

J. KIRBY SIMON FOREIGN SERVICE TRUST

GRANTS AWARDED IN 2006

The J. Kirby Simon Foreign Service Trust is a charitable fund established in the memory of Kirby Simon, a Foreign Service Officer who died in 1995 while serving in Taiwan. The Trust is committed to expanding the opportunities for community service, professional fulfillment and personal well-being of Foreign Service Officers and Specialists and their families. The Trust has been funded with contributions from Kirby Simon's colleagues, friends and relatives and other persons interested in the purposes of the Trust. The Trustees are present or former members of the Foreign Service - State Department community and Kirby Simon's parents.

In the Fall of 2005, following the pattern established in the nine previous years, the Trust invited proposals for the support, in 2006, of projects initiated and carried out by Foreign Service personnel or members of their families, or by other U.S. Government employees employed at American diplomatic posts abroad. In response to this invitation, the Trust received 86 proposals from 47 countries. The very modest size of the Trust permitted funding of only 40 of the proposals in whole or in part. The 40 grants ranged in amount from \$600 to \$4500, for a total of \$87,287; they supported projects conducted in 33 countries.

The following pages describe the projects supported by the Trust in 2006. (Material in quotation marks is taken from the proposals describing the projects.)

AFGHANISTAN -- KABUL. Art supplies for street children, part of a program to promote life-skills education and enable income-generating activity – a project undertaken by Christine Dal Bello, Foreign Service Officer, and Steve Carroll, State Department Financial Manager.

For Foreign Service personnel, it is “heart-wrenching” to encounter the needy street children who gather outside American compounds and military bases in Afghanistan, because both security restrictions and concern for their safety dictate that simply giving these children money is not a solution. Americans “want to do something to help these children and others like them” but generally can't find ways to do so “in a way that would accommodate security and other restrictions.” Ms. Dal Bello and Mr. Carroll found one answer in a Kabul-based NGO known as ASCHIANA (Afghan Children and New Approach), which supports centers that offer street children “basic educational skills,” including art instruction. The art produced by the children provides not only “a mental and creative outlet,” but “a needed income source in a country with vast unemployment and few licit job opportunities.” Because “it is difficult to get quality art supplies,” a grant from the Trust has enabled the purchase of a supply of good oil paints.

BAHAMAS -- NASSAU. Wheelchairs for disabled individuals working as advocates with the Bahamas National Council for Disability – a project undertaken by Greg Floyd, Foreign Service Officer.

The Bahamas National Council for Disability (BNCD) is a privately-funded NGO that provides assessment and skills training, and an important support network, for disabled persons in the Bahamas. It also plays an important role in community education and is working to influence the government “to formally recognize the special needs” of the disabled and “protect their human rights.” The efficacy of the organization has been limited, however, by the fact that the BNCD’s volunteers, “most of whom are disabled themselves,” have lacked “the tools that would help them to better help others.” Funds from the Trust have been used to purchase two electronic wheelchairs, which “provides an unprecedented level of mobility” for these volunteers, enabling “them to be far more productive in their efforts to help others.”

BANGLADESH -- DHAKA. Rice to be used as an incentive for attendance at a school for street children – a project undertaken by Paul Sabatine, USAID Officer.

Though it “lies in the very shadow” of the U.S. Embassy in Bangladesh, the settlement of Notung Bazaar is “a world apart.” Its residents are “among the world’s poorest” people, so that “even the youngest members of a family must pitch in or quite literally face starvation.” The children of Notung Bazaar are often seen “picking through piles of trash from the expatriate homes” for items that can be resold. Recognizing that “education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty and desperation,” members of the American community several years ago founded the ABC School to serve these children. ABC provides not only basic education, but meals and medical care, and it continues to help its graduates when they go on to public school. Unfortunately, however, school attendance must often give way to survival: the families of Notung Bazaar are so poor that even their youngest members must contribute whatever income they can. In an effort to alter that economic dynamic, the Trust has awarded a grant for rice that is to be distributed at regular intervals to the families of students who have achieved a perfect attendance record during that period.

BELGIUM – BRUSSELS. Building supplies for a workshop at a farm for disabled individuals – a project undertaken by Camille Szramiak, daughter of the Commercial Counselor.

La Clarine is a small farm “dedicated to the development of mentally and physically disabled farmers.” Some live on the premises, while others come during the day; all seek “to acquire new skills, achieve self-sufficiency, and make friends and be accepted in society.” The farmers sustain themselves not only with their produce, but with whatever income can be generated by making items for sale. In 2005, a grant from the Trust enabled La Clarine to pave several walkways so that they can more easily be negotiated by disabled individuals. This year, funds from the Trust are being used to build a workshop where the farmers can “repair and build tools and other practical items” for the farm and create items for sale to outsiders.

BOLIVIA – LA PAZ. Activities to support and publicize the work of an organization devoted to animal rescue, shelter, and public education – a project undertaken by Lisa Olsson, spouse of the Regional Security Officer.

In La Paz “between 150,000 and 300,000 animals are homeless and on the streets,” creating a situation that is not only tragic but dangerous, due to the prevalence of rabies. “Without neutering and spaying,” the problem continues to grow exponentially worse. Animales SOS is a private organization that “provides a variety of animal services,” including neutering and vaccinations as well as a rescue and adoption program. Although it has recently undertaken some income-generating activities such as grooming and boarding, “the organization is not well known in the expatriate and Bolivian communities.” A grant from the Trust is being used to publicize the organization through ads, posters, and brochures; add kennel space; purchase equipment and supplies; mount an “adopt-a-pet day” for the expatriate community; and produce a calendar for use in fundraising.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA – OSAMSKO VILLAGE. Seeds, chickens, and chicken feed to enable the resettlement of Bosnian Muslim returnees – a project undertaken by Rachel Meyers, Political Officer, and Ante Milisa, Political Assistant and Foreign Service National.

The 1992-95 conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina displaced “more than 2 million people,” only half of whom have so far “returned to their pre-war homes.” The problems of re-entry are especially acute for Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) seeking to return to their homes in Eastern Bosnia, which is “economically underdeveloped and politically dominated by the Serb nationalist party” due to its proximity to the Serbian border. In this “unwelcoming environment,” Bosniaks “have almost no prospect for formal employment,” and “will need to develop agricultural skills to support themselves.” Funds from the Trust are being used to provide vegetable seeds, chickens, and chicken feed to a handful of families – most headed by women, because “husbands, sons and other male relatives ... were killed during the war” – who were able to return to this small village only last year. Embassy personnel hope to assist with spring planting.

BOTSWANA – GABARONE. Materials and labor to build a storage shed for a food bank – a project undertaken by Lois Aroian, Deputy Chief of Mission.

As it has in so much of Africa, “HIV/AIDS has had a devastating impact in Botswana.” Among women of child-bearing age, almost 35 percent are said to be HIV-positive, and the number of orphans “is climbing rapidly.” Although the government provides some food assistance for these orphans, the food is often consumed by relatives or otherwise misdirected. The Samaritan Kitchen, operated by the Methodist Church, provides monthly food packages to needy individuals, over half of whom are now “orphans and vulnerable children.” Unfortunately, however, the Kitchen must store its supplies in an unsecured space in the church, which “means that food intended for the poor has been disappearing.” A grant from the Trust is being used to build a secure storage shed that will not only protect supplies but “enable the Kitchen to expand its outreach to all the needy families and orphan projects which have approached it for assistance.”

CAMBODIA – PHNOM PENH. Food, shelter, health care and school uniforms for street children – a project undertaken by Martin J. Bushue, an electrical engineer with the U.S. Department of State, and his wife Sharon K. (Sherry) Bushue.

For 2 ½ years, Martin and Sherry Bushue supported, out of their own resources, 25 Phnom Penh street children, most of them girls, providing “school supplies, school uniforms, food, limited health care, and some shelter” as needed for the children and, by extension, their families. By enabling these children “to maintain their schooling” and acquire job skills, the couple hoped to “reduce their exposure on the treacherous streets” and help them escape “a life of begging with no hope of a future.” Their commitment paid off, and the children flourished. Recently, however, the Bushues were reassigned from Cambodia to Myanmar. Although they will return frequently to visit the children and will communicate through e-mail, they have arranged with the Maryknoll organization in Phnom Penh to focus their support on “13 of the children, included in five families . . . based upon their regular attendance in school and the parental support of their mothers.” A grant from the Trust is being used to sustain this effort and provide additional support for other children among the original group of 25.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC – BANGUI. Video projection equipment to enable health education activities at a clinic – a project undertaken by A. James Panos, Chargé d’Affaires, and Paul Yalipende, M.D., Medical Advisor.

Centrafrique Assistance Santé (CAS) is a clinic “founded on the principle that health education is absolutely as important as applied medicine.” Residents of the area it serves, “a highly populated district” of the capital city, share a “chronic public ignorance of hygiene, prevention and treatment of contagious diseases, and family planning.” As a result they suffer from a variety of maladies -- particularly “malaria, acute respiratory disease, TB, typhoid, and STDs [sexually transmitted diseases] including HIV/AIDS.” The infant mortality rate is high. CAS operates “a program of Door-to-Door Awareness Canvassing” to teach about basic hygiene, but the organization needs a dedicated site in order to offer education about family planning and HIV/AIDS prevention, testing and care – critically important topics in light of the fact that “overall sero-positivity is rapidly increasing.” Funds from the Trust are being used to purchase video equipment and a projection screen for a Health Education Room within the clinic. There, “clients will either be walk-ins, for whom individual videotape/CD programs will be presented,” or “organized groups, who will hear verbal presentations with classic audio-visual aids and peer testimony.”

CHINA – BEIJING. Lab equipment and supplies for a school for migrant children – a project undertaken by Ian Christensen, son of a Foreign Service Officer.

China is home to a significant number of migrant workers who “move frequently from place to place as there is work available.” Because of “problems with residency cards, the children of these workers are often not permitted to attend local schools.” Even if that is not the case, they are frequently “too poor to afford school fees and supplies.” While their parents work, these children are generally unsupervised. “Their environment is dirty and unsafe,” and “there are problems with delinquency and abuse.” The Huilei School was established to give them “a safe environment in which to stay during the day and opportunities for an education.” A grant from the Trust is being used to equip two science labs with furniture, sinks, cupboards, and basic lab supplies.

COLOMBIA – BOGOTA. Basic clinical equipment, materials for vision screening, and eyeglasses for a monthly health clinic for impoverished children – a project undertaken by Sharon Swain, Foreign Service Health Practitioner.

The Fundación Proyecto de Vida, which maintains “three centers in poverty-stricken areas” of Bogota, is a non-profit organization serving “children who live under particularly difficult and trying circumstances, and whose basic human rights have been violated.” This project focuses on one of the three centers, at which children “receive a variety of services” including lunch. Health care, however, remains a challenge. Like their counterparts in similar circumstances around the world, these children suffer from “diarrheal illnesses, respiratory illnesses, stress-related health problems, and poor nutrition,” among other things. Yet most of them “do not receive routine basic health care” because, while they technically have access to distant public hospitals and clinics, their families can’t afford the necessary transportation costs. Nor do they receive “basic hearing and vision screening,” because they do not attend the “formal schools” where such screenings are conducted. Funds from the Trust are being used to create a small monthly clinic with an examining table and other basic supplies and equipment; to purchase eye charts for use in visual screening; and to cover the costs of optometrist appointments and eyeglasses as needed.

COSTA RICA – ESCAZÚ. Materials to renovate a children’s playground – a project undertaken by Jake Fisher, spouse of the Public Affairs Officer; Jean Frisbie, spouse of the Deputy Chief of Mission; and Meg Mahoney, spouse of an agent with the Drug Enforcement Agency.

As a fast-growing suburb of San José where “luxury residences are mixed with the remnants of traditional rural life,” Escazú is a town in which “public leisure spaces for local residents are a scarce commodity.” The town plaza, around which community life is centered, includes a heavily-used playground that is built on asphalt, surrounded by chicken wire, and in a state of disrepair. A grant from the Trust enables the project coordinators and community participants to install “a more forgiving surface,” create “a new play structure that offers a variety of play opportunities for more children,” and construct a fence that is “more aesthetically pleasing, safe, and open to view from elsewhere in the plaza.”

COTE D’IVOIRE – ABIDJAN. Food for impoverished children suffering from protein deficiency – a project undertaken by Deborah Goldstein, spouse of a Foreign Service Health Provider.

Because property owners in Cote D’Ivoire build in “a stop-and-start manner” while they “acquire money to finance the work,” neighborhoods may be dotted with structures that are “only half completed.” “It is the practice of the owners of these unfinished houses to allow a tenant and his family” to live in them as a guard against vandalism. As immigrants or displaced Ivorians who hold only “occasional, menial jobs” at best, these tenants suffer from extreme poverty. Upon arriving in Abidjan, Ms. Goldstein noticed that the children of the tenant families living in her neighborhood showed signs of malnutrition and protein deficiency; some of them, she observed, “would go the entire day without eating, receiving a single meal at night.” She began to offer a protein-rich,

nourishing lunch for 17 of these children, later adding breakfast and a program to track height and weight. Funds from the Trust are being used to purchase needed foodstuffs, including eggs, bread, fruit, peanut butter, powdered milk, and multivitamins.

CUBA – HAVANA. Medicines and a lending library for young cancer patients – a project undertaken by Usha Pitts and Robert Blau, Foreign Service Officers, U.S. Interests Section.

The plight of children battling cancer is doubly moving in places like Havana where adequate care is unavailable. Here, “the collapse of the Soviet bloc brought on the subsequent collapse of Cuba’s renowned health care system.” Against a backdrop of “crumbling” hospitals and the expectation that patients must “provide their own pain relievers, antibiotics, bandages, sheets and food,” Cuban children with cancer face amputations, outdated technology, erratic care, and an “extremely short supply” of even such common pain-relievers as Tylenol. In an effort to ameliorate these conditions, a local resident has knit together a support network for 80 such “cancer kids” at various stages of their illnesses. “During treatment or after an amputation,” these children “spend days or weeks at a time confined to their beds,” and much-needed toys, books, and other forms of entertainment are not generally available. This project seeks both to relieve the children’s suffering and to allow them to “enjoy themselves in the moments they feel well enough to do so.” A grant from the Trust is being used to furnish “basic pain-relief medication” and stock “a small lending library of books, music, and electronic equipment.” The project coordinators note that, because the Cuban government prefers not to acknowledge deficits in its health care and social services, this project is one of the few opportunities for Foreign Service personnel “to reach out to the local community.”

EGYPT – CAIRO. Surgical and lab equipment, cages, and medicines for an animal shelter – a project undertaken by Lisa Swenarski de Herrera, Vice Consul.

Cairo is a city of not only 18 million people but “hundreds of thousands of homeless cats and dogs”; yet it is served by only three animal shelters, which struggle to cope with the need for rescue, care, neutering, and rabies prevention. One of the three, Animal Haven, is a private organization supported primarily by two local philanthropists. It is operating significantly over capacity, and must spend precious resources to “pay local veterinary clinics for treatment sterilizations and other surgeries.” “One of its priority projects,” therefore, is to equip a clinic, and the organization has already acquired an operating table and some other basic equipment for the purpose. Funds from the Trust are being used to purchase additional equipment and supplies, including a centrifuge, which will enable Animal Haven to provide blood testing and thus promote pet adoptions among expatriates whose governments require such tests.

EL SALVADOR – ZACATECOLUCA. Travel costs and therapeutic games to enable psychological treatment for abused and abandoned children – a project undertaken by Veronica Maria Vasquez-Cuerno, Cultural Assistant, Public Affairs Office.

The Children’s Home of Zacatecoluca, operated by the Sisters of Charity, is a refuge for children who “have been battered or sexually abused.” Many “badly need psychological treatment” while they are “rebuilding their lives,” but the Sisters cannot afford the cost of

a psychologist. A grant from the Trust is being used to cover the travel costs of a psychologist willing to volunteer her time at least twice a month; to purchase materials for “therapeutically designed games”; and to transport the children to a day-long “treatment camp” at the Central American University in San Salvador, “in which senior students of psychology provide treatment to children for free” in a setting designed to be “both fun and therapeutic.”

GHANA – KOFORIDUA. Materials and labor to build a dining pavilion at a school and orphanage – a project undertaken by Sharon L. Cromer, USAID Director; her spouse Arnold Sobers; and their children Simone L. Sobers and Courtney L. Keene.

Almost a decade ago, a Ghanaian minister came to this remote village “on a Christian crusade,” but – after “scores of mostly naked children appeared” during the service – he decided to build an orphanage instead. The Baptist School Complex and Orphanage (BASCO) now shelters 105 children, and the Ghanaian government continues to place children there even though it provides no assistance. During the school day, the orphans are joined by 200 youngsters from the surrounding villages, because “the nearest alternative school is at least five kilometers away.” The children are taught by student teachers who, though “untrained and uncertified,” succeed in helping their charges “consistently surpass other schools in national exam results.” Among their classes is an “agricultural class practical” in which they help to grow produce to supplement their meals. While BASCO is succeeding on many levels, it needs significant infrastructural improvements. Several donor organizations have funded the construction of toilets, a classroom block, water tanks, and a kitchen and storeroom, but the children still lack a dining facility. Instead, they “huddle around makeshift tables” out of doors, or “stand or sit on rocks or the bare ground.” A grant from the Trust is being used to pay for materials and labor to construct a “clean dining pavilion” where the children “can eat in dignity and under more hygienic conditions.”

HONDURAS – TEGUCIGALPA. Materials to repair and refurbish a lunchroom in a children’s hospital ward, together with wheelchairs and strollers for use on the ward – a project undertaken by Portia Lino Watkins, spouse of the Assistant Army Attaché, and Cynthia Montero Healy, spouse of a Foreign Service Officer.

“Most public hospitals in developing nations” languish in “unpleasant conditions for the patients and their families.” Hospital Escuela, a public hospital in Tegucigalpa, is no exception, and the so-called Nutrition Ward is especially bleak. It houses children “with a myriad of health problems, including esophageal troubles” that make it hard to swallow, “HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B, spinal problems and much more.” All of the ward’s residents are malnourished, due either to their disease or medical condition or simply to the fact that their families cannot “afford the basic staples.” While the residents are offered three meals a day, their lunchroom “is so run down that it doesn’t provide any enthusiasm for eating.” The paint is peeling; “there are two huge holes in the ceiling”; children are often obliged to stand and eat because there are not enough tables and chairs; and one sink doesn’t work – all circumstances unlikely to boost the appetite of undernourished youngsters. Funds from the Trust are being used to acquire furniture, curtains, paint, and materials for repair, as well as four wheelchairs and four strollers for use by mobility-impaired children and their families.

HONDURAS – SAN ANTONIO. An “integrated approach” to teaching life skills in agriculture, construction, and personal health at an orphanage – a project undertaken by Holly Kirking, Foreign Service Officer, on behalf of the First and Second Tour Generalists and Specialists Organization (FASTGAS).

In consultation with the Executive Director of Tierra Santa Orphanage, who believes that “the teaching of life and survival skills is the most important long-term need” of its residents, members of the FASTGAS organization have designed a series of projects that will help prepare Tierra Santa’s youths for adulthood. Funds from the Trust are supporting two of the projects. The first, a Women’s Health Seminar, focuses on pre-teen and teen-age girls, offering medical exams and a talk on hygiene and sexual health; the seminar is preceded by a campaign in the Embassy community to collect feminine hygiene products for the girls. Second, a Farm Animal Project helps to acquaint students with agriculture and animal husbandry by purchasing chickens for egg production, building a chicken coop, moving a pig pen, and acquiring the tools and clothing needed for agricultural activity.

INDIA – NEW DELHI. University tuition for several impoverished high school graduates from a “squatters’ camp”; stipends for those same students to tutor younger children; and books – a project undertaken by Kurt Garrison, spouse of the Medical Attaché.

The Vivekanand Camp, located in New Delhi’s Diplomatic Enclave, and “locally referred to as a squatter’s camp or illegal community, . . . is home to about 700 poor Indians.” About half of its residents are school-age or younger; the adults are “mostly day laborers, underemployed, unemployed, elderly, or mothers who stay home to take care of their children.” As is so often the case, poverty is the enemy of education, because children’s labor is needed if families are to survive. Thus, “although the number of children who make it through to middle school has increased, the percentages that finish are still as low as 20 percent”; the Camp saw its first high-school graduate only five years ago. Thanks to the combined efforts of volunteers from the expatriate community and Camp residents, who created “a small library and a small study center where Camp students can receive tutoring,” others are now in the pipeline to graduate from high school. With a grant from the Trust, this project leverages these achievements in three ways. First, it provides one year’s public university tuition for four high-school graduates. Second, it pays small stipends to the same four individuals to tutor current Camp students, thus alleviating the economic pressures on the older youths and providing role models for the younger ones. Finally, it underwrites the purchase of 400 new paperback books for the Camp library.

INDIA – NEW DELHI. Equipment and a medicine cabinet for an animal welfare organization that runs a neutering and anti-rabies program – a project undertaken by Katherine McGifford, Office Management Specialist.

At least 30,000 deaths in India each year are attributable to rabies, and the number has been steadily increasing. “Stray dogs are the principal host and transmitter,” which is why the work of organizations like the Animal India Trust (AIT) is both a kindness to animals and a necessary public-health service. “AIT is dedicated to helping improve the

lives of street dogs and promote public awareness of rabies” by neutering and vaccinating “thousands of street dogs in New Delhi each year.” Under a government-sponsored program of “humane mass sterilization and vaccination,” AIT brings in stray dogs, sterilizes and vaccinates them, and returns them to the neighborhoods from which they came “in an effort to create a stable dog population...that is healthy and unable to produce offspring.” While the staff has been dedicated, it has had to “work under the worst of conditions,” administering anesthetic “by inoculation on a table located in an open courtyard” before moving the animals into the small operating room. Funds from the Trust are being used to procure appropriate anesthetic equipment that will allow for “a significantly cleaner and more hygienic sterilization process,” as well as a storage cabinet that will “keep medicine and equipment clean and away from Delhi’s pollution and dust.”

JAMAICA – DUCKENFIELD. A shower, basins, toilets, and a cooker for an impoverished rural school – a project undertaken by Jessica Carrigan-Broda, spouse of the Coast Guard Attaché.

Although they are regulated by the Jamaican government, schools for young children (ages 3 to 6) must be funded by their local communities – “a significant burden for parents” in small rural villages like Duckenfield, where employment is limited, income is low, and “the level of absentee fathers,” who are “often the only wage earners,” is high. Belrock Basic School is succeeding in the face of these odds. It is “full of happy, smiling, and smartly uniformed children and staffed by committed teachers,” but the school’s resources are “quite inadequate for the 81 children” who attend. “Facilities, in particular, are minimal.” Lunch, which for some of the children is “their one hot meal of the day,” “is cooked over an open charcoal fire, using an old wheel as a stove, in a small room adjacent to the school’s three dilapidated toilets. Last year, in partnership with the school’s parents and teachers, the Embassy community launched a refurbishment project that has so far redecorated the interior of the school, landscaped the grounds, created an “outdoor teaching area,” and renovated the playground, among other improvements. A grant from the Trust is being used “to transform the eating and hygiene conditions in the school” by installing a shower, new toilets and basins, and a suitable cooker.

JORDAN – AMMAN. Diagnostic and surgical equipment for a new veterinary hospital being established in conjunction with an animal welfare center – a project undertaken by Lesley Goodrich, spouse of the Regional Security Officer.

“In this area near the Jordan Valley, people rely on their animals” for both economic sustenance and companionship, yet “veterinary care is very hard to come by in Jordan.” The Humane Center for Animal Welfare strives to meet the need in a number of ways. It provides “free or low-cost veterinary care to the local poor citizens”; takes in abandoned and mistreated animals; provides routine care for pets; runs an educational program “to teach school children and adults” – including animal-control officials – “about the humane treatment of animals”; offers “interactive opportunities for children with special needs”; and conducts municipally-sanctioned inspections of local pet shops. All this is accomplished by a “small, meagerly staffed, rustic facility” that is in dire need of “a larger, more modern hospital” with medical facilities, holding areas for adoptable animals, and “an educational arena.” The cornerstone of such a facility has been laid, and funds from the Trust are being used to acquire surgical and diagnostic equipment.

KYRGYZSTAN – BISHTEK. For a women’s crisis shelter, supplies and equipment for an income-generating crafts project; portable video equipment for use in community education regarding women and violence; and a hot water heater – a project undertaken by Ariel Ahart, spouse of the Deputy Chief of Mission.

The capital city of Bishkek has a population of over one million, but only one refuge for women who have been subjected to violence or human trafficking. Crisis Center Sezim comprises “a 10-bed shelter, a 24-hour telephone crisis line, an information hotline for human trafficking, psychological counseling, free legal advice, social and advocacy support, art therapy, and limited but growing opportunities for job training and internships.” The organization also offers “public education seminars on women and violence for young people and community leaders.” Sezim receives some private support for its ongoing activities, but it is attempting to “expand and professionalize” two specific projects, and to “upgrade facilities at the shelter.” The first project focuses on the needs of the Center’s clients, who too often are economically reliant on their abusers. By learning marketable sewing and embroidery skills, these women experience “a form of art therapy” and acquire a potential source of income, both for themselves and, it is hoped, for the work of the Center itself. The second project seeks to educate “young people, policy makers and community leaders” in Kyrgyzstan about “bride kidnapping, human trafficking, domestic violence, and alcohol and drug abuse,” through plays, seminars, and video presentations. A grant from the Trust is being used to purchase craft materials, an iron and ironing board, table and chairs, and a hot plate for meal preparation; acquire a computer, screen and projector for educational presentations in rural towns; and install a hot water heater so that shelter residents can take hot showers.

KYRGYZSTAN – BISHTEK. Materials and labor to complete the rebuilding of an orphanage – a project undertaken by Mary Spatz, Community Liaison Officer, and Elene Stevens, spouse of a Foreign Service Officer.

The children taken in by Nadjeshda Center “are the least fortunate of Kyrgyz society, orphaned, disabled, and...often [improperly] labeled as retarded.” Indeed, some children born with handicaps have been forcibly taken from their parents. Barred from attending the public schools, they have “no one else to care for or educate them.” The Center has a staff of 30, including “teachers, assistants, volunteers, two doctors, a psychiatrist, two trained physical therapists and a nurse,” plus a neurologist who “visits twice monthly.” The physical plant comprises “a school, a kindergarten building, three orphanage buildings and a workshop” where “older disabled people who have graduated” can return to “work in various areas, such as handicrafts, pottery, cooking, horticulture and computer work.” The smallest of the Center’s orphanage buildings “was partially destroyed by fire” several years ago, and to date it has been only partially rebuilt with the assistance of personnel from nearby Manas Coalition Airbase. Funds from the Trust are being used to cover the costs of labor and materials needed to finish the rebuilding project.

LITHUANIA – ALYTUS. Travel, food, museum admissions, and entertainment included in a day trip to the capital city for a group of youngsters from a children’s home – a project undertaken by Demian LaMadrid, Information Systems Officer.

Unfortunately for children everywhere, parents can be lost not only through death but through “chronic alcoholism, crimes, or parental neglect.” “Most of the children” at Alytus Children’s Home in Lithuania – “the largest home for children between the ages of 4 and 18” – “have been taken away from their parents” for one or more of these reasons. The children badly need not only basic care but opportunities for friendship, joy, and normalcy. Together with Embassy employees who “visit and interact with the children on a regular basis,” a local charity known as “A Path of Hope” has been instrumental in helping to provide such opportunities, including an outing for 50 of the children that was funded by the Trust two years ago. This year, renewed support from the Trust has enabled another 50 children to participate in “a day-long trip of cultural learning” to the capital city of Vilnius, including a morning museum visit, lunch at McDonald’s, an afternoon of bowling and an ice cream farewell party, all in the company of Embassy volunteers.

MEXICO – GUADALAJARA. Materials and labor to repair and upgrade a shelter for single mothers – a project undertaken by Lynn W. Roche, Public Affairs Officer, and Carmen Malacara, Budget Analyst, Drug Enforcement Administration.

The Medical Social Institute Shelter for Single Mothers (originally known as the “Shelter for Sinners”) has been operated for over a century by the Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Refuge in Zapopan, Jalisco, “one of the five municipalities that make up Guadalajara.” It “provides lodging, health care, and training for single mothers who do not want to give up their babies,” while an associated medical clinic offers a range of “general medical services for the community.” The Shelter is much-needed because “Mexico has a high rate of pregnancy among teenagers and unwed mothers,” while the country’s “strong Catholic tradition” means that many of these “young mothers do not want to terminate the pregnancy or give up their children for adoption.” Eight individual bedrooms house new mothers, while a larger room with 30 beds accommodates those with older children. A shop houses a sewing program where the women create masks, caps, gowns, and other items of clothing for use in the clinic and for the support of the Shelter through sale to other hospitals. While Embassy employees and other “interested community groups” help with food, gifts, training, and other services, “it is difficult for the Sisters to find the resources for the basic repairs and renovations that the building needs.” A grant from the Trust is being used to help repair and replace doors and windows, plumbing, fixtures, and roof; upgrade the electrical service; and build a perimeter fence.

MEXICO – MONTERREY. Computers, printers, and internet access for a life-skills program targeted at young adults who have grown up in orphanages – a project undertaken by Patricia Hester, Community Liaison Officer.

At the age of 15, Mexican children who live in Casa Hogars, or orphanages, become ineligible for free education and often “move to the streets or back into an unstable and abusive family setting.” Many of these 15 year-olds are “ill-equipped to handle daily decision-making” and are limited by educational deficits “in the areas of mathematics, computers and science.” Back2Back Mexico is an organization that seeks to help orphans aged 15 and over by creating opportunities to live in family and community settings and to “receive a high-school equivalent education.” In 2005, a grant from the

Trust enabled the organization to acquire computers and software for a tutoring and enrichment program. This year, Back2Back Mexico is building two new homes, “opening up space for an additional 14 children”; the U.S. Consulate community, coordinated by Ms. Hester, is assisting with the construction. Funds from the Trust are being used to purchase the hardware, software, and internet access needed to expand the enrichment program to these new homes.

MEXICO – TIJUANA. Textbooks, school uniforms, health-care supplies, and a freezer for a children’s shelter – a project undertaken by May Baptista, Elisa Greene, Gene Harrel, Ari Nathan, Dexter Payne, and William Schmitt, Foreign Service Officers, together with Jason Craig, General Services Officer.

The Nueva Esperanza Hogar de Ninos is a small two-room shelter “for young children whose parents are unable or unwilling to care for them.” The need is great, because the “explosive growth” experienced by Tijuana in recent years has exacted real “human costs.” “Families fall apart, and immigration, prostitution, or narco-trafficking drag parents down and out of their children’s lives.” And the same growth “has far outstripped the city’s ability to provide sanitation and drinking water, let alone social services for children whose parents have left them behind, in either body or mind.” While Nueva Esperanza hopes that its children “can eventually return to their families,” it strives meanwhile “to provide a safe and educational environment.” It receives ongoing support from a church in California sufficient to modestly compensate its staff members and pay for water and electricity. Meanwhile, the Consular staff members listed above and their family members have become increasingly involved in the shelter’s activities. In 2005, a grant from the Trust paid for kitchen equipment, medical and dental supplies, and textbooks. This year, Trust funds are being used to “build a library of school textbooks and a wardrobe of ‘hand-me-down’ uniforms,” to “fund an additional round of vaccines, dental materials, ... eyeglasses, and orthopedic equipment,” and to “purchase a commercial-quality freezer” that allows for economical shopping.

PERU – LIMA. Materials and equipment to create a ballet studio for girls with disabilities – a project undertaken by Irina Wunder, spouse of the Public Affairs Officer.

“People with disabilities are marginalized” in Peruvian society, so it is especially important that young people with disabilities be given opportunities “to engage in an activity ... that helps them express themselves and derive a sense of achievement, acceptance and self-confidence.” Under the auspices of Centro Ann Sullivan del Peru (CASP), an NGO dedicated to providing “educational and economic opportunities to children with disabilities in Peru,” Ms. Wunder has initiated one such opportunity by offering a ballet/dance program for young girls. Herself a classically trained dancer, she seeks to help her students “develop coordination and awareness of their physical abilities,” and to instill the confidence that follows from such achievements. At present, the class takes place “in an unoccupied, threadbare classroom without furnishings.” It needs mirrors, exercise bars, “a portable dance floor,” and suitable “pictures and photographs.” The students additionally “require supplies such as dance wear, music recordings, a music sound system and books about dance in Spanish.” Unfortunately, “while CASP has enthusiastically embraced the dance program, the organization has no

funds available to support this initiative.” A grant from the Trust is being used to purchase the specified items, and the young dancers’ “enthusiastic” parents “will repair, prepare, and equip the room.”

ROMANIA – BUCHAREST. Dental care and computers to enable several young women leaving state-run orphanages to launch independent lives – a project undertaken by Timothy Nelson, Foreign Service Officer.

“By the time of the 1989 coup against Ceaucescu, there were almost 100,000 children surviving in deplorable conditions in state-run orphanages.” Even now, “there remain about 32,000 in orphanages that have changed very little apart from the assistance provided by NGOs,” and the situation will likely worsen as a result of the well-intended ban on international adoptions enacted last year. As they approach adulthood, these life-long residents of state institutions have little experience, few skills, and no resources. Lumina Pe Strada (Street Light), is a non-profit that “aims to assist young adults who have grown up as orphaned children transition out of state institutions and become successfully integrated into Romanian society.” It “provides housing, food, utilities, and limited necessities” for five girls who in turn have committed to “finding jobs or pursuing education to become self-sufficient.” When they have succeeded in doing so, “funds will be freed up to set up other apartments, starting with one planned for boys.” As part of the effort, this project will “provide computers and computer training” to help the girls with their education and find better jobs, and will also help two of them defray the costs of much-needed dental work, which is not included in state medical coverage. Funds from the Trust are being used to pay for the dental work and for some of the computer costs.

RUSSIA – KLENOVSKOYE. Travel, food and admissions charges for a one-day outing for a group of children from a children’s home – a project undertaken by Jana Beard, Community Liaison Officer, and John Stepanchuk, Consul General.

The Klenovskoye Children’s Shelter is home to 30 children, some of them “orphaned at birth,” many “taken from parents who are alcoholics, convicts, abusive or neglectful,” and all in need of “opportunities for normal emotional growth.” Over the last few years the Consular community has established an ongoing relationship with the Shelter, visiting with the children and helping to enhance the resources available to the Shelter. While “the basic needs of the children are being met,” however, the organization lacks “funding for outings and special activities that can help provide experiences, growth and informal educational opportunities similar to those children have growing up in their own families.” With funds from the Trust, Consulate staff members are arranging and participating in a day-long outing for the Shelter’s children, “including museums, lunch at a restaurant and an afternoon at a water park.”

SOUTH AFRICA – DURBAN. Furnishings; a computer, printer, television and DVD player; and books for a primary school library – a project undertaken by Amy Patel, Foreign Service Officer, and Wayne Clayton, Surveillance Detection Coordinator at the U.S. Consulate General.

The 50 year-old St. Augustine’s Primary School is a highly regarded institution that “grew substantially” after the demise of apartheid in 1994. When “black South Africans

were allowed to move freely, parents from black townships outside of Durban began sending their children” to the school because of its “excellent reputation.” At present, nearly 700 students occupy a building “originally designed for a maximum capacity of 300-400 students.” Because space is at a premium, “the school library has been converted into a classroom and the books in the library moved to an annex (a renovated wash room) without appropriate furniture or materials.” Not surprisingly, “the library is rarely used,” and the principal “cannot remember the last time they were able to purchase new books.” And because the South African government pays only for teachers and textbooks, the school is responsible for its own infrastructure and administrative costs. A grant from the Trust is being used to “equip the library with child-friendly furniture, a computer with printer, a television with DVD player for educational videos, and new children’s books.”

SOUTH AFRICA – JOHANNESBURG. Supplies and labor to paint and repair a building that provides a home for street children, a soup kitchen, and an income-generating skills center – a project undertaken by Linda Lockwood, Community Liaison Officer, as chair of Hearts and Hands, the Embassy volunteer organization.

“Over the past years the number of children living and working on the streets of Johannesburg has been increasing,” owing to “poverty, unemployment, abuse, and of course the HIV/AIDS pandemic.” That is why Twilight Children, once “a short-term home for boys,” has transformed itself into a living center “that provides a host of solutions in an attempt to ensure that the child enters a rehabilitation program.” Eighty boys now live at Twilight Children, and plans are being made to provide housing for girls. In addition, the organization now operates a soup kitchen that “feeds over 100 women, men and children twice daily.” Street children may also come to eat and “make use of the showers provided for them.” Finally, a Skills Center houses a pottery project that produces original designs, providing “a much-needed outlet for the boys to express themselves,” and “an income-generating beading project for area women was also recently introduced.” All of this activity, however, occurs in a building that is “in sad shape.” U.S. Marines posted nearby have undertaken a once-a-month painting project, the boys are helping to paint a mural in the dining area, and funds have been raised to repair interior water damage, but the exterior is still in disrepair. A grant from the Trust is being used to repair and paint the outside of the building.”

TAJIKISTAN – DUSHANBE. Textbooks, computers, printer, software, and training for a vocational education program for disabled individuals – a project undertaken by Jon Larsen, Public Affairs Officer.

“The system of support for people with disabilities” in Tajikistan “deteriorated significantly after the collapse of the Soviet Union and civil war in the country.” As a result, “many disabled persons” were left “unemployed and lacking access to information.” Support for Disabled Community in Tajikistan is a project that seeks to remedy these deficiencies by (among other measures) “providing books for academic and personal learning” and supplying “computers and support for vocational training.” The first objective is being pursued in collaboration with the local School for the Deaf. The School is “the only such specialized school” accredited in the country, and “the need for books is great.” Funds from the Trust are being used to buy new “textbooks and teaching

material books,” both for teachers and for general library use, and to acquire “computer software designed for deaf students” to gain internet access and learn International Sign Language. The second objective is being pursued by Mehrubon, an NGO that focuses on “unemployment among people with disabilities, and thus their inability to provide for themselves and their families.” Support from the Trust will help Mehrubon to acquire computers and software for use in computer skills training for disabled people.

THE GAMBIA – SINCHU ALHAGI VILLAGE. Materials and labor to repair and renovate the windows and roof of a home for children with learning difficulties – a project undertaken by Joyce Ohikhuare, Community Liaison Officer.

Sinchu Alhagi village is the site of The Gambia Home for Children with Learning Difficulties. The children, who struggle with “severe learning disabilities,” live on the second floor of the building, while their classrooms are located on the ground floor. When the rainy season arrives, “the children get displaced because the leaking roof and windows cause flooding” on both levels. Funds from the Trust are being used to “build an extension frame around the perimeter surrounding the windows to shelter them from the rain,” repair and seal the roof, and repaint areas that have suffered water damage.

UKRAINE – KYIV. Books published for native English-speakers, for an English-language magnet school library – a projected undertaken by Velida Kent, spouse of a Foreign Service Officer.

“Like all state schools in Ukraine,” School No. 135 “has been woefully underfunded since Ukrainian independence,” although as “a state-run magnet primary school” it is “one of a handful city-wide which teaches English from grade one.” “The burden of maintaining the classrooms” (including “summer refurbishment”) and “buying basic classroom supplies ... falls entirely on the parents.” The school library has “no English-language reading books,” so that the children learn English only from “stilted English-language textbooks” written for non-native speakers “in the artificial textbook style which afflicts language students of all ages and in all cultures.” In order to “bolster the quality of the English language instruction/resources of the school,” a grant from the Trust is being used to purchase books “written for native English language children” that are appropriate for second- through sixth-graders. Ten copies of each book will be added to the library “so that groups of students can benefit from parallel supplementary text assignments.”

UNITED STATES – WASHINGTON, D.C. Two grants to the Foreign Service Youth Foundation: the first for start-up costs and a secure website for a revamped and redesigned newsletter for Foreign Service teens – a project undertaken by Melanie Newhouse, Executive Director of the Foundation; the second for the production and promotion of a DVD designed to assist Foreign Service teens with re-entry into American culture – a project undertaken by Bryan Eckerson, son of a Foreign Service Officer.

Life in a Foreign Service family presents special challenges, especially for teens. They often feel socially isolated abroad and bewildered by American culture when they return home. Both of these grants deal with these difficulties.

The first grant relates to a newsletter published for many years by the Foreign Service Youth Foundation – a publication in need of an update. Recently, the Foundation “launched a reformatted newsletter ... and expanded the program internationally.” The new Wings of AWAL Teen Newsletter is “a quarterly publication written and illustrated by and for Foreign Service high schoolers in the Washington, D.C. area and around the world.” It is produced in Washington D.C., where local teens meet quarterly “at a FS family home for a day of directed writing ... and discussing issues of relevance to FS teens.” “Submissions are solicited from around the world,” and “all Foreign Service high schoolers are invited to write articles.” The newsletter is distributed both electronically and through hard copy. Funds from the Trust are being used to cover the costs of “start-up materials” and “creation of a password-protected website so that the newsletter can be securely viewed.”

The second grant focuses on the particular problems of re-entry into American culture. Foreign Service teens returning home “walk in a cultural and social fog, face issues of identity and rootlessness,” and “wonder if they belong anywhere.” Funds from the Trust are being used to help “create a professional, informative documentary DVD by and for Foreign Service teens and their families to help prepare them for re-entry.”

VENEZUELA – CARACAS. Equipment for a vocational education school for young adults with special needs; and furnishings, fixtures, kitchen equipment to refurbish an orphanage – projects undertaken by Sarina Penn, spouse of the Public Affairs and Information Officer, on behalf of 13 members of Helping Hands, the Embassy volunteer organization.

This “core group of volunteers, both American and Foreign Service Nationals, from the U.S. embassy community...has successfully provided assistance” to a number of NGOs in the Caracas metropolitan area. The group recently began to work with two additional organizations. The first organization, Taller de Educacion Laboral Dora Burgueno, “a public vocational workshop for young adults with special needs, teaches its students “to bind and restore damaged books, stamp t-shirts and caps, and create stationery,” and also offers basic education in reading, writing, and math. Equipped with such “tools and skills for a specific trade,” these young adults are prepared to “go out looking for jobs in the regular economy.” The workshop receives government support sufficient to “pay some of the teachers, but nothing for equipment or supplies.” A grant from the Trust is being used to acquire “a photocopy machine and a specific blade” needed for the industrial cutting machine used in bookbinding. The second organization, Hogar Belen/Jesus Nino Orphanage, is a struggling organization “funded by donations only.” The building “doesn’t have any proper lighting” and lacks needed hot water heaters, furniture, and kitchen equipment. Trust funds are being used to re-wire portions of the electrical service, install lighting fixtures, and acquire hot water heaters, shelves and dressers, and pots, pans, a blender, and mixing bowls.

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