

**MARCH 2011**

**Vol. 3, Issue 3**

# The A.P.P.L.E. Seed



(American Professional Partnership

for

Lithuanian Education)

## E-Zine

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### Greetings!



### Message from the President

The snow has finally melted, and those of us here on the east coast, who have been inundated with it, are looking forward to an early spring.

At this time, we are still short of instructors for our summer A.P.P.L.E. Seminars. Anyone interested, who has expertise in technology across all curriculum areas, is invited to apply. The theme for the seminars is the **Integration of Technology into Curriculum**. The summer sessions will take place July 11 through July 22. The sessions will not be located in Vilnius, but in another location in Lithuania. The Ministry is currently looking to find us an appropriate venue. Please apply on line through our web page at [www.applequest.org](http://www.applequest.org), or call Shirley Sabo, A.P.P.L.E.'s Administrative Assistant, 203-758-4600, for further information.

Another reminder that our Annual Meeting is scheduled for Saturday, April 30, 2011, and all A.P.P.L.E. members have an invitation to this open meeting. If interested in joining us for the weekend, contact Vida Anton ([crolit@optonline.net](mailto:crolit@optonline.net)) for details regarding reservations, etc.

On March 11<sup>th</sup>, we will be celebrating Lithuania's Independence Day! Twenty One years since Lithuania has regained her independence from the Soviet Union. Happy Independence Day to all!

Dr. Vida R. Gavin  
A.P.P.L.E. President

#### **Mission Statement:**

"The American Professional Partnership for Lithuanian Education (A.P.P.L.E.) is a volunteer international non-profit educational organization. With the support of the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science, A.P.P.L.E. partners with Lithuanian educators to foster the implementation of innovative educational approaches that contribute to the development of a democratic society."

#### **A.P.P.L.E. Member Profile - Shirley M. Sabo**



**Shirley M. Sabo**

- 
- Born Shirley Anne Matijosaitis, daughter of Joseph and Anna (Montvila) Matijosaitis and granddaughter of Antonas and Rosaria

(Nevulis) Matijosaitis and Kastatas and Marija (Ribinskas) Montvila, all immigrants from Lithuania.

- Raised in Waterbury, CT; member of St. Joseph Church; graduated from St. Joseph Grammar School, 1947; and Waterbury Catholic High School, 1951.
- Married George A. Sabo, Jr. in 1956 and with him raised 7 children: 2 sons and 5 daughters in Prospect, CT.
- At the age of 37, enrolled in college and received an Associate Degree from Mattatuck Community College (1976) and a Bachelors of Science degree from Southern Connecticut State University (1980.) Majored in Secondary Education in English and minored in History/Social Science Studies. Attended graduate courses, at Trinity College, Hartford, CT and St. Joseph College, West Hartford, CT.
- Teaching experience includes Emmet O'Brien Technical High School (2 years) and Sacred Heart High School (9 years.)
- Own and operate 2 family businesses: Highland Greens Golf Course and Samarius Precision Products.
- Activities and interests include a lifelong interest in politics. Shirley was elected to the Prospect Town Council for 10 terms (20 years), concentrating her service on the Pension Subcommittee. She has also served soon the Charter Revision Committee, the Library Board, and Beautification Committee. Shirley received an award for Connecticut Secretary of the State for dedicated service to her town.
- Intricately involved in her community, as wife of the mayor, Shirley has served on many committees, among which she chaired Prospect's National Bicentennial celebration and the Prospect Sesquicentennial Celebration. Also, she was involved in St. Anthony Parish, teaching religious Education for 16 years.

### **How did I hear about A.P.P.L.E.?**

When Lithuanians voted for their independence in 1990, I felt a burning desire to help in some way. Not having been involved in the Lithuanian community in some time, I was at a loss as to where to begin. I decided to call the Lithuanian Legation in Washington, D.C. and was surprised when Stasys Lozoriatis, who later became an ambassador, answered the phone. He gave me the names of Vaiva Vebra, the 1<sup>st</sup> President of A.P.P.L.E. and Stephanie Urban, an early contributor.

That was the beginning of my A.P.P.L.E. adventure. My experience brought much joy to my life. I was the first of my family to return to the country of my heritage. The combination of being a Lithuanian-American and an educator made my involvement with A.P.P.L.E truly rewarding.

These past 20 years have introduced me to so many wonderful people who also came to assist in the newly formed democratic educational system in Lithuania. Meeting and forming friendships with Lithuanian teachers helped me experience so many beautiful things about Lithuanian culture. This added, in a special way, to a heritage I had come to love through my parents and grandparents. I have passed that experience on to my children and my grandchildren. I am so grateful for my

I have been a member of the American Professional for Lithuanian Education (A.P.P.L.E.) from 1991 to present, served as assistant to Vaiva Vebra, the 1<sup>st</sup> president of A.P.P.L.E.; worked as Registrar, served as Vice-President for Recruitment and Personnel, and now as assistant to the current president, Vida Gavin.

## "BECOMING LITHUANIAN" - ANN PETRIULUNAS

Many of our readers may recognize the following article from its original publication in the May 2009 issue of *Bridges* magazine. We thought it was worth reprinting here, because it resonated personally with so many of us, American-Lithuanians, of all ages, who felt the same void. Ann's journey to claim her heritage is one that I believe is sought by many, but all too often never fulfilled for lack of opportunity, resources or the good fortune of perfect timing. Fortunately, in Ann's case, the stars were perfectly aligned and A.P.P.L.E. can add another credit to its record of assistance to Lithuanians on both sides of the Atlantic.



Ann Petroliunas

### "Becoming Lithuanian"

I went to ballet lessons on Saturday mornings. My cousins went to Lituanistine mokykla (Lithuanian school). They always sang "Happy Birthday" as "Ilgiausiu metu" (Wishing you long years), and I never understood them. My mother was a typical American blend of Irish and German immigrants, making me a child of the melting pot. I grew up dreading Christmas Eve and found the portrait of my namesake that hung in my grandmother's hallway utterly depressing. I wasn't Lithuanian. My father was.

After my mother died and before Mociute (Grandma) became too sick to travel, my father

brought us to Lithuania. Rather, my father dragged us to Lithuania. We protested. It would be a country full of pickled herring, wrinkled relatives, an alien language, funny toilets, and a tantalizing sea too cold to swim in. We were teenagers. We just wanted to go to Paris. As it turns out, Paris doesn't hold a candle to Vilnius. Paris doesn't have Dede Vytautas and cousin Andrius. Paris doesn't have Trakai, Kriziu Kalnas, or the family farm in Kacergine. Paris doesn't have saltibarsciai (traditional al fresco beet soup). I cried the entire flight to Paris.

On Christmas Eve, seven years later, over my plate of untouched pickled herring, my aunt's brother half-jokingly asked, "Hey, you're a teacher, wanna come to Lithuania with me this summer?" Six months later we were on one plane across the Atlantic and another across the Baltic. I agreed to present at the A.P.P.L.E. program at Camp Viltis, because I believe in the power of education. I have been working with students with special needs for 10 years and even in our "land of opportunity" in the U.S., I don't see them treated equally to their peers. When I learned that students with disabilities don't often go to school in Lithuania, I felt a strong tug to get out and investigate and contribute to the change that is beginning there.

As part of the A.P.P.L.E. team that volunteered at Camp Viltis, I spent two weeks working with students with disabilities, their families, and a group of Lithuanian teachers. This was simultaneously one of the most rewarding and frustrating experiences of my life. I immediately fell in love with a handful of the children I was working with. They wanted to play games, ask questions, and sing songs. I couldn't understand a word they said. I had a translator with me for my lectures, but these were kids; they don't have time to wait for someone to give your words meaning. They want you to pretend to be a meska (a bear) and chase them around the lawn. Initially, I felt like a failure. I felt like I had a disability. Feeling disabled, while frustrating, actually proved to be a valuable learning experience. I could put myself in my students' shoes for a moment--so much to say and no words to communicate with. Eventually, we found ways to communicate that were language neutral. Smiles, laughter, dancing, and hugs are all sincere ways to express affection and build friendships. Some of the kids knew a few words of English, and I picked up enough Lithuanian to scream "As Meska" (I'm a bear) as I chased Karolis in and out of the bushes surrounding the dining hall.

While I was content being a bear and singing nursery rhymes, my purpose for being at Viltis was not solely to befriend the children at camp; my job was to teach the teachers. A small team of us from the U.S. and Canada was charged with putting together a program that would bring new ideas and understanding to a group of education professionals from Lithuania who had some contact with students with special needs. I thought this would be easy. I knew teaching, I was full of creative ideas, and I had a translator for the language barrier, what else was there? I quickly learned that many of the women who had come to camp didn't actually believe that these special children were capable of learning, and many of them were even more discouraged by the bureaucracies of their schools than I. Many of them distrusted us as Americans, weren't interested in change, and were steadfast in the ways they knew, the ways they were schooled, the ways of the Soviets. I now had living portraits to go with the physical pictures of Soviet occupation that I'd known previously. I began to understand. Why grandpa had to leave his oldest children to be a freedom fighter and could never look back when forced to flee. And why he never talked about Lietuva. What it means that Dede was buried in uniform with 3 other soldiers. Why Vytautas' portraits are so sharp and shadowy. My purpose for being there became all the more clear and important. Our purpose for being there became clearer, and I felt it in my blood.

Education is a huge part of rebuilding a nation. It is an honor the Ministry of Education in Lithuania invites American teachers there year after year to share our educational philosophies and techniques. All I wanted to do was sit with these women and hear their stories, share experiences and ideas, listen to their beliefs, and maybe argue mine a little, but again, I was blocked by language. The translators tried, but it wasn't sufficient. I understood enough to know that there were big

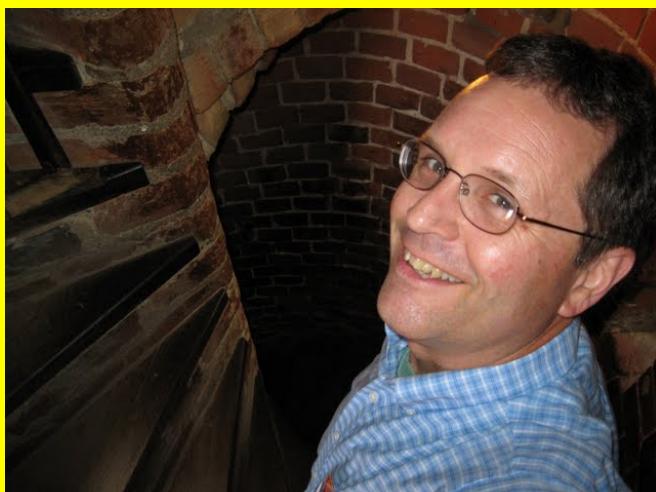
conversations happening there in those weeks. I could translate the emotions and enough words to get the gist, but could only be a silent observer. Sure, I got enough lecture time in and did some activities with the teachers that I'm proud of. They have some new tools from me for their classrooms and a few new windows from which to look at their students. But I wanted to be a part of the bigger picture. I still do.

There is a supposed tradition at Camp Viltis that if you throw something into the Baltic, it will return the following year. Evidently, it is true. On the last night of camp, in front of a few hundred witnesses, two of my colleagues tossed me unto the sea. Last month, without any deliberation of the financial realities of a return or thought to missing the few months that make Chicago winters worth it, I turned in my project proposal to A.P.P.L.E. and bought a plane ticket. I have shopped around Chicago-land for language courses for adults to no avail, and so, before I begin my work at Camp Viltis this coming summer, I will enroll in a two-week language immersion program at University of Vilnius. While it won't be enough to negate my need for a translator, it is a start. And maybe it'll let me chase Karolis around camp as something more interesting than a bear.

Something happened to me last summer. Maybe it was the baptism in the Baltic or the pickled herring that finally made its way down my throat, but somewhere between Vilnius and Giruliai, Kaunas and Druskininkai, I became Lithuanian. I have a long way to go, especially in learning the language. But if at 7 years old, Izidorius can be the first student with a disability in his entire town to attend a mainstream school with his peers, then I can do my best to learn a new language at 28. I can't say how things would have turned out if I had gone to Lithuanian school instead of ballet class, but I can say that my father gave me the greatest gift when he "forced" us to visit Lithuania in 2000. There is something remarkable about being rooted in a culture that truly values its freedom and equally so about the moment I breathed in the Baltic air and finally felt whole.

**Note:** We very much appreciate the courtesy of Jeanne Shalna Dorr, editor of *Bridges*, for her permission to reprint "Becoming Lithuanian" in this issue of The A.P.P.L.E. Seed

## John Trimble Receives Fulbright Scholar Award to Lithuania



Saint Francis University, Pennsylvania Professor Receives Fulbright Scholar Award to lecture in Lithuania

According to the U.S. Department of State and the J. William Fulbright Scholarship Board, John J. Trimble, Ph.D., professor of biology at Saint Francis University, has been awarded a Fulbright Scholar grant to lecture at Vilnius Pedagogical University in Vilnius, Lithuania this semester.

Dr. Trimble is one of approximately 1,100 U.S. faculty and professionals who will travel abroad through the U.S. Scholar Program in 2010-2011. The Fulbright Program is the flagship international educational exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government and is designed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United

States and the people of other countries.

Dr. Trimble will lecture in English in molecular biology, microbiology and evolution classes to students training to become secondary education teachers. Vilnius Pedagogical University (VPU) is the major teacher training university in Lithuania with over 12,000 students.

The spring 2011 semester at VPU is 16 weeks long with an additional four weeks of final exams. Dr. Trimble's grant is entitled: "Pedagogy, Science Literacy and Social Responsibility in the Biology Classroom." His interest in Lithuania education began in 2009 and 2010 as a volunteer instructor in summer teacher training programs sponsored by A.P.P.L.E., the American Professional Partnership for Lithuanian Education.

Accompanying Dr. Trimble to Lithuania will be his spouse, Jamie Fabian, an instructor of rhetoric and composition at Penn State's Altoona campus, and sons Emerson and Eliot, in 10th and 6th grades, respectively. They plan to live in the old town section of Vilnius, a UNESCO world heritage site. No one in the family is Lithuanian, and the learning the Lithuanian language and living in the capital city of more than 550,000 are among the challenges they look forward to meeting.

Dr. Trimble said "I plan to meet as many people as possible and learn about the history and culture of my host country. Then, I hope to share those experiences and our perspectives when we return. With tongue in cheek, I've said we're off on this adventure so that we have more interesting stories to tell."

Dr. Trimble is the second Fulbright Scholar from Saint Francis. Dr. Larry Rager, retired associate professor of business administration, lectured in Tirana, Albania in the spring of 2007. Dr. Rager and the A.P.P.L.E. organization were instrumental in encouraging Dr. Trimble to apply for the Fulbright in Lithuania.

## **Summer Program Personnel Notice!**

### **WANTED!**

### **EXPERIENCED TEACHERS OF BEST PRACTICES IN EDUCATION**

**We have a limited number of openings remaining for our Summer Programs in Lithuania during July.....**

If you are an experienced educator with a passion for supporting best practices in teacher education, **we have an offer you can't refuse.**

This will be our 21st summer providing teacher in-service training programs under the auspices of the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science in support of Lithuania's education community. **We are looking for personnel to fill six (6) open teaching positions in the following disciplines: Two (2) teachers certified in either ESL or ELL at any level; two (2) teachers of Science at Secondary (7-12) level; and two (2) teachers of math and/or reading at the Elementary level.**

If you choose to join us this summer, be prepared to be challenged and rewarded beyond any

previous teaching experience. Your current experience, talent and enthusiasm for supporting fellow teachers will be recognized and appreciated by your Lithuanian counterparts who are waiting for the knowledge and skill development that you can provide.

Your classes will be held in traditional teaching facilities, with PowerPoint assist capabilities, as well as computer lab access where required, an interpreter in each class and possibly a team teacher. You will be provided housing, usually in student dormitory-type facilities, as well as all meals and local transportation during your approximately three week stay with us in Lithuania.

If this brief description of what it would be like to participate in our mission to support the in-service training of talented and receptive fellow teachers, appeals to your sense of volunteerism or your desire to broaden your experience/resume or your curious sense of adventure, please contact us for more details. You can contact me, Ed Topar, at [edtopar@gmail.com](mailto:edtopar@gmail.com) or our Summer Program Director, Barbara Henriques, at [bhenriques@sjc.edu](mailto:bhenriques@sjc.edu) for an in-depth description of the total experience that awaits our participants this year.

**We look forward to your inquiries and promise you a rewarding teaching experience, along with an up-close and personal view of the people, culture and sense of vibrancy that is evident everywhere in Lithuania today. Should you be able to join us in July, it will be a summer memory that will last a lifetime!**

## Heard in Lithuania

**National census begins today in Lithuania.....** beginning March 1 through March 14 an E-Census will be conducted throughout the country. This will be the first ever census held there utilizing the internet as the primary method of canvassing the population and calculating the personal living demographics. This innovation is made possible because of the current computer literacy in more than 60% of Lithuanian homes.

There will also be a follow-up canvassing effort by government paid enumerators to secure the needed information from those residents who either do not have a computer at home or who have failed to respond via the internet request.

**Encouraging news for the Lithuanian economy.....** according to the *Baltic Times*, via Bloomberg, the economic growth in the 4th quarter of 2010 was the fastest pace in more than two years. The GDP grew at an annual rate of 4.6 per cent. That was the quickest rate in over ten (10) quarters. That is truly encouraging news to a country whose economy contracted 14.9 per cent in 2009, in the depths of this latest recession.

Retail sales also expanded at a rate of 8.9 per cent in the fourth quarter, making it the first annual increase since the third quarter of 2008.

The overall economy is still estimated to be 15. per cent below its pre-crisis peak, but the recent signs are most encouraging, especially when you add in an expected uptick in the available consumer and small business credit market.

**ATTENTION.....READERS OF THIS NEWSLETTER!  
DON'T HESITATE TO LET US KNOW WHAT YOU WANT!!**

**This is your e-zine and your opportunity to express your interests and perspective by submitting articles and/or requests for content that you believe would be informative and of interest to all our members, friends and subscribers. So, don't hesitate. Let us know what is of interest to you, and we will make every effort to provide the space and/or content that will allow for coverage of those areas of common interest. We look forward to hearing from each and every one of our readers. Remember, this is your e-zine!**

## **QUIZ**

**QUIZ  
FOR  
MARCH**

1. In what year did Lithuania join the European Union ?
2. Approximately how many active duty troops does Lithuania have at present?
3. What is the name of the U.S. Ambassador to Lithuania ?
4. What value to Lithuanian citizens is the U.S. Visa Waiver Program ?
5. How many members of the Seimas are there ?

(Answers can be found under the Reminders block.)

## **Quotables**

**Knowledge** is knowing that a tomato is a fruit.....  
**Wisdom** is not using it in a fruit salad.

Anonymous

## **Reminders**

**To our Lithuanian readers.....**as we announced in our February issue, you are now eligible to participate in our newly announced program to support Lithuanian citizens in becoming official members of A.P.P.L.E. Please contact our coordinator in Lithuania, Ramute Zemionienee, at [obuolys\\_lt@yahoo.com](mailto:obuolys_lt@yahoo.com) with your name, address and email address for details.

**A.P.P.L.E. will hold its Annual Meeting in Orlando.....**come and join us if you can, on the weekend of April 30-May 1 and participate in the open session held on Sat. April 30. Express your opinion and offer your perspective on what we do, and when and how we do it. For answers to questions or more details, contact us here at [edtopar@gmail.com](mailto:edtopar@gmail.com).

#### **Answers to Quiz:**

1. 2004
2. 10,000. (8,000 in reserves)
3. Anne Elizabeth Derse
4. Allows short term (90 days) travel to the U.S. visa free
5. 141

This electronic newsletter is designed for quick delivery of A.P.P.L.E.-related news to an audience that includes current A.P.P.L.E. members, friends of A.P.P.L.E. and interested potential members both within the United States and Lithuania.

Increasing communication and the exchange of ideas among our members increases the strength of our organization and our ability to be relevant to our Lithuanian constituents. Exciting and pertinent events occur all year round, and we want to keep all of you abreast of what is happening, when it's happening.

Editing for grammar, punctuation, and spelling of submitted materials is the responsibility of the authors.

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