



Happy Birthday, www.aafsw.org!

In the fall of 1999 AAFSW entered the digital age by “adopting” *Foreign Service Lifelines*, the first website by and for American Foreign Service families, and the brainchild of Melissa Hess, a State Department family member. Melissa continued to develop the website in her new capacity as editor. One of her first moves was to employ another U.S. diplomatic family member, Kelly Bembry Midura, as webmaster of the site, and to implement a redesign and expansion of the existing online resources. AAFSW also registered the domain name “www.aafsw.org.”

On January 1, 2000 the redesigned site was launched at www.aafsw.org. *Foreign Service Lifelines* became the “webzine” portion of the site, with three monthly features: “Tips from the Trenches,” a collection of advice from experienced Foreign Service family members; “Perspectives,” essays on the Foreign Service experience; and “The Cyberspouse,” Kelly’s monthly column on the many uses of the Internet for Foreign Service families. The new site also grew to accommodate extensive information about AAFSW and its activities and services, several pages of links, and continually updated resources contributed by the Overseas Briefing Center, including current course listings, and the Family Liaison Office. (It should be noted that the last two items are provided as a service to the community: AAFSW receives no funding whatsoever from the Department of State.)

New features were added rapidly over the next few months, including: “Notes for Newcomers,” a selection of articles and links especially for those just entering the U.S. Foreign Service; the “Foreign Service Tool Kit,” a page of links to essential information for all diplomatic families; and the “Washington, D.C. Housing Reviews,” first-hand reports on temporary housing facilities in the Washington area.

Interest in the site continued to grow, especially among younger and newer members

of the Foreign Service community who greatly appreciate the convenience and accessibility of the information from all corners of the globe. In May the site was moved to a new web host, allowing us to monitor visits to the site. Everyone involved was delighted to find that www.aafsw.org attracts about 5,000 visitors per month! Site statistics also tell us that the most popular features on the site are *Foreign Service Lifelines*, the housing reviews, and the “Foreign Service Tool Kit.” Closely following these are “Notes for Newcomers,” the Links pages, and the Overseas Briefing Center pages. If you would like

to investigate for yourself, all of these sections are listed on the left-hand navigation bar of the website.

AAFSW’s website is listed on all the major search engines and directories, including Yahoo!, Google, Northern Light, and About.com. Try typing in “Foreign Service” some time and you’ll see us pop up right next to the American Foreign Service Association and the State Department main page. Or search a directory under “U.S. Government>Embassies and Consulates” and there we are again!

www.aafsw.org is a major resource for those who are investigating careers in the U.S. diplomatic corps or who are currently serving their country in that capacity. Our visitors come from many different countries, with the heaviest usage by far coming from the state of Virginia. While Northern Virginia is one of the most “wired” areas of the world, which partly accounts for this statistic, we can also infer that many of AAFSW’s most interested members and potential members live and work in the Virginia suburbs of Washington, DC. Many of these visitors are no doubt junior officers and their families, an audience in particular need of the help and information that AAFSW can offer. Many other visitors come from European countries and Asia, especially Japan.

(Continued on page 4)

Calendar

February
27 Board meeting

March
13 Program featuring
Gail Scott (more
information in next
month’s *Global
Link*)
27 Board meeting

Inside this Issue

- 2 New scholarships
established
- 3 Job opportunity
- 7 Foreign Service
Youth Award
nominations
- 8 Speak your piece

Tell Us What You Think!

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The office is normally open
Monday through Friday,
from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Membership in AAFSW is
open to all members of
the U.S. foreign affairs
community for just \$35
per year. Join today!

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Site Serves FS Community

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Having trouble finding what you need?

With the millions of websites out there, it can be frustrating to try to find the information you are seeking.

Begin with a good search engine. Two that our members recommend are www.google.com and www.dogpile.com. However, search engines turn up thousands of results. Sometimes a personal recommendation is best.

At the risk of being redundant, www.aafsw.org offers some of the most useful links related to the Foreign Service. Better yet, join our egroup Livelines, search the archives, and ask your questions directly. It's free—and our participants are literally the world's greatest experts on Foreign Service life!

The website staff works closely with the editor of *Global Link* to provide information in both electronic and print format. Many *Global Link* articles are archived on the site, and many articles in the print publication refer to more extensive information available on aafsw.org. Capacity for storage on our website is practically unlimited, allowing for comprehensive coverage of the issues that affect Foreign Service families. Recent articles have included information on the new government health plans, State Department funding for language training for family members, and the lowdown on malaria medications. "Livelines," the 160-member email discussion group for Foreign Service family members, is also closely affiliated with the website. You may read more about this group in detail on the site and apply for membership.

We have plans for further expansion of the site in the coming year. First on the list will be a password-protected area of the site restricted to AAFSW members. This section will include an online membership directory with clickable links to members' email addresses, allowing quick "networking" for Foreign Service family members. It will also include articles of specific interest to AAFSW members, updates on Board and other member activities, and possibly a message board. Do you have suggestions for features or improvements to the site? Let us know at feedback@aafsw.org!

We also offer a free monthly email newsletter announcing new material and updates to www.aafsw.org. This service can be especially useful to Community Liaison Officers who may wish to reprint our materials in their newsletters; however, it is open to anyone who is interested. To sign up, use the form on the front page of the site, or email webmaster@aafsw.org.

How is all of this expansion into cyberspace accomplished? In our effort to provide a top-quality service to the Foreign Service community, we use a reliable, fast, (not cheap!) website hosting company. We have also recently registered www.aafsw.com in order to make it even easier to find us online. Two family members, Melissa Hess and Kelly Bembry Midura, are employed part-time to run the site. In addition, Jennifer DiNoia recently joined us as Advertising Coordinator. Thanks to her efforts, we now have several paying site sponsors. Click on their banners to show your thanks!

However, the site is largely funded by your membership fees and contributions. If you are not yet a member of AAFSW, please show your support for our efforts to bring our community together by joining now. Membership information and a printable/downloadable application are available on the site. Help spread the word about AAFSW by printing out the flyer found on the site and posting it in your CLO office, or by including this article in your Embassy community newsletter. It is available in printable format and as a downloadable Word document at <http://www.aafsw.org/happybirthday.htm>.

We believe that our best resource is ourselves. The Internet provides a wonderful way to communicate with each other, pool our knowledge and experience, and even organize to effect change. www.aafsw.org is a home in cyberspace for Foreign Service family members. Drop by soon and check out what we have to offer!

Kelly Midura, Webmaster, www.aafsw.org
Melissa Hess, Editor, www.aafsw.org

Education Online

The Internet provides solutions to some of the educational problems that have traditionally plagued Foreign Service families: inconsistent curricula, lack of college test preparation, and difficulty enrolling for or earning a degree because of constant moves.

Some Virginia Standards of Learning tests for third, fifth, and eighth graders are posted online at www.pen.k12/va/us/VDOE/Assessment/release2000. Even if you do not plan to live in Virginia, the tests can help you make sure that your children are keeping up with their U.S. counterparts. You will need Acrobat Reader to access the tests; there is a link at the site for a free download of this essential product.

Advanced Placement courses are offered online (for a fee) at www.pahomeschoolers.com/courses—and probably elsewhere. Many sites offer free test preparation for the PSAT and SAT, including Princeton Review (tester.review.com). A list of free PSAT/SAT math preparation help can be found at www.cvc.org/math/sat.htm. Test tutor (www.testtutor.com) offers free GMAT, GRE,

The Web for the Truly Worldwide

The development of the Internet has raised the quality of Foreign Service life considerably. The most obvious benefit lies in the ability to quickly contact friends and relatives around the world via email. If you do not yet have email, make it a New Year's resolution to get an address by this summer. Even if you don't have a computer, have someone help you set up a web-based account that you can access from a convenient public library, friend's house, or Internet cafe.

Following are some other areas in which the Internet helps Foreign Service families.

Language Training

The Internet offers free mini-courses and longer, fee-based courses in dozens of languages. One extensive listing of language learning resources is found at: <http://www.rivendel.com/~ric/resources/coursead.html>.

Opens New Doors

and TOEFL preparation. Use your favorite search engine to find other options.

There are online courses at every level and every price. Go to www.paisvirtual.com/educacion/comercial/edu26/freecourses.html (this IS spelled correctly) to find a list of free courses for everything from music theory to anthropology—or to register for the free “Online courses newsletter.” Other online learning resources include www.smartplanet.com (as many courses as you like for \$15.95 per month, primarily for self-enrichment, but including computer training) and www.college.com (large listing of college degrees that can be earned online).

Many DC area institutions offer online courses. Business and technology topics seem particularly common. To find out more, do a search using the name of the institution or the degree or area of concentration in which you are interested, along with the word “online.” No matter what your educational need, you can probably find a solution online!

Shopping

If you have never yet made a purchase online, make a first stop at www.aafsw.org and enter the word “shopping” into the search engine on the left. The Cyberspouse has written up a helpful guide to shopping on the Internet to ease your fears and start you on your way. The AAFSW website also offers links to a number of shopping resources. To make life even easier, www.talesmag.com provides a list of companies that deliver to international or APO addresses. No need to wait for a U.S. trip to stock up on kids' clothing or the latest books!

Livelines recommendations include www.netgrocer.com for groceries—just remember that you cannot ship liquids via APO or pouch—and www.half.com for used books, CDs, videos, and software.

Digital Photography

Gone are the days of taking pictures, finding a place to get them developed, ordering reprints, and then mailing them to interested friends and relatives months later. A number of companies will develop your film, send it to you, and put the pictures online—all at a low price. You can give your password to interested parties, who will then be able to admire the photos and order reprints for themselves. (See sidebar for more information).

Of course, a digital camera allows you to bypass the companies and send your own photos via email the very day you take them. AAFSW's Cyberspouse offers an easily understood guide to digital photography if you are just beginning to think about cyberpix. Go to www.aafsw.org and enter the words “digital cameras” in the search engine to the left. Another Cyberspouse column on “Online Journals” provides extensive information on how to create your own “scrapbook” online—a fun family project that Stateside loved ones might greatly appreciate.



Online Photo Services

The following companies have been recommended by Livelines participants:

www.ofoto.com offers space for web-based photo albums. Reprints are available for a fee, with discounts offered for referrals.

www.snapfish.com offers double prints mailed to you at very low cost. Pictures are posted online for free and can be emailed to friends and family. Reprints are available for an additional fee. A brief survey must be filled out to view photos.

www.yorkphoto.com provides free mailers to send film. The company offers photos on CD, diskette, or online, downloadable from the website.