

GLOBAL LINK

Association of American Foreign Service Women

FORUM Reveals Concerns about Child, Elder Care

Child care at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center and elder care were the two issues that received the most attention at the February FORUM meeting. The following papers were presented:

- a position paper on "Provision of Child Care Facility at NFATC"
- a proposal for an AAFSW-sponsored short-term child care subsidy pilot program
- a research paper outlining elder care needs
- a short summary of a meeting on "The Future of AAFSW"
- a written statement on "Language Training for Spouses"
- a written statement on "Morale in the Foreign Service as affected by Personnel Policy and Political Appointments"
- a brief proposal on "Help for New Foreign Service Spouses"

(See "FORUM," page 3)

AAFSW Announces Continuing Education Scholarship Winner

Congratulations to **Joan Sitnik Walsh**, who has been awarded AAFSW's third Continuing Education Scholarship. Joan is presently studying at George Mason University, specializing in teaching kindergarten through third grade and emotionally disturbed/learning disabled students. She chose this field of studies in response to a felt need in Foreign Service communities abroad.

Joan has served in Bangladesh and Egypt, and she has been the Vienna AAFSW Neighborhood Network contact since 1995. She turned to the field of education after working for USAID in Bangladesh, using her background in economics.

"I have always held a strong desire to serve humanity and had felt that the



best way to serve in the Third World was in developing strong economies. The lesson I learned [...], however, was that despite a nation's economic conditions, the success or failure of a business rested with the education of the entrepreneur and his/her workers."

Joan is the third recipient of the \$2,000 scholarship set aside specifically for AAFSW members. It was created to help meet the needs of Foreign Service spouses continuing their education after service abroad.

The selection process was exceptionally difficult this year, as every candidate was truly outstanding. We felt that any one of them would have made us proud as our representative holding the scholarship and found it awfully hard to choose just one.

Scholarship Selection Committee

Congress Studies Family Policies

The Office of Personnel Management has been asked by Congressional Representatives Frank R. Wolf (VA) and Steny H. Hoyer (MD) to do a government-wide study on the implementation of family-friendly policies, to be completed by May 1.

Options such as flexible hours, job-sharing, workplace child care, special leave for family matters, such as sick

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children, adoptions, funerals, etc., are supposed to be in place, but as the representatives say, "although these policies are law, every agency may not be offering these choices and thus federal employees may not be getting the family-friendly workplace...they need."

If your family has been affected recently by policies at one of foreign affairs agencies, contact the AAFSW office or *Global Link* as soon as you can, so that we can compile the information before the May 1 deadline.

AAFSW

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Member Papers Contribute to FORUM Discussion

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The group decided that the statement on "Morale in the Foreign Service" should be used as a "scene setter" for any of the other papers which might be submitted to foreign affairs agencies' management or Congress for advocacy purposes.

Child Care

The FORUM learned that a study was scheduled to determine what it would take to convert Building #51 (the Sears cottage at NFATC) to a child care center. The study and renovations would cost close to \$150,000 and the process would last from 12 to 18 months, after which the center would accommodate only 30 children. The Board of the Columbia Plaza Child Care Center (Diplotots) and the FORUM agreed that this would not be a good idea for the following reasons:

1 The facility is too small to be a permanent solution. Diplotots believes that an NFATC facility should accommodate at least 86 children.

2 Management might consider this a permanent solution, however, and cease further action.

3 No child care administrator would agree to run such a small facility.

FORUM and Diplotots prefer to concentrate on construction of a permanent and free-standing facility; there is a dedicated site, and some plumbing/sewage is already installed.

Potential uses for Building #51 include: as overflow for the free-standing center; for emergencies such as an evacuation; for the Foreign Service Youth Foundation; or for elder care.

Subsequent to the FORUM meeting, the Diplotots Board received a letter from the Assistant Secretary of Administration stating that the Department is interested in seeing some kind of child care services offered at NFATC in the near future and asking Diplotots to continue working closely with Real Property Management (RPM), Personnel/Employee Relations (PER/ER), and the

Foreign Service Institute on the development of a stand-alone center.

Elder Care

The FORUM spent a good deal of time discussing elder care. This concern is on the increase because people are living so much longer. There is a great deal of information about elder care, but it seems disjointed. DACOR, the Senior Living Foundation of AFSA, AAFSW, FLO, ECS and PER/ER all have information. The FORUM talked in terms of arranging a conference in September to encourage cooperation amongst these groups. The World Bank has an excellent facility for handling the concerns of elder care, and the FORUM could learn from visiting their facility.

We also talked about what AAFSW could do. Suggestion included:

- advocating for a yearly round trip for an employee or family member who is responsible for elderly parents
- advocating to be able to use USG tie-lines for communicating with elderly parents
- determining—through a questionnaire—what support is available for elders at post including information on the possibility of buying in to the local health insurance
- lobbying for Medicare to extend coverage to elders who are overseas
- advocating for the establishment of an additional position at State—in the ECS—to deal with elder care concerns on a full-time basis
- advocating to get survivor's pension increased from 55% to 75% for people whose spouses retired at the O3 level or below

Time was running short, but two other matters were mentioned briefly. The desirability of language training for spouses is not in question.

The last topic discussed was whether or not the FORUM would support the foundation of an "Employee Services Corridor" at State, in which one "super-crat" would take a person through the entire moving process. FORUM members did not approve of this approach, since there is too much specialized information to be provided. However,

time ran out and we did not finish our discussion.

This year's final FORUM meeting will be held on Saturday, May 2 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the same location, Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church, in Northwest Washington.

Better Link 

Member Proposes Teachers' Network

Dear AAFSW,

I recently received the February issue of *Global Link* and read Letter Link with great excitement. I would love the idea of setting up a letter-writing network!! I am an inveterate letter writer and am always eager to meet others who also like to communicate on paper. I'm afraid I do not like e-mail, as I find it as intrusive as the telephone. Letters allow one more freedom to compose, and, for me, give the added joy of putting pen to paper. I am not an artist, and so take great pleasure in cultivating beautiful penmanship.

I would welcome the opportunity to exchange letters with spouses on the topic of being an educator overseas. I am a new teacher (a 1995 graduate of FAST TRAIN) and am always on the lookout for more tips and insights from others.

I look forward to more news on this subject!

*Nicole B. Zupan
U.S. Embassy Lagos*

Nicole will be transferring to Jerusalem after a brief visit to Washington, DC in July.

Any ideas about the best way to set up this network? Are you interested in participating? Please contact the AAFSW office, and we will forward your letters to those interested in the network.