http://www.washdiplomat.c...

The Diplomatic Pouch

HTML Content

DIPLOMATIC POUCH

November 2011

an email newsletter produced by The Washington Diplomat

POUCH LISTINGS

STOPPING THE DRUG WAR
November 15 - Special one day Cato Institute conference with world experts and leaders: *Ending the Global War on Drugs.*
Click Here For Details

TRADE TALK WITH ANDREW GELFUSO: DOING BUSINESS IN TURKEY
Located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Turkey has a dynamic, growing economy. This video features Commercial Service Officer Thomas Bruns based in Ankara in a wide-ranging discussion on the economic opportunities for American businesses in Turkey.
Click Here For Details

GOT YOUR POUCH?
Click here for a **FREE SUBSCRIPTION** to the Diplomatic Pouch and get every issue of the latest diplomatic news & events sent directly to your inbox.
Click Here For Details

FOLLOW US

The Washington Diplomat
P.O. Box 1345
Silver Spring, MD 20915
www.washdiplomat.com

Lifestyle

BY GAIL SCOTT

The Washington Diplomat

Nordic Food Day in D.C. Brings Swedish Prince

Special to the Diplomatic Pouch by Julie Poucher Harbin

It's not every day that you get to meet a real prince. But on October 26, the students of Miner Elementary School in northeast DC did just that when 500 school children between the ages of six and eleven got to learn about Swedish culture and food firsthand.

The occasion was Nordic Food Day, the first of four international food day events to be held this school year celebrating the tastes and flavors of global cuisine — co-sponsored by D.C. Public Schools and embassies in partnership with the Embassy Adoption Program.

Fifth-grader Keith Herbert and fourth-grader Julisa Williams – both active in the school drama club, student council and running for council president (Keith) and vice president (Julisa) — stood at Miner's school entrance dressed as a viking and Swedish storybook character Pippi Longstocking to welcome Swedish Prince Daniel Westling to their school.

A former gym owner and personal trainer who married Sweden's Princess Victoria in June 2010, HRH Prince Daniel was on his first tour of the United States with stops planned in D.C. and New York City between Oct. 23 and Nov. 2. In addition to meeting inner city school children in D.C. and Harlem, he was also scheduled to meet with members of Congress, the United Nations, the World Bank and the private sector — with recurring topics scheduled to be preventative care, health and food.

Julisa held a card that said "god dag (good day)" so she'd know how to greet him. "At first I was nervous, but I got over my fears. I think it's going to be fun. We get to show the prince around for the first time. I saw pictures of him; he was racing cars!" she said.

Keith, who had been studying Sweden for weeks, and gotten a small taste of Swedish culture that morning — lingonberry juice for breakfast in the school cafeteria — said, "I'm most excited for the first time meeting the prince. When I talk to him I can know more about his official language. I know how to say 'thank you', tak."

The charming prince warmly greeted Julisa and Keith with handshakes when he arrived, as did Sweden's Minister for Health and Social Affairs Göran Hägglund, and Swedish Ambassador Jonas Hafström and his wife Eva.

The school principal Lavonne Taliaferro Bunch then showed HRH Prince Daniel into the school, and pointed to an overhead banner that said "Welcome Prince Daniel Westling."

More than 100 students and teachers were waiting inside with blue and yellow balloons and waving Swedish flags. He was greeted as if he was a rock star with squeals, screams, and camera clicks, and he worked the hallway like a politician.

The media could barely get a photo in as he knelt down to shake hands and hug some of the students. He and the princess are expecting their first child in March. Swedish Ambassador Hafström was already enjoying the festivities before the official program had begun. “Couldn’t be better,” he told me as the Swedish entourage swept into the school library. “What a receiving line!”

After all the fanfare, the Swedish group was seated and treated to a performance of the U.S. and Swedish national anthems by the school Glee Club.

“They sang the anthem beautifully, their pronunciation was perfect,” the new Swedish Deputy Chief of Mission Karin Hoaglund told me.

Then they were ushered up the stairs away from the press. A group of third, fourth and fifth-graders sang some more songs for the group, and the prince took questions from the students.

I asked Hoaglund later for the scoop on the question and answer session.
Does you live in a castle? What’s the school system like? What do you eat? How did you become a prince?
These were some of the questions fielded by the prince. Hoaglund said he gave a very frank and open answer to the question about how he became a prince, and the kids were very impressed with his answer, but she wouldn’t divulge exactly what he said.

(The Washington Post’s Reliable Source column had an inside tip that his answer was this: “I was lucky enough to have met a princess …a cute, cute, and kind princess. . . now we are married, and then I became prince.”)

The festivities continued back in the cafeteria and school gym.

All D.C. public school students, for a day, got to taste Nordic breakfasts, lunches and dinners, in cooperation with food providers: Ikea, Norge Salmon, siggi’s (Icelandic yoghurt company), Scandia bread, and Finlandia cheese.

For breakfast, depending on the school, there was yoghurt and lingonberry juice or whole wheat pancakes with jam. Swedish meatballs with lingonberry jam or Norwegian salmon in dill sauce with roasted root vegetables, Danish potatoes and Wasa crisp bread was for lunch, and open-faced Danish sandwiches were served for dinner.

Whitney Bateson, the Senior Dietician for Chartwells-Thompson School Dining Service, the foodservice provider for D.C. public schools, said that “teamwork” made the day possible.

“I’m a dietician. It’s been quite an undertaking,” said Bateson, who was behind the scenes in the buzzing Miner kitchen making sure the Nordic meals were just right. “It’s great to start partnering with the embassies.”

While all D.C. public school students got to enjoy the special menus, the students in four Northeast D.C. schools, including Miner, also had the opportunity to participate in additional cultural and educational events sponsored by the embassies of Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Finland, and Denmark, which included six Nordic cultural ambassadors, seven Nordic chefs, and four Nordic musicians.
According to D.C.P.S., the goal of the International Food Program is to “expose students to new, nutritious, appetizing foods in school while encouraging them to recreate these recipes with their parents or guardians at home” as well as “to introduce students to new tastes and cultural experiences, and lay the foundation for increased cross-cultural exchange.”
In Miner’s cafeteria students were feasting on salmon — with mixed reviews. A large film screen aired a slideshow of idyllic Swedish life — berries, cows, salmon, artichokes, pigs, raspberries, pastries, scenic ocean views, flower fields, and colorful houses.
Accordion player Per Agustsson, whose wife Gabriela works at the Swedish embassy, serenaded the students playing old Swedish songs commonly played at mid-summer.
“Their immediate reaction was hands on heads, then they wanted to hear more,” Agustsson said of the kids’ reactions to his tunes. “I let some of them try it.” “It’s always fun when you see something new, a new instrument.”
The school already has a special relationship with Sweden. One of the classes last year performed a concert at the Swedish embassy. The school also participates in a program called “museums in schools,” and this year’s theme is “we are the world”. Each class is studying a country and comparing and contrasting the different cultures and forms of government.
“Through our research we learned so much about Sweden, the demographics, the culture. Every child in Sweden goes free to college, even preschool,” said Marsha Parker, an instructional aid at Miner Elementary School and retired DCPS principal. “Sweden is a country that they usually don’t go into. Now they know so much about it. They are so excited.”

Over in the gym an enthusiastic female Swedish fiddler regaled students and teachers alike who were clapping along with the beat.

Different leaflets about life, food, and the monarchy were neatly stacked on an information table, and pictures representing Swedish culture hung on the walls.

Some children were coloring Sweden-themed pictures at one table. At another table, the Swedish ambassador's wife Eva and embassy interns (all wearing 'Hug a Swede' t-shirts) as well as women in Swedish traditional dress, were dishing up donut-hole-size "chocolate delights" — a dessert beloved by children in Sweden, Eva explained, which are healthier than donuts (containing oatmeal, sugar, and cocoa powder and rolled in coconut) — and apples with cinnamon yoghurt that turned out to be the Miner students' favorite.

Ambassador Hafström tasted a chocolate delight ("I haven't had one of these in ten years. This feels like old times!"), and then raised a toast with a drink of smoothie-like blueberry soup, which, he explained, can be taken as a drink or dessert . "Skall," he said to me clinking plastic cups.

"It's overwhelming to see the enthusiasm and the happy faces. For us Nordic embassies, reaching out to the D.C. Schools, if we can pay back to the community and the school system in a way like this, it's very very good."

D.C. Mayor Vincent Gray, who had dropped by for some of the program, agreed.

"It's fantastic," he told me. "I knew that it would be wildly successful. The kids were very excited."

"The food idea has value in itself, and then the whole program has value in terms of solidarity between our two countries."

Said Swedish DCM Hoagland, "The ambition is there for healthy choices. They are on a good path."

Across the room students were dressing up with Pippi Longstocking wigs, Viking caps, crowns, and scepters and getting their pictures taken in a photo booth brought in for the occasion.

"Put your heads together and look like Swedish people!" the photo-booth helper enthused as two kids in costume headgear squeezed in for the picture and smiled.

At one point a boy, who'd had his picture taken wearing a crown, was being chased around the room because he refused to give it back.

HRH Prince Daniel even got in on the action. He popped into the booth with students Julisa and Keith — his official school tour guides who were still in costume. It seems he didn't put on the plastic crown though.

Too bad.

"Are you having a good time?" I asked the Prince as he was ushered by his handlers into a private area to eat lunch. "Yeah!" he said enthusiastically.

Keith, who had left the Prince's side temporarily to get his own plate of Nordic food from the cafeteria line seemed star- struck.

"What was the most interesting thing the Prince had to say," I asked. "I don't know. Everything he says is interesting," he smiled.

Who knows what kind of star power the next three international food days, which will be sponsored by the Embassy of Panama, the Embassy of Indonesia, and an as-yet un-named embassy, will attract?

The Nordic embassies provided a special link for information about Nordic countries and recipes. www.nordicinnovation.org/nordicdays2011 .

> **Front page and bottom photo:** Swedish Ambassador Jonas Hafström raises a toast with blueberry soup during cultural festivities connected with Nordic Food Day at Miner Elementary School in D.C.
>
> **Top photo:** Fourth-grader Julisa Williams and fifth-grader Keith Herbert stood at the Miner Elementary School entrance dressed as Swedish storybook character Pippi Longstocking and a viking to welcome Swedish Prince Daniel Westling to their school on Nordic Food Day.
>
> **Second photo:** Swedish Ambassador Jonas Hafström (far left) and Prince Daniel Westling of Sweden (far right) greeted students at Miner Elementary School in Northeast D.C. on Nordic Food Day Oct. 26.
>
> **Third photo:** Swedish Deputy Chief of Mission Karin Hoaglund and Swedish Ambassador Jonas Hafström listened to Miner Elementary School's Glee Club perform the Swedish national anthem at the school on Nordic Food Day.
>
> **Fourth photo:** A student at Miner Elementary School in D.C. tries out the salmon with dill sauce on offer for lunch during Nordic Food Day. All D.C. public school students got the opportunity to taste Nordic food for breakfast, lunch, and dinner in their school cafeterias on Oct. 26.
>
> **Fifth photo:** Eva Hafström, wife of Swedish Ambassador Jonas Hafström offers some students at Miner Elementary School in D.C. some "chocolate delights" — a dessert beloved by Swedish children.
>
> *Photos: Julie Poucher Harbin*

The Loveliest Girl In The World

Special to the Diplomatic Pouch by Julie Poucher Harbin

The wall of glass opening onto the woods, complete with autumn leaves turning color, is the perfect backdrop for the latest artistic offering hosted by the Finnish Embassy. Visitors to "The Loveliest Girl in the World" photography exhibition, after descending the embassy's grand hanging staircase, can expect to enter a reception hall flooded with light and inspiration.

Using a film camera, Finnish social worker and artist Miina Savolainen accompanied ten girls from a Helsinki children's home — one at a time, and at various times in their lives — to some of Finland's most beautiful, haunting and remote locations. Billed as "the most successful Finnish photography project of all time," the exhibition is a culmination of the decade (1998-2008) she spent traveling about 200,000 kilometers by car, on foot, and via snowshoe and rowboat. She began the project

when she was just 24.

Whether a smoky forest floor, a Lapland snowstorm, a frigid lake, a hollow tree, an autumn field, a cityscape, an abandoned house, or a sea cave of sorts, Savolainen's landscapes are arguably as eye-catching as her human subjects.

"The landscapes are stunning, but in every picture you are drawn to the girls because they are being themselves," said Meri Siirala, a local Finnish opera singer who helped facilitate the D.C. showing.

Savolainen has come up with a unique way of mixing social work and art. Through "empowering photography," a concept she developed while doing this project, the photograph is transformed into an instrument of self-discovery.

"They hadn't been looked at in a loving way before," Savolainen explained to me in a private tour of the exhibition now on display as part of Kids Euro Festival and FotoWeek D.C. "They've seen a chaotic and cruel world."

Through these photography journeys, she said, "they could see the world as beautiful, and see themselves another way — as beautiful, valuable and precious." As it says on the "Loveliest Girl in the World" banner, "Everyone is entitled to feel precious and beloved."

Most of the girls were abandoned by alcoholic mothers. They were at the children's home, not because they were orphans, but because their living parents couldn't take care of them. Some of them had spent time in foster care, but perhaps because they were difficult to handle, it didn't work out. Some came to the children's home when they were already teenagers; too old to find a foster family to take them in.

Finland's first female ambassador to the United States, Ritva Koukku-Ronde, who assumed her post this September, hosted a private reception ahead of the October 19 opening. In comments included in the exhibition leaflet she said Savolainen's "perceptive photography beautifully illustrates young women's passages to adulthood and self-acceptance." "The exhibition also highlights gender equality and women's societal roles in subtle, innovative ways."

Each girl chose where and how she wanted to be photographed. Their personal reactions to the project were displayed alongside their photos at the exhibit.

One pregnant in a bridal gown, but with no prospect of a groom. Another wearing a crown. Another adorned with faerie wings...

"Using a fictional element we realize the emotional truth," explained Savolainen.

Was it role play?

Paula, photographed four times between age 14 and 24, chose to pose in an abandoned house in one of her photos.

She said this: "I don't see any role play in these photos. I only see an inexperienced little girl who has in fact experienced more than anyone would have expected. The atmosphere is like a fairytale, because in the photos there is love and tranquility, which are hard to find in real life."

According to Mona, who was photographed by Savolainen four times between the ages of 17 and 22, "Role play? Not at all. On the contrary in fact. I think that our picture shows for the first time in my life who I really am. My soul is in these pictures."

One of the photos on display shows Mona lying down in cold water pooled at the bottom of a rowboat that is floating in shallow water. Savolainen said, "It was freezing. She wanted to be in the water. She wanted a new start."

"At first she found the pictures terrible. She could see in them her inner world and it might have been painful to look at the picture. Then at the end the pictures were meaningful to her."

Petra, Savolainen's youngest subject, was first photographed at age nine and last photographed at 19. She wanted to have wings, so in her first photo, which is part of the exhibition banner, she is wearing them.

Jenna was photographed three times between the ages of 14 and 21. At 14 she is standing in a spring forest carpeted with little white flowers that Finnish girls traditionally give to their mothers. At 21, she is in a storm in Lapland.

When she was first photographed, Savolainen said that Jenna felt "it was scary and oppressive to be the center of attention." Then, when Jenna was 21, she looked at her pictures and said "I feel whole and strong."

Tiina, a single mom who became pregnant while still a teenager, was photographed before she was pregnant, while she was pregnant, and then, later, with her baby. Though she was not engaged, she wanted to be photographed in a wedding dress while she was pregnant. Savolainen gave her her mother's 1960s wedding dress to wear for the picture.

"At first looking at the photos felt pretty scary, but later it was quite wonderful. It was

important to see that you are good enough just the way you are," was Tiina's reaction.

Milla, who graces the cover of "The Loveliest Girl in the World" exhibit book, was photographed five times between the ages of 14 and 22. She was first photographed sitting in an autumn field with pinecones on her lap and a golden crown, given to her by her nurse at the home, on her head.

"She was born in autumn," Savolainen said. "It's important her head is averted. She thinks it's telling about her shyness and sensitivity, looking at pinecones in a very gentle way."

"In the photos every one of the girls has been accepted just the way she is, as the princess of her own life. Everyone is entitled to think about herself that way."

In her final photo, taken at age 22, Milla is on an island by the sea in a rocky place that's usually underwater.

"Milla had a dream she's walking on the water," Savolainen said, explaining the choice of locale.

The rocks were slippery so Milla and Savolainen had to take care. In this, one of the most striking photos of the exhibit, she has to lie on a blanket so she doesn't fall off, but the blanket is not visible in the photo.

"It's mythical in nature. Sheltering the inner child. Womblike," Savolainen said. "She (Milla) understood she could replace her missing mom's and dad's loving eyes by loving herself."

According to Milla, "It meant a whole lot to me to see myself beautiful. In the children's home I didn't get the parental attention I needed. It has left a hole. I thought that anyone could abandon you, but not your own mother. And yet, that's just what happened. After losing so much you try to live so that you don't lose again. You live frugally."

Savolainen said Milla's mother saw that text — which is part of the exhibition as well as in the exhibition book — and "she was hurt." Milla's mother has since passed away from complications of alcoholism.

Many of the girls are still in contact with their mothers, but their mothers are very needy, so the child's and parents' roles have now been reversed.

"Many of the girls are now caring for their parents," she said. "They were children just learning to love themselves… Mostly they have found their own way now."

Savolainen said there was "a lot of adventure" on these trips, and often the act of warming up in a cold place was comforting — drinking warm drinks and wearing winter coats, hats and multiple hidden layers of clothes. Of course there was also the individual attention and the carmraderie of a road trip. She showed me some candid, joyful, behind-the-scenes pictures on display. Savolainen did not take any assistants or drivers with her.

Most places were hard to reach, which makes them especially exotic. Savolainen said she will not disclose the exact locales despite inquiries. She doesn't want anyone to ruin the magic. ("Someone might want to do a shampoo commercial there.").

Book sales are the biggest source of financing for the traveling exhibition, though she has received some funding from the Finnish Cultural Foundation.

The artist developed all the film herself in a darkroom.

After it leaves D.C., the exhibition, which was most recently in Ottowa, Canada, will continue on to New York, Mexico City and Santiago de Chile as part of its first international tour outside Europe.

Savolainen is currently teaching this method of empowering photography back home in Finland. She most recently did a project on fatherhood and is currently working on a project about gender identity.

This is the last weekend to see the "The Loveliest Girl in the World" exhibition in D.C. It is free-of-charge and open to the public from 11 a.m.-4 p.m., Friday Nov. 11 through Sunday Nov. 13. Embassy of Finland. Finland Hall. 3301 Mass. Ave. N.W., Washington, DC. For more information see: Official web site and Facebook.

> **Front page and fifth photo:** Milla, who graces the cover of "The Loveliest Girl in the World" exhibition book, was photographed five times between the ages of 14 and 22. Here she is at 14.
> *Photo: Miina Savolainen*
> **Top photo:** Nina is photographed in the hollow of a tree. All of the young women photographed by social worker and artist Miina Savolainen resided in a children's home in Helsinki.
> *Photo: Miina Savolainen*
> **Second photo:** Finnish Ambassador Ritva Koukku-Ronde, right, welcomed artist Miina Savolainen at a private reception at the embassy to launch the D.C. showing of "The Loveliest Girl in the World" exhibition.
> *Photo: Embassy of Finland*
> **Third photo:** Paula, photographed four times between age 14 and 24, chose to pose in an abandoned house in one of her photos. Photos of her, taken by Miina Savolainen, are on display as part of "The Loveliest Girl in the World" exhibition at the Finnish Embassy.
> *Photo: Julie Poucher Harbin*
> **Fourth photo:** Tiina, a pregnant teen, wanted to be photographed as a bride. Her photo, taken by Miina Savolainen is part of "The Loveliest Girl in the World" exhibition at the Finnish Embassy in D.C. that runs through Nov. 13.
> *Photo: Julie Poucher Harbin*
> **Bottom photo:** The Embassy of Finland is hosting "The Loveliest Girl in the World" exhibition through Nov. 13. Finnish Ambassador Ritva Koukku-Ronde (at left holding a purse) welcomed guests to the exhibition at a private reception.
> *Photo: Julie Poucher Harbin*

Donors Dig Deep for Nyumbani HIV Charity

Special to the Diplomatic Pouch by Jacob Comenetz

A small boy was found wandering alone in the parking lot of Kenyatta National

Hospital in Nairobi, Kenya, at 9 p.m. one night. What to do with him? He was HIV positive, but in good health. An apparent orphan, he was admitted anyway so he'd be safe while the hospital looked for somewhere for him to go.

"I remember the day he was brought to Nyumbani Home," recalled Sister Mary Owens, Executive Director of Kenya's first and largest facility for HIV-positive children, located some 30 miles from the sprawling capital Nairobi. "He was wearing the pajamas of the hospital, that's all he had. When we tried to register him — well, what's his name? — we don't know. All that we knew about him was that he was African, and that he was a boy, because of his biology. So we gave him the name 'Ben'."

Ben didn't talk for many weeks, but he's beginning to talk now, Sister Mary said. "We had to give him an age. We're not too sure, something between three and four."

Sister Mary was recounting this story at the annual fundraiser for her organization, Nyumbani — meaning "at home"— that cares for the rising number of HIV-infected infants and children in Kenya.

Several hundred Nyumbani supporters gathered at the West End Ritz-Carlton on Sept. 30 for a silent auction, dinner and awards ceremony to honor some of the individuals responsible for Nyumbani's many successes.

Stories like Ben's are all too plentiful in Kenya, and in sub-Saharan Africa more broadly, where an estimated 22.4 million people are infected with HIV. The persistent epidemic has led to untold numbers of orphans who end up wandering the streets alone, like Ben.

That the flame of hope still burns in the face of such tragedy is in large part due to the work of Nyumbani.

Nyumbani has expanded the size and scope of its services and programs over the years, thanks to the support of government agencies, such as the United States Agency for International Development, and private donors, including many in the United States.

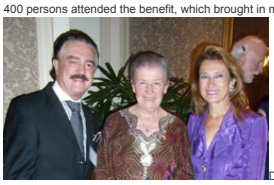
In the 18 years since the Nyumbani Children's Home was founded by Father Angelo D'Agostino, a Jesuit priest, urologist and psychologist, more than 4,000 children have been given a chance to live, and in many cases, to thrive. Father D'Ag', as he was known, passed away five years ago.

"I often wonder what we would be doing if he were alive today," mused Sister Mary. "I think I know, though, what his comment would be, if he were to talk to me from heaven. He would say, you're doing well, but…did you not think of…But still we go on, continuing his vision and his mission."

Twelve houses were recently completed in the 'Village'. Once eight more are completed (the funding is already there), Nyumbani Village will have 100 total houses and serve 1,000 children and 100 grandparents, in a mutually supportive surrogate family arrangement. The associated Lea Toto community outreach program, which gives children access to health care and education, enrolls around 100 HIV-positive children each month.

Sister Mary is concerned about what will happen when the Village reaches capacity. "I dread the day when we admit the 1,000th child," she says. "We have a huge waiting list."

The good news is that the annual fundraising dinners, like Nyumbani itself, have grown over the years, and the 2011 gala was the largest to date. A record number of 400 persons attended the benefit, which brought in more than $250,000.



Descending the stairs to the foyer, attendees began the evening examining the many bid items, and making first bids using electronic iPhone-like Bid Pal devices.

Later, things got exciting when auctioneer John Paul Womble inspired people to reach deep into their pockets and bid on prizes such as the Washington Capitals Lexus Suite, donated by Lockheed Martin, a stay at a secluded cottage in Jamaica, and a silver and topaz David Yurman necklace.

Sister Mary said that one of her greatest joys is that Nyumbani has been able to secure access to third-line antiretroviral medicine — essential for treating some HIV patients — thanks to donations from Johnson & Johnson and Merck.

Other global health firms are helping, too. One of the 2011 Nyumbani honorees, Gary Cohen, Executive Vice President at Becton-Dickinson, urged people to visit the facility to get a sense of what their contributions were doing, and what still needed to be done.

"You go there expecting to see despair," he said. "You don't see despair; you see the strength of the human spirit. There's nothing that demonstrates the strength and of the human spirit more than the resilience and the recovery of a child."

John Mike D'Agostino, great-nephew of Nyumbani founder, had the chance to volunteer at the Village from August 2010 to February 2011. He also came away with some powerful impressions.

"Overall, what impressed me most about the Village was the vision of those who built and run this community as well as the dedication to self-sustainablity that is part of that vision."

D'Agostino is optimistic about Kenya's future, but also sees uncertainty. But of one thing he is certain: "Nyumbani Village is a special place full of loving people implementing innovative ideas and techniques that I believe will provide a model of hope for the future of parts of Kenya and Africa."

Top and front page photo: From left, Barbara Albert (Noel Award Winner), Sister Mary Owens, and Lorna McLeod (Nyumbani Board Member) attend the Nyumbani fundraising gala on Sept. 30. Sister Mary is executive director of the Nyumbani Home in Kenya, which helps HIV positive children.
Middle photo: From left, Catherine Hansen and Deborah Dunham attend the Nyumbani gala to raise funds for the rising number of HIV-infected infants and children in Kenya.
Bottom photo: From left, Joseph Novello, Sister Mary Owens, and Ljubica Acevska enoy the Nyumbani silent auction, dinner and awards ceremony held at the West End Ritz-Carlton on Sept. 30.
Photos: Jacob Comenetz

Mustaches for Men's Health

by Anna Gawel

Move over clean-shaven faces — it's time for Movember, an annual month-long event in which men around the world grow moustaches to raise money and awareness for men's health issues. Now in its fifth year, Movember began in Melbourne, Australia, and has since attracted more than 1.1 million participants to sport newly grown stashes with formal campaigns across the world, including the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Canada.

Last year, more than 64,500 American "Mo Bros" and "Mo Sistas" (women who fundraise during the month) ditched their shavers, raising $7.5 million.

Not to be left out of the action, the British, Australian and New Zealand Embassies in Washington, D.C., have joined in the effort for the second year in a row, competing to see who can raise the most money in their "Embassy Mo's on Embassy Row" contest.

The British Embassy is being represented by Deputy Chief of Mission Philip Barton — captain of the "stiffer upper lips" team — who says his motivation is to "change the face of men's health." You can track Barton's transformation on his blog, where he's posting updates on his moustache progress.

"At the end of the month, Mo Bros and Mo Sistas celebrate their gallantry and valor by either throwing their own Movember party or attending one of the infamous Gala Partés held around the world by Movember," according to the group's website.

The goal is to educate men about the health risks they face, such as prostate cancer, the second-leading cause of cancer death in men that affects one in six men and is the primary target of the Movember campaign.

Starting out on the first day of Movember, "upper lips everywhere start their month-long period of hibernation to promote awareness and raise funds for men's health issues," Barton said. "I am thrilled to be participating in such a worthy cause."

Front page photo: Ian Collard, first secretary at the British Embassy, center, is flanked by Jeff Schultz and Matt Hendricks of the Washington Capitals at a British Embassy reception celebrating the conclusion of last year's "Movember" moustache contest to raise funds for men's health charities
Above from left: Washington Capitals Defenseman Karl Alzner, First Secretary of Public Affairs at the Australian Embassy Scott Bolitho (a "Movember" honoree), Washington Capitals Center Matt Hendricks, and Washington Capitals Defenseman Jeff Schultz sport their mustaches that they grew in November as part of the Movember moustache contest among the British, Australian and New Zealand Embassies to raise money and awareness for men's health issues.
Photos: Gail Scott

Subscriber Services

Sign Up
Unsubscribe
Web Version
Advertising
Contact us

About the Pouch

The Diplomatic Pouch is an email newsletter distributed to opt-in subscribers and produced by The Washington Diplomat, an independent monthly newspaper. The Pouch covers the diplomatic community, international affairs, politics, arts and culture, and social life in Washington, D.C. Although a complement to The Washington Diplomat newspaper, all content is original and exclusively written for the Pouch.

You are receiving this message because you provided your email address to us for The Diplomatic Pouch.
If you do not want to receive future emails from us, please click here to be taken off the list.

© 2011 The Washington Diplomat. All rights reserved.Unauthorized distribution, transmission or republication is prohibited.