“Mrs. Schmider Goes to Washington” - A year in time....

What a year it has been! What was described to me as “managing the office” turned into a year of transition for the Fulbright Association. With a small, yet experienced new staff, and the support of the Board of Directors, I drew on my life-enhancing commitment to the Fulbright ideal to create synergies around each of the events which comprise a usual year for the FA: the annual conference and the J. William Fulbright Prize for International Understanding. As I read the evaluations of events, the first Chapter Leadership Training Conference stands out as the initiative that has been most transformative for the vitality of our chapter-based, membership organization. The fifty-five or more chapter leaders now are not only in deeper, more consistent relationship with the staff at the Washington, D.C. office, but they are sharing ideas, coordinating joint programs, and engaging in the search for the “lost Fulbright alumni” in their jurisdictions.

The Fulbright Association has built a new web site, still developing, but ready for expansion with Chapter pages, interest groups, and links to social media. All these will come under the leadership of the new Executive Director, Steve Reilly. He’ll be on board January 2, 2013, and, for him, “social media” is a “first language,” not the acquired background of one of older alums—including me.

Fulbrighters Minding The Gaps (And Bridging Them), our 35th Annual Conference held in London was a huge success. Continued on page 2.

New Fulbright Association Website Launches

If you have visited the Fulbright Association website lately, you may have noticed a different look and some new features. The new website launched in late September and went fully operational in November of this year. The new website will allow FA members to better interact with one another, get the latest Fulbright information in a more streamlined manner, and take advantage of member-only benefits. Some new features include:

• Home pages for each chapter.
• Chapter leaders are starting to build their chapter online presence, so check your chapter page often to see what is going on in your area. We also encourage our members to opt in to messaging and email in their profile pages so that you can receive chapter information such as event notices;
• Online renewals. Renewals for members will now be arriving via email for those members with email addresses in their profiles. This move will save the Association money and focus resources on member engagement. But don’t worry! If you don’t have an email address, we’ll still mail your renewal to you;
• Member forums. Have questions about your next trip to China and want to get some info from your fellow Fulbrighters? Want to post info on your latest gallery exhibit? Looking for someone with a specialty in cultural anthropology? The forums are the place for you! Post your Fulbright related questions and advice and start a conversation with your peers. You can find the forums at http://www.fulbright.org/forums/. Take time to explore the new website and send us your feedback. And don’t forget to come back! We’ll be adding new features such as a career center, an online store, and member discounts in 2013. All members should have received an email with their username and password information. If you did not receive that or are having trouble logging in, please contact us through the “Contact Us” feature on the front page or the website or at 202.775.0725.

Introducing our New Executive Director

Stephen Reilly

The Board of Directors approved the selection of a new executive director for the Fulbright Association: Stephen Reilly. Steve was selected from a very strong field of 145 applicants. The search committee consisted of seven board members who spent much of the spring and summer reviewing resumes, choosing the top candidates, and conducting a number of interviews by phone, videoconference, and in person. Steve brings a strong background to the role of ED. During his Fulbright year in Sweden, he earned a master’s degree in peace and conflict studies at Uppsala University. After serving as lead project manager for Synergics, Inc., he founded Global Experiences, Inc., an international education organization that provides internships, foreign language training, and English language training abroad. He has been very active in the Fulbright Association, serving on the board of the National Capital Area Chapter since 2009. Steve officially begins work on January 2, 2013.

Pictured: below: Stephen Reilly, Emily Reilly and their three children.

Happy Holidays from the staff at Fulbright.

Note the official clan plaid scarf of Senator Fulbright. The 100% lambswool scarves will soon be for sale at the Fulbright store.
The Fulbright Association presented its 2012 J. William Fulbright Prize for International Understanding to Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the international medical humanitarian organization. The award, a $50,000 cash prize, was presented by the President of the Board of Directors, Patricia Krebs to Dr. Unni Karunakara, international president of MSF. Pictured above left to right are: Patricia Krebs, the Honorable Ann Stock, Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs, John Sargent, Mark Harrington, Francis Gatluak and Unni K. Karunakara, International President, Medicins Sans Frontières.

Michigan Membership Drive

The Iowa Chapter increased their membership by 20% during the fall membership drive. During each fall event, Iowa Chapter board members encouraged nonmembers to attend and handed out membership forms and information about past and future Iowa chapter events. Board members also searched for “lost” alumni, gathered Fulbright alumni lists from universities, updated contacts and sent recruitment emails to all nonmember alumni. Pictured with the Iowa Chapter’s tour of the World Food Prize Hall of Laureates in Des Moines. Standing on a map of the world in the garden each alum on the country of having served their Fulbright scholarship.
Mandisa Roeleene Haarhoff is a Fulbright Scholar from South Africa working on her doctorate at the University of Florida in Gainesville. Her autobiographical play “Crush Hopper” has been presented as an International Education Week event at Florida State University. The Mid and North Florida Chapters of the Fulbright Association have presented her play in collaboration with State Department’s Diversity Initiative nationwide - encouraging minority students and scholars to apply for the Fulbright program. She will be performing Crush Hoppers in Prague in May, 2013.

 Crush-hopper is the story of a girl seeking her identity and place in the world, and of the way in which men and women play the game of relationships.

Mandisa Haarhoff’s very personal tale begins with her playing with a white, blonde-haired doll, learning to speak pure Afrikaans and dreaming of marrying a white farmer. She’s uncomfortable in her coloured skin and wants nothing more than to impress her first crush, Wendall Paul, the blue-eyed, blond-haired boy at her Somerset-East school. Later she gets the chance to study in Port Elizabeth when her aunt invites her to stay. But she soon discovers that her aunt’s promises were empty and that she’s nothing more than a skivvy, there to cook and clean the house and work in a shop. Her crushes on boys now become an escape from her harsh reality, but also help her to embrace her “Xhosa-ness.”
The transitional year at the Fulbright Association culminated in a series of new programs, re-engagement of members and chapters, membership and chapter growth, and an amazing, new and interactive website. Mary Ellen Schmider stepped in as Executive Director to lead the Fulbright Association while the Board of Directors finalized the selection of a permanent one.

For the first time, due to a grant from the State Department, the Fulbright Association gathered all the leaders of the 55 association chapters in the country at a leadership conference held in Washington D.C. on September 6 and 7, 2012. The chapter leaders also met the Board of Directors at a special reception on the first night of the training.

The chapter training program culminated in a ceremony held in the Library of Congress in which the 2012 J. William Fulbright Prize was awarded to Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières) by Patricia Krebs, the president of the Board of Directors of the Fulbright Association. The President highlighted the work of the organization that was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1999.

The reception also took place at of the Library of Congress with magnificent views of the Capitol and the Washington Monument. “This is the first time the Prize has been given to an organization rather than to individuals,” Krebs said. “Doctors without Borders was a unanimous first choice of the International Selection Committee because of the shared goals of the two organizations in promoting global understanding and humanitarian principles.”

Over 160 Fulbrighters from around the world gathered in London to participate in the 35th annual conference of the Fulbright Association this past October 18-21, 2012. This time, the conference was titled “Fulbrighters Minding the Gaps (and Bridging them).” The two day conference was filled with meetings and panels. After the Fulbright Association Business Meeting that started the Conference on Friday morning, the plenary session, “Fulbrighters Minding the Gaps and Building Bridges: Economics and Finance” took place at the Pestana Chelsea Bridge Hotel in the quaint Battersea area in London.

The conference continued with the diversity luncheon in which Baroness Kishwer Falkner, Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for the Ministry of Justice in the House of Lords, spoke about Global Inclusion in the 21st Century.

Meanwhile, the Chicago Chapter of the Fulbright Association participated in the panel “Fulbrighters Volunteer Giving Back in Local Community / Chapter Activities.” In this panel Rosalba Corrado Del Vecchio presented the project “Youth Mentoring Initiative for International Understanding: A Fulbright Chapter Undertaking,” and Elio Leturia, current Chicago Chapter president, presented: “Fulbright Partnership Book: Small Projects, Big Causes” with the video “The Book Partnership Project.”

This conference offered an opportunity to network through special events on Thursday for the opening reception at the Pestana Hotel and the Friday reception at the U.S. Embassy in London.

The conference ended with a banquet and an introduction to the new Executive Director on Saturday. Themed “The Four Nations of the British Isles: Celebrating Distinct Heritages and Common Allegiances,” a special trio played beautiful British music while people enjoyed a delicious meal. The conference ended with a wonderful trip to Oxford on Sunday.

Written by Elio Leturia, President, Chicago Chapter.