

ODYSSSEY

A PUBLICATION OF FUND FOR TEACHERS

Volume 5, Fall 2009

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Food for Thought Luncheon

Tuesday, October 6
Hotel Zaza – Houston, TX
Special Guest: Debbie Phelps

Principal, former teacher, mother of Olympic icon and author of *A Mother for All Seasons: A Memoir*

Call 713-296-6127 for tickets.



Staples Joins FFT Efforts

Staples handed Fund for Teachers and our Fellows its "Easy Button" in July by donating \$50,000 toward future fellowships.

"Staples Foundation for Learning is dedicated to providing teachers with the resources they need to motivate their students to achieve academic success," said Joy Errico, director of community relations for Staples, Inc. "Fund for Teachers recognizes that real life experiences enhance an educator's training to create the most engaging and rewarding classroom environment for students."

The mission of Staples Foundation for Learning, Inc. is to teach, train and inspire. Thank you, Staples, for extending your support to America's top educators and the students they impact.



Eric Bethel and Kerensa Maiden reviewing math assessments with 6th grade teacher from Minden Heights Primary School in Penang, Malaysia.

Swine Flu Threatens Fellowship

"The best laid plans of mice and men oft go awry," wrote John Steinbeck. For Washington DC Fellows Andy Gomez, Eric Bethel and Kerensa Maiden, *swine*, not mice, posed the problem.

Pursuing an in-depth review of the Singapore Math concept, this teacher trio turned to Fund for Teachers. Their school, Marie Reed Learning Center, gave Singapore Math a cursory look last year, but the school principal suggested studying it first-hand before implementing the content rich approach school-wide. Receiving the Fund for Teachers grant, Andy, Eric and Kerensa made plans and arrived in Southeast Asia in July – simultaneously with epidemic warnings of the Swine Flu.

"We planned to visit retired teachers in Singapore who taught lessons on the concept at our school, as well as visit two schools, a university professor and the National Institute of Education, all with the goal of witnessing Singapore Math implemented in its country of origin," explained Andy. "We initially arrived in Thailand and two days before departing for Singapore, received an email relaying the ban on foreign visitors not quarantined seven days prior to the visit. The next day, we opened another email from the University announcing cancellation of all conferences with any foreign travelers. Our mouths were agape as our fellowship fell apart."

The team contemplated two options:

conduct school visits in Malaysia and Thailand, where the Swine Flu was not as prevalent, or, contact Andy's college friend who taught in mainland China to observe math education there. They decided to pursue both and follow the option that materialized because time was running out. Andy's friend in Hong Kong came through and set their course, coordinating meetings with the education department at Hong Kong University, scheduling school visits, and facilitating meetings with friends pursuing doctorate degrees in education.

"The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study reported that students in Hong Kong scored exceptionally high in math, as well," said Andy. "So we capitalized on a good opportunity to see something in addition to Singapore Math and learn what they are doing to also achieve success."

The next four days met all their expectations. Math education methods in Hong Kong approximated those in Singapore, so observing teachers and the content they use proved profitable. The real lesson, however, pertained to language, not math.

"Our only difficulty was that all their instruction was in Chinese," explained Andy. "Teachers put the numbers up on the board and I could sort of follow along, but felt frustrated. Then I realized that's

Continued on page 6





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From the Executive Director Summer – it's a wrap.

The adventure of school begins. Teaching and learning occur on a continuum: the 2009 Fellows spent their summer in pursuit of meaningful programs and participating in relevant volunteer opportunities that they identified to better approach teaching and learning holistically. This fall, their students will directly benefit from the new techniques, primary source materials and individual experiences netted during these fellowships. For some students, this will mean benefitting from teaching strategies such as those designed to augment reading aptitudes; for others, it will be the opportunity to build cultural understanding in meaningful ways that explore multiple perspectives rather than exoticize unfamiliar people and practices. Teaching and learning will be better.

I'm pleased to welcome The Malaika Foundation to the Fund for Teachers community. I recently participated in *the Going Global, a Symposium on Educational Strategies for International Learning*, a strategic effort of The Malaika Foundation and its founder, Dr. Natalie Hahn, to accelerate the education of "world smart students" in Nebraska. Participants, including university deans, professors and classroom teachers from around Nebraska and other states, contributed their expertise to the dialogue. The new alliance between Malaika and FFT will ideally be one that is



Participants at the Going Global Symposium.

Photo: Dean Jacobs

supported community wide and that will help infuse dimension and global themes into Nebraskan classrooms through FFT fellowships for their teachers.

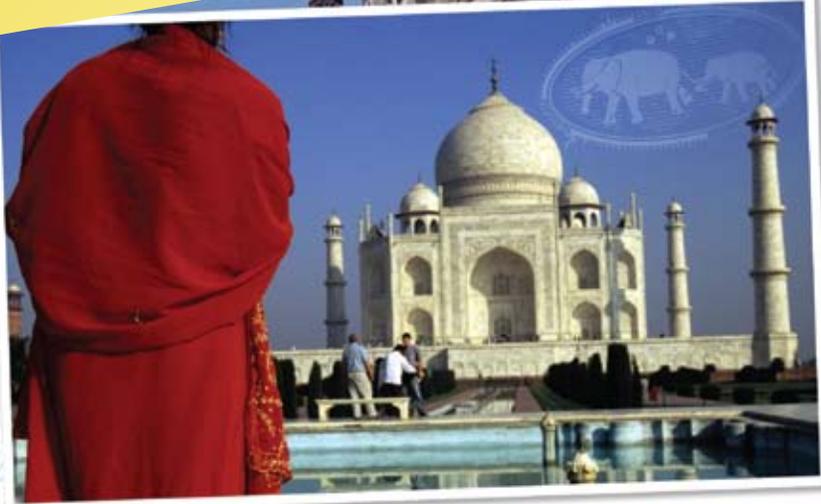
The fall calendar is full. Applications for summer 2010 become available on October 1. The FFT community continues to work to expand the pipeline at every level. We will be holding information sessions to assist teacher applicants as they clarify goals and prepare proposals for fellowships, as well as hosting donor related events and partner meetings. Please visit the website to view the calendar for specific locations around the country and for dates of Webinar Wednesdays. We work to link Fellows with individual donors who are interested in particular fields of study or particular areas of the world. We're working to maintain and establish partnerships with Local Education Foundations across the country to reach more teachers and students.

We are all part of the Fund for Teachers effort recognizing that successful teaching requires learning and acknowledging that without involvement in these efforts, we will ultimately fall short of the results needed to improve education and our country's citizenry. Thank you for your support. I welcome your suggestions. Karen.Kovach-Webb@fundforteachers.org

Our Mission

Fund for Teachers enriches the personal and professional growth of teachers by recognizing and supporting them as they identify and pursue opportunities around the globe that will have the greatest impact on their practice, the academic lives of their students and their school communities.

Where are
They
Now?



Introducing India

"Slumdog Millionaire" presented India to the movie-going public this year through film. But, high school students at New York City's Beacon School continue to meet India through the travels of their teacher, 2007 Fellow Tara Rana.

An attorney by trade, 9/11 prompted Tara to leave the profession and earn her Masters degree in social studies, determined to make an immediate impact on the world. After her fourth year of teaching, she applied for and received a Fund for Teachers grant to travel throughout India and develop curricular units on India's eras as an empire, colony and nation state. During the summer marking India's 60th year of independence, Tara spent the month of July crossing the country on railway, rickshaw, bus and plane to interview India's people, examine its cultural and historical sites and explore how people live each day. She returned with a renewed passion for teaching that she channeled into creating a senior level history class titled "Modern Indian History from Independence to I.T." The class examines India from colonization to globalization and focuses on economic, social and political history.

"I love every moment of teaching my class and it must show because not only is the course maxed out with students, I even have a waiting list of students eager to learn about India and its role in the world today," said Tara.

The syllabus includes a mock Indian Constitutional Convention in which seniors assume roles of Indian and British contributors to the Independence movement; a quiltmaking project stemming from the novel *A Fine Balance* by Rohinton Mistry and set during the prime ministership of Indira Gandhi; and, this year, the opportunity to hear a reading of *Maximum City* (about Mumbai) by Suketu Mehta. Mehta visited the class the week before the Mumbai terrorist attacks, and when he published several editorials in tragic aftermath, the relevance of studying India solidified in students' minds.

"I was very impressed with the students' level of scholarship and I believe it was due, in large part, to my pushing them to do their best," said Tara. "It's easy to push them to work hard because I am confident about my content knowledge after my first-hand experiences in India. I feel passionate about teaching India and always approach the material with a positive attitude, which fuels students' enthusiasm for learning."

Bringing good karma to teaching -- Namaste.

Potential Fellows Take Your Mark... 2010 Grant Application Opens October 1st

Are you interested in leveraging your professional and personal interests into a funded grant? The clock is ticking. October 1st marks the beginning of the 2010 granting season. Teachers: you have until January 29, 2010, to dream big and propose projects you envision translating into life- and career-changing opportunities that will serve as catalysts for inspired classrooms.

Geographical boundaries and subject areas are limitless. Previous Fellows attended conferences, festivals, workshops, independent and group tours, and volunteered in 54 countries on 6 continents this year alone. Visit our website to search projects by topic and location under the Fellows section. Also, be sure to view our Fellows map that documents fellowship destinations and disciplines.

Fund for Teachers invites Pre-kindergarten through 12th grade teachers with at least three years experience, working in the classroom 50 percent of the time, and located in an eligible geographic area to apply online at www.fundforteachers.org. Informational webinars to facilitate the process are offered two Wednesdays a month and a self-guided tutorial will also be available online. Visit our website for additional details.



Fund for Teachers is a proud partner of



JONES NEW YORK
IN THE CLASSROOM



Tiana Pastor, San Francisco, studied traditional Indonesian batik, painting and puppet making in the setting of a major Balinese art village to enhance her school's current art program and create a unit of study.



THE TAJ MAHAL, AGRA, INDIA



Lisette McClung and Kathleen Courville, Houston, participate in a workshop on open air painting in Umbria, Italy, to learn teaching strategies for painting outdoors directly from nature.



Angela Nelson, Atlanta, navigates the Nile while observing teaching strategies and cultural differences as related to ESL students.



Elle Terry, New York, observed the Summerbridge Afterschool Program in Hong Kong and rural Chinese public schools to develop skills for teaching math to economically disadvantaged students. ▲



Reginald Colbert (center), Atlanta, attended the Verbier Festival Academy in Verbier, Switzerland, to observe and research strategies used in masterclasses and chamber music coaching. ▶



Summer SCRAPBOOK

FUND FOR TEACHERS

We've Got Mail... Postcards from 2009 Fellows

Fund for Teachers Fellows spent their summer traversing the world learning, volunteering and living as global citizens. While on their journeys, many sent us postcards, photos and plans for implementing their life-changing experiences in their classrooms. We dedicate this issue of *Odyssey* to our 2009 Fellows' projects and share this small offering of their words and images with you. Enjoy!

"May my life, and the lives of my students, be forever changed by these memories."
- Pam McGee, Houston

"I have so much to bring back to my school. I have become a true resource for my colleagues and for my children. Once again, words cannot express how much value I have gained from this trip. My job now is to share this with my colleagues, my school, and many more children and parents to come!"
- Karen Weiss, Oklahoma

"I have learned more in a week about marine biology than I did in an entire semester course in college. I look forward to taking this all back to my classroom and cannot wait to integrate it all with my own lessons."
- Melinda Bernabe, Los Angeles

"We set out to gather information that would inspire our students to action and came back forever changed by the sights, sounds, and history of our nation's capitol."
- Bev Kinman, Oklahoma

"A million thank yous to Fund for Teachers who provided the tantalizing opportunity of travel, the challenge to plan your own professional development experience, and the funding to live out this dream..."
- Carol Scott and Roberta Combs, Oklahoma

Kathryn Elkins, Oklahoma, joined a 10-day field expedition with the National Science Teachers Association in Costa Rica to study conservation efforts, environmental education, rural and urban schools systems, and rainforest diversity. ▼

"Thank you to Fund for Teachers and its supporters not only on behalf of ourselves but also on behalf of the children we will reach with the experiences we are gathering."

- Bob and Dixie Allen, Houston

"This has been the most enriching learning experience in my career as a public school teacher. I can't wait to bring back all that I have learned to my classroom."

- Wendi Lewis, Oklahoma

"We are only on our third day on the US-Mexican border in Southern Arizona and we all agree that yesterday was the most profound day of our lives. Thank you FFT for this life expanding opportunity."

- Josán Perales, ELS

"...To actually see, photograph and touch 4000 years old artifacts from ancient civilizations that we only see in books will impact our teaching and our students' knowledge and hands-on experiences in understanding history. We are so excited to share this journey about Egypt and Greece with our students, so they will also have this learning opportunity for the rest of their lives!"

- Sylvia Thomas, Oakland

"This has been a wonderful experience for me and my colleagues. I have gained so much knowledge and know that my students writing will flourish, thanks to my training. Thanks for igniting a new fire in my teaching soul."

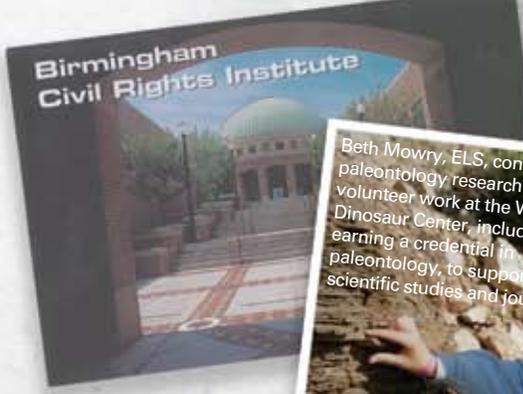
- Lisa McCarter, Los Angeles

"I wish I could have had every one of my students with me, especially the little ones, and I can't wait to get back and tell them about seeing these incredible things."

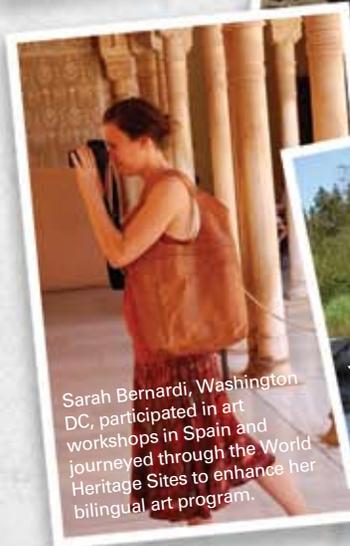
- Sarah Bernardi, DC

"I can't wait to enrich my science lessons with my new knowledge and photos. This experience is recharging my excitement for teaching science."

- Tammie Hyde, Houston



Beth Mowry, ELS, conducted paleontology research and volunteer work at the Wyoming Dinosaur Center, including earning a credential in paleontology, to support student scientific studies and journals.



Sarah Bernardi, Washington DC, participated in art workshops in Spain and journeyed through the World Heritage Sites to enhance her bilingual art program.



Jennifer Rockers and Molly Dykman, ELS, experienced the Outward Bound Boundary Waters program to gain skills for building wilderness and challenge opportunities for students.



Big Apple Team



Debra Mabery, Houston, partnered with the Panama public schools for six weeks to learn methods of motivating reluctant immigrant students to learn English.



Ray Kinzie, Chicago, drove across American prairies to study Native American cultures and U.S. geography to enhance content knowledge and facilitate classroom instruction. ▶



Gwendia Copeland, RSCT, participated in the Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts summer workshop in Gatlinburg, TN, to renew and enhance skills in ceramic education. ◀

Community Partners Spotlight

The Malaika Foundation joins Fund for Teachers' mission as our newest Community Partner.

The mission of the Malaika Foundation is to add an international dimension to learning in Nebraska schools and libraries, with the goal of building greater understanding among young people from different global cultural traditions. Thus, collaborating with Fund for Teachers provides a strong platform to extend its efforts to build bridges to the world for Nebraska's children.

"Fund for Teachers will provide opportunities to open new horizons for Nebraska educators. It's the Nebraska plains going international," said the Malaika Foundation's Founder, President and CEO Natalie Hahn. "Malaika means 'my angel' in Swahili, and, indeed, Fund for Teachers is a Nebraska Angel!"

Margaret Sibbitt, international consultant and rancher, was recently appointed as coordinator for the Nebraska-Fund for Teachers partnership. Under her leadership, the Malaika Foundation plans to publicize this new opportunity through the Nebraska Department of Education, state-wide education workshops, foundations and the media. The fellowships will be made available to all Nebraska teachers, with particular attention given to teachers in rural schools in farm communities.

"The Malaika Foundation empowers all Nebraska educators to benefit from Fund for Teachers' fellowships, making this our second state-wide partnership," said Karen Kovach Webb, Fund for Teachers executive director. "This relationship mirrors every allegiance we enjoy with other education foundations actively engaged in their own locales and we look forward to seeing the synergy between our organizations grow and open new vistas for Nebraska's educational landscape."

To learn more about the Malaika Foundation, visit www.malaikafoundation.org.



**Building bridges to the world for
Nebraska's Children**

Do The Math

Just as " π " represents a mathematical constant whose decimal representation never repeats, a teacher is a societal constant whose influence never ends. Linking the two together is Fund for Teachers' new π Society, a collaborative alliance of individuals – spearheaded by Apache Corporation Chairman and CEO Steve Farris – who recognize the importance of improving math education and the continued strength of the country's economy. A long-term ability to compete globally relies, in large part, on the ability to compete in the classroom. Poor student performance and the lack of interest in math have long term ramifications; therefore, the π Society solely focuses its efforts and resources on funding teachers' self-designed explorations developed specifically to increase knowledge of content and pedagogy and to promote the creative study and instruction of mathematics.

Examples of math-centered fellowships from this year include: Attending the Carnegie Mellon Robotics Academy and Conference to learn techniques for teaching technology, engineering and math concepts; observing rural Chinese public schools' extracurricular efforts to develop skills for teaching math to economically disadvantaged students; and constructing wooden boats in Indonesia to develop an interdisciplinary curriculum based on drafting and measurement.

Leaders investing in this vision each contribute \$250,000 over a five year period, yielding 50 math innovation grants and enhancing the instructional experience for countless students. If you are committed to strengthening math education, or are a math teacher who would benefit from a Fund for Teachers fellowship, FFT offers you a piece of the π Society.

If you believe another particular discipline can influence destiny, take a page from the π Society's playbook and create your own "Educational Action Committee."



Noah Heller, 2009 New York City Fellow, became an apprentice to Indonesian experts who design and draft wooden boats.

Swine Flu, cont.

how our Spanish-speaking children must feel. Maybe we're trying to get across math lessons to students who don't understand the language. Or, maybe they *do* understand the concepts but can't express them correctly. We plan to re-evaluate the real issue behind the low test scores and push this issue with our staff when school begins."

In the end, Andy relates difficulties in Singapore to challenges in his DC classroom. "Teachers have to be flexible because you never know what will happen. You can plan as much as possible, but have to have an open mind and be ready and willing to do whatever is necessary." That's a lesson from which his students are sure to benefit when things in life just don't add up.



Maiden, Gomez and Bethel visit the Wat Pho Temple in Bangkok.



Kris and Audrey cross borders and cultures from a new perspective.



Retracing the Horseshoes of Hannibal

“Teaching foreign languages is not only verb conjugations and memorizing gender; it is exploring culture, music, art, literature, history, holidays, food, government and folklore with our students,” began the grant application of Audrey Nelson and Kris Earle, French and Spanish teachers at Oklahoma’s Shawnee High School and Ada High School respectively. The two melded disciplines, and a shared hobby, into one fellowship that took them between countries, via the Pyrenees, on horseback.

“Kris and I regularly go on trail rides and invariably talk school: ‘Have you tried this idea? How would you handle this?’” said Audrey. “On one of those rides, we talked about how great it would be to create a dangerous trek in the name of learning that kids could relate to – that would make languages real. And Kris said, ‘We’re going to write a grant for that!’”

Their Fund for Teachers grant enabled them to spend seven days crossing the mountain range connecting the common cultures and histories of France and Spain. Atop their mounts, they interviewed people in French and Spanish and collected evidence of ancient journeys through photography while retracing the footsteps of pre-historic cave dwellers, Hannibal’s brother, Hasdrubal, the Romans, the Moors, Charlemagne, medieval pilgrims, Napoleon’s soldiers, and the mysterious Basque people. Nights were spent in old hunting cabins, mountain shelters and picturesque villages.

While scaling harrowing peaks seemed daunting, the real excitement awaits them back in Oklahoma. Kris explains: “My task is to put this rich experience into a digestible format for my students. I want them to discover the Pyrenees for themselves: learn important background knowledge, meet the people, both historical and contemporary, and come up with their own conclusions. Through storytelling in the target language, my students will ride an elephant with Hasdrubal’s army, become a medieval pilgrim on the Way of Saint James and learn of the fear I felt on a mountain crest on horseback. My students will not just learn new vocabulary and grammar structures, they will live in the Pyrenees!”

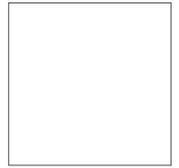
Using their target languages, both teachers plan map making to retrace Hannibal’s trek; model building to recreate the Roman road construction process that linked the immense Empire; researching the Moors’ cultural contributions to modern society; writing a log as one who traverses the Way of Saint James in medieval Europe; and even singing the Chanson de Roland, a famous troubadour ballad recounting the death of Charlemagne’s nephew.

“We’re going to be so much fresher in the classroom! We’ve come up with the most imaginative lessons and are implementing things we never would have done before (the fellowship),” said Audrey. “We hope our experience proves to our students that learning can be exciting and a lifelong adventure. You don’t have to get out of school and run away from learning. You run TO it.” Maybe even gallop.





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