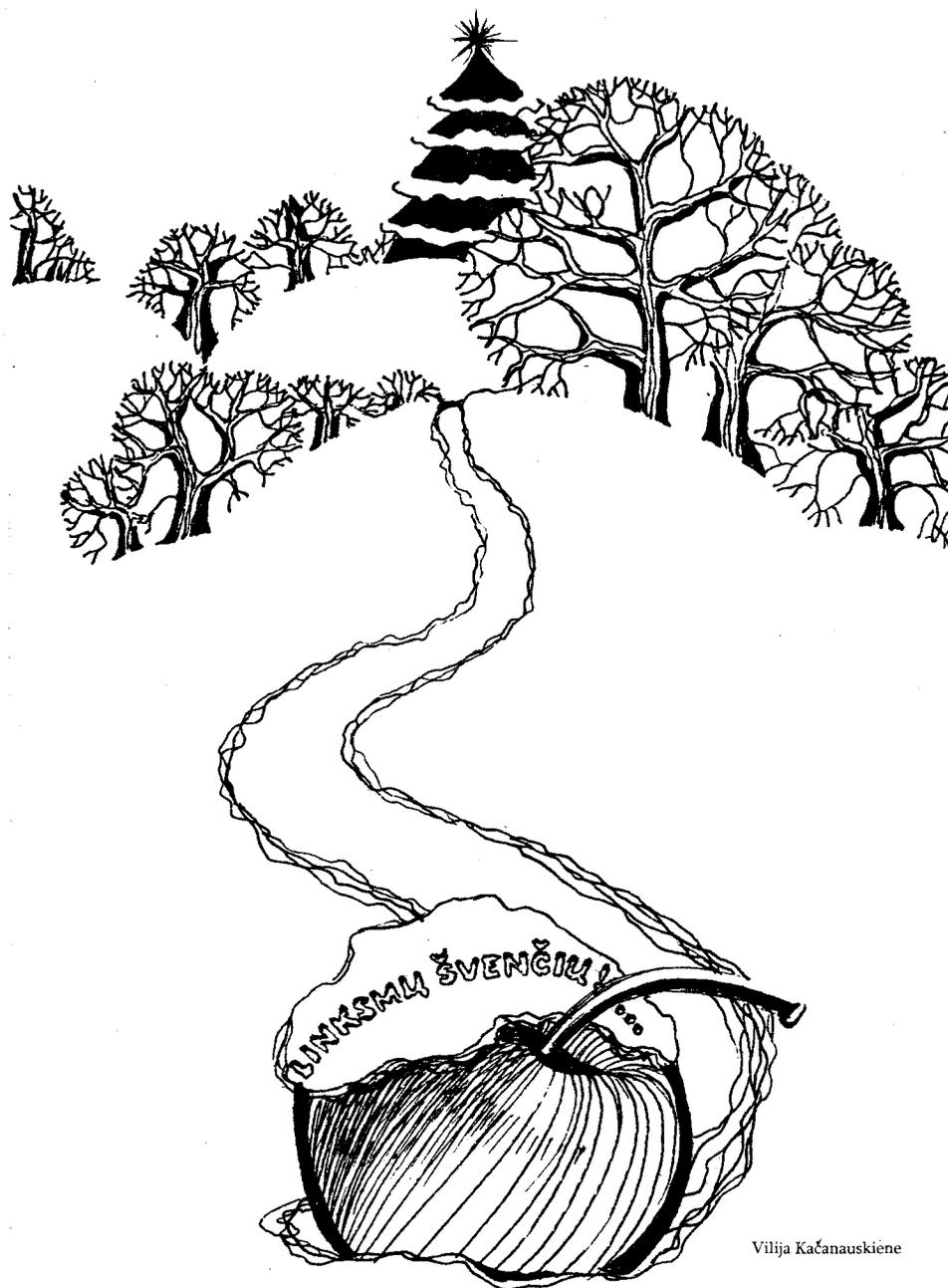


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REPORT TO THE CORPS

Volume 14, Number 4

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Vilija Kačanauskienė

DARKNESS AND LIGHT

While I drove to work today, it was dawning. The sky was broadly streaked with horizontal bands of amber, apricot and copper. I could not decide which was lovelier – the sight or the words that describe it, in any language. But now it is darkening outside the window of my Vilnius office – at 4:30 in the afternoon. The days will continue to get shorter for another six or seven weeks, until the winter solstice. Soon I will see neither dawn nor dusk throughout the workweek, except through my office window, which looks out onto a narrow street and ancient university walls. I will yearn for natural light and think of summers, and saunas, and bonfires, and fireflies. I will think of lighting candles against the dark when I should be thinking about the job I am here to do.

It is impossible to live here, as I do every second month (I fly back and forth, back and forth, from my home in the U.S.), and be unaware of the piercing contrasts that emphasize and outline the contours of life in Lithuania. I work as education adviser to the President while I am here, and do my best to keep up with events when I am not.

Yesterday, as the President's representative, I traveled to the eastern town of Didziasalis, three kilometers from the border post with Belarus. Didziasalis has become a town of unfortunate repute in Lithuania. Its name is synonymous with poverty, joblessness, social evils. This hasn't been the case for very long; Didziasalis began a desperate plunge into its current straits just a decade ago when the brick factory, in its heyday employing 1,500 workers, went bankrupt. Didziasalis originally had been a village with single-family farmsteads. When the Soviet government built the brick factory, it also built cheap high-rise housing, a school, a clinic, a store, a sauna for factory workers. Workers were imported in great numbers from other towns, from Belarus ...

When the factory went belly up, the town began to die. Younger people, anyone with the hope of finding work elsewhere, left. The apartment blocks were going begging. And then some "businessmen" thought of a clever plan; they would seek out Vilnius residents in debt, unable to pay for heat or hot water, people who were unemployed and pretty much unemployable. They would buy these people's apartments cheaply and relocate them to Didziasalis, where equivalent housing was going for peanuts. And then they would renovate and sell the Vilnius apartments, making millions in profit. The Didziasalis administrator ("seniune") told us that former Vilnius residents were brought to the town in buses by the "real estate agents" and simply let off in the middle of the street. Many of them had been promised jobs as well as homes, despite their lack of education or skills, despite long-term problems with drug or alcohol abuse. Now Didziasalis has an 80% unemployment rate.

The President promised to do his best to bring this community back to life. As a result of his efforts, there is a Danish project in the works to bring investors to Didziasalis, to refurbish the brickworks, employing perhaps 150 people rather than 1,500 this time around – still a major change for a town where pretty much the only current employer is the government. The Danish project may yet fall through. It requires European funding, and it requires skilled workers.

This is where I came into the picture. My role was to find out how the schools are doing in Didziasalis and whether there is an infrastructure available for providing vocational and adult education. The Russian-language basic school in Didziasalis was closed this year, and the students absorbed into the Lithuanian 12-year school (which is providing bilingual classes as a means of bringing kids into the mainstream next year) except for those few who simply wouldn't go and have become dropouts as a result. The Russian-language school building is standing empty, like so many town buildings, with huge, dark, mournful windows. There is plenty of classroom space available.

We visited the preschool-kindergarten, the 12-year school and the children's home/shelter. I braced for the worst. I had never yet heard a word uttered in praise of Didziasalis. My expectations were low. And they turned out to be utterly mistaken.

The kindergarten had been 'graduating' about five six-year olds to first grade yearly. Other children were simply kept home. The school and social readiness of many was very poor as a result. This September, 19 six-year olds entered kindergarten. Amazing! Nearly 400% growth in a year! What happened? The newly minted national policy of requiring that a "one-year school readiness" program be made available to all families, and of providing directed funds (per child attending), made this program a lifesaver for a desperately poor preschool. The principal went out to the apartment blocks to look for children, and she found them. She convinced their mothers to bring them ... the school provides free meals to very poor children – some, indeed, come for the food. But they receive much more. The classrooms were light, airy and warm despite the freezing drizzle outside. There was a roll of paper spread on the floor – a mural in progress. The teachers were drawing, too.

The 12-year school swept us off our feet. The teachers and students have been taking part in national programs and competitions for six or seven years and bringing home honors and prizes... The university entrance exam scores are stellar here. There is a school library, computer lab, dance hall. More important, there is a climate of trust between the students and the teachers that was evident from the body language of everyone in the classrooms into which we peered. The principal didn't ask us for more computers, or more money – he asked us about ... professional development.

Finally, we saw what is designated a “temporary shelter/home” for children. Children that have been removed from their homes because of violence or inability of the parents to care for them live here for a while. Others, kids “at risk,” come solely for the afternoons to do homework, relax, and get a hot meal. A third group are the children who live here during the week because there is no adequate daily transportation between their isolated rural homes and school. The director told us that he much prefers the status of temporary rather than permanent “shelter/home.” For many reasons – one being that permanent “shelter/homes” must hew to rigid rules that prevent children from learning many of the usual growing-up skills; regulations prevent them from cooking, cleaning, doing their own laundry...Why? I don’t know – yet. I suppose it’s part of my job to find out.

One would think that children in temporary “shelter/homes” are sad little creatures. Not in Didziasalis. The kids came in and out of the sitting room at will; they listened intently as the director spoke to us. Clearly, their ears had heard it all, and there were no secrets here. Then the kids put on a show of singing and dancing for us – it’s very usual here for guests to be treated to a performance – and we saw no poker-faced children drilled in a skill at fancier institutions. These children were exuberant. And they were a team. A clutch of 12- and 13-year old boys watching a friend perform like a whirling dervish in an almost-all-girl-dance were watching him with ... pride. A little kid, maybe eight, was sucking on the ear of his teddy bear. No-one teased him. As the program ended, the kids raced off in a joyful wave, nearly bowling over the adults.

Of course, Didziasalis is a dreadful economic sink-hole. But the town itself is not dreadful; the schools are not dreadful – on the contrary, they are a safe place, a hot meal, a trusted adult, a library, a foothold, a promise made and kept. The people who work in the schools, the teachers, the counselors, the administrators, are the solid infrastructure of the place – the framework for building some kind of viable future.

As we were leaving, a group of elderly women barred our way and said, rather angrily: “The President promised us a factory. When will it open?” We couldn’t say. Of course, we knew that the President had promised only to try to get the factory open ... but the people thought that they had heard him promise a factory. I couldn’t say, and I felt sad, and certainly inadequate. I told them that I would tell the President everything I had seen. I told them that the infrastructure for vocational and adult education was perfect.

Education needs a purpose. In general, educators can discuss this forever. In Didziasalis, though, everybody is sure that that the target of education is simple: getting a job. At the President’s office we have talked about one target of education: giving people the skills to create jobs for themselves and others in places where

there are none. In the meanwhile, though, we need to talk to the Danes about the factory.

It’s November in Didziasalis, and its teachers are working against time, lighting the lights, waiting out the dark. Christmas is coming. The festival of light, time to start rolling back fears and setting aside troubles. I thought of A.P.P.L.E. yesterday and about the task of making our programs available to the periphery of Lithuania. Places where, often, the schools and the teachers are the most true and generous bastions of hope. I think that we have a great deal yet to offer our colleagues in such towns, and besides, it’s a privilege, a blessing, to take up any tools that we have and join in the building of a new and better time .

Vaiva Vebraitė
A.P.P.L.E. President

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS FROM VILNIUS!

By the time that you read this, Romas and I will have decorated the Christmas tree in our new apartment in Vilnius. As most of you know, I defended my dissertation last November and received the Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction in December of 2003.

Romas retired on October 31. He will begin teaching journalism at Vilnius University the second semester of this school year, as well as media literacy at our A.P.P.L.E. partner school, “The Contemporary School Center” (formerly “Gama”). I’ll be teaching music to 9th, 10th and 11th graders at the same school as I look for other gainful ways to occupy myself. I have a secret desire to try out all of the recipes that I’ve collected over the years. My other desire is to read pulp fiction for a while. But I’m sure that won’t last any longer than the Lithuanian winter.

We extend an early invitation to visit us at our apartment in Vilnius during A.P.P.L.E. 2005. Best wishes for the holidays.

Emilija and Romas Sakadolskis
Emilija is a past A.P.P.L.E. President

HOLIDAY GREETINGS FROM MASSACHUSETTS!

Aidas and I celebrated our 30th anniversary in July 2004. Aidan continues to work as manufacturing manager at Sippican, Inc., a firm that makes antennas for submarines. He has completed 26 years with the firm. I shall celebrate 25 years with Fontbonne Academy in May 2005. I have been the assistant principal for academics these last five years. Both of us are active in the Lithuanian community. Our folksinging group, Sodauto,

has been together for 29 years. (Do we sound like people who never change?) Aidas is still the president of the Lithuanian Community of Boston. I have served as president of the benefactors of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in Putnam, Connecticut.

With Sodauto we have been working on putting out a CD of our program "By the Mountains of Coal," an account of songs and stories from the Lithuanian immigrants of the Pennsylvania mining region in the early 20th century. In the summer of 2003, we brought the program to Lithuania for the second time to be part of the national song and dance festival. The first time, in 1992, we performed it at the A.P.P.L.E. seminar in Vilnius. Sadly, Sodauto recently lost its long-time home, when the Lithuanian parish of St. George in Norwood, Massachusetts, was closed by the archdiocese of Boston.

Aidas' most exciting new endeavor has been playing bass guitar in a blues/rock band with our son, Aidas. All members of the Small Farm Animals, as they call themselves, are either Lithuanian-Americans or married to a Lithuanian-American. The band has enjoyed much success with the Lithuanian community in the Northeast in the last few years. Their most recent performance was at a benefit for Camp Neringa during the Columbus Day weekend, that was organized by our daughter Dainora.

The greatest joy in our life is our little granddaughter, Liepa. She keeps us smiling.

Last spring we bought a piece of property not far from Vilnius. It is a beautiful rural setting near the one-time capital Kernave. We are not quite sure what we will be doing with the land, but we now can begin to dream.

This year I took a hiatus from my summers with A.P.P.L.E. and spent some time just taking care of my home and family. I look forward to being a program director for the 2005 A.P.P.L.E. seminar, although Vaiva has not let me know where I will be working. Negotiations are progressing. Happy holidays to the A.P.P.L.E. Corps!

Gita Kupcinskas
Past A.P.P.L.E. President

A FIRST IMPRESSION THAT WILL LAST A LIFETIME

I began my teaching career in 1962 while pursuing a Master of Arts in Biology at Dartmouth College. I have taught at both the middle and high school levels, and I am currently the Lower School Science Specialist at the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Greenwich, Connecticut. The school is a PreS-12 college preparatory school for girls. It is part of the worldwide network of Sacred Heart Schools. Our newest school is being built brick by brick in Uganda.



Pat McKean, Elementary Strand, pours "Magic Sand"TM into a glass of water.

"Magic Sand"TM doesn't like water, so as it is poured, sand towers appear in the cup. It is sand that has been coated with a ScotchguardTM type of substance.

*Dr. John Moore of the Institute for Chemical Education performed this demonstration at the **Super Science Connections** workshop in Madison, Wisconsin. He is the person who donated the books for the 2004 **Elementary Strand**.*

This summer I traveled to Vilnius, Lithuania to teach a science program to 25 elementary teachers. In 1992, **Super Science Connections** was developed to help elementary teachers teach science every day in their classrooms. The program is now in the hands of a diverse group of Wisconsin teachers as well as teachers from 32 states and territories, including Alaska and American Samoa.

The A.P.P.L.E. seminar was the experience of a lifetime for me! I had never worked with a translator. (We all know how hard it is for a teacher to stop talking.) I needed to remember to stop every two or three sentences or so in order that my words could be translated. I have never had a more positive, enthusiastic group of teachers who were willing to take a risk and learn about physical science.

I taught the teachers five physical science units—Color and Light, Insulation, Pressure, Surface Tension and Water—through a hands-on approach using materials found in teachers' classrooms, homes, and grocery stores. We made rainbow gels, dyed wool with KoolAidTM, built Cartesian divers, blew bubbles, and prepared ice cream in a bag! Two teachers brought their young daughters (ages 5 and 6) to class. It was impossible to tell who (mother or daughter) was having more fun!

I experienced a King Mindaugas Day festival at Kernave and a wedding at Trakau. I helped serve hot dogs and sauerkraut to our Lithuanian teachers. I saw the 14th A.P.P.L.E. tree planted. I benefited greatly from a railing that was built for the stairs leading to our hotel. Shirley Sabo, an A.P.P.L.E. board member, offered to pay the cost of its construction if it could be completed in time for the program. This is one of many examples of the generosity of spirit evident everywhere in this organization.

It was difficult to leave knowing that I might not be able to return again. I am scheduled to have knee replacement surgery in November. Who knows what next summer may bring? I can't thank A.P.P.L.E. enough for the gift of this program and for my opportunity to participate in it!

Patricia B. McKean

LETTERS OF APPRECIATION FROM LITHUANIAN TEACHERS WHO ATTENDED THE A.P.P.L.E. SEMINAR IN JULY, 2004

I am sending sincere wishes from Lithuania. This is my second participation in A.P.P.L.E. courses and I am happy to communicate with friends from a foreign country. These people from America are not indifferent. They educate young generations and by means of experiments give us a lot of knowledge.

I thank the biology specialists for collaboration, expressed understanding, and sharing of experience. I send my sincere thankfulness to you for the support, for the possibility to maintain friendly relations between American and Lithuanian teachers.

We all have the same purpose to educate the young generation in the spirit of love of motherland and nature. Thank you,

Zita G.

I am an English language teacher from Vilnius. I am pleased to have a great opportunity to attend A.P.P.L.E. courses this year. It gave me a lot of ideas for English Language teaching and I am sure I will share them with my colleagues at school and use these ideas in my classes. In addition, I am glad I had a wonderful chance to listen and speak English with my group mates and professors from USA. Furthermore, attending choice lectures I discovered many interesting facts about life and schools in America. General lectures gave plenty of information concerning successful communication and work at school as well as solving conflicts. All these lectures were really worth attending. Thus, I think the gained information will help me working with my students and dealing with their parents and my colleagues. Finally, I met many interesting and clever

people as well as brilliant teachers.

Thus, I would like to express my gratitude for your help and support as well as the chance to attend the A.P.P.L.E. courses this summer. Thank you very much, indeed. Sincerely yours,

Violeta P.

I am a teacher from a small town in the north of Lithuania – Zagare. I work in the boarding school with children who have special needs and I was really surprised about the news that I will be able to take part in A.P.P.L.E. It was a great experience for me and I will use it in my work at school, I am sure! I am grateful for your donation. It was the first time when I took part in A.P.P.L.E. but it would be great that I would be able to come to Vilnius to A.P.P.L.E. next summer! I am also grateful for so sincere and kind lecturers who shared their knowledge with my colleagues and me. Thanks for Mara Servaites, Gail Bienstock, and Marjorie Gaysunas Pett. It would be nice to have an opportunity to meet you in the future and say “thanks” for your help. From my heart, thank you!

Dalia S.

I come from a small town in the south of Lithuania (Varena). I am the director of the music school. I have been in education for 32 years. I have a family with two children – a son and a daughter. I came to A.P.P.L.E. course for the first time and enjoyed it very much. The communication strand which I chose was extremely useful because it is really important in our school. Especially I liked strand classes given by Dr. Phyllis Deringis and Dr. Phill Taylor. Many thanks to them. Thank you so much for your help and support and for your big heart. I wish you all the best. Yours sincerely,

Nijole P.

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING SUGGESTIONS

If you are shopping for that special gift for the person who has everything he/she/they could possibly want, how about a membership in A.P.P.L.E. in their name as a Christmas present? The minimum membership fee is \$25.

Are you downsizing and really do not need another dust catcher? How about requesting a scholarship for a Lithuanian teacher in your name? That \$40 will get you a very appreciative letter at the end of the 2005 summer seminar.

In either case - a membership, scholarship, or a “no-strings attached” donation would go far with A.P.P.L.E. We are one of the few nonprofit organizations operating on a purely volunteer basis. In other words, no monies go toward salaries except for minimum maintenance of our office in Vilnius.

If no one does this for you, do it for yourself as a last-minute 2004 tax deduction. The address is A.P.P.L.E., P. O. Box 617, Durham, CT 06422. Act now ... and have a joyful holiday season!

A LITHUANIAN CHRISTMAS MEMORY

My first and only Christmas celebration in Lithuania came on January 10, 1995. I was beginning my sabbatical leave in Lithuania. My itinerary included one-week visits to schools in Mariampole, Panevezys, Kaunas and Vilnius. My friends, Audrone and Vilius Klicius and their three children, Justinas, Domantas and Dovile, invited me to share their Christmas Eve celebration, even if they had to keep their tree decorated until well after the January 5 conclusion of the traditional Christmas season.

Vilius and Dovile met me at the Vilnius Airport on a cold and snowy afternoon. I still remember seeing ladies sitting at sidewalk stands selling bananas crusted with fresh snow. Although I was tired from my long journey, my fatigue disappeared when I saw the quaint evergreen tree covered with treasured holiday ornaments. And though the tree had lost many of its needles, and those that remained were more brown than green, the holiday spirit was still in the air. Audrone and Dovile finished preparing the twelve dishes required for the Lithuanian Christmas Eve feast. No meat is served at

this meal; only special dishes, many I had never tasted before. Although it has been ten years since this eventful evening, I still remember the poppy seed milk and the herring. Other dishes that appear at this holiday meal include fish, small cookies called slizikai, kisielius, a dried fruit soup, a salad of winter and dried vegetables, mushrooms, boiled potatoes, boiled wheat corns, apples and bread (white and black). Dovile shared with me that slizikai is her favorite treat on the Christmas Eve table. When she and her brothers were young, they would eat all the slizikai before Christmas Eve. Their mother had to hide the slizikai to keep her children from eating them before the meal.

The dinner officially began when the first star was seen in the sky. Christmas wafers (plotkeles from the church), one for each person present at the table, were shared by all with wishes that we would be together again the following Christmas.

After dinner, we exchanged gifts. I had brought presents for all the family. Vilius received a sweater. Audrone was happy to get a holiday outfit from my wife. The kids got boots, watches and portable radios. The special gift was saved for Dovile. She loved her Barbie dolls. My wife and I shopped all over Central Florida for a Barbie gift that would add to her collection and still fit into my limited luggage. We finally decided on "Barbie's Bedroom." The box was big and colorful and far too large to fit into my two suitcases. We solved our problem by taking all the pieces out of the box, folding the box into a manageable size, and

WHAT CAN YOU BUY FOR \$40 IN 2005?

YOU CAN CHANGE THE LIFE OF A LITHUANIAN TEACHER!

A \$40 scholarship helps defray the cost of board and room for Lithuanian participants. The cost to underwrite an interpreter is \$200. Those who receive scholarships or an interpreter's stipend will write personal letters to their sponsors, providing a firsthand account of the influence that the Seminar experience has on their lives and professional development.

If you sponsored a teacher or an interpreter last year, you know the value that was received. If you didn't, this is your chance to find out. Consider honoring a friend with this special gift, giving a scholarship in his or her name. You will be making a difference! *Please send scholarship and stipend donations to: A.P.P.L.E., Box 617, Durham, CT 06422. We can reach so many more people with your help.*

PS. We would like to remind you that because of strict Internal Revenue Service regulations, we cannot accept scholarships intended for specific persons. If you would like to support your relatives or friends, please do so directly.

Reminder: A.P.P.L.E. regular membership remains a bargain at \$25 per year, because all this work is still handled by volunteers. If you haven't sent in your renewal, please include it with your scholarship donation.

packing the bedroom furniture throughout the luggage. Then, before the Christmas Eve feast, I went off to my room, unpacked the box, furniture, mirror, makeup items and Barbie. I reassembled the present and wrapped it in festive paper brought from home.

After dinner, friends dropped by to share in the holiday festivities and welcome me to Marijampole. Dovile and her brothers were happy with their presents. But the Barbie Bedroom was the hit of the evening. Dovile, now a second-year student at Vilnius University, recently shared with me that she still has it safely tucked away among her childhood treasures.

Ten years have passed since that magical evening. I may not return to celebrate another Christmas Eve with my friends, the Klicius family. But I always shall remember the food, the fellowship and the joy of sharing Christmas that cold winter night in Lithuania.

K. Phillip Taylor
Past A.P.P.L.E. President

CHRISTMAS FUNDRAISER LAUNCHES OUR CAMPAIGN FOR 2005

This Holiday Season we have a festive new fundraiser idea. We have A.P.P.L.E.-designed e-mail greetings for you to share with your friends and colleagues, and which they can share in turn. The co-producers of this e-mail greeting are past presidents Katie Dunlap and Irena Ross. Each use of an e-mail greeting is also a pledge of \$5 for A.P.P.L.E. We are counting on the generosity of all and we are hoping that many of our greeting messages will circulate among friends and relatives and A.P.P.L.E. supporters in order to fill our bushels with \$5 "apples." For details, and to see these terrific e-cards, please point your browser to www.applequest.org.



The A.P.P.L.E. Corps ...1994. *How many current and former members of the 1994 A.P.P.L.E. Corps can you identify?*

Correspondence, scholarships and other donations should be sent to:

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P.O. Box 617
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Our Internet address is: <http://www.applequest.org/index.html>. Please check it out, sign our guestbook, and offer your comments and suggestions. Please send information that you would like included on the Web site to: amanda@applequest.org or Amanda Muliolis, 1725 Sherwood Blvd, Euclid, OH 44117.

YES! I would like to join in your efforts toward educational reform in Lithuania.

I would like to make a contribution to:

The Scholarship Fund. (\$40 supports one teacher. You will receive a personal letter from the teacher who receives your donation.)

The Stipend Fund. (\$200 supports an interpreter or Lithuanian lecturer.)

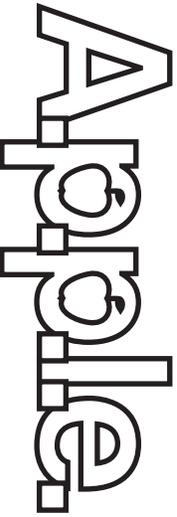
I am enclosing the following amount for annual membership:

- Regular Membership** (\$25) _____
- Family Membership** (no duplicate mailings) (\$40) _____
- Charter Membership** (\$100) _____
- Leadership Group** (\$250) _____
- Patron** (\$500) _____

I would like to add the following amount to help pay for A.P.P.L.E. programs: _____

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