

DKG@UN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF
THE DELTA KAPPA GAMMA SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL
TO THE UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION AND
THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

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As the masthead indicates, this Newsletter is published by the Society's NGO representatives at the United Nations. There are currently eight of us, listed on the bottom of the last page. Three of our reps are authors of articles in this issue. Also included are articles written by or submitted through the UN Liaisons from two different state organizations—Pennsylvania and Florida.

Members of our rep group frequently receive emails from departments at the UN about briefings offered for the benefit of affiliated NGOs or on other timely topics. One of these, regarding the International Day of Peace, arrived just as we were completing this newsletter. We were so impressed by the emphasis on education and the activities of young people in working for peace in this message that we are presenting sections of this announcement as our lead article below.

THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE—21 SEPTEMBER 2011

The message from which we have quoted the following segments was published by Mr. Kiyo Akasaka, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Communication and Public Information, on June 13, the beginning of the 100-day countdown to the International Day of Peace.

“September 21, 2011, marks the 30th anniversary of the International Day of Peace. As we begin today a 100-day countdown to the observance, we pay tribute to the many civil society activists who lent the strength of their imagination to the institution of this Day. The United Nations General Assembly declared in 1981 that the Day shall be devoted to commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace, both within and among all nations and peoples.

“It invited all Member States, the United Nations system, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, peoples and individuals to commemorate the Day in different ways, especially through all means of education, and to cooperate with the United Nations in the observance of that day.

“Education, and the fruits of education, have been central to this observance.

“Young women and men everywhere are demonstrating the power of connection by reaching out to each other, and rallying together, in the common cause of the dignity and human rights to which their peoples aspire. It is in tribute to them, and the spirit they represent, that we have chosen this year, under the overall idea of Peace and Democracy, the theme of ‘Make your voice heard.’

“The United Nations stands ready to work with the peoples in whose name the International Day of Peace was established to secure a world ready for, and worthy of, the peace that is essential to all creative human endeavour.”

THE CURRICULUM OF HOPE NEWSLETTER CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

The latest issue of the “Curriculum of Hope for a Peaceful World Newsletter” marks the beginning of its 25th year of publication. This newsletter, which is supported by a grant from the DKG Connecticut state organization, is written and published by a committee of its members and provides teaching suggestions for educators at all levels. It comes out three times a year, supplemented by a substantial curriculum guide in notebook or CD format. In addition, in 2005, a grant from the DKG Educational Foundation enabled the group to work with four Connecticut universities that educate future teachers on a project “Re-orienting Teacher Education to Include the Concepts of Peace Education and Global Sustainability.”

Congratulations to the founder, Jeanne Morascini, and to the dedicated committee members. For further information and to subscribe contact Jeanne Morascini: jemora@aol.com; 860-228-9293.

Educators who plan to prepare over the summer for the International Day of Peace to be celebrated on September 21, 2011, will find much in the Curriculum of Hope material for students of all ages.

Another resource for those working for peace is the “Global Campaign for Peace Newsletter,” (www.peace-ed-campaign.org). On this website you will find the Newsletter, educational resources, and other materials.

SHARING INSIGHTS FROM DPI BRIEFINGS

Joan Goldstein, New York

For 34 years I was a teacher in the New York City school system. Now retired, I am honored to be a representative of Delta Kappa Gamma at the UN. I have been involved for less than a year, and the knowledge I’ve gained over just these last few months has opened my eyes to the global challenges many societies face. Those reps who live in the New York area, as I do, frequently attend briefings held by the Department of Public Information (DPI) at the UN for the benefit of the affiliated NGOs. I learned quickly about the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) created and adopted at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000. The briefings I’ve attended related to these goals were phenomenal. I’d like to tell you about two of the topics that resonated with me, “Ableism” and “Maternal Health.”

During a March briefing entitled “Reframing Disability Towards Eliminating Ableism in Education and Employment Across the Globe,” I was educated on data regarding the employment situation of people with disabilities. The statistics indicated that these people encounter serious hurdles in job markets throughout the world. They are frequently denied employment or given menial jobs. Many think that people with disabilities are unable to work and that accommodating them in the workplace is expensive. The United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called on governments to do more to support people with disabilities and to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which entered into force in 2008.

I learned more from one of the speakers, Judith Heumann, who is the Special Advisor for International Disability Rights for the U.S. Dept. of State. Ms. Heumann's commitment to disability rights stems from her personal experiences. She contracted polio at the age of 18 months, and has used a wheelchair most of her life. As a child, the local public school refused to allow her to attend. Ms. Heumann's mother challenged the decision, and Judith was allowed to go to school in the fourth grade. Upon graduating from college, she was denied her New York City teaching license by the Board of Education because she used a wheelchair. She took the

case to court, and she became the first person in a wheelchair to teach in New York City. This prejudice against people being considered “not able” was at that time a common theme in schools.

Ms. Heumann has made significant efforts over the last 30 years to work directly with disabled people’s organizations and governments around the world to advance the human rights of people with disabilities. She firmly believes the way to make change is strong political movement and the vision to be change agents. She emphasized the need for the continuous involvement of parents as advocates. In recent years, strides have been made to meet individual needs and to accommodate disabled students to learn in the most efficient and effective way--for example, by implementing accessibility, customization, and trained specialists.

In May I attended a briefing focused on global Maternal Health (MDG 5). It was stated that achieving MDG 5 is dependent upon the achievement of MDG 2, *Achieving universal primary education*, and MDG 3, *Promoting gender equality and empowering women*. UNICEF reports that when girls are educated for six years or more their pre-natal and post-natal care, as well as their childbirth survival rates, are drastically improved. Educated mothers will also immunize their children 50 percent more often than those who are not educated, and their children have a 40 percent higher survival rate. One of the speakers stated: “In many countries, pregnant women approach their deliveries with fear of dying or not being able to care for their child because of poverty or homelessness. We should be deeply troubled that maternal mortality is still the leading cause of death among women and girls.” To me, even more troubling is that we know the root causes and HAVE the solutions available. If you live in the Northeast Region, plan to attend our NGO rep group workshop at the NERC, where I’ll be sharing more highlights from the briefings.

REFLECTIONS ON THE CTAUN CONFERENCE AT THE UNITED NATIONS:

“Achieving the Millennium Development Goals: Teaching for Action”

By Liz Brewer, UN Liaison, Pennsylvania

A pervasive theme during the jam-packed 12th annual CTAUN Conference in January at the United Nations Headquarters was “when you educate a woman, you make a difference for a person, a family, a community, a nation!” The seven-hour event started with a keynote address by Nicholas Kristof, Pulitzer prize-winning columnist for *The New York Times*. His two main thrusts as an investigative reporter are global poverty and women’s issues. Over the years as he has traveled throughout developing countries he has found that women are discriminated to death. Some women just disappear, while others die because the boys and men in their families receive the necessities in their lives—breast milk at birth and food as they grow up. Bed nets are few and will be given to the males in the families to protect them from the deadly mosquitoes. Additionally, males are favored to go the doctors if the families can afford it.

Kristof wrote about these injustices in his book, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, co-authored with his wife, Sheryl WuDunn. He set the tone for the day and presented an array of ways in which we can help bring these women from the margins into the formal economy, as they are not the problem, but rather the solution! And the answers to some of their problems are as simple as providing \$13, which is the annual fee for a girl to attend school in one developing region; or \$10, which will provide mosquito netting for young girls who are exposed to malaria; and a fifty cent pill will de-worm a child for one year!

We were given a brief overview of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which all United Nations Member States have pledged to achieve by 2015. These can be found at www.un.org/millenniumgoals. Throughout the day we heard from panel members about their

work on eradicating the inequities that children and women in these low income countries endure. A detailed summary of the conference can be found on the CTAUN website www.teachun.org.

During the afternoon we were introduced to the recipients of the Best Practices Awards, two of whom are DKG members. All of the recipients are working in their settings to educate others about the need to be global citizens and connect to other parts of the world. We were all reminded through their project work that we must introduce these issues to students in our schools and involve them in the solutions.

We were reminded of President Kennedy's statement in his inaugural address in 1961, "Man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty." As Deputy Director Ramu Damodaran of the UN Department of Public Information stated, "In this moment of time the UN is our last best hope for peace!" Much to think about and much to take back to our members!

[Update by the Editor on Nicholas Kristof:](#) Readers may be interested in Kristof's recent columns in [The New York Times](#) in which he has twice written in heart-breaking detail of his involvement in efforts to help free girl children from lives of prostitution in India.

BATS AND BLUE SKIES IN AUSTIN by Lochie Musso, New York

Your editor asked me to share some of the "outside" highlights of CTAUN's conference held in Austin, Texas. For details on the conference proceedings, go to www.teachun.org.

"Welcome to Austin" said our stewardess as the plane gently touched the tarmac. I was excited to attend this satellite CTAUN convention at the University of Texas as I had never been there before. Austin is also the headquarters of DKG. A tour of this facility was definitely on my agenda! I met Grace Murphy at the airport. As we shuttled into town, cerulean skies covered us and real long-horned cattle were grazing in a roadside pasture. We were definitely in Texas!

Austin is an interesting combination of modern sky scrapers and old time western hospitality. Grace and I grabbed a bite of lunch and headed to DKG where we were graciously welcomed and given a look around. I was quite impressed but surprised by this contemporary structure. I wasn't expecting such a modern mien. We entered into an elegant foyer and a striking ballroom-sized area with fireplace, large gold framed mirror, grand piano, and enormous display case. Founder Annie Webb Blanton's portrait overlooks this splendid room and her lovely mementos are on exhibit along with many gifts from state chapters around the country and the world. We even got a preview of the new "Wall of Roses." The DKG home address is a place to be proud of.

Next Grace and I walked to the State Capital Building under that warm blue heaven. We were greeted by demonstrators seeking support for their cause and treated to a tour of this magnificent dome-topped chamber built in the late 1800s. We kept hearing about the "Revolution," and suddenly realized they were referring to the Texas Revolution not the one in 1776!

Friday night was an experience to remember. CTAUN Chair, Anne-Marie Carlson, had arranged for us to take a boat ride on the Lady Bird Johnson Lake, one of a series of four dammed waterways on the Colorado River designed to prevent serious flooding. A balmy breeze cooled us as we listened to our guide tell of Austin's skyline and the BATS. We were somewhat apprehensive about this adventure, especially when he extolled on the virtues of bat guano and

the good luck it brings if some lands on you. However, we were awed (and remembered to keep our mouths shut) by the million plus little black creatures fluttering out from beneath the bridge arches in search of their nightly meal. In an orderly evacuation taking nearly half an hour, they blackened the sky like a flowing river undulating over the tree tops. On the bridge and in the water, sightseers marveled. At first alarmed by this invasion of their new crossway, now Austin revels in the billion dollar industry these little guys generate!

After a very successful conference the next day in the Thompson Conference Center, we headed out to see a bit of night life in Austin. Again, Anne-Marie's research found us a lively spot on 6th Avenue, the music center of Austin. Esther's Follies is set in a rustic old theater style venue but the show is definitely up-to-date with a witty rendition of today's issues set to Broadway show tunes and magic. It was fun mayhem!

A stroll along this boisterously swinging street (Austin is a college town) brought us to the historic Driskill Hotel. Built by cattle baron Driskill in the 1870s, he spared no expense with marble floors and columns, gold trim and magnificent art works, only to lose it all in a card game three years later. Today, it is still a stunning example of that wonderful sophisticated elegance and down home classy charm of Texas' state capital and DKG's hometown, Austin. It was a great weekend!

HANDS ACROSS THE WATERS By Edie Smith, Past Mu State (Florida) President

Upon my retirement in 1996 from teaching high school and college English for 27 years, my husband and I bought a 47 foot Gulfstar sailboat and decided to live on the boat in the Caribbean for six months each year, December through June. Knowing that we would be stopping at small island communities along the way in our travels, we decided to announce to our friends and family that we would be accepting donations of consumable school supplies and children's books to take to these island schools. My affiliations with the Sarasota County, Florida, school system and Delta Kappa Gamma opened many doors, and money and donations began flooding in. Hundreds upon hundreds of educators and students throughout the U.S. joined us with Operation Bahamas.

That first year, in 1996, we filled the forward cabin of our sailboat and any other "cavity" on the boat with boxes upon boxes of school supplies and children's books and off we went. Most of these islands in the Exuma Island chain in the Bahamas had schools with no more than ten to fifteen children and libraries with less than a dozen books. Almost all schools were lacking in art supplies. That year we dropped off school supplies and books at Staniel Key, Little Farmer's Key, Black Point, Long Island, Bimini and Great Exuma Island.

We began working with teachers, principals and the Commissioner of Education for all of the Exuma Islands, gathering Wish Lists from all of these schools. We engaged other boats heading for the Bahamas and Exumas to join in with transporting these supplies, and soon Operation Bahamas was in full swing. We visited these schools, meeting the students and learning about their culture. We encouraged other cruisers to mentor students and to gather their own supplies and books. Over the next six years we took over \$26,000 in consumable school supplies, children's books and teachers' materials to the Bahamas. We even received an unsolicited Outstanding Service Award from Seven Seas Cruising Association. We were not, however, looking for rewards or awards; we were looking to give students along our way some of the advantages that our students in the U.S. had. Over and over through our many donations we started school libraries and community libraries on these small islands.

We retired from cruising in 2002, but Operation Bahamas continues as other cruisers took on the challenge. In 2002 we joined with Boaters for Books, based out of Punta Gorda, Florida, and our hands reached out further—to the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, San Salvador, Grenada and other islands of the Caribbean. One year we had just taken over 15,000 books to the island of Grenada when Hurricane Ivan roared through the island, devastating everything in its path. We managed to help build more suitable storage units over the next two years and filled the units with 20,000 more books. Many of the books came from county book depositories from throughout the state of Florida, books that had been purged from county school library shelves.

Yes, we touched the lives of these islanders by making school supplies and books available to them, but they touched our lives in many more ways, ways it is sometimes impossible to explain. We now have friends on these islands, friends for life.

[A Note from the Editor:](#) The UN Liaison from Florida, Ann Perrine, has asked me to share with our readers how proud Florida's Delta Kappa Gamma members and their schools are of Edie's accomplishments and to be part of her project, "Hands Across the Water."

A "SCHOOLS FOR AFRICA" UPDATE

The first four issues of the "Schools for Africa Newsette" are now posted on the International website (www.dkg.org), with the fifth soon to be posted as well. Cathy Daugherty, who, as sub-committee chair for the International Educational Excellence Committee is the contact person for Schools for Africa, reports that over \$10,000 has already been contributed to this campaign. At last count, 23 percent of state organizations reported that contributions were being made by chapters within their state. The website also provides a new brochure to use when making contributions to the U.S. Fund for UNICEF, as well as additional background information about the project. DKG members around the world can directly contribute via a new link set up by UNICEF at www.unicefusa.org/donate/dkg.

Beginning with the February issue, each *SFA Newsette* focuses on a different country that is benefiting by this project. The focus countries so far are Angola, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Madagascar. Additional information on Burkina Faso and Ethiopia are given via powerpoints also posted on the DKG website. Information about Schools for Africa will be presented at all of the Regional conferences in workshops and/or the conference Info Fair.

YOUR UN REPRESENTATIVES

The members of The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International listed below are your official representatives at the United Nations Department of Public Information and the Economic and Social Council. Most of them also work with CTAUN. You can email us for further information.

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