



## Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide

...connecting the American diplomatic community at home and abroad



Since 1990 when SOSA began, more than 400 individuals have been nominated for this prestigious award. To date, the Secretary of State Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad (SOSA) numbers 104 winners whose volunteer contributions have impacted the lives of people around the globe.

The SOSA Awards recognize volunteer efforts at U.S. Missions overseas. All active American USG direct-hire employees, their spouses and family members over the age of 18, their EFM domestic partners and members of household are eligible for nomination.

Those nominated demonstrate remarkable service to the Mission community, outstanding activities directed towards their host country, and exceptional service in emergency situations. Nominees are judged on the scope and reach of their volunteer activity, sustainability, ingenuity, and leadership.

## The Secretary of State Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad (SOSA)

### Foreign Service Volunteers - 20 Years of Grassroots Diplomacy

For 20 years, the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide have honored Foreign Service employees and their loved ones who perform exceptional acts of service for their host country, for the expatriate community, or during times of crisis. The winners and nominees for the Secretary of State's Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad bear out the simple truth that small acts of selflessness can have a tremendous impact. They also remind us that our best diplomacy is often done outside the office. The stories featured here offer compelling examples of Americans living, working, and serving around the world, but this is only a small sampling of what happens every day. Volunteerism characterizes each of our embassy and consulate communities, providing an essential complement for our diplomacy and development efforts. What we do as volunteers reflects not only on ourselves as caring individuals, it also says something important about our country and our values. I am honored to continue the tradition of this award, and I extend my sincere appreciation to our overseas employees and their family members, domestic partners, and members of household who routinely go above and beyond. Thank you.

Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State

### Message from AAFSW President and the SOSA Chairperson

Why do people volunteer? The motivations and reasons are different for each person, but what AAFSW has learned over the years is that a great many members of the U.S. Foreign Service are doing their part, in every corner of the world, to better the lives of the people around them. Their volunteer efforts, based on humanitarian — not political — concerns, are making a global impact, one community at a time. They prove that working with local counterparts, teaching people new ways of doing things, forming partnerships, and bringing colleagues together to work toward a common goal can effect change. For that reason, we think of SOSA as grassroots public diplomacy. Those who reach out, give of their time, and put creative ideas into action for the good of others, forge unbreakable bonds. It naturally happens with volunteering — people interact with people, build friendships, create partnerships, and ultimately help each other. We congratulate all SOSA award nominees and winners and applaud the continued service of Mission employees and their family members who volunteer abroad.

Faye Barnes, AAFSW President / Cathy Salvaterra, SOSA Chair

## SOSA History



Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, pictured here with 2009 winner Erin P. Sweeney, said that SOSA recognizes those who *“have furthered our nation’s diplomacy and development efforts.”*

At the 2008 SOSA awards ceremony, Under Secretary Patrick Kennedy remarked on the benefits of volunteer efforts. Among the accolades, he said, *“Their selfless actions represent grass roots diplomacy at its best.”*

At right, winners accept their SOSA awards in the Department of State’s Benjamin Franklin Room.

The AAFSW Secretary of State Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad (SOSA) was established in 1990 with the direct encouragement and support of then Secretary of State James Baker and his wife Susan. While on an official trip, Mrs. Baker was so impressed by the extraordinary volunteer work by members of the Foreign Service community that she decided to establish an award to recognize volunteer accomplishments. Since its inception, the award has been administered by AAFSW.

The first SOSA awards were presented on Foreign Service Day, May 3, 1991. The five recipients — Jairo Granados (Maputo, Mozambique), Mai-Anh Adams (Port Au Prince, Haiti), Joanne Grady (Beijing, China), Sheila Switzer (Madrid, Spain), and Patty Stammerman (Dhahran, Saudi Arabia) also received a “Point of Light” certificate as part of President George H. Bush’s “Points of Light” recognition initiative.

Since that time, more than 400 individuals have been nominated for SOSA, with 104 of those winning the prestigious award. The Department of State now organizes the world’s countries into six geographical bureaus. Between 1991 and 2009, 73 nominations came from 30 countries in Africa (AF), 56 nominations came from 15 countries in the East Asian and Pacific region (EAP), 118 nominations came from 36 countries in Europe and Eurasia (EUR), 42 nominations came from 12 countries in the Near East Asia region (NEA), 36 nominations were submitted from 10 countries in South and Central Asia (SCA), and 95 nominations came from 25 countries in the Western Hemisphere and the Americas (WHA).

Funding for the award over the past years has included donations from former Secretaries of State, including annual support from Secretary James A. Baker and Secretary George P. Schultz, as well as donations from AAFSW members. Since 2005 the SOSA awards receive a generous annual donation from the Green Family Foundation. Ambassador Steven J. Green (former U.S. Ambassador to Singapore) and the Green Family Foundation began donating to SOSA in 2005. The Green Family Foundation was established to support groups and individuals working for social change. It provides seed grants to support holistic programs that empower entire communities. The foundation’s goal is in line with many of SOSA’s award-winning projects — *“to enable underserved communities to achieve sustainability and self-reliance by alleviating the cycle of poverty and disease.”* Visit the foundation website at [www.greenff.org](http://www.greenff.org).

AAFSW continues to accept additional donations to sustain this award for the coming years. For more information, visit the AAFSW website at [www.aafsw.org](http://www.aafsw.org).



*Cathy Salvaterra, AAFSW’s SOSA Chair, speaks at an awards program.*



*Former AAFSW President Terri Williams with 2004 winners Zina Lynch, Mary Jo Armani, Theresa McGallicher, Amy Sebes, and SOSA coordinator Ginny Taylor.*



*Bernadetta J. Ruch accepts her 2009 award from Secretary Clinton.*



*Sherilynn Tounger accepts her 2008 award from Under Secretary Patrick Kennedy.*

## Nominating a Colleague for SOSA

On an annual basis, AAFSW receives nominations for the Secretary of State Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad from U.S. embassies and consulates throughout the world. One winner is selected from each of the Department of State's six regional bureaus (AF, EAP, EUR, NEA, SCA, and WHA). Members of the U.S. Foreign Service community can nominate a colleague by following the instructions in the award announcement cable, distributed each year in April and posted on the AAFSW website.

### Eligibility

All active American USG direct-hire employees, their spouses and family members over the age of 18, their EFM domestic partners and their members of household are eligible. Previous nominees can be reconsidered if an updated summary statement is included.

### Submission of Nominations

The Secretary of State Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad recognizes volunteer efforts at posts overseas in one or more of the following areas:

- remarkable service to the Mission community,
- outstanding activities directed towards the host country, and
- exceptional service in emergency situations.

### Evaluation

Factors considered in the selection process include:

- scope and reach of activities;
- sustainability;
- ingenuity; and
- leadership.

The SOSA Awards Committee is comprised of the AAFSW President and SOSA Chair, the Director of the Department of State Family Liaison Office, a representative from the Foreign Service Institute's Transition Center, and the Executive Directors from the Department of State's regional bureaus. The committee meets six separate times, considering nominations from each bureau separately.

### The Award

Winners receive a cash award of \$2,500, a certificate signed by the Secretary of State, and a pin commemorating the annual AAFSW awards ceremony.

*"Life is a matter of perspective. A person can try to do as much as he or she can in a short period of time at a post or decide not to act, thinking they don't have enough time to make a difference. The award recipients are all people who chose to act."*

*Bridget Guerrero,  
2008 SOSA recipient for her  
volunteer work in Turkey*



*At left, 2009 winner Lara L. Center with Secretary Clinton. Above, Joseph A. Taylor accepts his 2009 SOSA from Secretary Clinton.*



*2008 winners with Under Secretary Patrick Kennedy. At left, Calvin L. McQueen. Pictured lower left, Amy Robinson and lower right, Susan C. Mattes.*

