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Bonding

AFS Interculture South Africa News

JULY 2014

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STOP PRESS

As you all know, we are currently in the process of placing 25 students for YPscNH14. It is very important for AFS South Africa that we place all of our participants within the agreed deadlines as delays impact in a very negative way on how other AFS Partners look at us and their commitment to continuing sending to South Africa.

We are looking for less than one host family and school per chapter, which is fewer than in previous years, and so it should be possible to meet our deadlines.

Can all volunteers make one last effort at identifying suitable hosts and send through details as soon as possible.

Thank you.

New National Director



We are sad to say goodbye to Eugene Absolom (pictured above at his last board meeting). Eugene was National Director from 2010 to 2014 and we would like to say a big thank you for everything that he did for the organisation during that time. Good luck in your future career Eugene!



We WELCOME Dennis Lane who has joined us as our new National Director with effect from the 1st of May this year.

We are thrilled to have you head up AFS ISA and we look forward to a long and successful time together.

Dennis and his family live in Pretoria and whilst Dennis is not originally from South Africa he has made this his home for the last twelve years. Dennis brings lots of experience in the fields of student exchange and volunteering, both of which he has been involved with for the last 28 years. A man of many talents, Dennis has also been nominated for various poetry awards and has published three novels.

Mama Lilly Award

CONGRATULATIONS to Mary van der Merwe on being awarded the MAMA LILLY AWARD.

WELL DONE MARY and THANK YOU for all your dedication, enthusiasm and hard work over the years. Mary's amazing AFS journey through the years and the impact AFS has had on her life is proudly presented in this edition of our newsletter. What a wonderful and enlightening journey!! Do you have an AFS Story to share with us? Please let us have it so that we can all enjoy it.

The Mama Lilly Award is the single highest award, presented by AFS Interculture South Africa to a South African AFS Volunteer.

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There is no higher or more prestigious award that an AFS volunteer in South Africa can achieve. It is made to an individual who has been involved with AFS ISA for at least 5 years and is a person who always goes the extra mile, brings recognition and professionalism to our organisation. This award is not an automatic annual award, it is only awarded when there is a person truly deserving of receiving it.

The award is named after, and in ongoing recognition of, Mama Lilly, who received AFS International's highest award for volunteering - the GALATTI AWARD. This prestigious award is presented annually in recognition and appreciation to one single volunteer, from within AFS worldwide.



Mary is pictured above, with her award, at the Annual General Assembly.

Meetings

April saw AFS South Africa hosting the Africa Regional Meeting with delegates from the 4 Regional Partners including Egypt, Kenya South Africa and Ghana in attendance. It was extremely rewarding to be able to interact and share knowledge relating to our vision for the development of the African Region. It was planned that this meeting would piggy-back on our Volunteer Summit. Both meetings were very successful and rewarding. We were thrilled and privileged to have the President of AFS International, Vincenzo Morlini, join us and participate in both meetings, pledging his support for, and confidence in, the African Region. We also had the added privilege of having Keri Dooley, Dominik Sherrer and David Blythe as our international guests and trainers. To the National Office Team who put together this very successful venture, we say thank you for a job very well done.

The Annual General Assembly was held during the month of May. Sadly, at this time we said goodbye to two of our very dedicated and committed Board Members, Virginia Palmer who will soon be leaving South Africa to further her career, and Kirsten Kruger due to family commitments. Replacing the 2 members, we welcomed back Mary Mlambo who rejoined the Board after a break of a few years and Phokwane Moloele who brings a wealth of financial knowledge to the Board. Congratulations also to Dennis Setshedi who was re-elected. During the AGA, delegates were made aware of the organisations strategic focus for the next 3 years which will be in the areas of Volunteer Development, Quality and Sourcing Funding.

Programmes

July and August are two very busy months for AFS ISA. (Please see Stop Press on page 1.) We reluctantly bid farewell to many of our participants whilst we also welcome many new participants to our wonderful country. To those leaving, we hope your stay in South Africa has enriched your life and that you will go back home and share your experiences and memories with all your family and friends – we hope you will come back and visit us again. To the families and projects that have hosted our participants, THANK YOU so much, without you being prepared to open your homes and your hearts, the opportunity for all of us "learning to live together" would not be possible.

44 students arrived on 10th July - 42 for IPscNH14 and 2 for IPbwNH14, they are all now with their host families and attending school. To those of you arriving, we extend a very warm South African welcome and we look forward to our interactions and experiences of "learning to live together" with you.

Who could believe it's 10 months ago that we said good-bye, now we are saying welcome home!!

Please let us have stories from your returning participants.

Off on their great adventure, 10 months later back home and we share some of Shaun's experiences.



Maritzburg SUN 23 May 2014

Learning trip of a lifetime for Shaun

Shaun Gouws, a Carter High School pupil, embarked on the trip of a lifetime when he was selected by AFS to travel to the United States of America. For the past eight months Shaun has been living on a farm in Kansas where wheat and sunflowers are farmed. He spent Christmas with his host family's uncle in Colorado and went hiking in the Rocky Mountains. He has also been on a ski trip during his spring break.

Part of the AFS scholarship programme is to promote interaction with other students from around the world. Shaun and ninety-five other exchange students took a trip to New York recently. He visited the Metropolitan Museum, Central Park, Columbia University, Hard Rock Cafe, Statue of Liberty, Brooklyn Bridge and The White House.

Shaun has also been very involved in his American school. They were so impressed with his art work that it featured in the school brochure. He is actively



involved in pole vaulting and high jump. Shaun will be heading home in June.

AFS was founded by volunteer ambulance drivers following WWII, and is sustained to this day by an international cadre of tens of thousands of volunteers. A non-profit international exchange organization operating in more than 50 countries, AFS organises and supports intercultural learning experiences for students and adults.

Volunteer Issues

Volunteers, please help us to turn South Africa into one of the top performing AFS countries in the AFS World. We can achieve this by ensuring that we place our participants on time and that we provide top quality, documented, support to them whilst they are in our beautiful country.

We are looking for interesting AFS Games and energizers – please share yours with us. Ultimately we would like to put together a booklet for each chapter. Remember the fun we had at the Volunteer Summit with Sherifa, the National Director from Egypt, with her Jan Coloba Game she shared with us. It was such fun at the same time as sending us a positive message. We look forward to receiving your inputs.

In order to make this a really inclusive newsletter, please would each region take responsibility for providing input and stories. These should be sent to wendy.svensden@gmail.com by the 25th of each month. We look forward to your contributions and ideas which could include photos of get-togethers, good news stories, up-coming birthdays and chapter events.

Centennial



November marks the 100 year anniversary of the establishment of AFS. All volunteers are encouraged to consider being part of this wonderful experience (although, unfortunately, AFS South Africa is not able to sponsor you). The celebration will be held in France to commemorate the sterling efforts of the young Americans living in Paris who volunteered as ambulance drivers shortly after the start of World War One and transported more than 500,000 casualties. Our thoughts will be in Paris at this time, however, should you wish

to be part of the celebrations more information can be obtained at <http://www.cvent.com/events/afs-world-congress-and-centennial-celebrations/event-summary-395f5db6e97747c2afa4940d576da000.aspx>

If you are not able to attend, don't worry, there will be other activities to mark this important anniversary and also online opportunities to participate. More information about this will be shared as it becomes available.

Grants

GREAT NEWS - Norman Vezi, one of our very first KLYES participants has been awarded a Department of State grant for his Community Library Project which he has been working on for the rural community of Braemar just inland from Umzinto on the KZN South Coast. He has managed, with the help of his American Host Mom, to collect in excess of 1,600 books for the library. The funding will be used to build proper shelving and provide the facilities required to make it possible for the community of Braemar to have access to their very own library.

CONGRATULATIONS and VERY WELL DONE NORMAN, we are very proud of your achievement, you are a real change maker.

Have any of our other Alumni got any success stories to share with us? If you do, please let us have them.

Mary's Amazing AFS Journey

Mary van der Merwe, the 2014 recipient of the Mama Lilly Award, shares her story of a long and fruitful involvement with AFS. Thank you Mary!

It is always a pleasure to think back on my AFS connections over the years, and to realise how much AFS has shaped my life and the influence my AFS experiences and colleagues have had on me. And this year, with my 50th matric reunion, it has really been 50 years of AFS, in more ways than one. Kathy Snow and her husband Chris, came to join the Rustenburg girls' class of 64, and came to stay with us at Somerset West as well...

Someone suggested to me the other day that I should write down some of what I remember, so here it is...

I first heard of AFS in 1963 when Jenny Kinlay, an old girl of my school, Rustenburg Girls' High in Rondebosch, and recent AFS returnee, came to speak about her experiences in the US. I went home and told my parents, and my Dad recalled how, as a young doctor in Italy in WWII, he had depended so much on the AFS ambulance drivers he met there... he thought they were just wonderful. And then in my matric year, 1964, the school hosted an AFS student from Ohio – Kathy Snow – and we became close friends. We shared so many experiences, befriended all the AFS students in Cape Town, and some further afield too, explored Cape Town, met a wide circle of friends, and Kathy spent hours telling me about the guy she had left behind in Ohio... His name was Chris... I even took an AFS returnee to my Matric dance! There were 9 of my classmates who applied for AFS that year, and early in February the next year, I heard that I had been accepted for AFS, to leave in August 65.

There were about 10 or 12 prospective AFS students at UCT or in CT that year – we had all already finished school and started at university, me registered for a BSc in Mathematical Statistics – the idea was to do one semester, go abroad and then return to finish the second semester of our first year on returning from USA. Those were the days of nine months call-up for the guys – some of them had to finish their nine months military service before they could go on AFS. But we all got to know each other and we were quite a close knit group. Mrs Hilary Marshall ran AFS in Johannesburg and she stayed at our home when she came down to CT to meet us all.

And so in Aug 65, 72 young South Africans (the group AFS SA 65/66) spent a week together in Johannesburg, having a departure orientation - I remember we were taken to the quite new Soweto area, and we went down a gold mine... Then we boarded a special chartered plane, flew to Salisbury and picked up Rhodesian students, then to Nairobi for more students, Athens and then to Frankfurt where German students boarded. You can imagine how that plane hummed as it

crossed the Atlantic! We had another orientation in New York... This was the time of apartheid South Africa, but most of our group were opposition, and we walked to the UN and sang "Die stem" under the SA flag. It was my first experience of Nationalism and we all vowed that much as we disagreed with certain government policies we would never openly talk badly of our country.

And so I set off by bus to Boston where the Chapman family were there to meet me. We drove further north to Damariscotta, Maine a little village at the mouth of the Damariscotta river – 1096 people, and me! It was beautiful – Maine is known as Vacationland – traditional meals include Maine lobster, clams, bean chowder, strawberry shortcake... the State population swells in summer time, and in the autumn too – the famous Fall colours, when the leaves on the spruces and fir trees change colour, and you will see a tree with leaves in four or five different colours – all on the same tree. And in winter Maine was a winter wonderland, with metre high banks of snow being a frequent occurrence. Lots of snow sports, though I never really managed to ice skate with confidence.

I attended Lincoln Academy, which was a private school serving the region, which was largely rural. With less than 200 students making up the four year academy, Lincoln was not a big school. Students took fewer subjects than we had in South Africa – I took English, US History, US Government and World Affairs, Mathematics and Physics. Although the pass mark was 70% I found the work relatively easy, and exams were written every term, and then not again. I joined the debating Club, and the AFS club. I was elected as class secretary and appointed photographer for the school yearbook. I played field hockey and was proud to be awarded my letter L, for my hockey colours at school. I also made the National honour society.

The Chapmans were a wonderful host family. My father was president of the local bank and also owned a real estate business in town, where my Mom worked in the mornings. She was a fantastic cook and spent many an hour preparing new dishes for me to experience. My sister Janice was slightly younger than me, but also a senior

– she and her boyfriend took me everywhere – George had his own car and every so often Jan would get the parents car and off we would go... this was a new experience for me too. There was an older brother and sister too, but they were away from home and we only saw them intermittently.

I saw a fair amount of the state of Maine, we also travelled to Quebec and to New Hampshire with the family. In the Easter holidays Jan and I joined a school group for a tour to New York and to Washington. We met with the other AFS students in the region every month or so, and so I made close friends with others from Germany, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Japan, Uganda, Switzerland, Australia. At the end of our year we had an AFS bus trip, three weeks long all 'round the north-eastern states, and ending in Washington. A highlight on this bus trip was a visit to my friend Kathy Snow, where I finally met Chris for the first time, as well as to meet the family who would host my cousin Jim Harwood the next year. The three or four days in Washington, with 3000 AFS students from all over the world was an experience – the pinnacle of which was our ceremony at the White House, where I managed to shake President Lyndon Johnson's hand.

On my return to CT, I found the Cape winter was colder than anything I had experienced in Maine, despite the freezing temperatures! Did I miss the central heating! I was back at UCT where as soon as you opened your mouth to speak in the Students Union, somebody would ask – "Are you just back from AFS?" We joined in with the whole returnee group at UCT – the support, especially from the older returnees, was invaluable. We were also nurtured by a group of men called The Forties Club – ex Round Tablers, they were the guys who ran all the AFS selection in Cape Town. Men like Boone Wilson, Porky Wells, Humphrey King, to name but a few; they nurtured this group of youngsters. With them we interviewed prospective host families, prospective AFS students (there were lots in those days and it was quite a selection process by elimination) and we also entertained the US students in the Cape. Every year in January the American students went on a bus tour round South Africa, and it wasn't long before my parents

were hosting a couple of students annually on the Cape Town leg of the tour.

There used to be a returnee gathering in Jhb each December, and twice I went up to Jhb with a group of AFSers by train – though the heat of the Karroo (little dreaming that one day I would live near those stations we passed by...) but we had lots of fun in Jhb – we visited the AFS office, knew all the staff and the AFS returnees from all over the country. We were motivated to work for AFS all year - we raised money and raised awareness – I arranged numerous cake sales, we sold AFS Christmas cards, we had talent shows. We used to build an AFS float for UCT Rag each year – that was fundraising for Shawco... Excitement too when we learnt my sister Jean had been selected to go on AFS 67/68. She went to Pennsylvania, to Amish country.

Those were fun years, filled with AFS activity. But at the end of 1970 I married Flip van der Merwe and moved to live on our African farm, near Beaufort West, and then later at Konstabel, Touws River. In 1975 Flip and I went to visit my American family – he was calling them Mom and Dad too within minutes of our arrival! Nothing had changed – I felt just as much part of the family. We toured around with sister Jan, and managed to stay with Kathy Snow, and husband Chris in Minneapolis. Years followed raising young children. Janice and her parents came out to South Africa to visit and regular birthday and Christmas parcels arrived for my children from Grandma and Grandpa Chapman. I lost touch with AFS and in fact AFS International later pulled out of SA, in an attempt to fight the apartheid regime. I continued as a member of the local VLV (Womens' Agricultural Union) where this English speaking farmer's wife ended up as chairperson in a very Afrikaans community – but my portfolio in the region was 'Volkere welwillenheid -Binnelands-en-Buitelands.' In AFS manner I held an international evening and international supper every year, while my local goodwill projects for the local townsfolk included sewing and cooking classes, basic literacy and learning to write their names on the farms, first aid, farm crèches, care for the aged, to name but a few... Much as the AFS 18+ volunteers are doing now.

I also did some post-graduate studying through UNISA and ended up with an HEd and half a BEd degree too. I had done some relief teaching in Touws River and found I enjoyed it. So after we sold the farms to our German friends who wanted to have their own farm in Africa, we moved to Durbanville, and I took up a teaching post (Maths and Physical science) at Rhodes High school in Mowbray. I had not been there long when I was asked to provide second-hand clothing for a new exchange student at the school; imagine my delight when I heard she was an AFS student!!! This was 1995 and I was unaware AFS had started up again in SA and Anna Gluek from Germany was staying with a family in Ottery, who were closely involved with the then Cape Town chapter of AFS. We clicked, and Anna spent many a weekend staying with us, both at Durbanville and at Betty's Bay. I attended AFS functions with her, but the chapter was in disaccord, and disbanded soon after she left.

But it was through this that I learnt there was a Cape Town representative for AFS – this was Mandy Botsis, who lived not far from us in the Northern Suburbs! A fellow returnee too, Mandy had been keeping AFS going on her own for a while. I joined forces with her and after a while we decided to form the Cape Town North chapter in the northern suburbs, with a Cape Town South chapter in the southern suburbs. I became contact person to other students, we searched for host families, we ran orientations, we selected and prepared students for going abroad. Eventually I was tackling the sending portfolio on my own. Another German student who became special to me, was Lena Krause, who was also placed at Rhodes High, staying with the Rutgers family, who were closely involved with the school, and to this day remain close friends of ours.

In 1999 our family hosted Laura Perichon from Belgium (YPscNH98/99). Laura was at Fairmead High school in Durbanville, but needed to change families. Already 18 years old, she fitted in well with our daughters Jeanie who was studying at Durbanville College, and Louise, a student at Stellenbosch University. We had six great months with Laura, and I know that the time spent with us was a very happy time in her life. She will always be our special

student. She was lucky – we managed a trip to Mpumalanga, and another one to Zimbabwe where we bade Laura goodbye at Harare airport, complete with African hairstyle and school blazer, so she could join her fellow AFSers for the return trip. We now have 4 year old Felix, our Belgian grandson who we hope to meet later this year.

In 2002 we hosted again – another Belgian, but this time a Flemish one. Sofie Deloof (SMcsNH02) was an 18+ volunteer who worked at a farm school in Durbanville. She was collected every day by the bus taking the children from Durbanville Children's Home, this was before DCH became a major project for AFS!! We also had a niece staying with us whilst studying, so Sofie had company as our offspring had flown the nest to overseas pastures green. By then I had taken up a teaching position at The Settlers High School in Bellville – much closer to home. There were several exchange students at the school there, and I was happy to be involved with them all, whatever the organisation. Teaching senior maths and science at both schools, I have been lucky to have been closely connected with older students in particular those with leadership potential.

Over the years I have had various roles within the Cape Town North AFS chapter – contact person on numerous occasions, secretary and treasurer, and in 2006 (?) I was elected as chapter chairperson, a position I still hold today. I have attended various annual general meetings in Johannesburg, all sorts of training courses (contact persons, intercultural learning, IC communication styles, volunteer development, how to run orientations, chapter chair, selection procedures, to name but a few) and have run numerous trainings and orientations myself in Cape Town. For years I was the only active sending co-ordinator for AFS – I used to run an annual information/selection day and I did most of the selection and preparation of students from the Western Cape. I assisted Lorna when the YES programme first started but then left it to Tygerberg Chapter until last year as we find we are usually away or overseas when selection takes place. I was closely involved with the YES selection in 2013 and will run it again in 2014.

In 2007 there was yet another student who needed a new host family. Phillip Nowakowski from Germany (YPscNH07/08) came to live with us. It was difficult as he attended Bellville High School, a fair distance from our home. There was also the arrival of new grandchildren in the UK, but Phillip, and some of his other AFS pals, especially Nils Maurier, used to accompany my husband to Betty's Bay and there the bachelors used to have the time of their lives! I was also very tied up with my ageing mother, and after she died in 2009, I was reminded I still had a mother in the USA and I went back to Maine to visit my American mom and family. When reading obituaries after Dad Chapman had died, and seeing their home again after so many years, I was touched to realise the impact I had made on their lives – AFS wasn't just the impact on my life.

In 2010 I was fortunate enough to attend an EFIL Summer Summit outside Budapest, in Hungary. EFIL is the European Federation for Intercultural Learning, closely affiliated to AFS. There I met an Argentinian who had been on AFS with me, and as the whole theme of the summit was AFS through the years, it made one realise that it is not only the young returnee who benefits and who has a contribution to make – we all do – In so many different ways. But once again it was an experience to be with some 600 AFSers from all over the world – I felt as if I was 18 again. It was fun to explore Budapest with Wendy and Laurette from South Africa, then Isaac and the rest of the South African contingent arrived, and we met Rita from Italy.

And each year on my birthday, and Sister's day, and other days too, I get a card from my American sister Jan... and last year a lovely month long visit from her and her husband - we toured so much of this beautiful country of ours and had hours to catch up on all the years... And we continue, thanks to Skype!

And now this year, 2014, I am the regional co-ordinator for the WCape. What a privilege to work with these volunteers from my region! How I have been blessed through AFS to make such wonderful friends! The volunteer summit in April was so special – and more so when I spoke to Vincenzo, AFS International president, who attended too - he told me he had been on

AFS in Ohio in 66 , with a South African girl he has never forgotten – my old friend Jill (Barlow) Mathiesen, who I saw in Knysna not long ago!!! It makes one realise that it is not over, there is a chance I will meet, or hear of, one of my old AFS friends again – be it Flavio, or Guy, or Jane, or Wilson or Rich...

This year is 2014 – yes 50 years since Kathy Snow and I were dressed in the blue Rustybug uniforms together. We have just had our school reunion – and Kathy and hubby Chris were here again (as they were in 1989 and 2004 also). It was wonderful to see them, and to have them to stay – but just as wonderful was the welcome from one of my fellow classmates, who had also applied for AFS so long ago ('And here's Mary Mitchell! And SHE got to go on AFS, and we didn't!'). That thrill of AFS, and all it meant then, and now...!!!

Mary (Mitchell) van der Merwe

Once again, we would really encourage all AFSers to share their stories with us!



Connecting Lives, Sharing Cultures