

AWAL Mania

FS Young People Form Re-entry Network



by David Fouché

There's a new craze that's sweeping Washington. The signs with the globe that say "Go AWAL" are popping up everywhere. (There is even one in the October issue of the AAFSW News.) Unlike other manias, however, we know how this one got started.

In the fall of '82, I got a call from Mrs. Janet Lloyd. She wanted to get some teen-agers together who had lived overseas. I had just gone through a difficult two years where I had tried, without much luck, to make even a small handful of friends. I felt the need to talk to someone who would understand. So I went.

Several of us met at the Overseas Briefing Center with Mrs. Lloyd, Ruth Abramson from OBC and Harvel Sebastian from AAFSW. At the time, we had no clear idea what we might accomplish. But, we did do a lot of talking about the hardships of trying to make a new home in our homeland.

A few weeks later, Jennifer Kahane telephoned. She said she had been elected Teen Coordinator for a newly-formed club called AWAL (Around the World in a Lifetime). The club, she explained, was for young people ages 12-18 who had lived overseas.

Jennifer invited me to an AWAL picnic.



AWAL Members at a softball game in McLean, Virginia

At the picnic, I opened up completely and had a great time socializing with kids who had experienced some of the same difficulties I had during my "re-entry" period. Here was a group of kids who really understood what it's like to be the "new kid on the block"; and, more important, who were ready to listen. I realized then what a valuable asset AWAL could be.

AWAL has a lot going for it. For one thing, it puts teen-agers now living in the U.S. in touch with each other, and it puts those just returning in touch with the rest of us. It also has a group of college-age members with their own activities—at which they have as much fun as we do at ours. In addition, they serve as our group leaders and chaperone at our functions.

In just a year's time, AWAL has not only gotten off the ground, it has taken off like a rocket. Several plans and projects are already in the works. One of our members has offered to set up a telephone tree and transportation network. Two others, who are going overseas, plan to start new chapters of AWAL abroad. One day we expect

to see AWAL chapters all over the world.

AWAL's plans for the autumn include a newsletter, a retreat, and the creation of school re-entry and college networks (to match up AWAL members at the same schools).

In other words, AWAL mania has struck town. Thanks to the enthusiastic response of kids overseas, the new members, and our supporters at AAFSW, OBC and FLO, we've gotten off to a great start. In addition to our brand-new logo, we've even acquired a mascot. It's a trunk with the label "Old Faithful." Once people cover it with stickers from all the places they've been, it will really be a part of us.

David Fouché is Assistant Teen Coordinator for AWAL. For more information about membership in AWAL, call him at 534-6883 or Jennifer Kahane at 448-9377. To find out how you can support AWAL as a parent call FLO at 632-3178 or OBC at 235-8784/5.

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