

GLOBAL LINK

PUBLISHED BY THE ASSOCIATES OF THE AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE WORLDWIDE • WWW.AAFSW.ORG • JANUARY 2009

THE FORUM IS COMING SOON

The AAFSW Forum Committee which had a role in...

- Establishing the Family Liaison Office
- Pension Sharing for Divorced Spouses
- Bringing attention to the need for employment opportunities for spouses and family members which eventually resulted in FLO's Professional Associates program.
- Establishing the need for Separate Maintenance Allowances and better insurance coverage for mental health issues during involuntary evacuations.
- Providing Elder Care Travel Benefits

...has now been reconstituted to address the special needs facing today's Foreign Service families.

There will be a brainstorming meeting on Saturday, January 24 at 10 a.m. at AAFSW Headquarters, first floor conference room, 4001 N. Ninth Street, Arlington, VA. There is metered parking on the street or there is also inexpensive parking available at Ballston Common mall approximately 2 blocks from the building.

During this meeting we hope to winnow down our list of ideas and discuss what actions the Forum Committee can take to move State Department bureaucracy to fix problems.

AAFSW works closely with FLO but has the freedom to work outside the confines of government. In the past we have lobbied the Hill, placed articles in newspapers and sat on Inter-Agency Working Groups to solve problems facing our families.

Even before January 24 we need your ideas. What can the State Department do to make our bureaucracy more family-friendly? Here are some points that have been raised:

- Can the FLO better help families separated by unaccompanied tours?
- Are the new Eligible Family Member employment opportunities in which spouses may bid on hard-to-fill positions before going to post serving their purpose?
- Why isn't there job sharing at the State Department like there is overseas and in other agencies?

Let us know your needs and concerns so that our discussion can be focused and creative. RSVP to office@aafsw.org. Send your ideas, (especially if you are overseas) to Ann La Porta at a_laporta@yahoo.com. Let's get a conversation going. We have a chance to influence the new administration!

WELCOME TO NEW AND RETURNING MEMBERS

Lucie S. Fay
Stephanie Kang
Denise Pierson
Mary Ann Thompson

THANK YOU TO THIS GENEROUS DONOR

Denise Pierson

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NEW DIRECTORY

The AAFSW Member Directory is being updated and will be available soon. A PDF version will be downloadable at www.aafsw.org. Any AAFSW member who wishes to receive a printed copy by snail-mail should call or email the AAFSW office no later than January 30, 2009. Please include your address and phone number. Thank you.



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News and Views



From the President's Desk...

The holidays have come and gone, but let me take time to wish a Happy New Year to one and all!

2009 promises to be an exciting year, with no time for post-holiday doldrums. Washington is abuzz with excitement and bracing for a huge Presidential Inauguration on January 20th! Our current Honorary President Diana Negrofonte will relinquish her role on that date, and we wish her every success and thank her for her support of AAFSW and the Family Liaison Office. Mrs. Negrofonte, a Foreign Service spouse for many years, was aware of the general concerns of spouses and family members. Kudos to her for efforts to keep abreast of issues by meeting with the Family Liaison Office Director on a regular basis and a hearty thank you for going the extra mile to assist in facilitating the beginnings of a Work Agreement with China.

Not to be left behind in all the Washington political excitement, AAFSW is busy preparing for change by hosting a brainstorming event on Saturday, January 24th to prepare for the re-launch of our Forum. AAFSW's Forum has served as a catalyst for distilling ideas and necessary changes to make the Foreign Service environment more hospitable and family friendly. The Forum serves as AAFSW's "think tank," generating discussion and proposals for change that the Department reviews and considers for action. For example, the Forum on Elder Care in 1998 was successful in generating recommendations for a number of changes in regulations that were supported by the Director General, and implemented by the Department's Office of Employee Relations. Prior to the recommendations of this Forum, employees and family members did not have the benefit of paid travel to assist a parent who needed to move to assisted living or make some other lifestyle change.

Ann La Porta, our AFSA Liaison, has graciously volunteered to coordinate this brain storming event, to get the Forum back on track.

So, please mark your calendar to attend on Saturday, January 20th at 10:00 a.m. in the Community Room at AAFSW's new location, 4001 North Ninth Street in Arlington. We need your input!

There is still time to volunteer and make a 2009 resolution to get involved! We are still looking for volunteers: a history/organization buff to serve as AAFSW Archivist, and a former CLO to organize and rejuvenate the CLO Association. Take the plunge and volunteer! Call the AAFSW office at 703 820-5420 or email office@aafsw.org.

FROM HERMIT KINGDOM TO FIRST IN TECHNOLOGY

A Short Visit to Korea

In October, 2008 my husband John W. McDonald co-chaired the Second International NGO Conference on History and Peace, hosted by the North East Asian History Foundation, in Seoul, Korea. The focus was "The Role of Global Civil Society towards Historical Reconciliation in East Asia." Twenty-three countries from North East Asia and South East Asia participated in numerous workshops and seminars.

For John it was an opportunity to introduce his concept of multi-track diplomacy as a systems approach to peacebuilding to hundreds of participants from history-related NGOs who all are trying to overcome the remains of historical trauma and strengthen networking and common global actions (see www.imtd.org).

Shortly after my husband accepted the invitation, I began to study the complex, often horrific, history of a part of the world with which I was not very familiar. John had been in Seoul in 1967 when the roads were crowded by bicycles and South Korea was still an agricultural society. In 1999 we were there together, this time witnessing the extraordinary changes that had turned the country into an industrial society. Now, in 2008, South Korea had just taken the number one position, surpassing Japan, and leading the world in technology.

Seoul has over 11 million inhabitants, and the steady traffic of cars in three, four and five lanes in one direction, with miles of high-rises on each side of the beautiful Han River, made the traffic on

our Beltway look insignificant. Thousands of trees have been planted in the past couple of decades reflecting the people's keen interest in protecting the environment throughout the country. Seoul is a green and clean city that displays familiar American and European signs amidst its own local flavor.

The conference organizers gave us foreigners the chance to see the DMZ. Barbed wire, watch towers with heavy roaming lights, families ripped apart – the way I had grown up in divided Germany. Farmers from the North and the South, specially selected to live in this volatile area, were tending their rice paddies under the keen eyes of heavily armed soldiers who carefully screened their surroundings. That day was my birthday – a significant one in many ways.

At the end of the conference we had an opportunity to visit an AAFSW Foreign Born Spouse friend, Angelika Greer, and her husband and children, at Yongsan Garrison, previously the headquarters of the Imperial Japanese Army from 1910-1945. Located directly across from 8th U.S. Army headquarters is the U.S. Forces Korea headquarters, a structure built around 1970. The building is home to the Commanding General, United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command and U.S. Forces Korea. Most of the U.S. Embassy officials live in an Embassy housing compound located in an area almost completely enveloped by the Yongsan Garrison, or in the Garrison itself.

Finding the right entrance at Yongsan Garrison to get to Angelika's was quite a challenge. The taxi driver drove around and around, and finally, there was Angelika, waiting in her car outside Gate 52 to take over from the taxi driver.

Yongsan Garrison is an American enclave in the middle of the Seoul, now reduced to only 630 acres. I believe it is totally possible to spend two years on the Base without ever having to leave it. Everything, really *everything*, is there. Schools, churches, cinema, PX, Commissary, beautiful roads to go jogging, swimming pools, tennis courts, a four-star hotel, the Dragon Hill Hotel, where one celebrates Oktoberfest, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, you name it. And if there is no celebration, there is the lovely garden and the bakery with its delicious, calorie-laden goodies.

Our friend's children had many friends of all ages, and they had divided their living areas into North and South

Korea. Thus we heard them calling: "Mom, I am going to see Diane in North Korea." Or "Dad, pick me up at David's in South Korea."

My husband and I were grateful for the very friendly and warm welcome by the Korean, Japanese, Chinese and other conference participants. There was no anti-American sentiment in the air, and the young volunteers from these countries who assisted the organizers in many ways were all delighted to have an opportunity to speak English. They all made tremendous efforts to please us and look after us throughout our stay.

John's presentation during the conference on "Conflict Transformation and Historical Reconciliation Through Multi-Track Diplomacy" will be published soon in a book by one of the universities in Seoul. Well worth the long trip. We were enriched by new friendships, a lot of amazing new impressions and a great respect for a remarkable people in South Korea.

Christel G. McDonald



AAFSW Foreign-Born Spouses Angelika Greer, left, Christel McDonald, and Suki White.

SOSA 2008

PROFILES OF THE SOSA AWARD WINNERS

Sherilynn R. Tounger – Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (AF)

Shortly after her arrival at post, family member Sherilynn Tounger personally adopted a poor village near Ouagadougou that was struggling to maintain an orphanage, clinic and school.



An educator by profession, Sherilynn quickly identified the needs within the village complex and conducted major fund-raising efforts to finance construction of a pre-school facility on the compound. She developed the building plans and is implementing every detail of the \$60,000 project.

To sustain financial support for the village, Sherilynn created a charitable organization called “Chasing Lions” whose total proceeds benefit the children of the orphanage and school. To achieve long-term goals, she is currently leading a group of expatriate volunteers to identify and plan for staffing needs, supplies, and facility maintenance.

Happy recipient of a backpack filled with clothes and shoes at a “Chasing Lions” Christmas event.

Amy E. Robinson – Rangoon, Burma (EAP)

Amy Robinson used her leadership and organizational skills to provide humanitarian relief to seven ethnic Karen villages after the devastation of cyclone Nargis in May 2008.

While NGOs were unable to enter the country, Amy and her team of volunteers risked personal safety to transport food, clothing, and building supplies. She arranged for visits by medical and dental personnel and conducted a major grass-roots fund-raising campaign to provide support for the relief project. With this support, she was able to establish a school in one of the villages that will educate 145 children.

Looking ahead, Amy organized the establishment of village committees to determine future priorities and to encourage personal investment by the residents in their recovery program.



Burmese families walking over narrow bamboo bridge with donated food.

Bridget L. Guerrero – Ankara, Turkey (EUR-IO)

Since her arrival at post in 2006, family member Bridget Guerrero has worked tirelessly to assist the thousands of refugees and asylum seekers who arrive in Turkey from Iraq, Iran, and Somalia.



Visiting the UNHCR processing center in Ankara, Bridget identified the needs of this under-served refugee population and within a few months had established a program that provides lunch five days a week.

Through her efforts, a monthly distribution program of used clothing, food and vouchers has flourished. Her fund-raising has provided needed support to vulnerable refugee women and children in Ankara.

To sustain these projects, Bridget formed the ARSG (Ankara Refugee Support Group) and spearheads its work in soliciting donations from Turkish businesses.

African refugees benefit from Ankara Refugee Support Group programs.

Susan C. Mattes – Baghdad, Iraq (NEA)

Like all Embassy community members in Baghdad, FSO Susan Mattes lives and works in a war zone under constant threat of rocket and mortar attack. Susan's response was to take on the demands of the nascent employee association and create an environment in the "OFF Site" where employees could find a refuge.

Leading a team of volunteers, she turned the facility into a welcoming place where the community could relax and escape the realities of a war-torn assignment.

Susan took the management of the association to a higher professional level by establishing a complete accounting, inventory, and financial management system. Her skills in identifying supply sources and organizing special events under extremely difficult circumstances have had an indelible impact on morale at post.



Behind the bar at the OFF-Site.

SOSA 2008

Calvin L. McQueen – Karachi, Pakistan (SCA)



Cal McQueen assists Consul General Kay L. Anske in cutting the cake at the Community Celebration of the 4th of July, held at the Karachi American Consulate Club.

FSO Cal McQueen took on the challenge of reviving the Consulate’s employee association for a community that lives in lockdown. With deft organizational skills, he overhauled the association with a new filing system and a membership update campaign which involved tracking down over 200 members.

When dealing with the merger with the Islamabad association, Cal ensured that locally employed staff could voice their concerns and become an integral part of the process. No task was too great or too small as he reviewed commissary orders, improved shelf stocks, and evaluated the menu options including tasting recipes.

Cal’s overhaul of the Consulate’s cafeteria, commissary and club had a profound impact on morale for the American and local communities.

Ellen J. Brager – Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic (WHA)

Family member Ellen Brager used the power of classical music to bring together youngsters from different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds through music festivals.

She successfully raised funds from local and multinational companies and attracted faculty and participants from the U. S. The result was a ten day festival at which Dominican and American children thrived on music lessons, rehearsals, concerts, and sight-seeing activities.

In July 2008, Ellen took the highly successful “Traveling Notes” festival to Peru. Ellen puts great effort into securing scholarships to ensure participation by children from all backgrounds. The outreach component of the program incorporates social awareness through performances in hospitals, orphanages, and other charitable institutions. Plans are already in place for festivals in 2009 and 2010.



Concert in church of Manchay, Peru in honor of all the teachers of the village.

For more information and photo slide shows of the 2008 SOSA winners and their projects, please visit www.aafsw.org/sosa.htm.

A SAMPLING OF FOREIGN SERVICE BLOGS

Many active and retired Foreign Service officers and family members maintain online journals of their experiences overseas. Others use their blogs for commentary on various international and diplomatic topics. These blogs provide an inside look at life in the Foreign Service, and the page listing them is one of the most popular features of the AAFSW website.

All of the authors of the personal blogs listed here have given their permission for their sites to be posted at <http://aafsw.org/overseas/blogs.htm>. You may view more personal blogs, along with freelance business websites operated by Foreign Service family members, on that page.

If you would like to list your personal blog or business website at www.aafsw.org, please email webmaster@aafsw.org with the URL and a one- or two-sentence description.

Avuncular American

<http://avuncularamerican.typepad.com/blog/>
An expatriate view from Europe from Gerald Loftus, retired Foreign Service Officer.

DiploLife

<http://diplolife.blogspot.com/>
A family of four (a Foreign Service Officer, a spouse, a one-year old and a 102-lb Labrador) adjusting to life in the U.S. Foreign Service.

FSO Globetrotter

<http://fsoglobetrotter.blogspot.com/>
The world through the eyes of a Foreign Service Officer posted to Chile.

FS Husband

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/fshusband/>
Brian Neely, an Eligible Family Member currently posted to Kazakhstan, maintains an online journal.

Life After Jerusalem

<http://lifeafterjerusalem.blogspot.com/>
Reflections on life in the Foreign Service from a second-tour officer.

The Perlman Update

<http://www.theperlmanupdate.blogspot.com/>
A Foreign Service family shares tales of life abroad.

Prince Roy

<http://www.princeroy.org>
Prince Roy is a self-described ex-law school inmate now serving as a US diplomat.

Something Edited This Way Comes

<http://www.somethingedited.blogspot.com/>
Zoe Friloux, a former newspaper editor, writes about her family's life on their first tour in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

Tasman's World

<http://tasmansworld.com/>
A Foreign Service family serving their first tour in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Whirled View

<http://www.whirledview.typepad.com/>
Patricia Sharpe and Patricia Kushlis, both retired Foreign Service Officers, along with Cheryl Rofer, a retired chemist and specialist in nuclear energy, weapons, and cleanup, co-write this blog which focuses on public diplomacy, diplomacy and national security issues.

World Adventurers

<http://worldadventurers.spaces.live.com/>
Mike Edwards writes a weekly chronicle on his Foreign Service experiences, beginning with A-100 training.

World Crafters

<http://www.worldcrafters.com/>
Concerned Foreign Service Officers is a group of current and former employees of the U.S. Department of State who are concerned about recent abuses of the security clearance process in the Department of State.

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JANUARY 2009

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