friendliness and more. And, please, take the time to contribute your own review!

Classified Advertising

AAFWSW members may post free classified ads for houses, apartments, cars or other items in this section of our site. Short-term furnished leases are frequently offered. In addition, "Livelines," our email discussion group which can be joined at <http://aafsw.org/aafsw/livelines.htm>, often features members posting ads for their rentals or cars for sale. Advice is also offered on wide range of services and resources in the DC area, from dentists to child care providers to handymen.

Resource Pages

Three pages—for the District, suburban Maryland, and suburban Virginia—offer quick links to town and city sites, schools, community associations, and other handy local resources.

Media Outlets

This page lists city-wide and community media outlets in the Washington, D.C. area.

Transit Resources

Links to local mass transit, maps, bike trails, and other information you may need to plan your commute.

For Parents

The Washington area is very kid-friendly with many affordable or free activities for families. Links to local family-oriented publications and websites, as well as organizations for parents, day care and preschools.

Continued on page 7.

AAFSW Awards, from page 1.

Following her remarks, Secretary Clinton presented the 2009 SOSA Awards to six regional recipients: Erin P. Sweeney (AF), JanMarie Flattum-Riemers (EAP), Lara L. Center (EUR/IO), Joseph A. Taylor (NEA), Bernadette J. Ruch (SCA), and Jan Irene Miller (WHA).

Each of the SOSA recipients spoke movingly of their volunteer projects. “Jay” Taylor, who spent many volunteer hours giving swimming lessons to employees assigned to the Green Zone in Iraq, delighted the crowd and the Secretary when he explained that Benjamin Franklin was a dedicated swimmer and had at one time considered a job as a swimming instructor. (Franklin's portrait adorns the wall directly behind the podium where the award presentations took place.)

Following the award presentations, Ambassador Edward M. Rowell of DACOR Bacon spoke on behalf of the Eleanor Dodson Tragen Award with award benefactor, Irving Tragen, joining him on the

podium. The Secretary then presented the Tragen Award to former AAFSW President Mette Beecroft for her extensive volunteer work on behalf of quality of life issues for Foreign Service families.

Following the Tragen presentation, former AAFSW President Lesley Dorman presented the 2009 Dorman Award to AAFSW Program Chair Sheila Switzer. Sheila was honored for her many volunteer activities as Foreign Born Spouses Group Chair, current Program Chair, and for her countless hours working in the BookRoom and the annual AAFSW Art& BookFair.

The program concluded with a light reception at which attendees had an opportunity to chat with all the award winners and their family and friends. The event was a joyous way to start off the holiday season and reinforce the message of giving.

For more information and photos on the event, including Reuters news coverage of the program, please check out the AAFSW website at <http://aafsw.org/awards/sosa/2009winners.htm>.



2009 Tragen Award recipient Mette Beecroft with Secretary Clinton, retired FSO Irving Tragen, and DACOR President, Ambassador Edward M. Rowell.



Secretary of State Clinton presents SOSA Awards to Erin P. Sweeney, Lagos, Nigeria (top left), Lara L. Center, Luxembourg (bottom left), and JanMarie Flattum-Riemers, Jakarta, Indonesia (below).





Secretary of State Clinton presents SOSA Awards to Bernadetta J. Ruch, Dushanbe, Tajikistan (top left), Joseph A. Taylor, Baghdad, Iraq, (bottom left) and Jan Irene Miller, Panama City, Panama (above).

By popular demand, here are a poem and song lyrics by AAFSW member Francesca Kelly. Both were presented at the AAFSW Awards program on December 8th. Thanks to Francesca for all the giggles!

'Twas The Night Before Packout

'Twas the night before packout
And all through the house
Not a creature was stirring
Except for the spouse.

The stockings weren't washed yet
The fridge not yet bare
But still, in six hours
Men with vans would be there.

The children were nestled
Like cubs in their lair
While their mother picked Lego blocks
Out of their hair.

When down from the wall
There crashed with a clatter
A large jigsaw puzzle;
But what did it matter?

For all the spouse saw
Wherever she turned
Was a mess so gigantic
She thought, "Slash and burn!"

And suddenly something
Just snapped from within
When she realized she'd never be
"Neat as a pin."

She set out that instant
And returned in an hour
With a small Cat bulldozer
'Bout 80 horsepower.

Then she fired it up
And aimed at the toys
And the sound of the pileup
Was one joyful noise.

The study was targeted
For her next caper
As she plowed at full speed
Towards the mountains of paper.

By now she had wakened
Her family from sleep.
And they stared at their mom
Without making a peep.

But their father said,
"I should have listened before,
When you said you'd go crazy
With one packout more."

The spouse did not hear.
She had gone in reverse
And was happily mashing
Her overcrammed purse.

Her eyes, how they twinkled!
Her expression, bewitchin'!
How merry she was
As she bulldozed the kitchen!

When she finished, there lay
In a pile on the deck
The remains of what could be called "Household
Effects."

"In just a few hours,"
She said, smiling with glee,
"Men with vans come for you,
Men with white coats for me."

And I heard her exclaim
As she drove down the road,
"Happy Packout to all!
And darn, that felt good!"

I'm Dreaming of a Smooth Packout

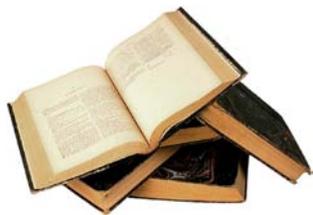
(Lyrics by Francesca Kelly; sung to the tune of "White Christmas")

I'm dreaming of a smooth packout,
Just like the way it's supposed to go,
When the kids like leaving,
The dog's not heaving,
The packers aren't too fast or slow.

I'm dreaming of a smooth packout,
And of a timely, nonstop flight,
May your family members not fight,
And may all your suitcases be light.

I'm dreaming of a smooth packout,
E'en though they say it can't be so,
No expired passports,
And no tired retorts
Between two spouses e'er would flow,

I'm dreaming of a smooth packout,
And of a lengthy R&R,
During which you constantly spar,
And spend thousands on a rental car.



Volunteers Needed

The BookRoom is open for business again and volunteers are always needed for cashiering, pricing, and shelving. Please contact Robin Jones at 202-223-5796 if you are currently in the Washington, D.C. area and have two or more hours per week to help AAFSW.

DC CLO, from page 2.

DC on a Budget

Feeling the financial pinch? AAFSW's cheapskate webmaster, Kelly Bembry Midura, maintains a page of links to local thrift and consignment stores.

Corporate Housing Lists for DC, MD and VA

The AAFSW Housing Office has been compiling these lists of properties for many years. They are a great place to start your search for temporary housing, and are available to AAFSW members in our Members-Only section.

Finally, we welcome the participation of AAFSW members in any of our local interest groups. The AAFSW Playgroup offers activities and support to stay-at-home parents. The Foreign-Born Spouses Group meets monthly for discussion and activities. The French Conversation Group will keep your French language skills up-to-date. Information on all these groups can be found on our website.

AAFSW's bi-monthly programs feature guest speakers, periodic tours of local attractions, and an opportunity to socialize with other Foreign Service community members. There are many opportunities to volunteer with AAFSW as well. We can help you settle back into life in the DC metro area. Contact our office at office@aafsw.org for more information. And visit www.aafsw.org to join today!

March Program Note

AAFSW has prepared an outstanding program for Tuesday, March 16. We will celebrate Women's History Month with a panel of distinguished female leaders to discuss various topics regarding women's roles in society, and how they excel in a variety of sectors.

To date, the confirmed speakers are Mrs. Rebiya Kadeer, a human rights activist and leader from Western China; Ambassador Capricia Marshall, Chief of Protocol, U.S. Department of State; and Ms. Jonetta Rose Barras, journalist, author, and radio broadcaster.

Look for more details in the next issue of *Global Link*, as well as at www.aafsw.org.

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