

Tokyo Conference 2007



US SWY Alumni Association Activities of the Year 2006 – 2007

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This report of the activities of the United States Ship for World Youth Alumni Association contains two sections. The first section describes some of the activities that have been accomplished over the past 12 months. The second section describes some of the upcoming events and programs in the coming 2007 year.

Section I: Accomplishments of the US SWY-AA from this Past Year:

This year has been about creating more substantive roles for alumni to be involved in as well as creating more interactive opportunities for alumni to get to know each other across batches. What follows are some of the highlights of this initiative:

(*) Our fellowship coordinator Mirentxu Arrivillaga along with treasurer Mazal Gavriellov from SWY 17 have led an effort to redesign our website [www.swyusa.com] which is the most public and visible side of our organization. They contracted an outside developer to help with the design of the website since we were having a difficult time finding web design expertise among our alumni. This proved to be a great decision. A sample screenshot of the website is below:



(*) We are proud to have an US ex-PY named John Rucynski participate as an ex-PY advisor to the SWY 19 sailing. A committee of six U.S. ex-PYs selected his application after a competitive selection process in May 2006. He currently teaches English in Kansai and has been an advisor on a previous SWY sailing. We are especially confident that he has been representing our membership well and has been bridging the cultural similarities and differences among PYs on board the Nippon Maru.

(*) Mirna Torres SWY 14 facilitated the annual election process of the US SWY-AA officer positions in May 2006. The five 2005-2006 officers were elected to a second year starting in June 2006 by the membership of U.S. SWY-AA. Mirentxu Arrivillaga SWY 17 serves as the Fellowship Coordinator. Mazal Gavriellov SWY 17 serves as the Secretary. Tommy Iverson SWY 17 serves as Treasurer. Sean Deblieck SWY 11 serves as Vice-President. Paul Foppe SWY 13 serves as the President.

(*) In July, Paul Foppe SWY 13 met with the Japanese Consulate in Honolulu, Hawai'i, to talk about the efforts of the U.S. SWY-AA and how the organization can help the consulate in planning activities for fundraising and possibly future sailings to Hawai'i. They were quite excited about the possibility for our organizations working together. One alum Carolina Lam SWY 16 held a previous job in Hawai'i where she helped to plan the SWY 13 port of call in Honolulu. We continue to explore how we can improve Hawai'i as a port of call.

(*) In August, Paul Foppe facilitated the departure ceremony for incoming JET teachers on behalf of the Japanese Consulate of Chicago.

(*) In December 2006, the fourth edition of the US SWY-AA newsletter called "Making Waves" was published. In April 2005, a third edition of the newsletter was published. Both newsletters are attached to this report.

(*) This past December, we held a gift exchange or a secret friend among U.S. PYs and non-U.S. PYs living in America. 25 people participated. They were matched with other PYs who they did not know in an effort to

encourage friendship among PYs from different batches. We look to repeat this next year as a way to build connections among PYs from different batches. We had PYs from SWY 5 to SWY 17 who participated. In an evaluation survey sent afterwards, over 90% of the participants said they would participate in the project next year if it is repeated.

(*) US SWY-AA continues to welcome visitors on vacation, study, and residency to the U.S. As far as we know, there are at least 20 non-U.S. PYs living, working, studying, or vacation currently from Hawai'i to New York.

(*) Treasurer Tommy Iverson SWY 17 is completing the application process to legally incorporate the U.S. SWY-AA as a tax-exempt non-profit. This should help the U.S. with receiving donations for future delegations. Currently, we are registered as an organization under national, or federal law, and now we are seeking tax exempt status as a non-profit. Receiving tax exempt status should help us with receiving donations.

(*) There are 108 ex-PYs registered to the US SWY-AA yahoo groups list serve. As not every ex-PY subscribes to SWY-NET, this list serve is helpful for communication important news and events among our membership.

(*) In November 2006, three SWY ex-PYs moved in to an apartment together in Washington, D.C. Tommy Iverson (SWY17), Mirentxu Arrivillaga (SWY17), and Roberto Munoz (SWY16) are roommates in the attached photo. To our knowledge, this may be the highest number of U.S. PYs ever living together.



Section II: Upcoming Events and Programs for the 2007 Year

(*) To prepare us for upcoming SWY invitations, Sean Deblieck from SWY 11 developed a plan to recruit ex-PYs to join one of four work groups starting in February and ending in April. These work groups have been developing plans to address the following areas:

- 1) How to recruit and publicize for future SWY delegations
- 2) How to select among these applications the best possible delegation
- 3) How to train and prepare the delegation for their experience
- 4) How to retain and develop a commitment to post-program activities among the delegation.

We are looking forward to the results of these work groups especially because it is a way for ex-PYs from different batches to work together and get to know each other. To date, these work groups have developed the following:

- 1) A revised application,
- 2) A power point recruitment presentation,
- 3) The idea of informational recruitment sessions at Japanese Consulates across the U.S.,
- 4) A requirement for participation statement to accompany the application (this is attached to this report),
- 5) A selection process capable of handling over 200 applications by volunteering alumni,
- 6) A conflict of interest statement to ensure that the application selection process is merit-based,
- 7) A press release,
- 8) A promotional flyer.

Much of these ideas are the result of help from other alumni associations, which have been enough kind to let us borrow and improve upon what they do for our website, for developing the power point slide show, etc.

(*) Chris Stratman SWY 16 is making a map plotting where each alum lives to help alumni get to know their neighbor better. This should help greatly to encourage more informal and mini-reunions. Alumni often complain that there are no other alumni living near them. With over 100 alumni, this map helps our alumni reach out and get to know each other at the local level. Over this past year, there have been over 25 informal reunions of ex-PYs in the states.

(*) We are assigning an Alumni Association officer to monitor SWY-NET emails and respond to any emails where a PY is visiting the U.S. If the PY will not be able to meet up with a U.S. PY, then s/he can receive at least some travel advice and have the U.S. officer respond to any questions and be a phone call away during her/his travels. To date, we have helped at least 7 ex-PYs who sent emails to SWY-NET about their plans to visit the U.S.

(*) President Paul Foppe SWY 13 attended the Tokyo Alumni Association Conference. It lasted from April 17 to 22, 2007.

(*) We are making an effort to better informing SWY alumni about similar programs such as the U.S.-Japan Foundation exchange program or the website www.goabroad.com. This way we can deliver interesting content both to encourage alumni to stay active on our list serves and to share similar international exchange opportunities to visitors to our website. Even though we can choose 10 applicants to serve on a SWY delegation, we would like to encourage other applicants who do not make it to continue their interest in both Japan and international exchange.

(*) We are looking to create a welcoming space with our organization for alumni with children. There is a fear that we lose some alumni as they get married, have kids, and feel that SWY AA is for “younger” alumni. We are looking into what we can do to encourage reunions that welcome spouses and/or their kids. We also are planning to better advertise opportunities throughout the year for alumni to be involved as ex-PY advisors, Renaissance Conference representatives, or even Tokyo Alumni Association Conference representatives. The more post-program activities we can advertise in advance, the more we hope we will get more PYs prepared and thinking about the possibility if and when the invitation occurs to send another U.S. representative. In theory, this should lead to increased competition and quality for the position as the U.S. representative for each program. For this Tokyo Alumni Association Conference, there were three applications to be chosen as the representative.

(*) We have been making an effort to get in touch with alumni who are not part of the U.S. Alumni Association yahoo groups list serve. To date, we have made progress in locating alumni from SWY 3, 5, 7, and 9. Often these alumni talk with their batch mates but just did not know about the list serve. We also are in the middle of surveying our alumni members about improvements to the organization. By combining this survey with the survey that we are asking alumni to complete for the Facebook project, we have been receiving higher response rates than if we were to send a survey to the list serve.

