

# CONTACT

gkctp.org



Greater Kansas City Chapter of People to People International

July 2008, Volume 2, Issue 3

## Inside:

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Welcome, Mary Jean Eisenhower | 1 |
| Sister Cities Conference      | 1 |
| Calendar                      | 2 |
| Strategic Planning            | 2 |
| President's Column            | 3 |
| Student Loans                 | 3 |
| Lost Boy of Sudan             | 4 |
| Park University               | 4 |
| Membership Matters            | 5 |
| Sponsor Activity              | 6 |
| PTPI Americas Meetings        | 6 |
| Watt Earns Gold               | 6 |
| IMS Friendships Endure        | 7 |
| Board Members List            | 8 |

## Operation Iraqi Children Sister Cities Youth Event

July 17 Noon to 5 p.m.

GKCTP members are invited to participate in packing school supplies. Several Iraqi students from the Sister Cities Youth conference will attend.

For more information and directions, contact Kelly Meyer, Director, OIC 816-531-4701.

## WELCOME CLASS OF 2008!

It is again my personal pleasure to welcome the new class of the US Army Command and General Staff College. CGSC holds a very special place in my heart, as my grandfather, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, graduated at the top of his class at CGSC in 1926. Of course, he would be proud of the close association between People to People International, the organization he established in 1956, and CGSC. It was Granddad's experience at CGSC that inspired him to dedicate the rest of his career to military and public service. In fact, my father had a similar experience.

I, too, am proud of this association and what it can mean to each of you and toward our greater mission to enhance *Peace through Understanding*. The friendships made through CGSC and the Greater Kansas City Chapter of People to People can last a lifetime. It is always a pleasure to hear about the personal and professional growth of our international friends during their stay in America's Heartland. To each of you - the sponsors, participants and families - I extend heartfelt thanks and wish you the joy of long-lasting friendships.

Continuing success to all!

Your partner in Peace,

Mary Jean Eisenhower  
President/Chief Executive Officer  
People to People International

## SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Sustainable Peace through Livable Communities

Kansas City, MO July 16-19, 2008

Kansas City will host the 2008 Annual Sister Cities Association International Conference on July 16-19. The conference is designed to bring together people from across the globe who are passionate about the sister cities movement and considered forward-thinking citizen diplomats.

The conference will provide an educational and interactive environment for networking with peers, sharing best practices and gaining knowledge about the latest trends for sustaining our planet. To register or for more information, go to <http://www.sister-cities.org/>.

# STRATEGIC PLANNING REPORT

Nelson Markel

At our recent annual retreat, the board reviewed the progress our chapter made in achieving the strategic goals we set for ourselves this past year. As with efforts of this type, we made substantial progress on many of the goals and not very much progress on many others. Notable milestones include:

- **Membership Growth.** We increased our membership units from 125 to 147. That net gain of 22 member units was most welcome as we needed more military sponsors due to an increase in the number of international officers attending CGSC. Having said that, our target for membership is to have 250 by 2010, so we have quite a task in front of us over the next couple of years.
- **Relationship with a Student Chapter of PTP.** We were delighted to learn that the Park University student chapter of People to People was very interested in developing a closer working relationship with us. We are in the process of creating a cooperative program with them.
- **New Programs.** Our program committee has done a wonderful job of offering new programs for our membership. We are interested in developing more programs for members that are not participating in military sponsorship.

- **Communications.** Communication, both internally and externally, has improved dramatically over the past year. Our newsletter has a brand new format and consistently provides interesting articles. We established a Speakers Bureau and made multiple presentations over the course of the year.

On a less favorable note, we did not to make any progress in developing a Sister Chapter relationship with an international chapter; creating an organization to support a larger and more active chapter; attracting members who sponsor military students to participate in other programs; and, in establishing a mechanism for identifying and developing future leaders for our chapter.

The board also reviewed the previous year's goals. While strategic goals and objectives are, by their nature, long term and shouldn't be changed on an annual basis, they should be subject to review and modification to fit our constantly changing environment.

With that in mind, the board decided to drop the objective of developing a Sister Chapter relationship with a foreign chapter and to add the objective of generating sufficient funds annually to support our initiatives and to set of goal of creating and maintaining a reserve of \$20,000.

## CALENDAR

| Date      | Event   | Location                               | Time       |
|-----------|---|--|------------|
| Jul 16-19 | Sister Cities Int'l Annual Conf.                    | Various locations                      | -          |
| Aug 11    | Flag Ceremony                                       | Lewis & Clark Center, Ft. Leavenworth  | 10:00 a.m. |
| Aug 15    | MOWW Ball   | Hyatt Regency, KC, MO                  | 6:30 p.m.  |
| Sep 26    | Fall Food Fair (Invitation only), Class 08-2*       | Frontier Conf. Center, Ft. Leavenworth | 6:00 p.m.  |
| Oct 3-4   | Americas Region Meeting - PTPI                      | Various locations in KC                | -          |
| Nov 14    | Fall Food Fair (Invitation only), Class 09-1*       | Frontier Conf. Center, Ft. Leavenworth | 6:00 p.m.  |
| Dec 4     | Holiday Dinner-Dance (Invitation only), Class 08-2* | Frontier Conf. Center, Ft. Leavenworth | Evening    |
| Dec 19    | Holiday Dinner-Dance (Invitation only), Class 09-1* | Frontier Conf. Center, Ft. Leavenworth | Evening    |
| Mar 6     | Spring Food Fair (Invitation only), Class 09-1*     | Frontier Conf. Center, Ft. Leavenworth | 6:00 p.m.  |
| Mar 20    | Spring Food Fair (Invitation only), Class 09-2*     | Frontier Conf. Center, Ft. Leavenworth | 6:00 p.m.  |

\* Class 08-2 graduates Dec 2008; Class 09-1 graduates Jun 2009; Class 09-2 graduates Dec 2009

Contact Newsletter GKCTP

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



Spring is a busy time for GKCPTP. Our chapter year ends on March 31 and we begin planning activities for the upcoming year. New board members join us and we prepare to welcome a new class of International Military Students. We also say goodbye to the June graduates of the Command and

General Staff College and their families. Spring is when the chapter board traditionally has its retreat to establish chapter priorities for the year. This year's retreat was on May 17. Three new board members joined us this year: Roxanne Westfall, Gabrielle Reilly, and Siew Lau.

The board developed a strategic plan at last year's retreat and it was published in the *Contact* a few months ago. One of the first tasks at our May retreat was to modify the strategic plan based on our experience during the last year. We will publish our revised plan so all members are aware of our priorities. Our most important task remains to recruit new members. Our primary source of revenue to support chapter programs comes from the modest membership dues we charge. As a chapter of People to People International, we pay a substantial portion

of our membership dues to PTPI to support their programs. This does not leave much money to fund our programs.

We discussed our "Recruit One" initiative previously. Recruiting new members has become critical for the chapter since the number of International Military Students has increased significantly. If each chapter member recruits one new member, we could immediately double our membership. Many of you have recruited new members during the last year. I thank you. Most of us know prospective new members, and I ask that you contact them and explain the benefits of chapter membership. Your recruiting efforts will ensure we have the resources to meet our mission.

We have a number of programs in the planning stage for those who sponsor International Military Students and for those of you who do not. Look for details of these programs in upcoming issues of the *Contact* and on our website. Our new board has exciting ideas for our chapter. I am looking forward to a great year for GKCPTP. Thanks for all your support and work on behalf of the chapter and remember, "Recruit One."

Larry Dolci

3

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## STUDENT LOAN PROGRAM UPDATE

As most of you are aware, GKCPTP provides a limited number of loans and scholarships for students who want to travel on People to People Student Ambassador programs. The chapter has funds designated solely for this purpose.

This year we planned to offer two \$1,000 travel scholarships and twenty-five \$1,000 student interest free loans. An unusually high number of students *declined* the loans and scholarships this year. One student accepted a scholarship and seventeen students accepted loans. Feedback from the students who participate in the Student Ambassador Program is usually very positive, and I am happy we are able to offer this benefit.

Unfortunately we have had some students and their parents and guardians who have not repaid their interest free loans. This makes it difficult for us to offer loans and scholarships to other students. In

some cases when I have contacted the students' parents, they have repaid the loans. In other cases, no payments have been made. Our board feels an obligation to collect these funds in order allow other students to travel. We have contracted with a collection firm to collect the past due payments. The collection agency is able to review credit reports in order to determine actual ability to repay the loans. The collection agency has been able to collect some of the past due funds and we will continue to use their services where appropriate.

It is unfortunate we must resort to such steps to recover the funds, however, we have an obligation to make sure the scholarship and loan programs remain solvent. I will continue to report on the status of this program from time to time.

Submitted by Larry Dolci

# GABRIEL AJAK - LOST BOY OF SUDAN

Terry Smitka and Tom Waggoner

The Kansas City area is home to immigrants from many countries. One such group numbering around 3,000 individuals is from Sudan. The Sudanese in this area, overwhelmingly from the Dinka tribe, are primarily located in Olathe and Overland Park. There is also a large population in the Northland. Since most have a limited education, they tend to work in factories with a large number in the meat packing industry in St. Joseph, MO. All have interesting stories about their entry into the USA, but few can match the harrowing tale of 24 year old Gabriel Ajak.

4

Gabriel was born in the Southern Sudanese town of Wanglei in 1983. He lived with his parents and siblings and farmed their small plot of land. He was born during the beginning stages of the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2003). The war was fought between the Arab speaking north and Darfurian west, both Muslim, against the Christian and animist Southern Sudanese. Accustomed to occasional shelling and the normal horrors of war, life for Gabriel was never easy. But things took a horrific turn for the worse in 1992 when government troops raided his city. Fleeing the troops, Gabriel and his brother were separated from their parents. They first took refuge for about 45 days at a Southern Sudanese military base. But this would only offer temporary security. After the soldiers left, Gabriel and his brother took off again and were discovered by the Red Cross in the Ajaher Desert in Eastern Sudan. They were told to walk towards the Kenyan border where the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees rescued them along with many other boys. They were then taken by truck to the refugee camp in Kenya. As it turned out, the camp would be Gabriel's home for the next nine years. Aid workers at the camp labeled the boys the "Lost Boys of Sudan".

Growing up in the camp was very tough for young Gabriel and his brother. Populated with over 100,000 refugees

from all over Africa, the Kakuma Refugee Camp was labeled by Gabriel as a "second Holocaust." Food was intermittently available with the boys often going without it for several days. Besides being constantly hungry, malaria and other diseases ran through the camp. It required a strong will just to survive the terrible conditions.

Gabriel also had no contact with his family during this time and had no idea whether they survived the raid. The US State Department eventually initiated a program to bring 4,000 of these boys to the United States. In 2002, 19 year old Gabriel was one of the fortunate boys to be selected.



Gabriel Ajak survived the Sudanese civil war and emigrated to Kansas City

Since arriving in the US, Gabriel was allowed to attend high school in North Kansas City, a school which has a very high immigrant population. He graduated in 2005 and is currently working at a job and also attending school at both Maple Woods Junior College and Park University. He is majoring in business and received his American citizenship on February 21, 2008. Gabriel hopes to attain his business degree and then return to Southern Sudan. He is also forming an organization with some friends to help teach children in Sudan to read and write.

As for Sudan, the former Arab speaking allies of Northern Sudan and Darfur are engaged in a terrible civil war. However, there is peace in Southern Sudan at this time. Oil has been discovered there and has brightened the people's hopes for a better future. Their goal is to be recognized as an independent state in 2011.

## GKCPTP AIDS PARK UNIVERSITY STUDENT CHAPTER

Olga Ganzen, faculty advisor for the student chapter at Park University conveys her gratitude to the chapter for the financial assistance for the selected student to attend the upcoming PTPI conference in Egypt.

Salam Lazkani will receive a \$1,000 award from our chapter to help with airline expenses to Egypt for the PTPI conference. In reading his application, several outstanding leadership qualities stood out:

- President of Model UN student organization

- President of Global Future (business program sponsored by World Trade Center)
- Board member of PTPI Park Chapter
- Treasurer of World Student Union
- Panel discussion member of Great Decisions

After he returns, Salam will present a program highlighting his experience to our chapter—perhaps a joint program with the Park University chapter.

# MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Pat Burnett

In accordance with our strategic goal of establishing a relationship with a student chapter, Nelson Markel and Pat Burnett met with representatives from the Park University PTPI chapter to investigate this possibility. Olga Ganzen, faculty advisor for the student chapter, and Amiran Gelashvili, president of the student chapter, were enthusiastic about the collaborative effort. The following ideas were discussed.

- GKCPTP to establish a person, or a committee, responsible for regularly meeting with a representative from Park's student chapter to discuss upcoming events for both organizations and how we might support each other's efforts.
- GKCPTP to work with military sponsors to bring together students and officers from the same country on a regular basis.
- Attend each other's board meetings.
- Hold a joint board retreat.
- Work more closely to provide home stays for visiting international students.
- Attend presentations by students on their respective countries at Park University.
- Invite their students to make country presentations at GKCPTP events.

- Work together on the Burma disaster relief effort.
- Include an article in our newsletter featuring one of their students (interview, photo, etc.)
- Park chapter provide articles for our newsletter on a regular basis.
- Assist Park University by sponsoring the airfare (\$1,000) for a student to attend the PTPI Peace Conference in Egypt.

Our board met and recommended exploring these ideas further. Gabrielle Reilly has volunteered to be the liaison to facilitate this process.

At this time our board has approved the commitment of monies for airfare to allow a student to attend the PTPI conference in Egypt, September 2008 with the stipulation that the student will make a presentation to our chapter. These monies were available from the scholarship fund, as one of the original applicants selected for this award withdrew. It is a pleasure to announce that Salam Lazkani has been selected as the recipient of this travel award.

We are steadily gaining numbers in membership. Thanks to everyone for sharing information about our program and a warm welcome to all new and returning members.

5

## NEW BOARD MEMBER:

### SIEW (SŪE) LAU

Member Siew Lau has graciously accepted the board position vacated by Chi Yi. Siew brings a wealth of community volunteer experience.

In addition to Greater Kansas City People to People, she is a board member of the Ethnic Enrichment Commission, the Asian American Chamber of Commerce, the Kansas City Chinese Association, and she is founder of the Malaysian Association of Greater Kansas City. She speaks multiple languages including English, Mandarin, Malays, Cantonese, Hokkien and Hochew!

Siew is currently a financial advisor for Waddell and Reed. She has previously held positions as a mapping analyst and graphic designer. Please extend a warm welcome our newest board member.

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

### New member(s)

Robert Dona & Sharon Johnson  
Michael and Pamela Zanders  
Dick and Georgia Orchard  
Francis and Janet Duff  
Angela Jarvis Dean  
Tom and Beth Hall  
Jim Wilson

### Sponsor(s)

Larry and Barbara Dolci  
PTPI  
Jack and Errett Schmid  
Terry and Pam Smitka  
Inga Barringer/PTPI  
Nelson & Paulette Markel  
Sharon Valasek

## MEMBER MERRILL WATT EARNS GOLD!

Chapter member Merrill Watt was recently awarded the Society of American Military Engineers (SAME) Walter O. Bachus Gold Medal, in recognition of his outstanding leadership and dedicated service. The medal is the society's highest award, given annually since 1920. The society, with over 29,000 members worldwide, promotes and facilitates engineering support for national security by developing and enhancing relationships and competencies among uniformed services, public and private sector engineers, and related professionals. Criteria for this award include outstanding leadership and accomplishments in support of the society's mission over an individual's entire period of membership in the society.

9

U. S. Air Force Major General Del Eulberg, P.E., F.SAME, and President of the The Society of American Military Engineers presented the Gold Medal at the 2008 Joint Engineer Training Conference & Exposition Honors Luncheon in Minneapolis, MN on 20 May 2008.

A society member for more than 35 years, Mr. Watt has served as an individual member, and as a sustaining

member representing Burns & McDonnell: Engineers-Architects-Consultants before retiring.

Following retirement, Mr. Watt has devoted increasingly more time to the service of the Greater Kansas City post, performing assignments requested by the post leadership. These assignments have addressed post governance documents, financial policies to strengthen post controls, and oversight processes.

Speaking of awards, Merrill was also presented a 15-year service award for his participation in the CGSC sponsorship program.

Congratulations on these outstanding achievements!



Merrill Watt accepts Bachus Gold Medal from society president Major General Del Eulberg

## PTPI - AMERICAS REGION MEETINGS

October 3-4, 2008

Please join CEO/President Mary Jean Eisenhower for People to People International's first-ever Americas Region Meeting! This two-day event will take place in Kansas City, Missouri October 3-4, 2008. Activities include:

- Volunteering at the Operation Iraqi Children (OIC) warehouse
- Welcome reception at PTPI's World Headquarters
- Co-hosting dinners with PTPI's Greater Kansas City chapter
- Full day meeting, which includes a leadership session and roundtable discussions

The meeting fee is only \$25 and includes the OIC humanitarian activity, welcome reception, and the meeting/lunch on Saturday! Don't hesitate, register today by clicking on [www.ptpi.org/whats\\_new/](http://www.ptpi.org/whats_new/).

## SPONSOR ACTIVITY

Sharon Valasek

The International Military Student (IMS) class of 09-1 (1st class graduating in 2009) has arrived! These 65 officers have completed registration. Ice breaker sessions were held on July 8 and 9. I hope each sponsor could attend. It is the best time to plan how the Leavenworth, military and GKCPTP sponsors will divide time (at least for major events such as the food fairs and the holiday dinner/dance).

Of the 65 newly arrived IMS units, 18 are assigned to individuals or families new to sponsoring with GKCPTP. Thank you for agreeing to be part of the sponsorship program and welcome! I hope you'll find it a rewarding experience as so many sponsors do. For those seasoned sponsors, please seek out your new fellow sponsors to say hello. I'm sure you'll be able to assist with their questions and alleviate some of their butterflies or concerns. Remember when you were a brand new sponsor?

As of the 1st of July, fifteen IMS had not yet met their GKCPTP sponsor. Meeting your IMS early on (preferably at the airport upon arrival) or very shortly thereafter, has proved the best way to get the relationship off to a good start. If you have not met your IMS, please make contact right away. If you've had difficulty making contact or have questions about what to do, please contact Gwenn Puetz or me right away so we can help out.

# IMS FRIENDSHIPS ENDURE

Cindy and Don Sandker

On July 5, 1981, Jorgen, Birgit and 1 ½ year-old Pia Carina Jelstrup arrived at KCI Airport to begin their year at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth. My husband and I and our 6-month old daughter, Sara, met them at the airport and also met the Leavenworth civilian sponsors, Dr. Ivan and Jo Birrer, and Skip Cooper, the military sponsor for the other Danish officer. It was the beginning of a long friendship.



**Cindy and Don Sandker reunite with Jorgen and Birgit Jelstrup in Copenhagen**

Over the course of that year we had many social activities with the Jelstrups - the opera, the Fort Leavenworth picnic, the PTP picnic, a weekend trip to Silver Dollar City, volksmarching, *Know Your World* programs, a city tour of Kansas City, the American Royal Parade, a tour of police headquarters, birthday parties for both of our daughters (Dec 27 and Jan 2), Mardi Gras festivities, golf, a trip to Las Vegas and of course, many “dinners and schnapps” at each other’s house. We were often accompanied by the Jelstrups’ military sponsor, Bob and Diane Driscoll and their 2 children, Megan and David.

After their return to Denmark, we kept in touch with Christmas letters, small birthday gifts exchanged between the 2 girls, and eventually email.

On May 19 of this year, we finally met again! We were on a northern Europe cruise with a one day stop in Copenhagen and they met us at the ship. All 4 of us were delighted that we recognized each other and “we hadn’t changed a bit!”

It was wonderful to walk through Copenhagen on a day long tour and to catch up on each other’s lives. Pia Carina (now 29 and a lovely young lady), met us for lunch at Tivoli Gardens. We saw all the sights we could imagine and parted tearfully, vowing that we would meet again soon.

Sharon Valasek and Gary Lofstrom

Sharon and Gary sponsored the Bartoszek family in 2006. LTC Witold Bartoszek, his spouse Daria and sons Rafal and Jakub (Kuba) left their Poland homeland for the heartland of the USA. The family had a positive attitude. The boys excelled in their classrooms among a diverse group of students, quickly making friends. Daria participated in the many programs offered for spouses, including English language courses. In fact, by the end of the year, Daria’s English was excellent.

Gary noted “Mostly we did what sponsors typically do. We invited them to our home for a few meals, included them in some activities, such as an afternoon at the bowling alley with our Kansas City friends, and a holiday performance of Handel’s Messiah in Independence, Mo.” When Witold was in Gettysburg, Sharon, Daria and the boys spent a fun-filled afternoon at Chuck E. Cheese.

One opportunity turned out to be particularly enjoyable. The Bartoszek’s planned to visit Chicago as they knew it was a thriving American city and had a significant Polish population. Gary and Sharon were able to join the family on this adventure, helping them find the usual and not-so-usual places to visit in the “Windy City.”

“We decided to attend a church service at a parish with a rich Polish history. It turned out that the church was celebrating its 75th anniversary that day. The service was spoken and sung entirely in the Polish language, and afterwards we were treated with Polish Paczki and coffee in the church hall. The Bartoszek’s clearly felt the way their kinsmen had embraced the US while still cherishing their Polish roots,” adds Sharon.

This spring, Gary and Sharon had the good fortune to have a trip planned to the Czech Republic, and were able to extend their time a few days in order to visit the Bartoszek’s in Poland. They visited their home in Bydgoszcz and took a day trip to the Northern coast of Poland to see Gdansk and Sopot. When Sharon asked Kuba what he missed most about the US, he promptly replied, “*Chuck E. Cheese!*”



**From left: Witold, Jakub (Kuba), Daria, Sharon, Rafal and Gary on the pier in Sopot, Poland.**

## 2008-2009 BOARD MEMBERS

|                          |                  |              |                                |
|--------------------------|------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|
| President                | Larry Dolci      | 913-648-0845 | dolci@everestkc.net            |
| 1st Vice President       | Pat Burnett      | 816-746-9698 | dburnett5@kc.rr.com            |
| 2nd Vice President       | Candice McField  | 913-271-4474 | cmcfield@yahoo.com             |
| Secretary                | Nila Cleaves     | 816-942-1820 | naninila@att.net               |
| Treasurer                | Gary Lofstrom    | 816-942-8887 | gary@lofstromandcompany.com    |
| Director 2009            | Bev Londerholm   | 913-897-3596 | blonderholm@sbcglobal.net      |
| Director 2009            | Terry Smitka     | 816-480-4227 | tsmitka@rwbaird.com            |
| Director 2009            | Tom Waggoner     | 913-631-1223 | jkid96@msn.com                 |
| Director 2010            | Alan Felton      | 913-268-8281 | afelton@feltonmedical.com      |
| Director 2010            | Nelson Markel    | 913-766-3543 | nrmarkel@bucon.com             |
| Director 2010            | Theresa Osredker | 913-897-6163 | Theresa_66209@yahoo.com        |
| Director 2011            | Siew Lau         | 913-897-9113 | siewlau2@yahoo.com             |
| Director 2011            | Gabrielle Reilly | 913-268-8090 | gabrielle2003@everestkc.net    |
| Director 2011            | Roxanne Westfall | 913-638-7849 | Roxanne.Westfall@mediaprof.com |
| Immediate Past President | Sharon Valasek   | 816-942-2794 | svalasek@kc.rr.com             |