On February 28, 2015, Amy Scolari, Mary Jane Mikuriya and Reianna Peets staffed an informational Servas table at the 2nd Annual Women's Travel Fest held at the Design Center of San Francisco. There were about 350 people at the conference, almost entirely women. Travelers, travel organizers and travel writers of all ages were networking as they learned tips especially for solo women travelers. At one point in the announcements, the organizer of the event introduced Servas as an alternative way to travel and encouraged the crowd to visit the Servas table in the gallery above. The all day program had presentations about women's travel safety, a woman skiing alone across Antarctica, vendors offering all women trips to Africa Safaris, Europe and Asia. It was good there were three staffing the Servas table because during the breaks, there was a big rush of women wanting to learn about Servas, taking Servas Business cards and Servas Brochures. The flyer of Volunteers for Peace, a Servas Partner organization offering work camps was also of great interest to many. The loaner Servas BOX available just for such Servas informational tables was well used as you can see from the photo. It includes our new brochures and re-designed business cards, which complement our new logo.

Join us at the US Servas National Conference on the campus of the University of Colorado in Boulder June 12-14th, 2015. Visit with old and new Servas friends, hear interesting speakers, and have a wonderful time. Registration is now available.

The link to register is http://confreg.colorado.edu/USServas2015. The Keynote speaker is Barry Karlin, Phd, who has been a public health official in several countries. Presentations include USAM Shahid, Saudi NGO Coordinator and a refresher course for interviewers.
Another great Servas Partnership

Recently Hassan Sheba Abdulkadir, the National Coordinator of AFS Kenya, visited the Servas Office in Arcata. He is pictured here with members of our office staff. Many Servas members attended a potluck later that day with young exchange students, their host families and AFS volunteers. AFS began the same year as Servas and has basically the same mission, which it carries out through high school exchanges. L-R (Andrew Cook, Tracy Jordan French, Hassan, Jacob Lewis and Joanne McGarry).

Servas, an Open Door to Travel the Lonely Planet... for Free! Huffington Post blog--Eric Trules USC theater prof, traveler, blogger, former modern dancer, doc filmmaker ("The Poet & the Con"), director, spoken word artist, solo performer, professional clown--
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/trules/servas-an-open-door-to-travel_b_6713902.htm

Are you in the current US Servas host list? Log in at our website www.usservas.org with the email you used when you signed up and your password. If you cannot access the host list or you aren’t there, it means you did not renew. You can fix that by renewing online or calling the office at 707-825-1714.

Leave a Legacy
Would you like to discuss leaving a bequest to Servas in your will or trust? Contact Enid Pollack at bequests@usservas.org

Thank You to Retiring Interviewers
Carl Chatfield and Susan Anderson of Arcata, CA; Judy Smallwood of Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Susan Fallat of Seattle; Michael & Brigitte Seligman of Santa Barbara; Gael Stahl of Old Hickory, TN; Phil & Judy Temko of Santa Rosa, CA

Welcome New Interviewers
Joanne Ferguson Cavanagh of Papillion, NE; Hank Hanau of NYC, NY; Marguerite Hills of Portland, OR; Nancy Brashears of Los Angeles
In memory of Servas Interviewers

Edith Sommer of Palo Alto, California died February 4, 2015 after a brief illness. Edith was many things to many people – artist, teacher of gold-smithing, traveler, reader, poet, theater and ballet lover, host of the French conversational weekly meetings in her home, founder of the Gallery House in Palo Alto - an artist coop still thriving after more than 50 years, member of the wearable art group, active Servas and Friendship Force member.

She attended Servas International General Assemblies beginning with the 1995 SI General Assembly in Melbourne, Australia and has the 8 GA group photos of each GA to show for it. She was a volunteer GA minute taker and presenter of the well-attended Interviewer Training GA workshops. Nationally, she was a Servas host and traveler, local and distant interviewer, one of the 5 member organizing team for the very successful San Francisco national US Servas 50th Anniversary Celebration where over 225 attended from 9 countries. She offered annual Servas Gatherings in her home where 20-40 attended. Edith always had an inspirational educational speaker for here event. While visiting in Seattle, Washington one year, she hosted a local Servas potluck and discussed how to activate Servas locally and… due to the local interest offered interviewer training the next day. Her local Seattle engagement resulted in the increased number of Seattle Servas members and their offer to host next national Servas Conference in their now active Seattle area. Last year Edith organized and hosted a very well attended successful joint potluck event of Friendship Force and Servas. Her creativity, generosity, friendship and love of Servas will be missed.

Rachel Bell of Los Altos, California died February 20, 2015. She was a music and reading teacher, member of the Unitarian Universalist choir, the director of the UU youth choir, an active UU social justice volunteer, and the membership chair for the Palo Alto-Stanford Branch of the NAACP. Edith Sommer recruited her dear neighbors Elton and Rachel Bell to be Servas hosts. Rachel became a long time US Servas interviewer. Her husband Elton Bell became a long time member of the US Servas Investment Committee. Elton reports his wife Rachel Bell and he have been together since their first date in 1947 and had “65 years of a wonderful marriage and wedded bliss.” Rachel’s shy smile, gentle ways, kindness and dedication to social justice will be missed.

Marvin Usdin of Brooklyn, NY, beloved husband of Martha for 63 years; loving father and grandfather. Marvin passed away peacefully just after his 88th birthday having lived a full life devoted to his dear Martha, his legal practice, Jewish principles, opera, travel, bridge, great food and a particular joy in engaging those around him in his many opinions and philosophies. Marvin, known for his impressive generosity was the US Servas Area Coordinator for many years. You will be missed, Marvin!

Jane Roberts, long-time Servas host, traveler, interviewer and advocate passed away peacefully on March 9, 2015 at the age of 95. Passion and commitment to Servas and its mission were clear. To know her was genuinely to love and respect her.

Her daughter Lisa, also a Servas member, described Jane best on the day she died: “Grace, strength, love, wisdom, dignity, reality, wit, curiosity, sophistication, charm, resolve…all of those with such a huge zest for life and a shiny golden spirit.” Jane had decided her time had come: “She was ready, she was complete, she had a wonderfully full life and had accomplished everything she wanted t. She collected people her entire life that never left. She had fabulous new friends she just met in the last couple years who were drawn to her force field even at her advanced age…and she relished and nurtured all of these relationships.”

Servas was an important part of her life, and is mentioned in her obituary as one of her enduring passions. She loved the organization, she loved meeting people through her travels and as a host and when, as she aged, she traveled and hosted less frequently, she continued to be an enthusiastic interviewer, often hooking people up so that we too became friends. Her last Servas trip was in 2010, with her daughter Hunter, to Barcelona. Here is how she, now past 90, described her upcoming trip: “As a Servas traveler and interviewer since 1980, I have experienced the wonders of getting to know people under normal living conditions and looking at the world from a perspective different from the familiar. This trip to Spain is the result of years of the wish shared with my daughter Hunter – to go to Barcelona and the homeland of Salvador Dali. For 30 years I have been heavily involved with the Dali Museum here in St. Pete. My only prior trip to Spain was when Franco was the ruler; A different time in many ways. How great that there is Servas!” Many people around the world will miss Jane Roberts. We are all better for having had her in our lives.
Travel Reports

We had great fun visiting Mario Burlando and wife Rosetta Corbetta in Spinea Italy, near Venice. I met Mario 5 years ago when an SI volunteer working group convened for several days at his house, but I didn't know him well.

We spent our days sightseeing Venice, and mornings and evenings with Mario and Rosetta. They fed us royally and I cooked them a wienerschnitzel dinner. We talked and talked and talked about everything despite Rosetta's very limited English and our virtually non-existent Italian, and the visit was lengthened from 2 nights to 4. On the last night, they invited us to a local radicchio festival, where we ate hearty, learned about the specialized practices of radicchio farming and processing, and generally imbibed the busy, festive atmosphere. There was a live band with hundreds of people dancing, all to popular Italian tunes. Rock and roll hasn't penetrated even the older generation in Italy. Crooning seems to be the dominant form. We're looking forward to hosting Rosetta at our house in the future, even though Mario staunchly refuses to visit the US. We also had dinner with Florence host Elisabetta Mari. Susan and she had their interests as writers in common, and it was a lively conversation. Elis has an interesting life story. Schedule conflicts precluded a home stay with her, but it was a great, if short, interaction.

A few weeks ago, while still residing temporarily in Switzerland, we also had a lively dinner with Christoph Kuhn, the NS of Servas there. We enjoyed another informative and lively discussion over a meal of horsemeat (first time), which is not too widely eaten in Europe, but generally available and socially acceptable.

From John Gunther and Susan Deer Cloud

I returned from four weeks in Vietnam last week and have one Servas story in particular to share that reminds me why I (and we) have joined this organization: We were in Danang for exactly one night; Christmas Day. As it happened, this was the first place we visited with Servas members -- an Italian husband and Vietnamese wife. I was surprised when they answered my email inquiry by inviting me to their house for Christmas dinner. The couple came by the hotel to pick me up. There was another visitor -- a Korean young man -- in the car also. In the car I learned that the couple have established a home for abandoned children, and that was where we would go! What an amazing prospect!

The house was wonderfully cheery, with a live-in housemother and a music teacher joining the 10 kids (4-17) plus we two visitors, the couple's two children and another Italian volunteer who had come over to help out for 9 months. Our dinner was fine if not lavish -- a mix of simple VN and Italian finger food -- and for about 17 people equaled the spread on almost every lunch and dinner table of my travelling party of 6, but the food was not a question: it was the most rewarding and marvelous meal of the entire trip. I didn't ask the history of the kids but was told generally that their parents for lack of money, some sold to neighbors, some found selling lottery tickets on the street had given some up. They looked so pretty that night!

There was a lovely Christmas tree and each kid had exactly one gift waiting for him or her. They sleep in two very pleasant rooms in bunk beds; their shoes are lined up on racks at the foot of each bed. After eating I sang an American song for them (my college fight song) and they sang for us, and the Italian volunteer (very easily) and the Korean guy (reluctantly) were persuaded to sing too. Then I returned to the hotel. Not one word was said to me of making a contribution, although I wish I could. This is the type of experience you only get thru Servas, as far as I know. My other Servas day hosts (two in Hanoi, one in Ho Chi Minh City) were very eager young college students anxious to learn more about the world and to practice their English. What a pleasure! From Hayden Wetzel
Should Your Next Servas Potluck be Vegan?

There are many travelers and members who might be vegetarian or vegan. If you prepare food that is vegan, then the vegetarians can also eat. Veganism is a way of being that does not hurt any animals or use them for entertainment, food, science, clothing, etc. There are many delicious dishes with no animal products.

General Assembly

The bi-annual Servas International General Assembly will be “Down Under” in New Zealand this October (spring in NZ). The venue, Totara Springs [http://www.totarasprings.org.nz/] is famous for being the home of Hobbiton – the little village made for the film Lord of the Rings trilogy. Questions regarding the GA 2015 can be emailed to SIGA2015info@servas.org

Servas International Seeking Archivist candidates

The Hoover Institution Library and Archives maintains and houses the Servas Archives. Servas retains copyright and full access to all the items in the archives. The Hoover Institution Library and Archives, located in Palo Alto, California, on the campus of Stanford University is one of the world’s most reputable archives with modern provisions for document safety and security. Our treasured archives will continue to be taken well care of, and we will be able to add to it over the next decades.

Responsibilities of the Archivist:

• Maintain the archives on line,
• Store and make accessible minutes from SI General Assemblies,
• Store and make accessible other documents of historical importance to Servas,
• Coordinate with National Groups in the preservation and maintenance of historical records relating to national activities and interface with Servas International.

This is an elected position. Voting will take place this October at the SI General Assembly in New Zealand. The term of office for the Archivist ends no later than three months after the following General Assembly. Interested persons may contact Mary Jane Mikuriya, US Servas National Secretary for Peace & Justice via email: Mikuriya@aol.com

New Fees for Servas Travelers

For the first time in many years, US Servas International Traveler fees have increased, but the increase is offset by the elimination of host list deposits! If you have a host list deposit on file, you may request a refund if you choose. You may also apply it to your next Letter of Introduction or you can make a contribution with it and become a Friend of US Servas. If you do not choose which option your prefer within a month of the expiration of your current LOI, we will assume you wish to contribute it.

The only countries that continue to have printed host lists are Switzerland, Japan and Ireland. We will continue to request a $5 postage and handling fee for travelers who request these lists.

We have a newly discounted Traveler fee for new members between the age of 18 – 30; only $49 for your first Letter of Introduction.

All International Travelers who renew within one month of their LOI expiration date receive a $10 discount. If you have questions about the new fee schedule, feel free to contact the office.
US Servas Open Doors

US Servas Election

It is now time to cast your ballot for the US SERVAS Board of Directors. There are currently three open board positions. Candidates are Amy Scolari from Arcata, CA, Xande Zublin-Meyer, from Portland, OR and Phyllis Chinn from Arcata, CA. Their bios and candidate statements are available on the ballot. All current hosts and travelers are eligible to vote. You may vote online or you may request a ballot by calling the office by April 4. Even though only three candidates are on the ballot this year, your vote is important. Check the box next to the candidate’s name for a “yes” vote, leave it blank for a “no” vote, and send the ballot back to the National Office in California in the return envelope no later than Tuesday, April 14, 2015, also the deadline for resolutions to be presented at the national meeting. The Nominations Committee thanks you for participating in the governance of our nonprofit organization! In Peace, The Nominations Committee, Robert Allekotte, Xande Zublin-Meyer and Ernie Baragar

Servas Youth

Mogerman SYLE Scholarships

Are you between 18 and 30-something? Would you like to improve your foreign language skills outside of a classroom?? Would you like to have a meaningful cultural exchange?? Do you have a month or more to commit to the unique learning experience that can only be found in travel?? The SYLE program is free with Servas membership (travel expenses, of course, are the responsibility of the participant) and is seeking participants. SYLE (Servas Youth Language Experience) is a program designed for young Servas members to learn a language through a Servas cultural exchange during one month in a foreign country. Through SYLE we also hope to strengthen the integration of national local groups, as well as to promote the participation of young people in Servas.

But wait! There’s more! US Servas is proud to present the Dennis Mogerman Youth Scholarship fund!!! Dennis Mogerman, long time Servas member and traveler, is now generously offering for Servas Youth the financial assistance you may need to make your dreams a reality. These $500 scholarships are currently available for individuals who are looking to participate in a SYLE and are awarded based on demonstrated financial need and a commitment to the promotion of Servas among youth. For more information on SYLE and Servas Youth, see www.servasyouth.org

To apply for SYLE and the Dennis Mogerman Scholarship look at our Blog and contact the US Servas office at

Host a SYLE

Michele Siragusa of Italy has been approved to participate in SYLE in the USA and now we need your help to organize his trip for this summer. The dates are July 7 to August 13 (more or less). If anyone would like to host him I’d like to find several hosts in one region. Hosts should expect a typical Servas visit, but with a bit more of a time commitment (2 nights to maximum 1 week). I prefer hosts who are also “youth” as an aim of SYLE is to engage young people. If you are interested, please reply! If your community would like to volunteer for this exciting opportunity, contact servasheather@gmail.com

Heather Mason, Servas International Youth Team
Rolling for Peace

The Los Angeles area Servas group had a gathering on Saturday afternoon March 14th at the Santa Monica home of long-time host Sara Meric. It turned out to be one of the warmest mid-March days in recent history and beach-bound traffic made it especially difficult for everyone to get there. After a belated start we were treated to a wide array of delicious potluck dishes from kale salad to moussaka, Chinese vegetables and various pastas. After the main dishes, we grabbed some yummy cookies, closed the shutters and listened to the amazing and inspirational story of Gabriel Cordell's second journey. He lost the use of his legs at age 22 and years later came to realize that he found true happiness by inspiring others. His first epic journey was a 99-day roll across America in 2013.

In his second journey, Gabe, a Palestinian-American, wanted to roll across Israel to promote tolerance and compassion. He and his support team, Derek Gibbs and Chris Yanke (who did the slide show) started this journey on Sept 21st 2014 -- The International Day of Peace.

Chris learned about Servas from a friend and it seemed the perfect match for meeting families during their stay. They were interviewed by Israeli-born US Interviewer, Hannah Rosenthal, who helped solidify their plans. Gabe and his team stayed with several host accounting for about half their time in Israel. They connected so well with one host they had to return to say their good-byes at the end of their trip. Many at the local gathering commented they were inspired and felt it was one of the better talks. If you'd like to find out more about Gabe and his team have a look at their web site and watch the one-minute video on the home page. http://www.rollwithme.org/

What’s That Survey All About? US Servas is working with a marketing research class at Humboldt State University to improve our outreach efforts. This partnership is also a way to directly engage with college-age students who are unfamiliar with our organization and our mission. The class of 20 students designed and sent a survey with the purpose of learning what motivates members to join our organization. Both our Administrator and a local Board member had an opportunity to review the survey prior to the launch. We sent it to all travelers and hosts within the past three years. Be assured that no identifying information will be collected, distributed, or analyzed.

We had a “respectable” response rate for an online survey with no incentives. Over 450 members participated and approximately 20 contacted us with complaints about the intrusive nature of some of the questions. Lessons learned by the professor and students already: “In the future, we will have a more detailed letter at the beginning of a study explaining the lifestyle questions, which come from a national lifestyle audience segmentation tool. Servas members apparently ask critical questions about questions, which we have not seen much in prior studies that have used lifestyle as a lens.” Designing a survey project always involves many decisions, including the one to use lifestyle questions. In our case, we asked the basic questions “What types of people are Servas members on a deeper level”?; “How can we attract more and different members”?. Many market research studies ask relatively superficial questions without defining a strategy for the organization. Having a clear understanding of the lifestyles of Servas members means Servas can send more compelling messages about the benefits of the organization to current and future members and see who is currently missing. Often, you hear relatively useless advice from well-meaning people to "just recruit more young people"! Well, it turns out there are many different kinds of "young" people (and "old" people, for that matter) and a successful marketing strategy defines which one. The instructor explained to me “…we DO want to strike a nerve to get at deeper motivation, etc. So, I would be concerned if there weren't some negative messages!” There will be a report released on the findings of the survey at the end of the project. Please contact the office if you are interested in receiving a copy of that report.
United States Servas

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US Servas is Online

Follow us on Twitter
twitter.com/USServas

Send us your latest travel and hosting stories
info@usservas.org

Visit our Website
www.usservas.org

Our new website is coming soon!
It will have a new look and will be easier to navigate.

To be launched this spring!