



Friendship Force of Central North Carolina

Newsletter #4
October 2007

JAPAN SAYONARA

The FFCNC was honored to host a delightful group of 21 Ambassadors from Aichi province in Japan. Most of the Ambassadors were from the city or suburbs of Nagoya, Japan's third largest city, and home to Toyota, Norigami, Brother, and other industries.

The activities for the group included a tour of Reynolda House Museum of Art, a day trip to the Blue Ridge Parkway and a lunch at Chateau Morrisette, and a day trip to the North Carolina Zoo. We were blessed with fine



weather and we found many warm new friendships.

The farewell party was held at the Alliance Center in Winston-Salem and featured performances by a Barbershop Quartet and by the Triad Dulcimer club. A special treat was a wonderful magic show by the Aichi Ambassadors, Shinichi and Emiko Hashimoto.

We were sad to see the Aichi Ambassadors leave, as we became such close friends in just six short days.



Paul and Marcia Meis, Exchange Directors

TALES FROM MONTANA



In August three FFCNC families, the Peiffers, Cauthens, and Andresens, attended the Big Sky Festival in Montana which including homestays in Helena. Following is a report from Peter Peiffer.

This has been a very unusual and great trip. Montana is a beautiful state! We toured Great Falls a couple of times, once with a commercial tour company and once with the Friendship Force group. Great Falls has a great history that begins with the Lewis & Clark Expedition in 1804. Lewis & Clark traveled up the Missouri River and found this set of five waterfalls. It took almost a month for them to circumvent the falls. The Lewis & Clark National Historic Interpretive Center details this story. Also in Great Falls is the Charles M. Russell Museum. He is very famous for his paintings (and some sculptures) of cowboys and Indians in the West in the late 1800's and early 1900's. The museum houses a truly fine collection of his works. Charlie Russell is almost worshiped here in Montana.

The city of Great Falls has a population of 56,000 and is the second largest city in a state with under one million people. The center of the city has many older and fine homes. Downtown itself suffers from the blight that many US cities have suffered. Nonetheless, it is a nice city and served as our "headquarters" while we traveled the state. We stayed there for four nights upon our arrival while being shown around the local area by the Central Montana- Great Falls Friendship Force club. We saw one of many buffalo jumps, a very unusual area where there is a cliff over which the Indians, prior to about 1500, drove buffalo herds so they could harvest the meat, bones and hides for their use. The Indians would come from far away places, as much as 500 miles, once a year to use the jump. Many tribes used the same jump, and did so on a schedule so that they were not there at the same time. Very interesting.

We also saw the "Gates of the Mountains" on an afternoon cruise trip on the Missouri River. We visited Fort Benton, which was the last place early settlers could travel to by riverboat. From that point on they had to use wagons and horses. We ate in many places (VFW's & Eagles, homes) & many restaurants. One night we were even made honorary citizens of Montana, but we had to practice the phrase "you bet" first. We went to a real good Farmers Market in the center of town and had a good time just talking with people. On the last night we went to the State Fair and the Rodeo. It truly was a "Western" thing, and convinced me that I will never ride a bull, much less a wild horse.

After the activities of the Big Sky Festival in Great Falls, we traveled by bus to our home-stay in Helena. There were approximately eighty Friendship Force visitors at the Festival and we stayed in several different cities including Kalispell, Missoula, Helena and Billings. I think everyone had a good match with his or her home hosts. Our hostess was Bonnie David of Helena, a retired schoolteacher and principal. Originally from Great Falls, Bonnie moved to Helena a couple of years ago to be near her daughter and family. She was a wonderful hostess and had an excellent sense of humor. We enjoyed her company very much and would like to see her again. She really took good care of us. Helena is the Capital of Montana with a population of roughly 27,000 folks and a very nice city for its size. Lots of beautiful old homes are found there, as well as government buildings, museums, parks & restaurants. Their downtown area is active and very charming because they have preserved their old buildings. The last night we stayed in Helena (as a Friendship Force group of twenty or so) we all saw the play "Grease" produced by a local college group.... they did an excellent job. Helena was a good place.

Montana has suffered a very hot and dry summer this year and during our stay forest fires were raging throughout the state, so it was hard to escape the smoke. Some places were worse than others. Perhaps the worst we saw was in Missoula, but we actually saw a fairly large fire when we were in Yellowstone. Smoke was present for almost the whole trip. We actually visited a "smoke-jumper" base and school in Missoula, which was interesting. That certainly is not an easy living!!!! A VERY tough and dangerous job, only for the young.

After our home stay we returned to Great Falls for a farewell dinner ending our Friendship Force stay. The next day thirty-two of us began a six-day escorted extension tour of Yellowstone Park, Glacier Park and several points between. Yellowstone was the most beautiful place we have seen, but Glacier gives it a run. One night we stayed in Waterton Park inside of Glacier Park in Alberta, Canada. What pure beauty!! Wild deer and bighorn sheep wander in the town at will. Being in a National Park, the wildlife somehow knows it is safe. During the trip we saw many wild animals including, on the last day, a bear from a distance. On the trip we also visited a world-class museum featuring dinosaurs. We went to a gold mining "ghost town", and a Flathead Indian Reservation Catholic church and mission. The beauty of Yellowstone is legendary and it certainly lives up to its billing. It is truly a national treasure. Our bus driver was great, just full of all kinds of jokes and stories. That made the trip better; he was a good guide.

The Friendship Force group on the extension tour consisted of a couple from Tokyo and a couple of women from British Columbia in Canada. The rest were Americans from all over the US. We had lots of fun and learning from them, as well as the folks from Montana. We hope to return soon. Our extension tour ended in Great Falls with a picnic at the home of the president of the local and host Friendship Force club, Juanita. There are fifteen of us now, all the rest of our group having returned home. It has been a busy three weeks, and I am sure Juanita will be relieved to see this come to a successful end. We get home tomorrow night.

In Friendship, Peter Peiffer

BEN FRANKLIN TRANSATLANTIC FELLOWS INITIATIVE

This summer two FFCNC families, the Scherls and the Browns, hosted youth visiting the US as part of the Ben Franklin Transatlantic Fellows Initiative.

“The Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellows Initiative is in its second year, providing two Summer Institutes: The Founders (ages 15-17) and the Diplomats (ages 17-19). Participants in the Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellows Initiative will find opportunities to foster relationships among youth from Eurasia, Europe and American in order to advance links and awareness of shared values, encounter principles of freedom and cooperation as challenges of the global 21st Century. Inspiring the Institutes is American statesman and diplomat, Benjamin Franklin, who prized religious tolerance over intolerance, social mobility over class privilege, and was a firm believer in free speech. We will seek an environment that encourages individual expression, communications, and information sharing in an effort to advance positive relationships among the various ethnic, religious, and national groups.” (<http://blogs.bftf.org/about/the-program/overview/>)



The FFCNC membership should be advised that participation in the Ben Franklin program is addictive. Having the brightest, most energetic students from Europe and Eurasia in your home for a week can be the highlight of your year. We have participated for four years, and we are still in regular contact with every student we have hosted, and with some that we just happened to meet as part of the hosting experience. Linda and I are already planning our 2008 activities to permit us to be available for hosting Ben Franklin students when they are here next summer.

Here are some words from one of the students we met this year, a girl from Kazakhstan. Upon her return home she wrote us: “Thank you for welcoming me to your hearts. I miss everyone and everything so much that I am still close to crying. These were the happiest days in my life, really.”

It was our pleasure to meet and get to know these exceptional young people. I hope that the members of our club that have the time to spare will try hosting next year. The rewards are far greater than the effort. ~ *Marvin and Linda Scherl*

It's difficult to find the right adjectives to describe our week of home hosting Armend from Macedonia and Gabiden from Kazakhstan. On the surface, these energetic eighteen year-old teenagers looked and acted very much like our teenagers as they typed on their laptops, listened to their Ipods, and played computer games. But peeling away layers of the onion, revealed two articulate (even in English) young adults full of enthusiasm and destined to become future leaders of their countries. Yes, it was fun to share many "firsts" with them: bowling, putt-putt, baseball, kayaking, and even riding the waves of the Atlantic. Conversation at the dinner table never lacked as Armend quizzed Dale about investments, banking, and finance and explained to us many aspects of the Muslim faith. Gabiden, a little on the quiet side, took pride in describing Kazakhstan to us. But the most eye-opening moment of the week came when Armend told us that, prior to his participation in this program, he did not know that Americans have freedom of religion; he thought Christianity was a state-imposed religion. How easy it is for us to take these basic rights for granted. Surely, I thought, everyone in the world knows why the Pilgrims came to America. Obviously, not. What a powerful reminder of the importance of these home-hosting experiences. ~ *Martha Brown*

OUTBOUND EXCHANGE TO LIMA, PERU

You are invited to travel to Peru for a weeklong homestay with a family in Lima followed by a journey to Machu Picchu, The Sacred Valley of the Incas and Cusco. This experience is an auspicious opportunity to learn about and experience the people, culture and history of this magnificent and picturesque land. The warm-hearted Andean people will welcome you as you are led by Dr. Jose (Pepe) Altamirano Vallenias, the former Director of the National Institute of Culture and the National Park of Sacsayhuaman in Cusco, for the post home stay tour. An optional excursion to Lake Titicaca to see the Uros Floating Islands, a tour of Puno, and a visit to Taquille Island can be added to your trip. We will leave July 8 and return July 21 unless you add Lake Titicaca. Then your return date will be July 24. My memories of Peru bring back a joyous time, warm smiles, and a sense of wonder about the Peruvian people. Please email Lundee Amos at sarahamos@earthlink.net or call 336-288-2654 for more details. Come to the annual meeting on October 25 to learn more.



THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING!



You may recall that FFCNC was selected by FFI to home host and provide an activity program for ten Russian participants in an Open World program the week beginning November 2, 2007. Open World is a program sponsored by the Library of Congress since 1999. "The Open World Program enables emerging leaders from Russia and other Eurasian countries to experience American democracy and civil society in action.....Each U.S. visit focuses on a set theme that relates to the delegates' professional or civic work, exposing them to ideas and practices they can adapt to their own situations," (www.openworld.gov.) Ralph Cauthen and Martha Brown, co-exchange directors, with the help of many others are putting together a thirty-two hour program on the theme of Accountable Governance.

It's not too late to volunteer to host one or two of our guests in your home. We have recently received profiles of our Russian visitors and now know that most are men between the ages of 26 and 43 who live in ten different cities and towns in Russia. For most of the group this will be their first trip to the United States and only two of our guests describe their English skills as "fluent." The others describe their English skills as "basic". In addition to our ten Russian guests, we will host two interpreters as well.

Our home hosts will ideally be people who are interested in maintaining contact with these Russian delegates and building bridges between our community and theirs. Open World regards the home stay and the opportunity it presents to learn about American life as an essential part of this unique travel experience.

This exchange will differ from typical Friendship Force exchanges in some respects. As usual, we are planning welcome and farewell parties (Nov. 2 and 9 respectively) for our guests and their hosts. However, Monday, November 5 through Friday, November 9 most of their time during the day will be committed to the program we are preparing. These activities will be limited to our guests and their interpreters; however, our Russian visitors will need transportation to and from each day's events, which will be located throughout the Triad. We will also help coordinate carpooling as much as possible.

If you would be willing to host one of our visitors or have additional questions about this exchange please contact Ralph Cauthen at 299-2089 or rbcauthen@aol.com or Martha Brown at 946-0105 or brownfamily@triad.rr.com.



EXTRA! EXTRA! TURKISH INBOUND SET FOR OCTOBER 2008!!



FFCNC has just been matched with the Cankaya club as our international inbound exchange for next year! Cankaya is a neighborhood in Ankara, the capital of Turkey. Ankara is the second largest city in Turkey, after Istanbul, and is located on the Anatolian steppe in the middle of the country. Our contact (and probable ED,) Aysen Ozkaynak, has asked that the exchange begin immediately following the month-long fast of Ramadan, which ends in early October. We have suggested either the week of October 6th or October 13th--to avoid the Furniture Market. Cankaya will travel on for a second exchange week with the Central Iowa club. Stay tuned!! And let your leadership know if you would like to help with the planning/hosting!

ODDS & ENDS

President's Perspective...

I was again privileged to be among many seasoned Friendship Force members when I attended the Big Sky Festival in Montana. It was fascinating to talk to club members from Louisville and Lincoln, from Memphis and Missoula. I was struck by their myriad styles...and how each club has forged its identity over the years. I realized that FFCNC has just begun to develop customs and a distinctive annual "rhythm"!

But we don't have to reinvent the wheel! We can borrow so many good ideas and practices. Here are a few:

Most boards meet monthly...and most clubs have a monthly program of some kind. Some boards meet for drinks and dinner in a restaurant on a set day each month—like the third Thursday. Several clubs have a monthly breakfast meeting for those in their membership who shy away from night activities.

Many clubs have “LEO” – Let’s Eat Out – monthly ethnic restaurant dinners. Potluck dinners seem to be a universal meeting format. Speakers or travelogues draw people to many club meetings.

Community volunteerism is often a tool for membership recruitment. Club members wear green shirts or other FFI gear to advertise their affiliation...while they take tickets at a civic event or man the phones for a public radio campaign. Some clubs have “guest night” two or three times a year, including a potluck meal and speaker of note.

What’s hot now...is the domestic exchange! Our Montana experience proved to me that an outbound exchange to a culturally different part of the US could be as satisfying as an outbound international exchange. Clubs are really getting into the swing of this...there was a bit of a “meat market” atmosphere in Great Falls with folks busily sizing up other clubs as either destinations or partners. FFI’s domestic exchange fee is only \$25/person...and there is no minimum number of ambassadors—it’s all up to the two (or more) clubs to arrange. Several clubs have scheduled as many as three outbound domestic exchanges in a year. (They’ll be busy hosting – there’s a tendency for domestic exchanges to be reciprocal!)

We could learn from our near neighbors in Morganton who rented a 15 passenger van so nine members could attend the Big Sky Festival. One member’s son, a professional truck driver, did all the driving while the other eight covered his shared expenses for gas and hotels. They drove all over Montana, both before and after the Festival!

The Cauthens and Peiffers, as well as the Andresens, made some good contacts in Montana: Where in the U.S. would YOU like to go?! Please let your board members know.

Carol Andresen, President FFCNC

IMPORTANT DATES FOR 2007 - 2008 (Mark these on your calendar)

October 25	Annual Meeting: potluck dinner at Main Street UMC in Kernersville
Nov 2 - 10	Open World/Russian in-bound exchange
Jan./Feb 2008	LEO (Let’s Eat Out) – location and date to be decided
March 1, 2008	World Friendship Day
July 2008	Out-bound exchange to Lima, Peru
Oct. 2008	In-bound exchange from Cankaya, Turkey

ELECTRONIC FFI CONNECTIONS

Register for FFI’s “E-Flyer” by e-mailing your name, postal address and e-mail address to ffi@thefriendshipforce.org. The E-Flyers contain exchange updates and are sent every couple of months.

FFI’s website address has changed to www.thefriendshipforce.org. Here you will find featured exchanges, lists of all confirmed exchanges worldwide for 2007, slideshows of past exchanges and international conferences, and press releases.

Also, check out our own website. Yes, Friendship Force of Central North Carolina has a website now: www.ffnc.org. On our website you will find photos from recent exchanges, a calendar of our upcoming events, past newsletters and meeting minutes, and more. Please have a look and be sure to bookmark it for future reference.

Receive **FFCNC communications** by e-mail. If you are not already on our e-mail list, send your e-mail address to Martha Brown at brownfamily@triad.rr.com to receive newsletters, meeting minutes, invitations and other important information by e-mail.

PASS IT ON

This newsletter is e-mailed to all current members who have e-mail addresses and by U.S. mail to members who do not have e-mail addresses. Members should feel free to copy and share this information with their friends who may have an interest in FFCNC.

FRIENDSHIP FORCE OF CENTRAL NORTH CAROLINA BOARD MEMBERS

President	Carol Andresen	fhacsa@triad.rr.com	294-0842
Vice President & Membership Chair	Marvin Scherl	marvin-linda-scherl@triad.rr.com	969-5923
Secretary	Laura Lennon	pharmastat@mindspring.com	282-5855
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President Elect	Ralph Cauthen	rbcauthen@aol.com	299-2089
Activities Chair	Carol Bryan	rskipbryan@aol.com	855-5452
Exchanges Chair	Howard Hicks	hhicks5@triad.rr.com	454-2516
ED Japan	Paul Meis	pmeis@triad.rr.com	724-9540
ED Peru	Lundee Amos	sarahamos@earthlink.net	288-2654
co-ED's Russia	Ralph Cauthen	rbcauthen@aol.com	299-2089
	Martha Brown	brownfamily@triad.rr.com	946-0105
Communications Chair	Martha Brown	brownfamily@triad.rr.com	946-0105