

GLOBAL LINK

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RECOGNIZING THE SPIRIT OF GIVING ALL YEAR 'ROUND

The December AAFSW program is a festive occasion and includes annual holiday music set amidst the beautifully decorated Ben Franklin Room. This program also spotlights our annual volunteer awards ceremony honoring the recipients of the Lesley Dorman Award, the Eleanor Dodson Tragen Award, and the Secretary of State's Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad (SOSA). The Dorman Award is an internal AAFSW honor which recognizes outstanding service in all aspects of the organization. Lesley Dorman, who serves as the model of this continued service, will make the presentation. The Tragen Award honors the memory of deceased AAFSW member Ele Dodson Tragen and recognizes a family member whose efforts and advocacy have improved the rights and benefits of FS family members. The award is co-sponsored by DACOR, FLO, and AAFSW and is generously funded by Ele's husband, retired FSO Irving Tragen, who will make the presentation.



Foreign Service family member Alison Padget cares for an infant at the Jiaozuo City orphanage near Beijing, China.

committee faced a real challenge in selecting one winner from each of the regional bureaus. The five 2007 SOSA recipients are highlighted on page 2. Be sure to read the short summaries of their extraordinary accomplishments and enjoy the photos which reflect the selfless and invaluable contributions they have made to improve the quality of life for so many in need. Their volunteer work is awe-inspiring and demonstrates grass roots diplomacy at its best.

AAFSW congratulates the winners of these three prestigious awards. They all deserve our acknowledgement and gratitude. Their actions signify the essence of "this season of giving."

The ceremony also honors the 2007 recipients of the SOSA Award. AAFSW administers the award through generous contributions from the Green Family Foundation, former Secretaries of State, and from many supportive AAFSW members. This award recognizes outstanding volunteer service performed overseas by employees and family members in the American community, the host country, or in emergency situations.

This year AAFSW received 23 nominations from posts around the globe. The selection

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW AND RETURNING MEMBERS

Kanyanee Bras
Veronica Delarve
Brooke A. Mancini
Maguette Gueye
Patricia Squire

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS

Wendy Welsh
Joan T. Pogue
Alice Lowenthal
Peggy Bradford Long

**BOOKFAIR 2007
WAS A GREAT
SUCCESS! PLEASE
SEE PAGES 4 AND
5 FOR METTE
BEECROFT'S
RECAP OF THE
EVENT.**



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SOSA AWARD WINNERS

Neill G. Krost – Cotonou, Benin (AF)

During his two year tour, Neill has devoted countless hours to the welfare of 250 children at the Abomey orphanage located four hours from Cotonou. He brought together the entire diplomatic and expat communities for the first annual Christmas drive and organized the subsequent delivery of a large truckload of clothing, books, toys and furniture to the orphanage. Neill was also successful in persuading the mayor of Abome to provide electricity and water to the facility. Working with the orphanage, he wrote a proposal for the Ambassador's Self-Help Program which will fund construction of a new dining room as well as teaching valuable trade skills to the children. To sustain and expand these efforts, Neill developed a business plan, created a website, and raised \$20,000 to fund improvements. He has made a lasting improvement in the quality of life for orphans struggling to survive the harsh realities of life in West Africa.



Children at the Abome orphanage in Benin.



Dennis and AISZ Director Robin Heslip review the proposal for the new school.

Dennis E. Nice – Zagreb, Croatia (EUR)

Dennis's volunteer efforts span his three year assignment in Zagreb. As two-term Chairman of the Board at the American International School of Zagreb (AISZ), he has been the catalyst for the identification of a much-needed new school facility. Drawing on his strong leadership skills, Dennis formed a multi-cultural team of architects, engineers, investors, and lawyers to tackle the challenges of a viable school plan, site location, and construction. As Board Chairman, he also led a successful search for a new School Director. Among his other accomplishments are establishing a financial aid policy, increasing classes to accommodate waiting lists, increasing the number of international teachers, and paying off a facilities improvement loan two years in advance, thereby saving AISZ thousands of dollars. Dennis's efforts have not only impacted the Embassy community but the entire international community as well.

Paul A. Sabatine – Dhaka, Bangladesh (NEA/SCA)

Since Paul began his assignment in Bangladesh in 2004, he has devoted his volunteer efforts to further the education of street children and the employment of destitute women in Dhaka. During his tenure as Board Chair of Eglals ABC School for street children, the school building has been renovated to include a computer lab, upgraded kitchen, showers, and ceiling fans. Vaccinations and medical care are also provided. Paul's implementation of a monthly family subsistence plan catapulted the school attendance rate from 70 to 92%. Paul also volunteered to manage and promote sales of handicrafts by a cooperative of marginalized women. His management and financial skills resulted in tripling the income for the 50 women who relied on the cooperative for their sole support. Better yet, he has established an infrastructure which the cooperative now uses to manage its own sales and financial plan. Paul leads by example and coupled with his enthusiasm and practicality, has become a force of nature in the community.



Paul Sabatine visits the ABC School in Dhaka.

Maria Regina Barros Pontes – Managua, Nicaragua (WHA)

Maria is a family member who believes that poverty and ignorance can be overcome by motivation, education, self-reliance, and most of all, opportunity. She created that opportunity in the rural community of Los Amadores, 20 miles outside of Managua. The families of Los Amadores live in extreme poverty and illiteracy approaches 100%. In 2006, Maria began making weekly visits to teach a group of women to make baskets from newspaper. At the same time, she was making contacts in Managua with galleries and craft fairs where the women of Los Amadores might sell their wares. The yearly arts fair sponsored by the First Lady of Nicaragua provided the venue for the group's debut and resulted in coverage on national television. Not content with this achievement, Maria convinced the mayor of the community to create a space in the public market for sale of the handicrafts and to assist in the restoration of an old building where the women have established a headquarters for their cooperative.

Alison M. Padget – Beijing, China (EAP)

Alison is a family member living in Beijing who is a volunteer nutrition program coordinator for the United Foundation for Chinese Orphans (UFCO). She has dedicated her skills and expertise to improve the lives of the children of the Jiaozuo City orphanage who face severe health issues including malnutrition. Alison oversees the ordering and transport of infant formula to the orphanage. During her regular visits, she weighs and measures the babies, trains the orphanage staff in sanitation techniques, formula preparation, supplemental feeding, and alerts the volunteer doctors of children who require special attention. Alison was also instrumental in securing a \$10,000 grant from a pharmaceutical company for corrective surgeries. The 2008 grant will deliver \$45,000 for corrective surgeries. To improve and sustain the efforts of UFCO, she designed a new website and is active in fund-raising activities. Continuing her ever-reaching efforts to improve the lives of needy children, she is currently working with the China Center for Adoption Affairs to find a second orphanage to sponsor. (See Alison's photo on the front page of the Global Link.)

Book Corner

ALMOST A HALF-CENTURY OF BOOKFAIR

Mette Beecroft, AAFSW BookFair Chair



AAFSW Honorary President Diana Negroponte speaks at the BOOKFAIR opening ceremony.

had access to BOOKFAIR for nine or ten days. Now, the general public has access for only four. Furthermore, people can now go on line to purchase books. In addition, many people live much farther away than they used to. Thus coming in on a week-end is more time-consuming. In many ways, the internal logistics have become much more complicated also. It is more difficult to bring books into the Department garage and since the Department has needed some of our book storage space, the books have been transferred to other less convenient locations.

We hold the distinction of being one of the oldest of all the book fairs in the area. For some fifty years, the Vassar Book Sale (VBS) held that distinction. Their volunteers cared deeply about raising scholarship money and carried on for many years. However, their operating costs started to consume more and more of the profit so that in 1998, for example, the VBS grossed \$83,000 but retained only \$13,000. As a result, they regretfully closed their doors in 1999.

The AAFSW always has the Vassar experience in mind and we are determined to carry on if we possibly can. Thus far, we have managed to retain a larger portion of the

We can now say that BOOKFAIR has been in existence for almost a HALF CENTURY. Somehow, that seems more impressive than saying that this last BOOKFAIR was our 47th annual event. During the years, BOOKFAIR has evolved in many ways. When it first opened in 1960, volunteers worked only two months to collect approximately 7,500 books. That first BOOKFAIR reported a “benefit”—as they called it, of \$1,159.80. Now, though many people may not know it, a few faithful volunteers and the Manager of BOOKROOM labor throughout the entire year to collect some 100,000 books. And the “benefit” is at least 60 times as great as the original amount—without adjusting for the value of the dollar.

To be more specific, this year, our gross proceeds will be approximately \$71,400 as opposed to \$66,877 last year. Given the many factors which have tended to decrease our profits over the years, this is a very respectable accomplishment. In the past, we often took in over \$80,000. However, that occurred when the public



BOOKFAIR Chairperson Mette Beecroft, AAFSW President Faye Barnes and Diana Negroponte.

proceeds than the VBS was ultimately able to do. Back in 1960, when the AAFSW BOOKFAIR started, our motivation was also to raise funds for scholarships. But as one of the VBS volunteers commented, “The sale was never solely about money.” The same can be said of the AAFSW BOOKFAIR. It has become a real institution. People continue to volunteer because they believe in the cause. But they also continue to do so because they like books, they like to promote reading and they like to give good books a second life. Furthermore, they enjoy the camaraderie. In addition, they know that customers see us as a unique source of interesting books, stamps and art objects from all over the world. They also realize that BOOKFAIR gives the Department of State an unusual type of visibility. And so they carry on. Already, we are thinking about BOOKFAIR '08.

Needless to say, mounting BOOKFAIR takes assistance and cooperation from many different sources. However it is the volunteers and the BOOKROOM Manager, Robin Jones, who constitute the core of the entire effort. Under Robin's guidance, books are collected all year round, sorted, priced, packed up in categories and positioned so that they can be retrieved, displayed and sold at BOOKFAIR. Closer to BOOKFAIR, volunteers need to be identified to deal with specific areas—the Art Corner, publicity, finances, logistics, and recruiting and organizing all the volunteers needed during BOOKFAIR.

This year and last, we have added another feature -- a “Wine and Cheese” to start things off the evening before opening day. Our AAFSW Office Manager, Margaret Teich, also gets very much involved. In addition, we benefit from the invaluable support of the Department itself. Diplomatic Security and GSO have always been willing to work closely with us and for many years, Real Property has generously permitted us to use their color copier. Last but not least is the support from the Stamp Corner which for at least 25 years has graciously donated proceeds from their stamp sales to the scholarship effort. Finally, the AAFSW very much appreciates that Mrs. Diana Negroponete, our Honorary President, was willing to take out time from her extremely busy schedule to open BOOKFAIR and to get things off to a very festive and positive start.



BOOKFAIR Chairperson Mette Beecroft, AAFSW President Emerita Terri Williams, AAFSW Honorary President Diana Negroponete, Stamp Corner Coordinator Bill Littlewood, and another BOOKFAIR volunteer.

THANK YOU ROBIN AND AN ENORMOUS THANK YOU TO EVERYONE!

News to Use

NEGROPONTE SHINES AT OCTOBER “REALITIES” PROGRAM

Honorary AAFSW President Diana Negroponte delighted the audience at the October 23rd program to launch AAFSW’s newest publication, “Realities of Foreign Service Life Volume 2”, with a thought provoking presentation. She began by discussing the globalized interconnected world. She posed the question, “With instant communication is it still necessary to have a Foreign Service presence?” She mused that although our world is connected so well electronically we still require person-to-person contact for delicate and necessary negotiations.

Mrs. Negroponte went on to discuss her experience as a spouse in the Foreign Service, focusing on her volunteer activities with Nicaraguan refugees in Honduras. With the abrupt departure of the director of the refugee organization, she became the volunteer director and managed despite the desperate lack of equipment and supplies. Her list from the previous director included the need to acquire a plane, trucks, and other major equipment. No small task! As refugees overwhelmed the organization’s ability to cope, she sought assistance. With support from the US Embassy requesting UN assistance, help and equipment finally began to roll in Honduras.



AAFSW President Faye Barnes, Honorary President Diana Negroponte, and President Emerita Mette Becroft.



Authors, editors, and others who contributed to “Realities.”

Mrs. Negroponte ended her presentation by suggesting that Foreign Service spouses and employees who have cross-cultural skills built through living reality overseas can fill a unique need in our country today. She quoted from recent PEW research citing the negative feelings about immigrants contrasted with overwhelming attitudes about US cultural superiority. What better group than Foreign Service spouses and employees to mobilize and work to sensitize our fellow citizens about the importance of cultural understanding and the richness other cultures can add to our own? In a country built and developed by immigrants it is alarming to see how closed off we can be to the influx of other cultures.

In closing, Mrs. Negroponte hailed Volume 2 of “Realities” as an excellent glimpse into the extraordinary Foreign Service lifestyle.

FOREIGN BORN SPOUSES CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS

Christmas around the world is celebrated in many different ways, but with the same universal message of togetherness. We may find ourselves attending the shepherds' mass, watching a procession of singing carolers, cheering at a bull fight, or one of many other festivities around the world. Worldwide folklore is significantly varied and includes: making ginger snaps, baking bread, hiding the lucky silver or gold coin, decorating the tree, setting the crèche, fasting the day before Christmas, blessing the silverware, giving and receiving gifts, and much more. The holiday is also characterized by fascinating folktales of St. Nicholas, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Joseph, St. Basil, St. Barbara, St. Lucy, St. Stephen, St. Wilfred, the three Kings, the Magic Mule, and others.

We cordially invite you and your spouse to join us in celebrating this special holiday at the FBS Christmas Party. Join us and share your customs, traditions, food, and music. Please bring a small gift for exchange. Join us Saturday, December 8th from 6 pm until 9 pm at the residence of Tere Weinger, 1730 Great Falls St. in McLean, VA 22101.

I hear the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play
And wild and sweet
The word repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

H.W. Longfellow

Please RSVP to Sheila Switzer
703-569-8867, sswitzer9@Verizon.net or
Carmen Geis 703-503-911, and let us
know what food you are contributing to
the party.



LeGroupe de Conversation Francaise au travail

Back row: Catherine Pierce, Lily Overton, Savannah Walker, Susanne Newberry, Suzanne Madde.
Front row: Paula Tossini, Karen Lamb, Alexandra Parrs, Ruth 'Day, Susan Morrison, Olivia Brown, Chris Zarr, Caroline Brennan.

TRAGEN GIFTS ON EXHIBIT IN COLORADO MUSEUM

Irv Tragen, who recently established the Tragen Award in memory of his wife, Eleanor Tragen, has communicated to us that the Museo de las Americas, in Denver Colorado, has opened a new exhibit which includes some of the Latin American folk art and handicraft collection that was gifted to the museum by his wife.

The museum focuses on the art, history and culture of Latin America and works to encourage understanding and appreciation of the rich Latino heritage.

More information is available by telephone (303-571-4401) or by going to the website: www.museo.org/about.htm.

WE LOVE YOUR PHOTOS!

Send us your photos of AAFSW activities and events for inclusion in the Global Link and www.aafsw.org.

High-resolution, print-quality photos are necessary for reproduction in the newsletter, and optimal for posting on the website as well. Email attachments are fine, or you can also mail a CD to our Media Production Manager, Kelly Midura.

For more information, or to email a photo, contact Kelly at kelly@aafsw.org.

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