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REPORT TO THE CORPS

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From the President

It is always a wonderful feeling to see that each year a Call for Proposals is issued and each year we enlist a cohort of people who are eager to give of their time and finances to share their expertise with others. Thank you to each and every one of you. A.P.P.L.E. 2008 will celebrate our 18th year.

This summer we will conduct in-service education seminars for teachers and administrators at our Vilnius



*President Barbara Henriques and
Past President Karl Janowitz .*

Program at the Pedagogu Profesines Raidos Centras; A.P.P.L.E. will facilitate a Special Education Program that will include lectures in Kaunas and in residential programs as well as with faculty and graduate students at Vytautas Magnus and Saiuliai Universities; two Religion and Ethics Strands will be held in Vilnius and Kaunas; a new Social Work Initiative by our colleagues from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill will involve presentations for faculty and graduate students Vytautas Magnus and Saiuliai Universities and Klaipeda College, and once again A.P.P.L.E. will be working with teachers, parents and young people with special needs and their siblings at Camp Viltis.

As we move forward, I would like to also thank those of you who have continued to support our work through your donations and contributions to A.P.P.L.E. Your donations support our general expenses, translators, interpreters, materials, and the Lithuanian Scholars Fund. This year the Lithuanian Scholars Fund supported over 30 Lithuanian educators who submitted proposals for projects related to last summer's sessions. We will accept proposals for grants related to Best Literacy Practices for the 21st Century at the conclusion of our 2008 Summer Seminars.

Barbara

Barbara Henriques Takes the Reins

I became involved with A.P.P.L.E. when the organization was interested in developing programming related to Teacher Centers. My colleague and friend, Corinne Levin, asked me if I might be interested in presenting sessions on Teacher Centers in Lithuania in 1993. Ever the teacher, I said yes.



That year we had a cohort of energetic participants, we discussed issues focused on how teacher centers could identify the needs of teachers and the resources to meet those needs. I still remember that group just thinking about them. We had a broad range of folks from different areas, all were excited about the possibilities for teacher centers and for teachers and their students.

Over the years, I have conducted several workshops on the value of teacher centers. It is a great accomplishment that Lithuania has developed 59 Teacher Centers over the 17 years of A.P.P.L.E.'s existence. Having been able to visit many of these centers has been a wonderful experience.

Subsequently, I became involved in the Action Research Program of A.P.P.L.E. For several years, I worked with teachers and administrators, as well as, University doctoral students in developing and implementing Action Research Projects at their schools and within their communities. The initiation of the first Action Research course in the Education Program at Kaunas Technological University was a milestone. This summer we will have an Administration Strand that will once again deal with Action Research as an important tool for educational change.

Change has been a major motivation in my life. Looking back on my experience with A.P.P.L.E., I can honestly say that it has been grounded in the knowledge that being able to embrace change makes almost anything possible. Having been an inner city youngster with immigrant parents (my parents are from Portugal), I remember being told in junior high school that girls like me didn't go to college. When I told my mother this, she said, "If you want to go, you can go." That afternoon, she went to the school and spoke to my guidance counselor. I got to go to the high school for students who were planning to go to college.

Today, many years later, I am a member of a college faculty. I know that education can change lives; I have seen it in my own life, in the lives of my students, and in the lives of my Lithuanian students as well. Change is difficult to embrace, it comes often when we are not prepared for it, but our reaction to how we deal with change speaks volumes about who we are. My hope is that personally and professionally I will always remember that it is only by embracing change that I can grow. This is something I try to convey in my teaching and in my attitude toward life. My work with A.P.P.L.E. has been one of the most productive experiences of my professional life. The experiences that I have shared with my Lithuanian colleagues have been transformative. Education should always be transformative.

I have been honored to serve on A.P.P.L.E.'s Board of Directors, to have served as President-elect and now to begin my term as President of the organization. I look forward to working with members of the Board of Directors, the people who volunteer to continue the work of A.P.P.L.E. in so many ways, our contributors, and our Lithuanian colleagues as we continue to explore new ways to continue our collaboration with our Lithuanian colleagues and ensure that the future of education reflects our commitment to teachers, administrators, students, and their communities.

Currently, Dr. Henriques teaches at St. Joseph's College in the Department of Education in West Hartford,, CT.

A.P.P.L.E. Special Education Library in Kaunas

The A.P.P.L.E. Special Education Library in Kaunas is unique, as it highlights the needs of individuals with disabilities and, as such, is unlike any other organization's dedication to educational issues. The name of the library was chosen by the Lithuanian teachers involved in special education and the very active A.P.P.L.E. chapter in Kaunas. The **Karl Janowitz Library** was named to honor our past president and the dedication he has shown over the years to Special Education needs in Lithuania. Honoring him in this way was very special as Karl has centered his work in Kaunas.

"This is the most up-to-date library related to special education issues. It is a special, central place to think and to work."

Last summer Karl was speaking with a teacher who told him how important the library was for educators. He was moved by the emotion she displayed as she thanked him for making this resource available to educators.

According to Karl, "It is a unique library, comprised of special education texts, publications, videos and materials in other formats. Materials are available in multiple languages, including English and Lithuanian. This is a most up-to-date library related to special education issues. It is a special, central place to think and to work."

Karl clarified the status of the special education library in Kaunas at a recent board meeting. "The books, furniture, and anything else in the rooms are the property of A.P.P.L.E., but not the building."



Spring Meeting Update

The Annual Spring Meeting was held in San Diego this year. The opening reception was at the home of Jack and Nancy Vellis which has a lovely view of the bay. A.P.P.L.E. was introduced to many members of the Lithuanian community in the San Diego area. It is hoped that these new bonds will continue to strengthen as we strive towards our mutual goals during the summer sessions. It is believed that this meeting was the first to be held west of the Mississippi.

A.P.P.L.E. has created three new committees. They are New Funding Sources, Publicity, and Grant Applications. These new committees were created to help with major projects. The Recruitment Committee will be maintained.

Jim Brousseau and Sue Kohfeldt will host the 2009 Spring Meeting which will be held in Milan, Michigan near Ann Arbor. All A.P.P.L.E. members are invited to attend the Saturday meeting as we discuss the highs and lows of the summer sessions just completed and finalize the plans for the 2009 Summer Sessions.



George Sabo, Sister Jeannette, Shirley Sabo, Nancy Hanssen-Vellis, and John Baltrus

Camp Viltis and San Diego State University

Camp Viltis

Nancy Hanssen, Director

This past summer with A.P.P.L.E. was an exceptional experience for myself and eight graduate students from the University of San Diego. The required Special Education course on campus titled Healthy Environments and Inclusive Education was offered for the first time in Lithuania to give students a “hands-on” experience. These students chose to travel to Lithuania to work with the children and teachers at Camp Viltis.

The Lithuanian teachers were paired with six of the USD graduate students for the first week of camp and with four for the second week of camp. Each team was responsible for working with two to three children for the first hour and a half of the day. The A.P.P.L.E. teachers then attended the A.P.P.L.E. workshops while the USD students and Lithuanian volunteers worked with the children. I would like you to see Camp Viltis through the photos and some of the written reflections of the students whose lives were touched by this experience:



Laura Larson

In Lithuania I built relationships with people that I would have most likely not have met at any other time in my life. I was able to feel the breeze of the Baltic Sea on my face, and have the sea on my skin. I was able to sit at bonfires at the end of the night with fellow volunteers and chat about our similarities and differences in life experiences. I have come to find that we are so much more similar than different. I have also learned that although at times it may be frustrating not being able to speak the same language fluently, you can still have an amazing time, and some great moments come from words being lost in translation.



Mallory Singer

I will most definitely miss the friends I have made while being in Lithuania. The most interesting part of building all of these relationships has to be the fact that it is completely possible that I will never see them again. For about two weeks I was surrounded by the cream of the crop in Lithuania, for only the cream would volunteer two weeks of their summer without being paid and work at a camp for others, and be completely selfless during that time. I can only hope that I may have given them a fraction of what they have given me.

Nani Naish

My trip to Lithuania was not an adventure, it was a journey. A journey through a land so foreign and different from my own. I arrived feeling vulnerable, scared, and humbled because I could not function in Lithuania all by myself. I had to rely on others for almost everything. But, I left in awe of the country and its people. The people of Lithuania have hearts and souls which have been stomped on through generations and yet their hearts are bigger and beating stronger than anyone I have ever met. The relationships I made with the shining and talented individuals at Vilijampole, the courageous children at Camp Viltis, the angelic social workers, the strong parents, and the revolutionary teachers, not only humbled me, but inspired me to see the good in myself and forever help others.



Jasmine Williams

I went to Lithuania to help in any capacity. It just so happens that that

help came in the form of playing basketball. I did more than play basketball in Lithuania. I grew to love a group of people from a country that I never imagined myself going to. I learned, retained as well as enjoyed the history and culture of a country that was distant in my world but has now become a big part of my heart and soul.

April Zay

Alexis and I have had many shared memories for the short time that we have known each other and I tell you, everyday seems to trigger something from our experience. Camp Viltis has left many lasting impressions on me and has changed me significantly. I cannot wait until I have the time to sit down and dig deep on the children who have forever changed my life.

Alexis Downey

I do not feel my life or my education would be quite as complete without this trip to Lithuania. You cannot get the same kind of practical experience anywhere



else. Although it is unlikely in the near future I will come across many Lithuanian children, I will be confronted with many other cultures and barriers. Without the knowledge and experience gained

in Lithuania, the process would probably be more difficult. I have learned to work with people in difficult situations, I have been broken and emotionally drained, I have been humbled, I have seen a culture from a variety of perspectives, but most importantly I have loved and been loved by people and children whose greatest joy is spending time at Camp Viltis.

Lisa Dunitz

I cried tears of sadness when leaving my Lithuanian friends but happiness because they are now a part of my life. My new young friend has changed my life forever.



Our hope is that our future teachers, through this experience, will reinforce their own self-confidence as well as infuse the development of self-confidence within Lithuanian teachers. Our vision is the creation of a long-term partnership among the University of San Diego, A.P.P.L.E. and our Lithuanian colleagues.

While there were many challenges, my purpose was to give our future teachers an international experience that would take them outside of their world and let them give to and learn from others. I believe they all came away from this experience touched by the love and the spirit of their Lithuanian counterparts.

My experience at camp this year was very different in many ways. The level of commitment and knowledge of the Lithuanian teachers is great and they deserve to have the best that we can offer from A.P.P.L.E. The greatest difference was seeing camp through the eyes of our next generation of teachers.



Fulbright in Romania



Editor's note: Co-editor of this newsletter, Sue Kohfeldt, was awarded a Fulbright Teacher Exchange for the 2007-08 school year. She has been teaching English as a Foreign Language this past year in Romania.

This year has marked a change in my regular teaching assignment. I have been living and teaching in Gura Humorului in northern Romania near the Painted Monasteries, UNESCO World Heritage Sites. It has been a remarkable opportunity to teach English as a Foreign Language in the high school through the Teacher Exchange Program of the Fulbright Commission. I exchanged classrooms with a Romanian teacher of English who taught my tenth graders (in Milan, Michigan) Julius Caesar and the process of writing a research paper, while I taught her students fluency in the English language. I am living in this small town as a local (or as close to a local as I can be without speaking the language), and learning what it is like to live in one of the poorest areas of Europe. From the nearest city, I am seven hours by train deep in the Carpathian Mountains where wolves and bears roam freely – a far cry from the outskirts of Ann Arbor where I have lived for the past twenty years. There are no McDonald's or malls here. Without a car, I walk everywhere, just as most of the locals do. I do my grocery shopping at the open air market and buy fresh bread at the bakery. Horse and *carutes* pass my window all day long as they go about their daily business. I am learning just how difficult life is in rural Eastern Europe.

Research tells us that learning a foreign language from a native speaker who only speaks the new language is the best way to learn. I have ten classes and each one of my students has grown exceptionally in their language skills and so the research must be right! In September, only a handful of students could speak English and even that was stilted. Now, only

six months later, there are many students in every class who can hold an intelligent conversation.

In the first semester I helped a 12th former (12th grader) assemble the application packages for several American universities. One of them has asked for interim grades and it is still early. I have an American Club that meets weekly to speak in English and to talk about going to university in America, with assistance in the process from the Fulbright program in Bucharest and the American Centers scattered throughout the country. I meet with the students as a group once a week and individually several times a week. The students have been working on college choices, the Common Application, letters of reference, and the essay so far. In Bucharest, while at a meeting with others who are on Fulbright grants in Romania, we talked about the SAT and TOEFL and the rest of the process. This program caught the eye of the Ambassador and we were invited to the U.S. Embassy for an afternoon of discussions and dinner while we were in Bucharest.

The Bucharest trip had several prongs. We managed to make international news in five newspapers and on the internet news services with a live, online video conference with an American-Romanian author. Alice Rose was born in Bucharest and spent her summers with her grandparents in Constanta. She went to university in Canada and then completed her Masters and PhD programs in the U.S.A.. She currently teaches Eastern European Literature and Women's Studies at UCLA. Recently, she wrote a YA (young adult) novel in English with thinly-veiled references to the previous Romanian regime into the novel. *Maria Dracula* was on the *NY Times* Bestseller list for over three months this past fall. My students read this novel in English although it has been translated into Romanian and was introduced at Gaudeamus in Bucharest this past November. This novel resonated with the students and so the atmosphere during the video conference was electric! Members of the Romanian press were in attendance as was her mother who is a renowned journalist here. The air was charged with excitement as Alice discussed how she came to write the novel, how some of her own life stories were embedded in the novel and the research she did to create the characters. As a result of this conference, the sequel will be dedicated to these 29 students who are currently interacting with Alice through two blog sites. Alice hopes to assemble a book of these comments for which I will write an introduction that will be published in the fall.

Additionally, several students have chosen one scene in the novel to film with the intention of making a full-length feature film in the next academic year. It is hoped that two American film school professors will assist them in this effort through the Fulbright Scholars program in the next academic year.



I have students who have performed excellently on several national and regional contests such as the Kangaroo, taking first place which includes a trip to Paris. I have coached one student for the Olimpiada in English. I accompanied him to the national contest in Slatina. He

Sue Kohfeldt, center, with Barbara Sue (right) and Denise (left) during the video conference with internationally renowned author Alice Rose.

won first place in the nation and all the honors that go with this prize. In June, 2009, the Kulshan Chorus will come to Gura Humorului to present a concert in the park and then spend the next few days in an international “Clean the Moldovan River” campaign. There are home stays arranged for the ninety members of the Chorus and a tent city will be set up on the banks of the river for many who are invited to attend from neighboring countries. It is expected to be a wonderful event.

And, finally, the faculty at both buildings where I teach have become much more fluent in their English skills. They have overcome their reticence to speak in English for fear of making mistakes. Many of them now can say more than “Hello!” In fact, we are able to have conversations beyond simple instructions, which is a milestone for them.

During my time here I have managed to visit much of the countryside. I have learned many of the customs and traditional dances. I have made many friends here

and see that, although this year is quickly drawing to a close, I will be finding reasons to return to this lovely corner of the world. A piece of my heart will be here in Gura Humorului with my friends and the students of Alexandru cel Bun high school. Sadly, there will be no more year-long Fulbright exchanges. This is sad news as the program will be modified to a six to eight week stay rather than the year-long experience. Although I realize that it can be very difficult to orchestrate the exchange, it takes that kind of time to be able to identify the issues that lie beneath the surface and to find the assets to make it all work. I can't imagine the program working as effectively in such a short time. The friendships and bonds would be superficial and the needs will not be identified and solutions will not be found. The language skills that the students and staff acquired simply from my being there will not occur. It is a shame that this program will become such an abbreviated version of a worthwhile project.

One of the dances I have learned here is uncannily similar to a Lithuanian dance I know and so I have been able to dance! Tradition runs strong here. There are some lovely traditions I will bring home with me, such as a true celebration of International Women's Day. All day long, the men celebrate the day by giving flowers to women and wishing them a wonderful day. There are similar celebrations all year long. This has been a delightful year – one I will always remember fondly.
Sue Kohfeldt



Humor Monastery

**American Professional Partnership
for Lithuanian Education**

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You will receive a letter of thanks from those that benefit.

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