

# GKCPTP Chapter Bulletin: October 2013

---

People to People Kansas City Chapter Calendar .....	1
* Thanksgiving Feast by OISS.....	2
President’s Letter .....	2
Great Decisions Program.....	3
Deanna Rose Farmstead 2013 Recap .....	4
International Military Student (IMS) Sponsorship Committee.....	5
Reconnecting with our International Military Student .....	6
Membership Update .....	8

## People to People Kansas City Chapter Calendar

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	TIME
11/15/13	Holiday Dinner Dance 13-02 (by invitation only)	Frontier Conference Center Fort Leavenworth	6:00 p.m.
11/22/13	Sponsor Appreciation 13-02 (by invitation only)	Eisenhower Auditorium Lewis and Clark Fort Leavenworth	6:00 p.m.
11/24/13	Thanksgiving Feast* for IMS. (Must join/register via Organization of International Spouses and Sponsors)	Riverfront Community Center, Leavenworth, KS	3:45 p.m. - 5:30
12/06/13	Holiday Dinner Dance 14-01 (by invitation only)	Frontier Conference Center Fort Leavenworth	6:00 p.m.
12/09/13	Sponsor Briefing (for members, new and prospective members)	Kauffman Foundation, 4801 Rockhill RD, Kansas City, MO	6-8:00 p.m.
12/12/13	Badge Ceremony 13-02	Eisenhower Auditorium Lewis and Clark Fort Leavenworth	TBD
12/13/13	Graduation 13-02	Eisenhower Auditorium Lewis and Clark Fort Leavenworth	TBD
01/02 - 01/03/14	IMS Arrival 14-02	Varies: MCI Airport or vehicle	
01/21 or 01/22/14	Sponsor Icebreakers 14-02 (by invitation only)	Frontier Conference Center Fort Leavenworth	6-9:00 p.m.

Note 1: 13-02 class graduates Dec. 2013; 14-01 class graduates June 2014; 14-02 class graduates Dec. 2014.

### \* **Thanksgiving Feast by OISS**

\* To attend Thanksgiving Feast (and other OISS events), you must join Organization of International Spouses and Sponsors (OISS). Member fee is only \$10 per year. Download OISS membership form and/or OISS event list here. Cost of Thanksgiving feast is \$7 per person for those age 12 and older. Contact the president of OISS, Marcia Irvine, at 913-240-3315, with questions.

## **President's Letter**

Dear Friends,

The theme of my letter for this issue is "Thanks!"

I want to make an effort to thank the chapter members who do so much to make the activities of our chapter a success. First, the recent Deanna Rose Farmstead event was attended by more than 300 chapter members, guests and international military students. The feedback from this event has been nothing but positive from the officers and the leadership at Ft. Leavenworth. In fact, one of the staff members of Deanna Rose Farmstead said the event gave him, "the feeling he was traveling all over the world" just by being around the international families.

Many people were involved in the planning and execution of the event. At the risk of missing some of you I want to thank those of you who I know were involved. **Jane Kohl** planned the event, handling all the logistics that went off without a hitch. **Kim Nitz** and family did their usual excellent job of setting up the children's bags, and general setup and take-down along with **Terry Smitka, Sharon Valasek, Gary Lofstrom** and **Tom Waggoner**. The front gate crew of **Karen and Chuck Haber, Randy Pace, Jim Malouff** and others did a great job of getting people checked in with almost no wait. And **Larry Hedlund** took a number of quality photos so we can share and remember this year's event. I am sure I missed naming some of you who helped make the event a success but I appreciate all your efforts. This year was the first year the chapter received no support for the event from the military, but with a generous grant from People to People International and the financial support of chapter members we were able to execute the event at minimal cost to the chapter.

I want to thank those of you who sponsor international military students at the Command and General Staff College. For the first time in my memory, our chapter received one hundred percent positive reviews from the students. This is quite an achievement and one I hope we can repeat to ensure the students continue to receive a positive impression of sponsors and the United States.

We have begun a new series of structured discussions under the Great Decisions format of the Foreign Policy Association to appeal to those chapter members who may not be sponsoring an international officer, as well as those who do. The first discussion group was held on September 29, discussing the topic of the Future of U.S. Egyptian relations. The second discussion group on October 20, 2013 discussed China in Africa. Look for additional information on this program in the article below. For details, contact **Barbara Dolci** at [btrdolci@gmail.com](mailto:btrdolci@gmail.com).

Special thanks to all you long-term members who have supported our programs for decades, such as **Thelma Simmons** who I was honored to present at the Deanna Rose Farmstead event with a special award from People to People International for her decades of service. Many other chapter members have also served for decades – thanks to all of you.

I would also like to thank all of you who purchased Chiefs tickets through our chapter. These purchases help fund chapter functions and a special thanks to **Donna Koontz** who handled the sales for us.

I would also like to thank all of our board members who serve on a variety of committees such as membership, finance, military, communications and others. Board members are devoting considerable time to reviewing our website and other communications tools to ensure we are using the latest tools to recruit and communicate with members and the public. We have a very talented and hardworking board and it is a pleasure to work with them. If you get a chance, you might want to thank them as well.

Finally, I would like to thank those who help put the newsletter together, **Paulette and Nelson Markel, Karen Haber** and especially **Gary Lofstrom** who helps the chapter so much with the newsletter, emails and other communications.

Warm regards,  
Larry Dolci

## **Great Decisions Program**

Great Decisions, a program of the Foreign Policy Association, got off to a great start this fall. The October meeting was led by special guest, Captain Juste Codjo, on the topic of China in Africa, the subject of his master's thesis while he was at CGSC. A big

“Thank you” goes to him, and to Tom and Jane Kohl Waggoner who sponsored him during his year at Ft. Leavenworth.

The discussion group focusing on world events met in September and October at the home of Larry and Barbara Dolci. Each discussion brought first-hand knowledge of the issues currently facing Egypt (September) and China in Africa (October) using outside resources and personal accounts, as well as the detailed material provided by the Foreign Policy Association.

Chapter member Hazel Bischoff said,

“Great Decisions was one of the most rewarding events of my year because as GKCPTP members, we gathered to discuss, study, and particularly to share personal experiences, either as professionals traveling to or employed (in Egypt), or as individuals who have lived there, or who visit family there. After the discussion, I feel more control personally because I understand more about the world for which I have responsibility.”

The Great Decisions program will resume in January with the new topics of world-wide importance for 2014. We will be ordering books at a cost of \$20 each with articles written by informed foreign policy professionals. If you are want to purchase a book, please send an email to [btrdolci@gmail.com](mailto:btrdolci@gmail.com) and the order will be made for you.

## **Deanna Rose Farmstead 2013 Recap**

Submitted by Jane Kohl-Waggoner

The sky could not have been bluer, the air could not have been fresher, the families could not have been more.....INTERNATIONAL. And so it must have been Sunday, September 22, 2013, at the Deanna Rose Farmstead in Overland Park, KS.

Approximately 300 people (international military students, their families and their sponsors - both GKCPTP and those from Leavenworth/ Lansing and Ft. Leavenworth) gathered to share an all-American meal and explore the grounds of this 1900s-era farm. We know that fishing and eating ice cream at the General Store and Ice Cream Parlor were a huge hit again this year.

GKCPTP member Kim Nitz and her enthusiastic children, Annabelle and Jack, organized a very popular arts and crafts area so that all of the children could color their own animal masks. They also discovered last year’s animal masks that were left over – they were also very popular!



Kim heard one of Deanna Rose Farmstead's volunteers say that he "felt like he'd been around the world today without ever getting on a plane." We think that was the best summary of the fun that everyone had on this gorgeous autumn afternoon!

I personally want to thank all GKCPTP members who not only attended, but who helped us warmly welcome our new friends from all over the world. We certainly hope we get to do this again in 2014!

## International Military Student (IMS) Sponsorship Committee

Provided by Sharon Valasek

- **New IMS class: 14-02.** The next class of IMS arrives January 2-3, 2014. Current IMS sponsors should have been contacted via email by a member of the military committee requesting your participation in sponsorship. Your reply is requested by October 28 so we can begin coordinating new international military students with chapter members.
- **Sponsor Briefing.** Members/sponsors, new and otherwise, as well as prospective members/sponsors are invited to attend the next sponsor briefing on December 9, 2013. It will be held at the Kauffman Foundation (4801 Rockhill Rd., Kansas City, MO).
- **Event RSVP.** Please be sure to RSVP, one way or the other, when you're invited to the official events sponsored by the IMSD: food fairs, holiday

dances, graduation ceremonies, sponsor appreciation events, etc. Check with your IMS to ensure you're in sync with him/her regarding plans to attend the event.

- **Cold Weather.** As cold weather sets in, please consider sharing tips with your IMS about what to wear, where to get good deals on coats, gloves, boots, etc.

Please contact me at 816-213-5847 or svalasek@kc.rr.com, Sonia Eichenwald at 913-851-0873 or seichenwald@aol.com, or any member of the military committee if you have questions about sponsoring or ideas to improve the sponsor experience. We appreciate your feedback and chances are your questions or ideas could benefit others.

## Reconnecting with our International Military Student

### *Our trip to Lithuania*

Submitted by Gary Lofstrom



Members Gary Lofstrom and Sharon Valasek recently reconnected with international military student from class of 2004-2005, Vaidas Bernotas (far right), and his family in Lithuania's capital, Vilnius.

This past September, my wife, Sharon Valasek, and I traveled to Europe for 2 weeks. Our travels took us to Prague and Brno in the Czech Republic, and to Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. This article focuses on the days spent in Lithuania in order for

us to share with fellow chapter members how we reunited with a past international military student that we sponsored through People to People International, Kansas City Chapter. Although many chapter members have traveled to the homelands of their officers, we have done so just a couple of times, and this visit was unique and special for us.

#### *Vaidas Bernotas, class of 2004-05*

Vaidas came to Fort Leavenworth in 2004 and today continues his military career in the capital city of Vilnius. His position today includes interacting with many foreign governments and his time at Fort Leavenworth has proven valuable to him and to Lithuania. Fortunately, Vaidas was on scheduled vacation during our visit and graciously showed us around Vilnius and the surrounding area. We were also able to reconnect with his wife, Egle, and meet their 2 young sons, Jonas and Pavilus. We stayed at Vaidas and Egle's home, which is a great way of learning the way of life of the Lithuanian people. It was also very generous of them to share their home and time with us.

#### *Soviet Union imprint remains*

Our time together allowed us to not only visit the beautiful and historic sites, ancient castles, scenery, etc., but also to learn more about the recent history of this ages old land. We learned how Vaidas and Egle's lives have been intertwined with the time of Soviet rule and the independence gained at the end of the Cold War. For example, we toured the building that once held Soviet Union's KGB headquarters in Vilnius and we soon learned that Vaidas' mother was incarcerated there for a night at the young age of 17.

During her youth, she wrote poems and one of them included some criticisms of the Soviet rulers. A classmate turned her in to the authorities. The night in prison was followed by a train ride to Siberia (Uzhla and Stavropol), part of a sentence of 10 years! Fortunately, she was freed after three years. A number of political prisoners were freed after Stalin's death in 1953. Her story doesn't end there. She eventually became a medical doctor and practiced medicine for many years. This is quite a feat, since few women were allowed to study medicine in these times, especially those who were once political prisoners.

#### *Baltic Chain*

On August 23, 1989, approximately two million people joined their hands to form a human chain spanning over 600 kilometers (370 mi) across the three Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, republics of the Soviet Union. The protest was designed to draw global attention by demonstrating a popular desire for independence by each country. It also illustrated solidarity among the three nations.

Vaidas proudly told us that at age 16 he was part of that chain. Egle shared with us how the young women in the Soviet era were required to wear specific and rather stodgy uniforms, and were continually pressured to declare their allegiance to the communist party.

### *Stalin's World*

We also visited Grūtas Park, a two-plus hour drive from Vilnius through forests full of mushrooms. (The mushrooms were in season, so there were many people selling them along the roadway.) Grūtas Park is unofficially known as Stalin's World because a Lithuanian entrepreneur gathered many statues and memorabilia from the Soviet era (as they were being removed and dismantled) and created a mostly outdoor exhibition. The park also contains playgrounds, a mini-zoo and cafes, with many families visiting. The park is controversial. Is it a way to remember and heal from a painful past? Or is it disrespectful to those who were deported or killed during the Soviet occupation? I assure you that everyone in Lithuania has an opinion!

Our friendship with Vaidas and Egle that began in 2004 has turned into an even closer bond through this personal visit and sharing of cultures, ideas, opinions, and through our shared experiences while together. We strongly recommend that you, too, visit your officers and families in their homeland. You'll be glad you did!

## **Membership Update**

by Betty Olberding

New members are: Samantha Harlan      Recruited by: PTPI

Samantha, welcome to our organization! It's truly wonderful to have you as a member. We are making preparations for the international officers who will be arriving in January 2014. At this time, we need additional members to host the January 2014 class. Our membership committee will be hosting informational gatherings in our homes in which we can invite prospective new Greater Kansas City People to People members to mingle with current members. If you would like to host an event, please contact me as soon as possible: [betty\\_olberding@yahoo.com](mailto:betty_olberding@yahoo.com), or telephone: 913-772-8684.

Copyright © 2013 People to People International Kansas City Chapter, All rights reserved. People to People International Kansas City Chapter, PO Box 22365  
Kansas City, MO 64113