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Greater Kansas City Chapter of People to People International

June 2009, Volume 3, Issue 3

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TO RUSSIA WITH LOVE...

Students from Park University recently performed their 5th annual cultural sharing program. The focus of this year's celebration was the ever-intriguing Russia. The evening began with a "taste of Russia" featuring cookies and cakes and the traditional Russian "Salut Olivier," their version of potato salad.

GKCPTP member, Dr. Olga Ganzen, narrated the educational tour of this diverse country that included background information on history, culture and politics. A question-and-answer quiz engaged the audience in learning fun facts to know and tell.

A fashion review with colorful costumes represented many distinct regions. These regions are more popularly represented in the nested Matryoshka Dolls.

Traditions of storytelling and folk music were shared.

Additionally, the Russian contributions to the classical arts were represented through moving ballet and cello performances. The evening concluded with rousing renditions of the Kalinka and Barynya Dances. This delightful program was sponsored in part by our sister PTPI student chapter at Park University. Bravo!!



Sponsor Orientation

Thursday, June 4
6:00-8:30 p.m.

Kauffman Foundation
4801 Rockhill Road
Kansas City, Missouri
64110

Contact Sharon Valasek at
svalasek@kc.rr.com
or 816.213.5847
with questions or
for more information.
Sponsors and chapter
members are encour-
aged to attend

A WORLD OF UNDERSTANDING

On April 9, 2009, American Airlines partnered with PTPI's Operation Iraqi Children (OIC) and the Department of Defense to send 20 tons of school supplies and Crocs shoes to children in Iraq. A kick-off event was held at an American Airlines hangar at Kansas City International airport. Guests were treated to a performance by Vandel-Snook, a video message from OIC co-founder Gary Sinise and recognition of wounded veterans from Fort Riley. (See more on this story on page 5.)



From the military community were (left to right) : LTC(Ret) Todd Guggisberg, SGT(Ret) James Wilson, MAJ Andre Authier, MAJ Leonardo Zarza (Argentina), and MAJ Travis McCrackine.

People to People was represented among the invited attendees, as were a number of key individuals from the military. Among others in the latter group were SGT(Ret) James Wilson, a wounded veteran who was honored at the event, and members of the Command and General Staff College Class of 09-1: MAJ Leonardo Zarza, a student officer from Argentina, MAJ Andre Authier and MAJ Travis McCrackine, along with instructor, LTC (Ret) Todd Guggisberg.

Mike Wood writes poignantly about the depth of human understanding he has gained from his years living and traveling outside the U.S. This article rings true today, as it did two years ago when he wrote it.

A BELATED THANK YOU NOTE

Michael B. Wood

For years I had heard the phrase: “travel broadens the mind,” but I had no idea the wisdom of that saying until I arrived in Malaysia as a young American Peace Corps Volunteer over 40 years ago. Truth to tell, I may not have realized until recently the full impact my two years as a teacher in Labuan, Sabah, has had on my life.

I was assigned to an orphanage where I taught English to 13-year-old boys. The school was a nearly perfect representation of this young country – with Malay, Chinese, Indian and other indigenous local students, each with his own language and traditions. There was a lot of education going on, but to this day, I’m not sure if it was the students or the teacher who learned the most.

On a superficial level, it was just plain fun...sampling new kinds of food, struggling to learn foreign languages, making new friends, using a bike as my primary means of transportation and enjoying Asia’s customary hospitality. On top of that, the students were attentive and respectful. It was an altogether wonderful experience. However, I think “broadening the mind” means more than that.

What is it about living in a foreign environment that can be so significant in creating the person that one is to become? It may be that such an intense experience can thoroughly challenge personal convictions, re-arranging one’s view of the world and one’s place in it. There seem to be very few absolutes. Ideas about the meaning of relationships, justice, the importance of “things” and many other concepts take their place under the microscope of an in-depth international experience. The very meaning of “development,” one of the specific reasons for the creation of the Peace Corps, becomes subject to re-evaluation.

The significance of my years in Malaysia and their effect on me was underscored a couple of years ago. It’s not that my teaching days in Labuan are ever very far below the surface of my mind; they’re always there. Over the years, I have visited Malaysia, and I constantly talk to my family and friends about my experiences there. However, just a few years ago, I received word that one of my students from 1965 was trying to reach me. After some initial missteps, I was finally able to establish email contact with Jimmy Tan, now living in Kota Kinabalu. We have exchanged photos and nearly 20 emails with holiday greetings, family stories and comments on world affairs and economics. It’s been quite an emotional ride. Jimmy, I wonder if you know how much I learned from you and your classmates.

The broadening of my mind continues. During Ramadan 2005, my wife and I spent several days in Kuala Lumpur. The high point of the trip was the opportunity to break fast with a local economics teacher, Professor Ataul Huq Pramanik, and his family. Although KL’s growth into a world-class city is extremely impressive, the personal interactions between people who live 11,000 miles apart are what give such visits meaning.

And, then, 18 months ago, I was contacted by Ms. May Maniam, who is originally from Penang but now lives in the US. She explained that she was spearheading a project to promote awareness and understanding of Malaysia among American young people. The Friends of Malaysia, a group of former Peace Corps Volunteers, had agreed to help her out. “My bank account was full, but my heart was empty,” she said “and there is a pressing need to broaden the minds of school children.” Once I heard that comment, I signed on.

With her encouragement, we began a series of programs at elementary schools and libraries around the United States. Using specially developed materials including books of Malaysian children’s stories, videos of Malaysian animals, large wall posters and years of personal experiences, we tried to light the fire of curiosity about the world in the minds of American fifth graders. The programs were attended by thousands of kids and, from all reports, it was a rousing success.

One of the major goals of the Peace Corps, well known among its alumni, is to help promote international understanding by explaining to Americans at home what we learned in service overseas. That was part of the mission over 40 years ago, and it remains so today.

The US is thoroughly western in character and Malaysia thoroughly eastern—irreconcilably different, seemingly—yet many people of both countries share the view that international experiences can shape minds. And, both nations demonstrate a strong commitment to democracy and diversity. For these and other reasons, I found in Labuan, in KL and then at home that people’s similarities far out-weigh their differences. Perhaps one could go to any foreign country to have his mind broadened, but from my perspective, Malaysia was the perfect setting.

So, Jimmy, Professor Huq, May and the rest of Malaysia, on this your 50th birthday, please accept this note of thanks, even several decades late, for contributing to my education and for helping me to realize that we are all citizens of the world. (June 6, 2007)

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness."

~ Mark Twain

Mark Twain is an American treasure. Hal Holbrook portraying Mark Twain is an equal treasure. I had the opportunity to hear Holbrook in person a couple of months ago in his Tony award winning production of Mark Twain Tonight. The

insight and relevance that Twain's work has, even today, on subjects such as politics, religion and cultural understanding is impressive.

Your GKCPTP board met on May 2 for the annual retreat to refine our strategic plan. We identified areas of strengths and weaknesses and are developing committees to create action plans. We continue to focus on recruiting new members and engaging current members to seize this great opportunity to act as ambassadors for our country. YOU do make a difference!

Inga Barringer has volunteered to serve in the board of director's vacancy. She brings experience from both the chapter and international levels. The board is grateful to have her aboard.

I want to take a moment to recognize the talented newsletter committee. There were many compliments on the first issue brought to you in "living color" on your computer screen. Joan Barrett leads the committee as the "point" person. Sharon Valasek, Karen Haber and Jake Jacobs, along with yours truly, proof the material; and Gary Lofstrom does the beautiful layout. Guest writers and committee chairs contribute news content, photos, etc. We are always looking for articles that would be interesting to our membership, so please contact us.

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By now you realize that I love quotes. Mark Twain sure has some ageless thoughts on travel and his are some of my favorite. My husband has his own favorite that he shares with me before every vacation. "He who would travel happily must travel light." - Antoine de Saint Exupéry. I guess I had better repack...

Warm regards,

Pat

Additional photos from Park University's "Russian Cultural Sharing Event"



THE WAY AHEAD: WHAT PART DO YOU PLAY?

Every organization requires a core group of leaders, planners and coordinators. GKCPTP is led by a dynamic board of directors, who met May 2nd in a one-day executive retreat to set goals and plans for the coming year. This annual gathering is designed to create a solid working relationship among the board members while laying the organization's foundation at least one year in advance.

During this year's retreat, the following committees were established or re-confirmed. Listed below are the chairs, along with their primary goals for 2009-2010. Isn't there a spot for you on one of these committees? Where could you apply your talents? Great leaders are essential, but fabulous committee members are irreplaceable.

Finance Committee - Chair: Siew Lau

- Form a budget
- Wrap up student loans

Communications – Chair: Gabrielle Reilly

- Improve external communications with other international organizations

Membership – Chair: Karen Haber

- Update membership directory
- Implement recognition awards

Programs – Chair: Candice McFields

- Assist with humanitarian project
- Coordinate homestay programming
- Coordinate Park University/Sumner Academy program
- Develop a quarterly program for the calendar year

Military – Chair: Sharon Valasek

- Serve as point of contact with International Military Student Division (IMSD)
- Manage IMS program
- Conduct sponsor/member orientations
- Coordinate program for IMS with program committee

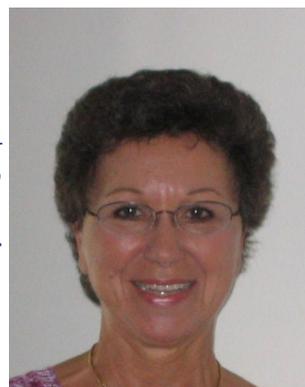
Strategic Planning – Chair: Nelson Markel

- Plan and coordinate long-term organizational goals.

WELCOME BOARD MEMBER INGA BARRINGER

Inga came to the United States in 1964 with her husband, then serving in the US Air Force, and their two children. Despite frequent moves with the military, she was able to have a career as a medical technologist, working in Germany, Belgium and here in the U.S., retiring from the Veterans Administration in 1999.

PTPI has long held a special interest for her, and she has been a member and IMS sponsor since 1983. Besides helping with both international and chapter scholarship committees, she has also served on the board of directors several times. In 2003, she was elected to the board of trustees of PTPI, where she currently serves on the audit committee.



Being a sponsor for an international officer, volunteering for Heart to Heart International, the Johnson County Election Office, her church and spending time with her four grandchildren keeps her busy. In addition, working part time funds her favorite pastime, international travel.

MEMBERSHIP

Please take the time to welcome the following new GKCPTP members. And, don't forget to thank the sponsoring members for continuing to increase our membership. In addition to the new members, we've had two renewals. As of May 20, there are 141 membership units.

<u>New Member</u>	<u>Sponsoring Member</u>
Chuck and Ann Hatch	Nelson and Paulette Markel
Tim and Wanda Nolan	IMSD
Crystal Pace	Pat and Dak Burnett
Karen Skinner	Patsy Medill
Renee Stevenson and Lyn Yarbrough	Siew Lau

GOT A MINUTE?

Do you have a minute? An hour? A full afternoon? If so, take a trip to www.travelpod.com. Oh, you've already been? Then you know how easy it is to get lost there. Located on one succinct website are the musings, the travelogues, the stories of thousands of travelers from all over the world.

There are blogs that whimsically follow one traveler on a bicycle tour of eastern Europe; another, through an emotional day at Auschwitz; and still another, on a romantic journey in Asia. Mixed in, you'll also find a lengthy description of an evening's exploration of Kansas City's Power & Light District.

In addition to the innumerable blog entries, a visitor will find user forums for discussions about travel in particular locations, travel tips, pictures that capture the essence of travel, a point-and-click map – and, of course, the usual travel ads for flights, hotels, hostels! It's an amazing site: plan to spend a long time there!

A TRAVEL CHALLENGE

Just like the folks who fill www.travelpod.com with their travelogues, our members have amazing stories to tell about places and people who are meaningful in their lives.

So, why not share them the rest of our membership? Let us know about an out-of-the-way spot where you've lived or traveled. Write about special times in ordinary places, as well, including those right here in the U.S. Do you have tips, hints and cautions for those of us who are headed out to the other side of the world? Stories that have touched your heart? Tell us, please!

Here's how! Tell your story (a limit of 850 words, please) and include pictures, if you have them. You don't have to be an author or journalist; we will be happy to help edit your story, if you'd like. Send them to jrcbarrett@aol.com. Or, call Joan Barrett at 816-746-7966 for more details.

CALENDAR

Date	Event	Location	Time
6/04/09	Sponsor Orientation	Kauffman Foundation, 4801 Rockhill Rd, K.C., MO 64110	6:00 - 8:30 p.m.
6/11/09	Badge Ceremony, Class 09-1	Lewis/Clark, Ft. Leavenworth	10:30 a.m.
6/12	Graduation Ceremony, Class 09-1	Lewis/Clark, Ft. Leavenworth	10:00 a.m.
6/13 - 6/24	Class 10-1 arrival window		
6/24/09	Know Your World - Brazil	Lewis/Clark, Ft. Leavenworth	3:30 p.m.
7/7 & 7/8	Icebreakers for Class 10-1	TBA	
7/15/09	Know Your World Bahrain, Class 09-2	Lewis/Clark, Ft. Leavenworth	3:30 p.m.

Note: 09-1 Ft. Leavenworth IMS class graduates June 2009, 09-2 class graduates in Dec 2009, 10-1 arrives June 2009.

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NEWS FROM PEOPLE TO PEOPLE INTERNATIONAL



PTPI's Global Peace Initiative/Peace Camp in Jordan!

Students and adults from across the globe gathered in Jordan for 10 days of intercultural exchange and dialogue. Read about it in the students' own words by visiting the Peace Camp blog at <http://www.ptpipeacecamp.blogspot.com>.

Register for PTPI's Americas Regional Meeting

PTPI invites you to join them in Las Vegas, Nevada for PTPI's 2009 Board of Trustees and Americas Regional Meeting to be held September 3 – 5, 2009. Spend U.S. Labor Day weekend with your PTPI friends from across the Americas Region! For a complete itinerary and to register, please visit www.ptpi.org/whats_new/AdultTravel.aspx. For more information, contact Karen Hoch at karenh@ptpi.org.

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Operation Iraqi Children and American Airlines Send 20 Tons of School Supplies to Iraq

American Airlines partnered with PTPI's Operation Iraqi Children (OIC) Program and the Department of Defense to send 20 tons of school supplies and Crocs shoes to children in Iraq. This was the largest shipment of school supplies to Iraq in OIC's history! A group of entertainers, including singer Tony Orlando, model Leeann Tweeden and actor Stephen Baldwin were also on board to entertain U.S. troops in Iraq. American Airlines donated their 767 aircraft to send the supplies, performers and PTPI's OIC staff members to Iraq in April. For more information, visit http://www.ptpi.org/whats_new/NewsReleases.aspx.

Find PTPI on Facebook at <http://tinyurl.com/PTPIfacebook>. And, follow them on Twitter at: www.twitter.com/ptpi.