

Global Link

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WELCOME TO NEW AND RETURNING MEMBERS

Aleksandar
Blagoevski-Trazoff
Linda Beth Barker
Elizabeth Shear Bredin
James Bilbrey, Jr.
Philippe Casteuble
Robert Choo
Bolanle Ekpe
Kerry M. Fraatz
Emily R. Gardiner
Christa Twyford Gibson
Katharyn Elizabeth Havens
Holly Higgins
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Report: AAFSW's January Forum



AAFSW's Forum, held on January 29, 2011 at AAFSW headquarters in Ballston, VA, attracted nineteen participants, including Family Liaison Office (FLO), Director Leslie Teixeira and her colleague, Gabrielle Hampson. We discussed the following issues, the first three of which were follow-ups to the 2009 Forum.

Expanded maternity/paternity benefits and whether State MED "forces" all women to return to the US to deliver.

At this point, employees must combine sick and annual leave and unpaid leave to deliver children. There was talk in Congress in 2009 of legislation which would allow federal employees paid maternity/paternity leave. In discussion with Susan Johnson of AFSA we agreed that in this era of deep budget cuts (and some antipathy towards federal employees) this legislation is going nowhere. It is noted that the US is the only developed country that does not have a mandated paid maternity/paternity leave policy.

MED encourages women to come home to deliver their babies. However, in countries where hospitals and care are good, women often choose to have their babies either at that post or at a closer location to the post than the United States.

Continued on page 4.



From the President's Desk

With the political unrest in Tunis, Egypt and Libya, AAFSW has been busy providing support to our Foreign Service colleagues

who have had to leave their overseas homes to be evacuated to the U.S. If you have ever been an evacuee you know there is relief in leaving danger behind, but once on U.S. soil, there is also insecurity as a result of disruption to your normal life patterns and not knowing if and when you will ever return to post.

The Family Liaison Office is the main point of contact and support for evacuees, but Ann La Porta, who so ably assisted with Haiti evacuees last year, has stepped up again to organize the complementary AAFSW effort. She has coordinated a large number of volunteers to meet planes, to provide individual support and help out where needed. She has also included evacuees from Côte d'Ivoire who were evacuated in December, 2010.

AAFSW has recently set up a marketing group, led by Aleksandar Blagoevski-Trazoff, a new Foreign Service spouse and AAFSW member with a marketing background. We are looking at our mission, our relevancy to the Foreign Service and what kinds of programs or events would interest our current and prospective members. The goal is to increase our membership and to make AAFSW a vital organization that provides support for long-time members as well as for today's plugged-in generation.

The Board has already acted on one suggestion of the marketing group, and that is to make Livelines, our 4,000-plus member Yahoo group, a perk of AAFSW membership. All current Livelines subscribers will be grandfathered into the group. However, all *new* subscribers must become AAFSW members for at least one year. As we enact more of the marketing group's suggestions we will, of course, share the new direction with you.

The CLO Association (now called the Former CLO Association) is breathing new life under the guidance of Donna Ayerst. Donna met with a number of former Community Liaison Officers in early December to gauge interest and to formulate the goals of the group. The focus will be to provide information and services akin to a "Washington D.C.

area CLO." In this vein, Donna is working on a new content-rich section of the AAFSW website with information on neighborhoods, schools, services, parks, transportation, etc. This information will be available in the members-only section of the site.

We are also looking at developing a mentoring program for new FS spouses. Many of you have years of experience that you can share with new spouses. Newbies always have so many questions about the lifestyle and the pros and cons of being an Eligible Family Member! We are looking at both face-to-face and online mentoring. Stay tuned for more information as we develop this. And, of course, please volunteer to be a mentor and share your experiences!

Enjoy spring when it finally arrives!

Faye Barnes

AAFSW President

president@aafsw.org

Take Note

We very much regret to announce that our March 26 discussion of Foreign Service parenting issues with Becky Grappo of RNG International Educational Consultants, LLC has been canceled due to a scheduling conflict. We hope to present this program again in the future!



We're on Facebook!

As part of our mission to connect the Foreign Service community at home and abroad, AAFSW regularly posts up-to-date news about our own activities and events on Facebook. We also use the page to share photos, videos, and other items that we are not able to include in the *Global Link*, and to highlight news stories of interest or outstanding blog posts by members of our community.

So, what's not to "Like?" Become a fan of AAFSW on Facebook today by clicking the Like button on the front page of our website, www.aafsw.org, or going directly to <http://www.facebook.com/aafsw>. We thank you for your support!

AAFSW Program Highlights

April Program: U.S.-India Relations

Please join us on Tuesday, April 12 from 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon in the Benjamin Franklin diplomatic reception at the State Department for this interesting program.

Ms. Meera Shankar joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1973, and has been India's Ambassador to the United States of America since 2009. She has held several important assignments during her career including Director in the Prime Minister's Office and Minister of Commerce. She headed the Indian Council of Cultural Relations in New Delhi and, in the Ministry of External Affairs, she headed divisions dealing with the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC). After promotion to the rank of Additional Secretary in 2002, she held the responsibility for the United Nations and International Security. Her last assignment was as Ambassador of India to Germany from 1st December 2005 to 6th April 2009.

Ambassador Shankar will enlighten us with her "insider" views concerning the many challenges and opportunities confronting our two nations. Please use the coupon below to reserve your seat for this event or reserve and pay for your seat online at www.aafsw.org.

Sheila Switzer, AAFSW Program Chair
programs@aafsw.org



Embracing the Way of Tea

On February 17, more than 30 AAFSW members and their guests were immersed in the timeless beauty of an authentic *Chanoyu* (Japanese Way of Tea), with the help of Yumi Yamasaki and Norie Watanuki, members of the Chado Urasenke Tankokai Washington DC Association.

With *shoji* screens, large *tatami* mats, and handmade ceramic tea bowls, a bit of traditional Japan was brought into Seyoung Thomas's Falls Church, VA home. A wall hanging showed the Japanese characters representing the four principles of the Way of Tea: Harmony, Respect, Purity, and Tranquility. Ms. Watanuki, clad in a kimono, quietly and busily prepared the tea; Ms. Yamasaki, likewise in traditional dress, described the ceremony and its philosophy to the onlookers. Ms. Yamasaki then coached guests Seyoung Thomas and Sheila Switzer, sitting Japanese-style on the *tatami*, on the proper demeanor required in the Way of Tea.

With its serene atmosphere and elaborate etiquette, the *Chanoyu* (literally "Tea-of-Hot Water") is designed to be a spiritual experience uniting hosts and guests and connecting them to the timeless beauty of nature.

After the ceremony, Ms. Yamasaki and Ms. Watanuki prepared a ceramic bowl of tea, one by one, for each of the remaining guests. Afterward, an informal buffet lunch was enjoyed by all at this well-attended and successful event.

Photos are posted on [AAFSW's Facebook page](#).

Barbara Reieux, AAFSW Member

APRIL 12 PROGRAM: U.S.- INDIA RELATIONS

Please reply no later than Tuesday, April 5, 2011. The event takes place on Tuesday, April 12 from 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon at the Department of State (23rd 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 at www.aafsw.org.

APRIL 12 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

Forum, from page 1.

Access to unclassified information by Foreign Service families

Shortly after AAFSW's 2009 Forum, Forum co-chairs and AAFSW President, Faye Barnes, met with members of FLO to discuss this. At that time, we were told that the FLO office was "working on it." They are still working on it, but it is getting closer to reality in the form of a new password-protected FLO website for family members. FLO is also working with the Overseas Briefing Center at the Foreign Service Institute in order to include information such as the Personal Post Reports. FLO hopes to complete this site within the year.

It was noted that several years ago the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) was changed to allow posts to set up kiosks where family members could have access to "sensitive but unclassified" information. Since this was permitted but not actually *mandated* most posts have not provided these kiosks.

Central funding for EFM jobs in Embassies

Since the 2009 Forum, State has implemented the Expanded Professional Associates Program (EPAP) positions within the embassies. This program is notable in that these are special positions that are separate from "hard-to-fill" positions. Some of them may be bid on at the same time that an employee is bidding on a post. They are primarily entry-level Foreign Service positions and are centrally funded Eligible Family Member (EFM) positions within embassies. Most local hire EFM positions are locally funded, usually under International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS), which means that the cost is shared among Foreign Affairs Agencies.

Obtaining central funding from Washington for these positions would be very difficult. FLO has researched locally funded positions at Embassies and found that there are several that are funded from program funds. State has control over these funds..

At this time there are 160 EPAP positions worldwide. It would be good to see these types of positions institutionalized, but this will be difficult with a tight budget. Ideally more EFM positions that are currently funded with program funds would be centrally funded as part of a pilot program. The difficulty in expanding central funding is that the regional bureaus will lose some funding as EFM salary costs are added to the total salary budget for the region. Additionally, the bureaus prefer to keep their post funding options as "discretionary."

Following this discussion, there were several questions and suggestions received from overseas and through Livelines that were brought to the table.

Why aren't there larger weight allowances for families and senior officers? Why don't we go by volume instead of weight like other countries do?

15 years ago there were larger allowances for families and senior officers. However, some argued that this was not egalitarian and the policy was changed. The cargo shippers that State uses go by weight instead of volume.

Why can't we go back to business class tickets for flights of more than 14 hours? It is more of a hassle for a family to go through customs, spend the allowed overnight on a long flight and get on the plane again than to fly comfortably straight through. And related to this, why can't we use our own points to upgrade to business class?

The business class option was canceled because of gross misuse by a few people who used it for flights shorter than 14 hours. Also the price of business class tickets went up drastically. State often purchases the cheapest class of tickets, the "Y" class, which can't be upgraded with miles. One can still upgrade to business class at one's own expense and deduct it from income taxes as an unreimbursed business expense. It was noted that this ban on business class travel is now government-wide where it used to be an agency decision whether to let its employees fly business class on long flights.

Can there be more support for single employees who are, in fact, always "unaccompanied"?

AAFSW does not discriminate between employees and family members. During the recent Cairo evacuation we had one single employee volunteer who has specifically asked to help single employees who have been evacuated. OBC has a "singles forum" which is designed to provide information to single employees who are returning to the DC area. Also it was suggested that single employees could set up a support group like Livelines specifically for singles. There are already several of these sub-groups for parents, families with special needs, pet owners, etc.

Can we create an electronic bulletin board and use it to advertise all types of housing, sale and swap and other information of interest to FS employees and families.

AAFSW offers classified advertising on its website as does AFSA. AAFSW members may advertise for

free on the website and anyone may access the ads. Our monthly newsletter, *Global Link*, has also started to offer classified advertising for services with the April, 2011 issue. However we realize that we need to do more, to network with other foreign affairs employees and to bring our volunteer Housing Office into the 21st Century. Accordingly we have asked a new volunteer to provide us with a proposal for what such an online database might entail and what funding will be required.

Can we assign a dedicated social worker from ECS and/or a doctor from MED to work with special needs children to help with the bidding process.

Unfortunately HR does not consider spouses and children as part of the bidding process. Employee Consultation Services,(ECS) the Office of Overseas Schools (OOS) and MED do not participate in the bidding process. The Office of Overseas Schools often has incomplete information about schools at post and whether or not they accept children with special needs. FLO information in the Overseas Schools Summary Report is gathered by the local Community Liaison Officers. At the moment it is up to the parent to research the schools as best they can. Sometimes a post school is “advertised” as having resources that meet the student’s needs, so parents bid on the post and then the student is not accepted. At that point, all other bids on the employee’s list may have been assigned.

The webzine [Tales from a Small Planet](#) has just launched a new “Real School Reports” section in addition to its Real Post Reports. Also, Yahoogroups such as [FSParent](#) and [FSSpecialneeds](#) are a good resource for information. Until ECS, the OOS and MED liaison with HR it remains up to parents to do the research.

There were also some comments from the Forum participants.

Can FLO set up a DC Skills Bank for spouses? Can there be a waiver of the one year time limit for a government contract, for jobs of 6-24 months? Can an EFM volunteer their services?

In the past FLO had a Skills Bank under the old Wang system which was accessible over the Internet but worked imperfectly. A new Resume Connection was developed in 1997 to replace it. After 9/11, Diplomatic Security required encryption of information and that made the program very slow and almost impossible to use. No Skills Bank has been reinstated.

Government hiring for the Civil Service is a cumbersome process. By the time EFMs make it through the hiring process their time in DC may be almost over. The government is prohibited from accepting volunteer labor. However, the possibility of an EFM internship was discussed. If there are internships for college students why can’t there be internships for spouses? This is something that the AAFSW Forum Committee could work on if enough interest is shown and enough volunteers come forward to form a committee to work on this issue.

Also for non-government jobs DOS has a contract with Manpower Inc. to provide training and job information. Interested persons should contact FLO.

It is difficult for a Foreign Born Spouse to qualify for a position in the EPAP program because US college degrees are required and foreign degrees are not recognized.

There is a mechanism for foreign credentials to be transferred to an American degree. Persons with this problem are encouraged to contact FLO for the details. And as a service, FLO should inform EFMS on their website or by cable about the requirement for credentialing foreign degrees long before the EPAP details are advertised.

A plea was put forward for Sensitivity Training for Ambassadors and other senior level employees with regard to family members.

There is a new study on Diplomatic Professional Education and Training just released in draft form by the Academy of American Diplomacy. It does not deal with family sensitivity issues, just professional training. It really depends on the senior employee; some are more sensitive to family issues than others. Hopefully if the report addresses training for managerial skills, that might also transfer to some extent to families.

In conclusion the Forum answered many questions that affect the employees and families in the FS, though we may not have had the solutions they wanted.

We have two projects to work on:

Expanding our Housing Office with an electronic bulletin board and working toward a spousal internship program if interested volunteers come forward. An AAFSW volunteer has also offered to set up an AAFSW Skills Bank through LinkedIn.

Ann La Porta for Judy Felt, Forum Co-Chairs
forum@aaafsw.org

Foreign Service Kid and American Hero

“It’s Not The length of Life, But The Depth of Life”

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

Recently I watched a home video made in Lagos, Nigeria in 1989 for my son’s sixth birthday party. Six young boys, all from different parts of the world, laughed and played together without thoughts of their diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Even at such a young age and maybe due to our family’s Foreign Service lifestyle, Todd’s personality was evident: each child brought a new dimension to Todd and he offered the same to them.

This Foreign Service attribute, together with his easy going temperament would serve him well as he journeyed to adulthood. It would aid him in developing his inherent leadership abilities. Whether it was in a social setting, on the athletic field, on the college campus or in a military environment, Todd was comfortable engaging people of diverse cultural, ethnic backgrounds. To him life was to be lived to the fullest.

Todd was killed by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) while leading a combat patrol on September 9, 2010 in Afghanistan. Since his death, we have met so many of his friends who have all said the same thing: “knowing Todd made me a better person.”

Todd accompanied us on tours to Lagos, Budapest, and Sofia. On his own, he lived in Russia, Iraq (military) and Afghanistan (military). He spoke two foreign languages and traveled to another 36 countries. He was a culturally astute and diverse individual who loved his country and valued its importance in a shrinking world.

In 2005, after returning from Mosul, Iraq on a National Guard combat deployment, Todd entered The College of William and Mary. As a government major with a minor in psychology, his conviction on life, family and his country gained him respect and

friendship of students and professors alike. He was a person to be trusted, to play ball with, and to enjoy a beer and pizza with on Friday night.

Believing that Russia was a country of importance to the future of his country, Todd traveled abroad during his senior year at William and Mary to study the language and culture in St. Petersburg. He was an “international kid”, after all. During an academic break he invited his sweetheart to Russia, to be with him on a little R&R. It was there where he proposed and they dreamed of living a life similar to the one he had known.

Over ten days in May, 2008, Todd graduated from The College of William and Mary (summa cum laude) and was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa. He was commissioned into the Army through the College ROTC program after being ranked 36th among 4,000 ROTC cadets in the nation. After marrying Emma Cloyed of Williamsburg, VA, he went to Officer’s Basic School, Ranger School, and on to Fort Campbell, KY to join the famous 101st Airborne Division

(the “Screaming Eagles”). In August, 2009, he became a proud and devoted father to Kiley Honoria Nell. He so often said there was nothing more important or loved in his life then his little “Sweetie.” His love for his wife and daughter was overwhelming.

In May, 2010, Todd was deployed to Kandahar, Afghanistan. He was proud to be there and wrote home that he was happy to see there were International Units. It was there, in the Arghandab River Valley, while leading his men to bring security to a troubled region and to keep terrorism at bay, that Todd was killed. He was 26 years old. He was always my hero. Today, he is among our nation’s heroes!

Todd’s compelling life story can be viewed on the website below. To honor his legacy, a Memorial Award, also available on the site, has been established at the College of William and Mary.

<http://1LTToddWeaver.org>

Jeanne Harris Weaver, AAFSW Member
drifterslanding1@cox.net



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>.

AAFSW 50th Anniversary Performance DVDs

DVDs of the AAFSW 50th Anniversary Musical Play are now available for online purchase at \$7 apiece. Don't miss this memorable performance, written, directed and performed by members of the Foreign Service community! Visit <http://www.aafsw.org/dvd.htm> to find out more and order your DVDs today!

Antique/Collectible Items for Sale

AAFSW has three items left over from Art&Bookfair 2010 that are available for sale. Proceeds will benefit AAFSW.

Wedgewood Dishes

Campion pattern, like new. Service for 8 plus extras, also includes the completer pieces, large platter, and cereal bowls. Replacement value: \$1800; selling for \$800.

Dough box

From the 1800's. Large enough for behind-the-couch table, but with lid, can also handle small storage jobs. In good condition, especially considering its age. Purchase price: \$375; selling for \$250.

Thai and Khmer silk ikats

For the textile collector. One is a length, 32"x71"; the other a tube, 28"x60". Dark tones. Valued at more than \$300, selling for \$200 each.

Photos of these items can be seen here: http://www.aafsw.org/classified/sale_wanted.htm.

If you are interested, contact Dianne Bodeen at artcorner@aafsw.org. She will gladly deliver to anyone in the DC Metro area, or shipping can be arranged to another location for an additional fee.

Mentors Wanted

AAFSW is seeking experienced, current Foreign Service family members to offer guidance to newbies as part of a pilot mentoring program. If you are interested in serving as a mentor, please contact Debbi Miller at debbi@aafsw.org. Thanks!

Trena Bolden Fields, M.A. Certified Life Coach

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Freelance Artist

Jeanne Weaver, who draws inspiration from twenty-five years in eight countries on three continents in the foreign service as a spouse, four-time CLO and recipient of the M. Juanita Guess State Department Award as CLO of the year, 2001 is now a full time artist. She concentrates her work on those things she loves: the sea, coastal life, and those places where she has lived and traveled. Her art has been exhibited at the State Department, U.S. Embassy, Bangladesh, Southeastern VA, North Carolina, and the Space Coast of Florida.

Jeanne is a two-dimensional artist who works primarily in oil painting. Her website gives information about her as an artist as well as showing many of her paintings.

www.jeanneweaverartist.com

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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!



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