



# FS Direct

Direct Communication to Foreign Service Employees and Family Members  
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## **FS Direct Subscriptions**

Welcome to the September 2002 edition of *FS Direct*. To keep the publication user-friendly and simple, we have listed the articles in the sidebar to the left. Simply click on those items you are interested in reading. To subscribe to *FS Direct*, email [flo@state.gov](mailto:flo@state.gov) or visit the FLO area of the AAFSW web site at <http://www.aafsw.org> and click on FLO newsletters. *FS Direct* is also available on the FLO Internet web site at <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo>

## **From FLO Director Faye Barnes**

### **Controlling the Rumor Mill**

For many of us the first anniversary of the horrific terrorist attacks on September 11 will be emotional. The media is giving full coverage as we approach this date, so the scenes of carnage and emotional outpouring are there for us to see and to relive. As Americans on home ground, for the first time we too feel vulnerable. As Foreign Service hands we are used to taking extra precautions overseas, trying to blend into the crowd and be aware of our surroundings. Somehow, taking these precautions feels different on home ground.

As part of the USG reaction to 9/11 with the creation of the Office of Homeland Security and the emphasis on increased vigilance on our borders, the consular function has come under the lens of the federal microscope. While it appears the consular function will remain with the Department of State, there will be changes of course in the way we do business.

Part of the speculation has centered round the Consular Associate positions filled by family members and rumors that these would be abolished. We have been assured by Consular Affairs that this is not the case. There are currently 160 Consular Associates and we do not anticipate fewer

positions in the future. There is some concern that the actual consular workload will increase.

While we do not anticipate a drop in numbers, what is clear is that the work Consular Associates perform will change. Foreign Service officers for the most part, will handle visa adjudication. The other duties that Consular Associates perform will still require successful completion of the Basic Consular course. There is no movement to downgrade the positions from their current level. More details will be available soon. As I write this, Consular Affairs is defining the type of work that a Consular Associate can perform and will issue a cable on this subject.

### **Changes in FLO Staff**

I would like to introduce our newest employee, **Rebecca Grappo**, Education and Youth Officer. Becky began working in FLO in July. She has a varied background in education and over 17 years associated with the Foreign Service. During her time overseas, she lived in Nicaragua, Portugal, Jordan, and Oman. She taught both in international and Virginia public schools, and holds a BA in International Studies from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio and a Master's degree in education from George Mason University. Additionally, she has raised three children in the Foreign Service and faced many of the same educational and youth issues that confront Foreign Service families today. Her eldest daughter attended boarding school to finish her high schooling. In addition to teaching, Rebecca served as CLO coordinator in Managua and as corresponding secretary on the board of AAFSW (Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide). You can reach Becky at GrappoRN@state.gov

**Liza Bright**, our Program Assistant, is currently on maternity leave. We are fortunate to have **Debbie Bailey**, our evacuated CLO for the Pakistan community, backing up Liza on FAMER issues. Debbie Bailey can be reached at BaileyDA@state.gov

**Debra Thompson**, Special Employment Projects Coordinator, left FLO in August for a new position at FSI. Debbie joined FLO in March, 1999 as Employment Program Specialist. With other FLO colleagues, she initiated the Spouse Networking Assistance Program (SNAP) in 2001, as well as providing the framework for advising clients about local economy employment overseas.

After 5 years in the FLO office, **Virginia Boncy**, Support Services Officer, has left to assume a career civil service position, with a promotion, in the Casualty Assistance Office (right next door!). Ginny was the mainstay of our evacuation support program and a wealth of knowledge about resources and regulations relating to all aspects of Foreign Service life.

**Emily Soroko**, former CLO in Antananarivo, joined FLO as Secretary and Front Desk Receptionist last month. Emily helps visitors and callers and provides administrative support to the CLO Support Officer.

And finally, we welcome **John Reddy**, who will replace Ginny Boncy as Support Services Officer this month. John brings eight years of experience as a Peace Corps

Country Director in Guinea, Burkina Faso and Madagascar. He has a wealth of experience in program development and administration, as well as training and counseling. John is also the Foreign Service spouse of a FSHP currently working in MED.

## **Click Your Way to More FLO Resources**

### **FLO Homepage on the Internet**

<http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo>

### **FAMILY MEMBER EMPLOYMENT**

- **Popular International Job Search and ExPat Web Sites (by country and by profession)**  
Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/rsrscs/pubs/4510.htm>
- **Training Opportunities for Foreign Service Spouses**  
Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/12895.htm>
- **Home-based Businesses**  
Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/12490.htm>
- **Dual Citizenship – Security Clearances Implications**  
Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/hr/student/9108.htm>

### **SUPPORT SERVICES**

- **Long Distance Relationships and Separated Tours: When Couples Live Apart**  
Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/rsrscs/pubs/12511.htm>

During the past year of evacuations, we offered support to many family members who experienced a temporary (but still significant) period of family separation. With the officer still at post, many spouses were faced with what we term a “separated tour.” As a result, the Family Liaison Office prepared this new Direct Communication Project paper, *Long Distance Relationships and Separated Tours: When Couples Live Apart*.

- **Understanding Separate Maintenance Allowance**  
Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/rsrscs/pubs/2049.htm>

### **RETURNING TO WASHINGTON**

- **Find reentry information and links on our web site**  
Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/reentry/>

## **SNAP - The First Three Months**

*The Family Liaison Office believes that one factor in recruitment and retention among officers is the employment satisfaction of their spouses. Mission jobs rarely attract spouses whose background and work experience include professional training (attorneys, consultants, physicians, accountants, to name a few). It was with this in mind that FLO proposed a pilot program to provide special employment assistance for those spouses looking to work outside of the Mission.*

*FLO's 2001 FAMER statistics tell us that of the spouses who work overseas, only 25% work outside the Mission. While language barriers, difficulties in obtaining work agreements, and cultural barriers may be factors, the reality is that it can take 6 to 8 months to make job connections and map out a strategy for new employment in a new country. Thus, SNAP was born. The Spouse Network Assistance Program funded 10 countries initially, placing a Local Employment Advisor (LEA) at the Embassy/Consulate to provide research and advice to incoming job seekers in a variety of professional fields.*

Do the stats to the right look too good to be true?

### **SNAP: Statistics for first three months (9 posts reporting)**

*More than 1000 business contacts made*

*More than 240 personal visits made with contacts*

*104 clients*

*97 one-on-one client sessions*

*88 introductions made between clients and employers*

*34 interviews*

*16 job offers*

*9 job acceptances*

In response to the identified need for job search assistance to the spouses of U.S. government employees serving in our embassies and consulates overseas the Family Liaison Office has implemented the Spouse Networking Assistance Program (SNAP). The countries selected for the FY 02 pilot were Mexico (Mexico City, Monterrey, Guadalajara), Canada (Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto), Chile, UK (London), Belgium, Poland (Warsaw, Krakow), Egypt, Singapore, Japan, and Korea. Unfortunately, Chile was unable to implement the program. Therefore, the results reported here are for the other nine locations.

FLO's first attempt in Mexico in 2001 was a great learning experience, but devoid of results. We persuaded the Department that we needed to build on this experience and with appropriated funding changed the program to make it work. The above posts selected a Local Employment Adviser (LEA). These advisors were trained in Washington the week of April 23 and left with new employment resources and career counseling knowledge. By May 1, the LEAs had begun the exciting task of opening an office, developing business contacts and soliciting spouses to avail themselves of the SNAP services.

The levels and types of success differ at each post. Mexico has been the most successful with three spouses who have found employment but seven others are being considered for contract positions that could employ them all. In Seoul, two spouses

have accepted positions in their professional fields at salaries above their previous U.S. levels.

“Build it and they will come,” but our biggest challenge to date has been enrolling spouses. Of course, this is due in large part to the fact that summer is turnover season and few spouses are actively seeking employment. The program, a first in Department of State history, is growing as spouses at participating realize that their LEA can actually assist them. At each post the number of clients increases rapidly once a success is reported. SNAP has proven that it can work and can cut the time it takes to locate and land a position in an overseas setting.

With the successes we are experiencing this year, FLO requested funds to expand SNAP in the coming Fiscal Year. FLO plans on adding at least 8 new posts and possibly as many as 10. A cable was sent to more than 20 posts around the world inviting post management to conduct the necessary research on the community population and local economy to determine if SNAP would likely succeed. FLO is providing funding to cover the cost of conducting the research in hopes that more posts can afford to take the time to provide in-depth, detailed and convincing conclusions. Factors that will affect the selection of expansion locations include a large spouse population wishing to work, a stable economy, an open labor force, availability of work permits, but most importantly a post management team that is highly committed to a SNAP success.

You can find SNAP on the web at:

Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/9888.htm>

### **Alternative Examination Program (AEP) For Entry-level Administrative Officers**

In July, the Department announced the opening of the Alternative Examination Program (AEP) for entry level officers in Administrative Career Track only. Now in its fourth year, the AEP is a skills-based alternative to the Foreign Service Written Examination (FSWE).

For the first time, the AEP will open as an online examination beginning August 1, 2002 to September 16, 2002.

Information can be found on the Internet at:

<http://www.careers.state.gov/officer/foreignservice/aep.html>

Online Examination:

<https://narnia.anvi.com/fso>

Vacancy Announcement: <http://jsearch.usajobs.opm.gov/ftva.asp?OPMControl=IF7227>

Of particular interest for family members is the requirement to have accumulated a minimum of twelve months under overseas local hire appointment(s) and the requirement to apply within three years of returning to the United States.

## **Spouse Employment Training Courses Offered in October**

The Transition Center Training of FSI will host several courses for Foreign Service spouses in October, designed to assist spouses in the job search process, both overseas and in the Washington area.

### **POST OPTIONS FOR EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (MQ 703)**

9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

October 24, 2002

Participants obtain information to develop a comprehensive employment plan, to identify various employment opportunities and necessary training for overseas employment, and to develop a personal strategy for seeking paid or unpaid professional opportunities overseas.

### **TARGETING THE JOB MARKET (MQ 704)**

9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

October 22-23, 2002

Job hunting strategies for the Eligible Family Member (EFM) focused on the Washington area, but transferable to any location. Self-assessment, resume writing (including cover letters), networking, interview techniques, informational interviews, electronic and other sources for vacancy listings, and a review of government and non-government job markets are all topics covered during this two-day course.

Looking to put past experiences together? Need to form a new career path? Interested in the latest trends in Career Planning, Job Searching and Position Acquisition? Wondering Where to Begin? Here's your opportunity to learn more about spouse employment in the Foreign Service. These courses are taught by staff members of the Family Liaison Office and the Transition Center. To register, contact the Transition Center at tel: 703-302-7268 or email: [fsitctraining@state.gov](mailto:fsitctraining@state.gov)

For information on other Transition Center training courses, visit:

Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c6950.htm>

## **Homework Crunch – Finding Help on the Web**

Another school year is getting under way, and kids these days do a lot more than just sharpen their pencils! Most kids are already experienced with the mouse, and are savvy about using computer resources to help them with their schoolwork. I have found several "Mother Lode" of web sites when it comes to fantastic resources students can use to help them with their homework, and will highlight two of them here.

**Tekmom.com** - <http://www.tekmom.com/search>

This site was started by a northern Virginia computer teacher with children at home. It contains favorite research tools on the web for kids. URL addresses are provided for kid search engines, general search engines, science, history, images, encyclopedias, dictionaries, biographies, authors, and maps.

## **B.J. Pinchbeck's Homework Helpers -**

<http://school.discovery.com/homeworkhelp/bjpinchbeck/index.html>

This site, started by a teenager and his father, has been carefully tended to include hundreds of links, and is now accessible through the Discovery Channel's education links. I have these sites bookmarked under favorites on my own computer for the kids. They by no means cover ALL sites out there for young people, but are a superb place to start.

Happy surfing!

## **Bidding Resources**

It's that time of year again. There are several ways to access bidding information.

### **Government Internet Web sites include:**

#### **Family Liaison Office**

<http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo>

#### **Overseas Briefing Center**

<http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc>

Includes **Learn About Posts**: <http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/1861.htm> with additional Internet resources, including links to the Real Post Reports.

Includes **Returning to Washington**: <http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c1932.htm>

#### **Office of Overseas Schools**

<http://www.state.gov/m/a/os>

#### **Department of State Homepage**

<http://www.state.gov>

#### **Department of State Background Notes**

[www.state.gov/r/pa/bgn](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/bgn)

#### **Department of State Travel Warnings**

[http://travel.state.gov/travel\\_warnings.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html)

## **New Books by Foreign Service Spouses**

*Foreign at Home and Away: Foreign-Born Wives in the U.S. Foreign Service*, written by Margaret Bender. For purchase information: Contact the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, <http://www.adst.org>.

*The Expert Expatriate: Your Guide to Successful Relocation Abroad*, written by Melissa Brayer Hess and Patricia Lederman. For purchase information: Contact <http://www.interculturalpress.com/shop/expertexpattext.html>

## **Reminder - Long-Term Care Insurance**

Open Season July 1 to December 31, 2002. Open season applications are available at <http://www.ltcfeds.com>. You can put your name on the mailing list to receive an open season information kit, including application, by calling 1-800-582-3337 (TDD 1-800-843-3557).

According to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), "The Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program is an important new benefit for over 20 million members of the Federal Family, including Federal and Postal employees and annuitants, members and retired members of the uniformed services and qualified relatives." OPM contracted with John Hancock and MetLife, who formed a joint venture called Long Term Care Partners, to provide this insurance.

For more information on long-term insurance through the U.S. government, check with your HR officer or visit the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) web site at <http://www.opm.gov/insure/ltc/index.htm> or <http://www.ltcfeds.com>