



friendship force

CENTRAL
NORTH CAROLINA

Fast Facts ~ April 2010



Mary Ann McAvoy & Sophie Tworkowski – Southern CT



*Jan Hindsley – Colonial NC – and
Jim & Wilma Morgan – Shelby*

Presidents' Roundtable – A Leadership Success!

28 delegates representing FFI chapters stretching from New Hampshire to Western NC converged on Greensboro last Thursday evening for the biennial Presidents' Roundtable. Marcia Meis and Ray Kiszely were FFCNC representatives; Fred Andresen organized and convened the Roundtable, and Donna Lambeth gave an oral summary of the proceedings to close the meeting Saturday morning. It was a time filled with learnings and fellowship.

The four workshops on Friday – exploring the topics of current status, competitive analysis, recruitment and retention – were moderated/recorded by eight FFCNC members: Patti Gilmour, Peter Peiffer, Porter Thompson, Barbara North, Margaret Griffin, Evelyn Parks, Nancy Sherrill and Ralph Cauthen. 52 people—including 21 FFCNC folks—enjoyed dinner and a speaker that evening.

Though some delegates stayed at the Hilton Garden Inn, our meeting site, there were ten FFCNC home hosts: Marilyn Baird, Doris & Ray Kiszely, Pat Michal, Barbara & Jim North, Nancy & Peter Peiffer, Jane & Ralph Cauthen, Ruth & Jim Jackson, Donna Lambeth, Carol Bryan and Judy Greene.

It's too soon to have all the many insights distilled (you will read more about them next month) but here are a few points that surfaced:

- The seven NC chapters are interested in each taking a turn to host a "long weekend" domestic exchange open to the other six on a first-come basis. It would be like a round robin festival—and get us better acquainted for future state-wide cooperation.
- In the event there is excess space in an NC outbound exchange, priority will be given to other NC chapters to create a "Tarheel" trip. This will enable orientation and reunion meetings, distance wise—and preserve a sense of group which enhances outbound exchanges.
- FFI is beginning to promote "theme" exchanges, e.g. fly fishing, hiking, quilting, etc. And "discover" exchanges with minimal or no homestay—to areas with no FF presence.

The group also learned of FFI's decision to move NC chapters from the MidAtlantic to the Southeast Region—comprised of South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee and Alabama. So at future regional events, we will be making new friends!

Indonesian Student Exchange

Final details are coming in place for the arrival of our Indonesian guests on April 21. In addition to seven FFCNC families who are hosting (the Browns, Joneses, Kiszelys, Peiffers, Ravenel, Scherls, and Schoch) we are very happy to welcome to this exchange six non-FFCNC families, friends of our members, all of whom have children (mostly teenagers) living at home.

Our guests expressed an interest in visiting American universities so plans for their week here will allow them to visit UNC CH, Duke, and (optionally) Wake Forest and Salem College. Other activities planned for their visit include tours of Old Salem, Reynolda House and the Civil Rights Museum, a Greensboro Grasshopper baseball game, a tour of the Charlotte Motor Speedway, and shopping at Concord Mills Mall.

If you would like to meet our guests and hear about their visit, you are encouraged to attend the farewell dinner at Fire Mountain Grill in Kernersville (6 PM on Monday, April 26, \$13 per person.)

Brisbane Inbound Exchange: Farewell PICNIC on Wednesday, May 26th

Plan now to come to the "potluck picnic" sendoff for our Aussie guests! It will be at the beautiful Triad Park in Colfax/Kernersville. We have reserved Shelter #4 from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. It's covered...but we should all hope for good weather! We had an all-club meeting in this newly built shelter several years ago. There is a playground and restroom facilities are very near by.

More info about the exchange will be in the May newsletter. Val Stokes (273-7205 or levels@triad.rr.com) is our ED...and her committee includes Paul Meis, Carol Bryan and Carol Andresen. Host families have been selected for our 8 incoming ambassadors: Marcia & Paul Meis, Carol & Fred Andresen, Jim & Barbara North, Frank & Nancy Sherrill, and Carol & Skip Bryan.

New Zealand Outbound Exchange Has Eco-Cultural Theme

Exchange Directors, Barbara and Jim North, have been busy planning our outbound exchange to New Zealand. Tentative travel dates are October 25 – November 16, 2010 (give or take a couple of days depending on final plane reservations.)

This exchange will begin on the North Island where we will be hosted by the Auckland-North Shore Friendship Force Club. In keeping with the eco-cultural theme of this exchange we will learn about the Maori, the indigenous Polynesian people believed to have arrived on the island prior to 1300, and visit the Rotorua area, a major tourist destination known for its geothermal activity and beautiful lakes.

After our home stay on the North Island we will fly from Auckland to Christchurch on the South Island to begin an eight-day escorted tour. A few of the highlights of this part of the trip will include:

- A spectacular mountain train ride on the TranzAlpine Express which is often regarded as one of the world's great train journeys due to the beautiful scenery through which it passes.
- A jet boat ride to see the nesting site of the Kotuku white heron. (Look for its depiction on the reverse side of the New Zealand \$2 coin.)
- A visit to the glow-worm caves of Te Anau. They say that the roof of a cave covered with the larva of this insect can look remarkably like a starry sky at night.

Finally our group will have a second homestay hosted by Otago Friendship Force when some of our ambassadors will visit Dunedin, the second largest city of the South Island located on the southeastern coast, and some will visit Alexandra, a small town founded during a goldrush in the 1860's.

The total projected cost of this trip is approximately \$4,500 per person (including roundtrip airfare from Greensboro.) FFCNC members will have the first opportunity to sign up for this exchange which is lucky for us. New Zealand has become one of the most popular tourist destinations for Friendship Force clubs and our exchange directors already have a long list of interested FF members from around the world anxious to join us on this exchange. For more information and to sign up early contact Barbara and Jim North at woodnotes2004@yahoo.com or call them at 336-643-0985.

A Different Exchange Experience: Travel With Another FF Club; Add A Service Component

In February 2009 FFCNC member, Judy Greene traveled with an FF international exchange to Costa Rica. In addition to international exchanges, often FF clubs open up their outbound exchanges to FF members from other clubs. These exchanges may offer you the opportunity to visit a particular place of interest or to travel at a particular time that suits your schedule. You will see as you read Judy's travelogue that her experience proved to be very positive and rewarding.

The sounds of falling rain and howler monkeys greeted us as we awoke for our "free day" at Arenal Paraiso, Costa Rica. It was February, 2009 and a handful of brave souls met at 6 AM for a bird-watching walkabout. Others braved the rain and took an early canopy tour via the zip line, hiked or toured a local organic farm, while I donned riding duds and was part of a trio of amigos who mounted our steeds and set out for a morning ride up the misty slopes of Volcàn

Arenal. Driving to the site the previous afternoon, we snapped wonderful photos of Volcàn Arenal framed by the setting sun. Arenal is only one of the active volcanoes that indicate the relative youth of Costa Rica. With a string of 160 volcanoes, Costa Rica is still “growing.”

A young, friendly and hospitable people, our “Tico” hosts made sure we saw every ecosystem available in each region. Mountains, beaches, hanging bridges; botanical gardens; coffee, cacao, sugar cane (We also learned that pigs LOVE molasses!), vegetables, orange groves, banana and pineapple plantations; thousands of species of tropical animals, plants, birds and insects; rainforests and cloud forests; Costa Rica has it all! Did you know there are NO “jungles” in CR? There are also only caimans and crocodiles--NO alligators!

My first FF Exchange was to Costa Rica and organized by Vicki Vance from the Baton Rouge, LA chapter. This was an International Exchange that included a service component and 24 Ambassadors from the U.S., Canada, Germany, England and Denmark. Several arrived early to join the Riverboat Francesca tour of the Tortuguero Nature Tour before joining the rest of the group back in San Jose for a country tour followed by a week of home stay hosted by the Heredia FF Club. The focus of this exchange was “Nature’s Garden” which was perfect for both gardeners and birders! The ED had been to CR on many occasions and had all the details well organized.

About a month before our exchange visit, an earthquake damaged many bridges, homes and buildings in Poas, Costa Rica. As a result, a few parts of our itinerary were adjusted accordingly for safety and accessibility. Since many of us were retired educators, we brought extra luggage and boxes stuffed with school supplies. We had arranged to visit the remains of Escuela Poasito, the elementary school which had been devastated during the January 8, 2009 earthquake to deliver the supplies and to meet the teachers and principal. The day was cold and foggy and the rain was heavy! Roads were extremely muddy that day. Temporary housing for both community members and construction workers had been erected along the roadsides in this mountainside village. Portable generators worked from the back of flatbed trucks. It was difficult to imagine how scary it must have been for members of this community. There were no high-rise buildings and, though there were some injuries, fortunately no one died in that quake. The school’s dining facility was completely destroyed, having “fallen off” the back side of the school leaving a gaping opening at one end of the building. The students were continuing their studies in a near-by temporary facility while a new school was being constructed. The Director of the Board of Education and the teachers met with us in the damaged school and explained how they were attempting to recover their materials from the still standing sections and from the rubble. Each teacher had a very positive, hopeful attitude and exuded much pride in his students. One teacher’s mother had lost her home which was located behind the school.

The Friendship Force Ambassadors presented Escuela Poasito with many items for their school, as well as money to purchase supplies locally—thinking that would also be at least a small boost for the local economy. The FF club of Huntsville, AL had also sent a huge suitcase of donated school materials brought by their Ambassadors. Each Ambassador brought materials from his or her state or country, or donated money. Both ED’s had agreed ahead of time that, in lieu of parting gifts, money would be donated to the school instead. All of this was much appreciated. A group picture was taken with the Director, teachers, and Ambassadors before we left to travel to El Parque Nacional Volcàn Poas.

There were many other memorable moments. Besides the incredibly beautiful tropical scenery, here are a few:

The People! My host, Rita, made this exchange a wonderful experience for me. Even though she didn't speak English and my Spanish was minimal, we made an instant connection. Since most of communication is nonverbal, we became very good at it. We both learned more of each others' language by the end of the week. Rita knew all her favorite US love songs in perfect English! So we sang together. Her daughters live next door and one of them either visited or phoned each day to make sure I understood everything and that my visit was going well. For Sunday night dinner Rita's children and grandchildren usually gather for light snacks, drinks and fellowship. It was fun to be included and to see how important family is in Costa Rican culture. Her youngsters practiced their (perfect) English with me and shared their favorite baseball team (St. Louis Cardinals) with me. I felt "at home" with them.

FOOD!! YUMMY! Fresh flavorful fruit every meal was so tasty! Traditional dishes of chicken, rice and beans. A refreshing pineapple drink in the afternoon: pineapple strips, water, spoon of sugar & blend with ice! Our host club gave us a picnic in a state park. Mango salad made with shredded cabbage, fresh mango, and fresh lime juice!

Animals: The "Iguana Tree" which was a name we gave it, was a tree in an iguana preserve covered with 25 or more Iguanas in different colors and sizes, lounging and hanging as ornaments would on a Christmas tree. White faced capuchin monkeys running through the palm trees trying to catch a basilisk lizard-- nicknamed *Jesus Christ lizards* for their ability to run/skim across the water surface--a favorite food of the capuchins.

Butterflies and Birds: Blue Mariposas, Macaws, Quezels, and 200 different varieties of hummingbirds, some that will let you stand within 10 inches of their feeders to take photos!

Farewell dinner of music and dancing: Our last night was Fat Tuesday/Mardi Gras/Carnival, so for our farewell dinner, we donned Mardi Gras beads and feathered masks and danced our way in for some Mardi Gras madness. Our hosts loved this colorful and fun way to close out the exchange event! They eagerly caught our beads, accepted our masks and posed for photos while listening to traditional Mardi Gras music and joining our Conga line!

Ben Franklin Fellows Return

The Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellows Initiative was funded by the US State Department during the summers of '06, '07, and '08 with the purpose of fostering relationships among youth from Eurasia, Europe and America in order to advance links and awareness of shared values and to encounter principles of freedom and cooperation. Unfortunately there was no funding for this program last summer, but we have recently learned that the program will be funded and hosted once again on the campus of Wake Forest University.

A portion of the program from July 17 -28 will include a home stay experience for the 16 to 18 year-old participants. "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." These are the words of FFCNC member, Marvin Scherl, who, with wife, Linda, has hosted Ben Franklin delegates several times.

If you are interested in learning more about this program, there is an article in our October, 2007 newsletter (http://www.ffcnc.org/uploads/2007_Oct._Newsletter.doc pg. 3) which you will enjoy reading. If you are interested in hosting or know families with teenagers, especially in the Winston-Salem area, who may be interested in hosting, contact Scott Freese

(scottfreese61@yahoo.com or 972-6237) and he will keep you informed about this wonderful hosting opportunity.

2010 Calendar Highlights

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| April 21-28 | Indonesian Student Exchange
ED: Peter Peiffer, 336-288-0014 |
| April 26 | Farewell dinner for Indonesian guests.
All FFCNC members are encouraged to attend.
(Cost is \$13 each; hosts are covered.)
Fire Mountain Restaurant; Kernersville, 6 PM. |
| May 21-28 | Inbound Exchange from Brisbane, Australia
ED: Val Stokes, 336-273-7205 |
| May 26 | Farewell potluck dinner & celebration for Australian guests.
All FFCNC members are encouraged to attend.
5:30 – 9 PM at Shelter #4 at Triad Park, Kernersville. |
| June | Let's Eat Out (LEO) & program about New Zealand outbound exchange.
Location, date, and time to be determined. |
| Aug. 14 | Club picnic at home of Marilyn Baird on Lake Norman. (Date tentative.) |
| October 16-18 | FFI International Conference in Washington, DC |
| October 18 – 22 | Post International Conference home hosting. |
| October 21 | FFCNC Annual Meeting - Main Street UMC, Kernersville
Activities Chair: Ralph Cauthen, 336-299-2089 |
| Oct. 25 – Nov. 16 | Outbound Exchange to Auckland & Dunedin, New Zealand
EDs: Barbara & Jim North, 336-643-0985 |