



Servas Monthly News 40



November 2008

60th Anniversaries

UDHR 10 December 2008

Servas 2009

Universal Declaration of Human Rights was ratified on **10 December 1948**, 60 years ago. It recognises that every human has a range of rights. This does not mean that everyone can do what they want. If they did they might well be impinging upon someone else's rights. As well as having their rights every person must also consider the rights of other people and ensure that they help them to get them. This very much fits in with the gandhiism of 'If everyone cared enough and everyone shared enough then everyone would have enough'.

Servas is very concerned with the Human Rights, especially Article 28 which relates to social and international order. Servas will be 60 next year. UDHR and Servas came about from people's concern as an aftermath to human destruction for nearly 6 years. Both were looking at ways to alleviate it.

60 years on we now reflect on achievements. Have people/individuals/groups/nations paid attention to UDHR? How has Servas helped? Have wars now ceased? Is everyone properly concerned for everyone else? If not, why not?

It is then time to look at the present and review the state of the world. Then follow this with the future. How are we, as Servas members, who should have Human rights at the forefront, going to help others recognise and uphold them? At least see the celebrations that countries will be holding and hope that these will then lead to action.

Website and links

Please can those who put picture links to the Servas Web site please check their pictures. One link contained a picture, obviously nothing to do with the topic and considered very unsuitable. It is possible that the picture had been inserted unknown to the original person. So check what you have put up. It was quickly sorted by Exco and the IT group.

Contact

We welcome articles coming to SI Monthly News. We do not guarantee the article, or any part of it will be published. This depends on the theme for the month along with the number of other articles also available for publication.

Preferred method of contact is email at:

newsletter@servas.org or jgiffould@aol.com

Make sure Servas: Monthly News is in the subject heading. Or if the email address is not recognised it may get deleted.

Servas International General Assembly To National Secretaries.

We are pleased to welcome you to the **Servas International General Assembly**, scheduled for **September 5, 2009** -- and meeting for up to a week, to **September 12, 2009** at **Mare del Plata, Argentina (south of Buenos Aires)**.

Nominees for elected office may wish to plan staying a day longer, to attend first meetings of the new Servas International Committees. Organized pre- and post-conference touring will be considered, if there is interest.

We are grateful for proposals kindly advanced, in addition to Servas Argentina, from Servas India, Servas Korea, Servas Turkey and for the inputs from Servas Japan and proposals from Servas Central America and Servas East Asia.

This GA in Argentina will focus on the main "business" decisions of Servas, as defined in the Statutes. We will update and evaluate the 125 strategic and administrative decisions made in Latina, to strengthen Servas. To ensure economy, particularly during these times of global financial uncertainty, travel support will be limited. We will assess ways of using polling, Distant Voting and other means to collect inputs from national secretaries or other delegated voters for the GA who may be unable to attend.

As you know, 2009 is a very special year for Servas. Several Anniversaries are planned around the world, to celebrate and help renew Servas. Please draw to the attention of Servas Travelers the current (and changing) calendar of these fun and educational activities on the improved Servas website: www.servas.org [no login].

We hope the energy produced by these Anniversary celebrations, towards Servas renewal, outreach, and recommitment, will help make the GA 2009 an important turning point in the history of Servas.

More information on GA arrangements, registration procedures, and the usual call for GA agenda items is being prepared and will be sent to you. A collection of new GA resource materials will be posted on the Servas News site, www.siexco.org which volunteers are updating, archived, indexing and making more user-friendly.

All of Servas is counting on you to provide help and advice for successful preparations of the GA.

We are looking forward to enjoying our friendships both during that advance work and in your company at the GA.

Contents: November 2008

1. Editorial
2. Country meetings and 60th Anniversary
3. Meetings
4. Travellers tales -
5. Comments - Solidarity
6. Comment - Improvement
7. Peace - Magi at Pafras
8. Youth - German Israel Youth Exchange
9. Youth - German Israel Youth Exchange continued

Country meetings and 60th Anniversary

SERVAS 60TH BIRTHDAY PARTY & FIRST AGM IN AUSTRALIA

At last! The best Servas event in Australia! THE NATIONAL SERVAS GATHERING & 60th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION. a social, residential get-together for hosts and travellers. Mark your diary and plan your holiday now.

WHAT: Servas National Gathering

Saturday 25th April, 2009 ---Thursday 30th April,
(Camp available from Friday evening 24th April, no evening meal provided.) Come for the week, weekend or just a few days.

WHERE: PORTLAND BAY LODGE, 5km east of Portland, South West Victoria.

WHY? To hold our first AGM
To meet and get to know other hosts.
To explore the local area and its attractions.
To feel more comfortable about visiting other hosts within Australia. (This is your automatic benefit in being a Servas host – no need to apply as a traveller.)
To meet Servas Executive Members & Keyworkers

PROGRAM:

- o Lots of informal chatting (bring along some great Servas stories).
- Different options each day for excursions and/or activities. (Those without a vehicle will be placed with other drivers.)
- Informal fun and games. If you can a concert item would be great!
- A very, very brief Annual General Meeting to meet the requirements of our recent incorporation.

ACCOMMODATION:

- A very large centre on the coast.
- Rooms of 2 beds, or 1 bed + double bunk. You will need to bring sleeping bag or bedding.
- Lots of toilets and showers within the sleeping block.
- Large dining room, games room and meeting rooms
- Large grassed and garden area for caravans

HOW MUCH:

- \$55 per person per night – includes all meals, morning, afternoon teas and supper.
- Powered campsites available at \$20.00 per day for first two people plus \$7.40 for each additional person. Meals \$30.80 per person.
- Look at the website – www.uccamping.org.au

TRANSPORT:

- By car it takes approx 4 ½ hours from Melbourne.
- V-Line train to Warrnambool connects with a V-Line coach to Mt. Gambier. Get off at either Narrawong or Portland. V-Line 136196
- Plane from Melbourne to Portland – Sharp Airlines. 1300 556 694
- Bus from Adelaide to Mt. Gambier. Connects with a bus to Portland. Flights from Adelaide to Mt. Gambier – Rex Airlines – bus to Portland.
- Arrangements will be made to pick up people from the coach or airport. (Don't forget those eligible Seniors you can use your free train pass.)

POSSIBLE OPTIONS FOR DAILY EXCURSIONS/ACTIVITIES. www.portlandholidays.com.au

- Camp right on beach, great fishing spot. Beach or bush walking in numerous National Parks including Grampians.
- Great South West Walk. Walk goes through, bush, river, beach and cliffs.
- Historic seaports of Portland, Port Fairy and Maritime Museum at Warrnambool. Ride the Portland Cable Tram.
- First Botanical Gardens in Vic. Rose and Lavender farms, wineries and chocolate factory. Take part in the Anzac ceremony and view the magnificent ANZAC flower display. Tour the WW2 Memorial Lookout Tower.
- Tour of Portland Aluminium Smelter. Car Museum.
- Walk or boat trip to seal caves. Visit the Enchanted Forest and Blow Holes.
- Limestone caves.
- Mt. Gambier Blue Lake.
- Aboriginal interpretive walk, including Lake Condah ancient fish traps.
- Historic homesteads – Portland was the first permanent settlement in Victoria.
- View the only mainland gannet colony.
- Canoe on the Glenelg River. Bring your bikes and ride the many trails.

Take this opportunity, plan to register now. It will not be an annual event. The last one was 10 years ago. This one is only happening because a few Victorian hosts who made so many Servas friends at previous National Gatherings decided it was time for another one, so that you too can experience the fun we had. Servas's 60th birthday, what a great time for a party. If you can help in any way please contact, Nancy O'Toole 03 9486 2680 or Di Burch 03 55295209.

SWITZERLAND - 60 YEARS SERVAS

The committee of Servas Switzerland has decided to celebrate "60 years Servas" with the following events:

1. Servas members (small groups or individuals) are present at small local markets taking place once a year and focusing on ecological/biological themes; they distribute Servas-Flyers and tell people about Servas.
2. With the Slogan "Canons instead of Cannons", we organise two open singing events, where we sing easy international canons (rounds) in the streets/squares of two smaller cities and invite passing people to sing along and tell them about Servas. These singing events take place on 4th of July 2009 in Winterthur, and on 12th of September 2009 in Biel-Bienne. Two experienced and professional musicians will conduct the singing.

SERVAS HONDURAS 2009

In the middle of the month of January 2009 we will be meeting in some beautiful facilities beside the Lake Yojoa. This is in the centre of our country. The meeting will help us to know each other and to incorporate new hosts and travellers, and in that way to strengthen Servas Honduras. This is important in the year in that this pacifist organization celebrates its 60th anniversary.

Our country is beautiful and calm, we are anxious to receive travellers from all over the world. Please contact us at this address:
servas_honduras@yahoo.com

Meetings, Get together, Seeing each other

Join with others in Lyon, France

The venue is: Grand Café de la Soierie
This is in: 1 place des Tapis, Lyon
Date: First Thursday of the month
Time: 8 pm

Get together in London

The venue is **Pontefract Castle.**
This is in Wigmore Street, London W1.
The nearest Underground Station is
Bond Street.
Date: First Monday in every month.
Time: 6.30 onwards.
Look forward to seeing you all there.

Servas Britain
01 May - 04 May 2009
Dalesbridge revisited
for
60th Anniversary
Celebrations
and AGM

SERVAS HONDURAS
2009
60th anniversary
Meeting, mid January,
Lake Yojoa
servas_honduras@yahoo.com

Scottish Servas gathering

Edinburgh

on the last Thursday of the month from 6-8pm
(the next meeting is on 27th January)
at The Elephant House, George IV Bridge in the
city centre.
The Elephant House is on George IV Bridge, on
west side almost opposite the National Library
buses: 23,27,41,42,45 *all from Hanover Street*
2 from Haymarket station
35 from Ocean Terminal/Parliament
(could leave a car in Holyrood Park)
from Waverley Station a climb uphill or up steps,
Looking forward to seeing you there!

"Sentierinsieme"

/ Pathways together 2009
Val d'Ossola (Italian Alps) 10-17 July

For this occasion we will celebrate 60 years
of Servas and 25 years of Sentierinsieme
(1985 – 2009)!!

Contact: Luigi Uslenghi,
uslenghi@fauser.it Tel 0039 0321 402842

For full details see October 2008 p7.

Meeting place in Paris, France

The venue is: **Le Vieux Châtelet**
This is in: 1 place du Châtelet, 75001 Paris
The nearest metro is: Châtelet
Date: Second Tuesday of month
Time: 7 pm to 9 pm

Belgium & Luxembourg 2009

February 07, 2009: Servas Anniversary Dinner in Brussels
Venue: Planet Primerose, Ave du Gros Tilleul,41-
43/Dikkelindelaan 41-43 1020 Brussels (close to the Atomium)
On Saturday afternoon and on Sunday guided walks are on the
program.
Hosts of Brussels will give you the opportunity to stay overnight.

May 03, 2009 : Leuven for all

Last day of the annual 5-city meeting will be open for all Servas
members
(01-02-03 of May 5-city meeting : Leuven, Basel, Frankfurt,
Utrecht, Strasbourg)

June 2009, Transborder cycling in Belgium and France

Cycling tour starting and finishing in Péruwelz (Belgium)
Due to the national elections in Belgium on 07/06/2009 we have
to look for a new date

October 2009, SERVAS Anniversary Weekend in the

Ardennes

Due to the GA held in September 2009 we have to look for a
new date
More details will be announced in due time .

Info Johan Stiens jstiens@etro.vub.ac.be
belgium@servas.org

'Seoul to London' (the Asia-Europe

Inter-Continent) Expedition

* *Period:* March 1, 2010 - August 31, 2010 (for 6
months)
* *Route:* From Seoul through Asia and Europe to
London
* *Team:* 20 Servas members(10 Koreans and 10
multinationals)
* *Invitation:* The international Servas members are
now being invited to join this expedition.
* *Contact:* Mr. Jong Soo Kim N.S. Servas Korea
servas@korea.com skype: kingofasia2 Cell: 82-
16-830-2623
See Servas Monthly News February 2008
for full details.

Monthly Meeting in Brussels

!!! New Venue !!!

Venue:Restaurant Piazza Italia
Located in the centre of Brussels,
next to La Bourse/De Beurs
Rue de la Bourse, 12/ Beursstraat 12
1000 BRUSSELS
When: Last Tues of the month (except Jan 09)
Time: 6 pm to 8 pm .
Info belgium@servas.org
You are welcome to join us !

Travellers' tales

Unforgettable Trip to Korea in November 2008 !

This summer we met several Koreans in Europe but the written invitation to the National Conference made us to decide to visit South Korea.

Our very first impressions: efficient transport, excellent roads, no rubbish anywhere and recycling bins. The view from the 24th floor at our first host family was astounding and with nice walks around. The next days we spent getting acclimatised to the Korean history and culture by visiting the Gwangwamun Palace with the change of guards, The National Palace Museum, entering a Buddhist Temple filled with ladies praying for their offspring to pass the exams, walking along the lovely Chenggye Stream and spending a day in Korean Folk Village with interesting performances like a traditional wedding ceremony.

The Servas Conference was held in Tongyeong by the sea in southernmost Korea where we travelled with our host family by bus sitting on most spacious seats. There were nearly 100 participants with visitors from Japan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan (Anatoli's son) and us from Belgium and Finland. The evening gala truly was great not only with excellent performances of Korean one string fiddle, a mesmerizing dance, intensive drums and singing but also introducing senior participants, the eldest being in his 90s. We seem to have been posing in hundreds of pictures. Once again, this was a true Servas meeting filled with intense positive energy and with absolutely lovable people around with their genuine smiles.

The next day there was a bus tour to a very interesting maritime museum and to an exceptional art gallery on the adjoining island. The scenery on the way was just fabfabfabulous. The blue sea dotted with numerous islands basking in the sunlight.

We slept solo, together or shared the room with several others sleeping on the floor the Korean way. We managed to eat with the local metal chop sticks and we did like the tasty Korean food. We never managed to eat at their pace though.

Our short stay was filled with exquisite experiences: visiting the Upo Wetlands, a Korean spa with three different pools and saunas, a temple visit with nuns was a highlight at Haeinsa where the Tripitaka Koreana is kept (over 80 000 hand-carved birch blocks in Chinese characters for printing Buddhist Canon in 12th century), a site with 10 000 statues of Buddha and Gyeongju Natural Park dotted with numerous statues around the mountain. Not forgetting walks and talks and succulent meals we shared with so many wonderful people.

We owe thanks to the national secretary, Kim Jong Soo, all our dearest hosts and members we met. They made it possible to become acquainted with the Korean culture and habits. Did it matter that our itinerary was changing all along! It kept us alert and ready for new experiences.

We remind all you travellers in Servas. There are 350 eager hosts waiting for your visit in South Korea. With an adventurous mind you will experience all the wonders we did and even more. Please, don't hesitate.

*Rita Dessauvage, NS Servas Belgium & Luxembourg
Anne Hemming, NS Servas Finland*

SIGN UP NOW FOR THE SAN FRANCISCO SERVAS END OF YEAR GATHERING AND POTLUCK

Tuesday, Dec 16, 2008
6:00 to 8:30 p.m.

ZOCALO
1508 Bancroft Street (Bayview District)
San Francisco

POTLUCK ITALIAN NIGHT

\$5 donation to Servas is requested.

RSVP TO THIS BY TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10

Jeremy Sommer has offered to host us at his great location. He will make one of his famous Italian pasta dishes as a main course. The rest of the dinner is up to us. Please bring a dish for 6 to 8: an appetizer, green salad or vegetable dish, or dessert. If you come right from work and do not have time to prepare a dish, a loaf of good bread or a dessert from a bakery is fine. Ovens are available for reheating food. If you wish to also bring a beverage that will be welcomed.

AGENDA: TIPS FROM A VERY FREQUENT FLIER
Our host Jeremy Sommer flies frequently all over the world in connection with his business. Those of us who fly occasionally know that getting there is not always fun. We gripe about crowded seats, bad food (or none), long lines for invasive security checks, then jet lag. How does a veteran traveler deal with these questions?

NOTE: You may want to bring something to take notes. Jeremy speaks very fast and most is bottom line.

AUGUST 23, 2008

It was a great day for a picnic! We enjoyed lunch in a redwood grove on a warm, sunny day in August at Roberts Park in Oakland. This was a perfect spot for a group, with a collection of tables and benches in the shade of majestic redwood trees; there was parking close by, barbecue grills, room for children or pets to run around and other recreational activities in the park. We hope to do this again.

OCTOBER, 2008

Edith Sommer's annual Servas potluck at her home in Palo Alto was enjoyed by a congenial group. The guest speaker was Randy Mont, who told us about her volunteer work in Haiti. She worked with the people of a poverty-stricken rural community to set up an agricultural project that brought in income, and also set up an elementary school where there had been no school. She was aided in her venture by several Stanford students during their vacations. This gives us all the reminder that one or two people of good will can do a lot to help people who have so little. Edith participated in the Servas Youth meeting in Istanbul in August of this year and told us about this successful gathering of young (and young at heart) Servas members.

Comment 1

A bit more about solidarity for India and Brazil

Maria Fernanda is going round the world in a self-sponsoring project to look for good programmes in conflict countries or places with some kind of social problem. In one month she will reach São Paulo, Brazil, again.

Dear friends from India,

In name of Servas Brazil, as Peace Secretary from there, I would like to express our solidarity and affection to all Indians after those sad terrorist attacks in Mumbai, some days ago.

We hope all of you are fine, despite any understandable pain or sorrow.

We wish you can be powerful examples of peace and respect to the Other since you are such beautiful human beings, full of nice experiences to share with your compatriots and also foreigners and friends from different parts of the world. I could feel myself in home when I was travelling through India...

Receive our friendly hug and our best wishes, always.

Maria Fernanda, Peace Secretary, Servas Brazil

Dear friends from Brazil,

I would like to share something, in addition to my previous message expressing solidarity to our Indian friends. As you must know, a Brazilian state named Santa Catarina is over a very hard moment because of the strong and crazy rain and floods. My friends from there have told me it is a very sad and chaotic situation. You can have a look at:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7753744.stm>. Too many death people, too many homeless.

I am still far from home (at this moment, I am in Lima, Peru, at a very nice Servas member's house), but for sure I feel myself extremely close to my Brazilian compatriots. I am telling you this to say that, although it is a natural tragedy -- in spite of events in Mumbai --, it is being created a national network of solidarity in Brazil. People from different villages, cities and states there are getting together in other to help with donations, money and human support to victims in Santa Catarina. IT IS REALLY TOUCHING. You know Brazil has a high level of criminality and poverty, sometimes it's difficult to trust in anyone, but even though people don't forget generosity and friendship.

My point is: tragedies never can be bigger than our love and our respect to the Other. Never. If they are terrorist attacks, tsunamis, floods, political bad statements, Guantanamo jails (horrible as well), wars, it doesn't matter. WE ARE HUMAN BEINGS, WE CAN TRANSCEND, we have this ability and capacity -- but many, many times we forget that.

Santa Catarina's tragedy shows we can contribute in the way we are able to. I am sure our Indian friends are doing the same to support inhabitants from Mumbai.

As a dear Brazilian friend uses to say, we can't conform to "that is possible". We have to look for the impossible: believing in a project, going for it, developing it and sharing our results.

We are not alone, we will never be alone -- that's what I believe in. And that's why I am available to the world, even if money doesn't come, even if I don't have car or house, even if people look at me as a crazy one. Because I feed myself from friendship, love, respect and solidarity. And those feelings I will carry with me to the eternity, nothing else.

As a journalist, I would like to listen to any story of solidarity you can tell me. Write me separately. As a result, I want to produce a long report to Servas International and I can try to translate in Spanish and Portuguese as well. Let's show we are alive -- and not only "surviving". Let's keep the hope, let's increase the hope, let's go for action!

Among my friends, we start a kind of movement: "I do believe in human being." What do you think?

A huge hug and million of kisses, from your talkative Brazilian friend who loves to write,

*Maria Fernanda, from Brazil, *Peace Secretary**

2008/12/1 Maria Fernanda Vomero

[<mafevomero@gmail.com>](mailto:mafevomero@gmail.com)

Maria Fernanda Vomero *** dreamer without borders ***

*"Porque nosso canto não pode ser uma traição à vida/
e só é justo cantar quando nosso canto arrasta consigo/
as pessoas e as coisas que não têm voz."
Ferreira Gullar, poeta*

DANCE from India

Linonium picture I made of Gujrat tribals celebrating successful completion of their harvest season. These are poor simple folks. You can see them dancing around little fire with beats from a drum (their only musical instrument)

Gurdev Singh, Servas India



Comment 2

SUBMISSIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF SERVAS

With the diminishing of Servas revenues Servas International(SI) needs to review its situation at the next SI conference in order to assess/implement remedial measures to meet the situation.

SI conferences are the costliest events that take place every three years. Can a less costly alternative to SI conference be found? Or, in case it can not be found then can the expense be drastically reduced to half of its usual cost? The hardest option will be to do away with SI conference. Other hospitality organizations are managing with out such conferences, so why can SI not manage to do so. We are publishing Host lists at considerable cost. Host lists in many chapters have many mistakes that are inadvertently perhaps meant to frustrate the travellers & hosts alike. The desirability to have or do away with host lists needs to be examined through a work study. These are important questions the answers to which need to be found at the next SI conference, it is felt.

More travellers are opting for travel/hosting facilities from Hospitality Club & Couch Surfers as these organizations have no fees. Letter of Introduction(LOI) fees for Servas travellers are very high in some chapters that add extra cost to stamp fee in order to raise money to pay their Servas Officers. Other chapters add extra cost to stamp fee to cover office/National Secretary's (NS's)expenses. For travellers to view Servas as an attractive option reduction of LOI fees needs to be considered. With fees reduced there is possibility of attracting more Servas travellers as also increase in SI revenue.

Non interference by SI in the functioning of Servas chapters is the root cause of many of our problems in Servas. The NSs may or may not register their chapters, they may or may not have any rules, they can remain in saddle until their demise, they can attend all SI conferences to contribute or not to contribute(just exchange greetings with those attending the conference) & remove or kick out any of their members that oppose them (NSs stand assured that SI will not interfere). Is such a stance by SI wise, I wonder!

NSs nominate themselves as their chapter's delegate to the SI conference. SI should not allow NSs to attend each & every SI conference None should be allowed to attend SI conference more than once at Servas expense. Australia has such a rule. It is felt that SI should institute such a rule also. After attending one SI conference if any NS is still holding his office as NS, then an eminent person should be found as delegate through proper election & not through nomination by NS.

As of now the NSs are less likely to usefully contribute towards growth & development of Servas as neither from SI nor from Area Coordinators (ACs) there is any control or any interference. Letting them remain NSs for undefined periods of time or until their demise is therefore of no advantage to Servas. NSs should be allowed just one tenure of three years, it is felt.

SI must consider austerity measures for reducing SI conference expenses as also for reducing LOI fees to attract more Servas travellers.

There was once a move to do away with the appointment of ACs as they were being considered as non functional. ACs are a very useful link between the SI's Exco & NSs. SI should encourage/help in holding of ACs conference with their NSs once in three years which is not happening at present. At present ACs meet their NSs at the SI conferences which isn't useful. It is suggested that some Exco members attend the ACs conferences to oversee development/growth of Servas as also guide the ACs & NSs. It may in the longer run become possible for SI to run Servas by giving greater responsibilities to ACs & perhaps eventually doing away with the need for any SI conferences.

.ACs & NSs can do a lot towards growth & development of Servas. The SI must give them more responsibilities & oversee their growth & development work. It is hoped that SI will take note of the thoughts expressed in the forgoing & take suitable remedial measures.

Gurdev Singh, Servas India

Comment from the editor:

There are a number of points that are important for discussion here. They need to be discussed between members are indeed coming up for discussion in various countries. However there are two or more points of view for each item. Following are a few:

1. Costs for travellers and hosts

Although Servas is similar to Hospitality Club and Couch Surfers in that we offer open doors we are also dissimilar in that we are an active peace organisation recognised by and with access to the UN. Our fees cover contributions towards our Peace activities and include such events as the Youth Conference. If anything the fees should be higher rather than lower. The fees also relate to administration and local, national and international level. This will vary from country to country dependent on local costs.

2. Host lists

It is important to realise that not everyone has access to the internet, especially when travelling. Paper copies are essential. Downloading a paper copy is more expensive in money and time than having a print run done.

3. Country autonomy

Servas consists of a group of autonomous countries who are expected to run themselves efficiently. SI can be called on to moderate. It is not there to rule.

*From the PafRAS September October Newsletter
Positive Action For Refugees & Asylum Seekers*

An interview with Magiarí Díaz Díaz

Magiarí Díaz Díaz (Magi) is a member of Servas, a worldwide peace movement. Over the summer she did a volunteering placement at PAFRAS; providing support and assistance in various ways. Magi left Leeds for London on 19 October, and will return home to Venezuela in 2008. Before she left, she spoke to PAFRAS about her experiences in the UK:

PAFRAS: Tell us about Servas.

Servas is an international travelling network for making contact with people all over the world. The idea is for people to meet and talk to each other, which can be a good way to peace and international understanding.

As a Servas traveller you have the chance to stay with people in over a hundred countries, and to share ideas with them. Servas travellers stay with hosts for two nights –sometimes longer if hosts suggest it. Hospitality is freely offered, so money does not change hands between hosts and travellers.

Servas – the name means “we serve” in Esperanto – started in 1949, after the Second World War. A group of friends from different countries who were meeting in Denmark came up with the idea of an open-door network. Their aim was to work for peace, creating a framework for like-minded people who could enjoy hospitality in members’ homes and promote international understanding.

What is your role in the organisation?

I’m the local youth contact for Venezuela. My role is to support people who are interested in visiting, volunteering, studying or working in Venezuela, or who just want to learn more about the country. On an international level, I see myself as a “peace ambassador” for my country. I try and promote the aims of peace and understanding through music, involvement in community projects, presentations at conferences, travelling and meeting people from all over the world.

What is your background in the peace movement?

Since sources of conflict are so diverse (political, economical, cultural, racial, religious, etc); I believe peace can be promoted at many levels. To me, poverty is the main trigger of conflict. In my effort to understand why poverty exists – and with it exclusion, injustice, discrimination, inequality, corruption, etc – I’ve done a combined studies degree in Politics, History, Philosophy and Translation. I’ve also engaged in different kinds of development work with indigenous communities in the Amazon, the most marginalised population in Venezuela. My experience in the peace movement has been mainly through music. I’ve been involved with the Venezuelan musical movement of orchestras and choirs, renowned worldwide both for its work with children and young people from deprived backgrounds, and its artistic excellence. Over the past year, I’ve been invited to lecture about the latter at conferences in France, Austria, Czech Republic and UK. I have also been a member of the World Youth Choir, which is recognised as an “Artist for Peace” by the UNESCO. This striking artistic project enables nearly 100 young people to share a month of music making and touring the world together. The World Youth Choir creates lifelong friendships for those involved which makes an enormous impact on the quality of performances. Finally, I’ve participated at the Harvard Model of United Nations, a conference where nearly 3000 college and university delegates from the US and over 30 countries around the world discuss a multitude of issues relevant in today’s global community. In 2004 I was very proud to be named the “Best NGO Delegate” of the conference, representing the humanitarian NGO Care International.

www.pafRAS.org.uk



What made you want to work with asylum seekers in the UK?

Ann Greenhough, Servas Youth Project Development Coordinator, mentioned the possibility of doing voluntary work for PAFRAS while using Servas hospitality in Leeds. I was more than happy to get involved, since I had always wanted to learn more about asylum destitution. My family comes from Colombia and some relatives have gone through the experience of seeking political asylum. Working with PAFRAS has helped me to make sense of my own family history.

How has your time in the UK been?

Absolutely wonderful! Working at PAFRAS has been an incredibly meaningful experience. Project Manager, Christine Majid, has been like a mother to me, her support and loving-care has made my stay extraordinary. Her passion and commitment to fight for social justice has made a profound impact on me. Also, befriending people at the drop-in has been a pleasure and a privilege. I have learned so much about countries and cultures I knew nothing of. Most importantly, I have made wonderful friends. We have shared unforgettable times of music, joy and laughter. Meeting staff and volunteers has also been incredibly inspirational. On my first day at the drop-in I met Bob Schiffrin, a guitar teacher, who invited me to sing and play my traditional Venezuelan instrument at a Latin gig with some friends. I never suspected that from that one-off gig we would become a proper band – the delightful Capullos Internacionales – that later I’d be organising a fundraising gig for PAFRAS, playing with the band and having such a wonderful time with PAFRAS and Servas friends.

It also was bliss to meet Shorsh Saleh, Kurdish artist, and Kasia Baczkowski, PAFRAS art facilitator, who made the Servas 60th Anniversary Banner with the input of many of us at the drop-in. This banner means a lot to us at Servas. It means that our peace work has grown stronger and more inclusive over the past 60 years. The friendship Servas-PAFRAS is a symbol of how individuals and organisations can unite in the fight for peace and social justice.

What are your plans in the UK after being with PAFRAS? What are your career plans in the future?

I’m currently doing an MA in ‘Peace Studies, Development, Security and Conflict Transformation’ from Innsbruck University, Austria. I’m working on a distance-learning module until December. In January I hope to travel to Austria to complete the course. I hope to continue singing, volunteering and travelling. In the longer term, I would like to work in the field of community development and international relations, particularly linked to music and languages.

For more information about Servas contact me at magiari@gmail.com or check the Servas website www.servas.org

Youth

GERMAN ISRAEL YOUTH EXCHANGE PART 1 – MUNICH

Diary

Servas Germany and I&EYE embarked on a German Israel Youth Exchange project that was subsidized by the German government who supports youth initiatives. The bilateral youth exchange consists of two parts, the Israel group visiting Munich for twelve days in July and the German group traveling to Israel for twelve days. Here follows the report of the first part of the youth exchange.

Saturday 4:00am: the world was sleepy and full of dreams until the alarm clock rang. Peter and I jumped out of our beds to rush to the airport to pick up our Israel friends. And unfortunately for us two, who were fighting with a vendor machine to buy in advance the public transport tickets for the group, their plane was surprisingly on time. Although we had never met before it was easy to spot a young group of 13 people (age 15-17) with their two coaches among all the strangers that were walking with their suitcases out to the reception hall. We drove back to Munich, to the restaurant "Mongdratzel" (which means appetizer in Bavarian) where we served them breakfast and waited for the hosts to pick them up. Some hosts were from Servas, others were friends of Servas.

In the summer 2008 the city of Munich celebrated their 850 anniversary and those from the Israel group who did not fall asleep after the long flight met again in downtown Munich early afternoon to walk through the streets watching the people and the booths. We visited the synagogue and the famous market "Viktualienmarkt", we took a brief glimpse at one of the brewery restaurants and strolled along the English Garden until the rain clouds started to manage our entertainment agenda. Besides that even the bravest youngsters started to feel very tired. So we closed the day and let them sleep out on Monday morning.

Monday afternoon we took the Israel group on an exploration tour. They had to find specific spots of the centric downtown plaza "Marienplatz" and they were required to interview the pedestrians to get some historical facts about those spots. Afterwards we took them up to the tower of the church "Petrikirche" from where they had a wonderful view over the roofs of Munich. The sun was very kind with us that day. Having digested so much history we then all sat in the meadows nearby and introduced the Israel visitors into the organization of Servas. We talked about the history and background of Servas, we described its vision and objectives, and we explained how the system of hosts and travelers is working globally and in Germany.

Tuesday was a day dedicated to culture. One of our Servas hosts is a professional tour guide and took them to most interesting historical downtown sites. Another Servas host had specialized on art and had offered to guide the group through a museum that had displays of famous painters that were banned by the Hitler regime.

Nearby that museum there is a square called "Königsplatz" which was used for parades during the Hitler regime but had also seen the tragic event of the burning of books. Naturally this was an ideal place for us to exchange ideas about the freedom of thoughts, and about what we can do today and in the future to avoid things to happen that happened many decades ago. One of our hosts was a student of music and his faculty was right next to the square. He highlighted that the University of Music on purpose kept their location to second the freedom of culture as a response to ancient censorship.

Wednesday was excursion day. We wanted to give the group's brain a break and charge their sportive batteries. We visited the lake „Ammersee“ which is about 30km outside of Munich and had a nice hiking walk up to the cloister „Kloster Andechs“ which is also very famous for their beer brand and offers a spectacular view over the region. And it offers a spectacular view into the Bavarian way of having fun. Back to the lake – and the skies had cleared - we experienced the German summer water temperatures which are completely different to the ones our Israel group might have been used to from their beaches. But we had a lot of "brave" youngsters going for a swim along with some curious swans.



The next day (Thursday) we visited the Dachau memorial concentration camp. Before the visit we organized a workshop to prepare the young people for the visit and to arrange for a commemoration service. The tour guide and the movie at the museum center conveyed us a realistic picture of what had happened in the camp during the Second World War. It just makes such a difference whether you read about something in books or see it in movies or whether you are walking through such a place trying to imagine the day to day fate of so many people that lived in the camp. I was very happy to be part of the commemoration service the Israel group had arranged which added a very personal note to our visit. With the help of prayers and songs we expressed our hope that similar racist events will never happen again.

Youth continued

German Israel Youth Exchange Part 1 – Munich continued.....



Friday was framed by two culinary events. First we began with a typical Bavarian beer garden experience to have some typical Bavarian food and drinks. To digest the heavy meal we had rented the so called conference bikes to take a joyful tour through the city and along the river Isar which crosses Munich. It was fun to see how the groups were hitting the pedals, cheering happy songs and screaming when they were making a close turn. In the evening the Munich based Rabbi Diskin had invited us to his Chabat center to celebrate Shabbat. It was a very welcome opportunity for us non Jewish people to learn about this very typical Jewish tradition. Shabbat starts with a praying ceremony before we all gathered together to have a festivity meal.



When you visit to Munich it is mandatory that you visit to the Olympic village, a place that lived some dramatic days during the Olympic Games in 1972. We went there Saturday morning and also visited the Olympic Tower to have a view around the area. We also offered to visit the newly opened BMW World center and the Bayern Munich soccer stadium called Allianz Arena. And I was surprised to see that not only the boys were hooked up, also the girls showed high interest. They went crazy buying fan articles from our most famous soccer players. Spend a minute to figure out who was buying those fan articles: the boys or the girls.

Sunday was time to spend the day with the hosts. Maybe some decided to sleep and relax, maybe some enjoyed a tour with their hosts, maybe others might have grouped together to stroll around. I did not ask ;-).

Monday morning, one of our Servas hosts Dieter offered to visit a school nearby to offer the Israel group a chance to meet and talk with people of their age (15-17). They shared their experiences about their lives as kids, showed some folkloric dances and had some highly interactive and playful 1:1 introduction sessions. The pupils of the German school got very excited and are now looking forward to be part of our hopefully next youth exchange planned for 2009.

On Tuesday the Israel group went for an excursion to the city of Salzburg. Dieter was born in this city and knew a lot of stories about the different places of the town that go beyond the typical touristy rumors and whereabouts of Mozart.

Wednesday was primarily shopping day. You wouldn't believe what priorities young people do have. Forget the museums, forget the gardens, take them to the temples of consumption and you will see shiny faces and looking forward for a very relaxed day. The farewell party in the evening almost closed the very exciting days that the group stayed with us. It was a lot of work for our organization team but it was worth it. Our hearts were filled with new laughter and experiences. I do not want to miss them. I almost envy those that will fly to Israel in September.

Thursday we waved Good Bye to our new friends.
Markus Kappenberger, Germany

Next month join Part 2, the exchange visit to Israel.