

SYA

MAGAZINE





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SYA Magazine chronicles the professional and personal lives of SYA alumni, faculty, students and staff, and provides current news from the home office and our schools in Europe and Asia. We appreciate receiving your news, photographs and suggestions for articles to broaden the scope of this publication.

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ON THE COVER:

"When we visited a small village in Yunnan, a southern province in China, a group of Yi minority women in their vibrant, multicolored attire, greeted us with a traditional dance," said Reena Jailwala CN'12 (Barrington High School, Illinois), who blogged and captured photos throughout the year she spent in China.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Alumni, Parents and Friends of SYA,

As I write this letter for *SYA Magazine*, I'm reminded how quickly time flies, especially when one works with adolescents. It seems that just a few months ago I was in San Francisco at the airport-departure meetings for China and Vietnam. We are now in conversations with the Resident Directors at all our schools about wrapping up this year and preparing for the arrival of the class of 2013 next fall. How did the time pass so quickly?

I feel most fortunate to have met so many students, parents, alumni and alumni parents in the last 12 months. Thanks to all for a most warm and gracious welcome to the SYA community. No matter where we have met, you have answered my questions and wondered aloud with me about SYA's past, present and future.

I've have the incredible opportunity in SYA classrooms across the world to watch some of the best teaching I've seen at the high school level. Today's SYA faculty carry on our longstanding tradition of the highest classroom expectations, coupled with a deep and genuine interest in the social and emotional transitions that our students must undergo, and are at the heart of why SYA is a life-changing experience.

To be a successful SYA teacher, it is not enough to know one's discipline well and teach with great skill. SYA master teachers also know how to help teenagers develop the self-confidence and self-reliance that equip them to see history, customs, culture and societies from a perspective different from that of most American teenagers. We don't teach global education; we live it, and no one does it better than we do.

As I've traveled across the country and the world to meet SYA alumni and alumni parents, I've been struck by the outpouring of support for our curriculum (i.e., all that we do with intention). Although alumni use different words to describe the impact SYA has had on their lives, the message is the same. A year abroad, immersed in another culture and learning to master another language, changes everybody. It didn't matter if I was at a reception on a sunny afternoon in the Napa Valley; at the Paris residence of the U.S. Ambassador to France, the Honorable Charles H. Rivkin FR'79; or on a rainy, cold night in Portland, Oregon. SYA alumni are incredibly proud of what they have accomplished and overwhelmingly supportive of our efforts to move forward.

SYA is looking confidently to the future. The Board of Trustees is currently engaged in a strategic planning process that will position us to be even stronger in the years ahead. We are asking the hard questions about our curriculum, our personnel and our enrollment practices. We

are critically reviewing our financial base and cost-containment efforts. And we are scanning the globe to assess future school locations at the same time that we wrestle with the volatility in the political, economic and safety arenas. It is not a time for the faint of heart, and I am absolutely convinced that the Board of Trustees is up to the challenging tasks we face.

In March we dedicated our new school in Zaragoza, Spain. It was a delightful gathering of faculty, alumni and parents of SYA. We came together as a community to reaffirm our deep roots, not just in Spain, but in other countries as well, and our equally deep commitment to the goal of teaching American teenagers about, as we say in our Mission Statement, "self-reliance, responsible decision making, resourcefulness, adaptability and respect for difference." It was a special moment in our history.

I want to thank all of you who have generously contributed your time, resources or talents to support SYA this year. At each reception I attend, I remind everyone that we cannot function without the assistance of others. And I ask that we acknowledge the intergenerational responsibility each of us has for today's SYA students.

For those who are graduates of SYA, you know that your year as a student was made possible because of the generous support of someone who came before you, someone who contributed her or his financial resources to ensure that SYA would remain the gold standard of study-abroad programs. Today, those of us who look back with affection on your SYA experience have a responsibility to make certain that students in the class of 2013 and those of you who follow will have the same opportunities, the same high-quality teaching and the same level of social-emotional support during their year at SYA. That's what intergenerational responsibility is all about. It is critical to our future.

At the end of May, close to 260 students returned to the States transformed by the immersion experience that is SYA. They are different people from the ones I met in September at the airport, and we are confident that they will be better citizens of the world because of SYA. And their year has been exceptional, in part, because of your support and belief in what we do.

Best wishes for a pleasant summer.



Jack Creeden

Becker Appointed SYA China Resident Director



Hilde Becker has been selected as the Resident Director of SYA China. Becker served as Interim Resident Director for the 2011–12 academic year and was a history teacher at our school in Beijing for the preceding 10 years. She was also the director of the 2011 SYA China Summer Program. A fluent speaker of Mandarin, German, English and Japanese, Becker has lived in China

on numerous occasions during the course of her career.

After interviewing several outstanding candidates for the position, the search committee agreed that Becker continually rose to the top. Her depth of knowledge of the culture, the people and the language

is unparalleled and, even more important, she is well known for her supportive and warmhearted relationships with faculty, students and staff.

Before joining the SYA family, Becker completed her M.A. and all coursework for a Ph.D. in Chinese history at the University of California at Santa Cruz, where she was an instructor in the history department. She also earned an M.A. in Sinology, Classical Chinese and German at Trier University (Germany) and received extensive Chinese linguistic training at Lanzhou University (China).

“All of us at SYA are delighted Hilde has graciously accepted the position,” said Executive Director Nelson Chase. “We look forward to further building on the already solid collegial relationship we have shared with her throughout the past decade.”

The First Halsey Scholar, Manuela Araque



From a pool of well-qualified applicants, Manuela Araque was selected to be the first recipient of The Halsey Fund Scholarship, a fully funded scholarship that includes tuition and round-trip airfare to the SYA school of enrollment.

The committee unanimously chose Araque, who will go to SYA France to master a third language and immerse herself in the French way of life. A tenth-grader from Charlotte Latin School in North Carolina, Araque was born in Colombia and moved to the United States when she was a young girl. Throughout the interview process, she spoke eloquently of her keen interest in diversity and culture, and when told she was the recipient, she said, “SYA makes my dream of studying abroad possible, better than anything I could have imagined. Living with a French family will fully expose me to French culture, allow me to stretch out of my comfort zone and teach me essential adaptability skills.”

Araque is currently enrolled in French II and carries a 4.07

GPA. She loves theater and has been in a number of plays and musicals since joining the Charlotte Latin School community. She is a member of both the varsity tennis and lacrosse teams, and in 2008 was voted the school’s hardest worker.

SYA President Jack Creeden said, “We’re delighted and proud to welcome Manuela into the SYA community. She’s bright and enthusiastic, and has an instinctive interest in studying diverse cultures and languages — truly a perfect fit for SYA and for Manuela.”

In July 2011, SYA received the largest gift in its history when the Bulgari family donated \$1 million to establish The Halsey Fund Scholarship, SYA’s first endowed scholarship. Other donors, including alumni, parents and friends, have also contributed to this scholarship, named in honor of Woodruff W. Halsey II, SYA’s first president, a beloved teacher and vital member of the SYA community for 31 years. The objective of The Halsey Fund Scholarship is to provide academically exceptional and globally minded high school students the opportunity to experience a rich academic and cultural education at SYA, and in doing so to prepare them to become leading citizens of the world.

Trustees’ Vote Closes SYA Vietnam

At the March 2012 board meeting in Zaragoza, the SYA Board of Trustees voted to close our school in Vietnam, effective July 1, 2012. Many factors influenced the board’s final assessment: most prominently, low enrollment, lack of secondary school language-feeder programs and the ongoing state of the U.S. economy. Extended marketing efforts were focused exclusively on SYA Vietnam, with emphasis on the excellent environmental science and service learning curriculum and the singular opportunity to study in an emerging nation. After operating the school in Hanoi for three years, however, the application pool actually decreased over time.

“Be assured that the conversation was diligent, and that reaching a decision involved spirited conversations that were layered with gen-

uine emotion,” said SYA President Jack Creeden. “But given the circumstances, it was clear to all that this decision was judicious for the organization as a whole.

“I thank our founding Resident Director Peter Esty for laying the groundwork during our inaugural year in Hanoi,” Creeden said. “I especially thank current Resident Director Vu-duc Vuong, who, for the past two years, has engaged our students, inspired our faculty and built relationships with our neighbors in Vietnam, near and far. I also want to express my gratitude to the warm and supportive people of our extended community, the families who opened their homes to our students and the local faculty who provided much more than classroom lessons. SYA will be forever indebted to these people, and to many more.”

Meet Kait Martel, Admissions Marketing Manager



School Year Abroad is pleased to announce the appointment of Kait Martel to the newly created position of admissions marketing manager. Martel's marketing background includes marketing communications coordinator at Metro Credit Union,

where she was responsible for executing advertising, website, sales, direct mail, and other marketing initiatives, as well as writing and distributing press releases for corporate announcements and articles. Prior to joining Metro, she worked at a start-up healthcare company and for a consulting company.

Martel earned her B.A. magna cum laude with Presidential Honors at Merrimack College in North Andover, Massachusetts. She also spent three summers studying in Prague and Bologna, where she

took classes at Charles University and the University of Bologna, participated in leadership training and helped complete community service projects in both cities. It was after her time abroad that she realized how much those experiences meant to her, and she's excited to be part of a team helping students have an amazing experience in other countries.

In her new role, Martel manages the development and implementation of the admissions marketing plan, focusing on online marketing and website development, social media and online advertising. She also supports the admissions team when they're out on the road, and manages the inquiry onboarding process through development of a series of emails, newsletters and other communications.

Martel, her partner James, and their dog, Bailey, live in Haverhill, Massachusetts. She's a member of the Groveland Garden Club, and loves spending time in the garden and antique shopping.

Parent Survey Nets **Big** Thumbs-up

The results of the 2010–2011 Parent Evaluation Questionnaire are tallied and, says Executive Director Nelson Chase, "We're quite pleased and impressed with the results." The survey was sent to all parents of SYA students who completed the 2010–11 academic year. With almost a 75 percent response rate, parents answered 19 questions, 16 of which were specifically program-related.

"In essence," said Chase, "the parents confirmed what we know to be true — SYA sets the standard for excellence for high school study-abroad programs. The SYA experience is unparalleled in terms of academic standards, educational travel and overall quality."

The program-specific questions were answered on a five-level scale of agree to strongly disagree. The majority of answers ranked 85 to 97 percent agree or strongly agree. "The question that asked parents whether or not SYA provided a unique opportunity for personal growth and helped their child to grow in maturity and self-confidence was, to me, the most significant question on the survey," said Chase. "A resounding 97 percent either agreed or strongly agreed. This means that although there's always room for improvement, the overall sentiment is that SYA delivers on our promise of transformative growth."

SYA Italy Summer Adopts World Initiative Curriculum

In partnership with the Global Studies Foundation (GSF), the SYA Italy Summer 2012 curriculum is now designed to be a holistic global experience. The language classes, homestay and excursions are still a valuable part of the overall experience, but the curriculum is supplemented in order to expose the students to global issues in a way that will enhance research and analysis, comparison, group work, collaborative problem-solving and oral and written persuasion.

"SYA's goal has always been to prepare students to become citizens of the world by providing them with an overseas experience in which they learn a new language and culture and live with a host family," said Director of SYA Summer Programs Whitney Hermann ES'85. "We have counted on the overall experience to instill the values we hold dear: broad-mindedness, adaptability, self-reliance and responsible decision making. During a five-week program, however, when the students arrive with little or no skills in the local language, we realized that we needed to be more intentional with the curriculum, and planned activities in order to achieve this kind of student transformation."

Each day the students will attend classes in the morning, in and outside of the "traditional classroom." They'll spend two hours on

practical, conversational Italian and two hours on global issues (taught in English), such as demographics and population, environment and resources, and economics and politics. The themes presented in both courses are designed to carry over into the afternoon activities so that students have an integrated experience.

Michelle Harth will design and teach the global studies curriculum based on research done by the Global Studies Foundation (GSF). Harth has taught a wide variety of courses, coached numerous sports, advised dozens of clubs and thousands of students and served on countless committees. Before assuming her current roles as grants chair for GSF and a faculty member at St. Andrew's Episcopal School, in Mississippi, Harth taught, coached, advised and served as a Head of House at St. Paul's School, New Hampshire, one of SYA's charter member schools. A former Klingenstein Fellow at Columbia University's Teachers College, Harth earned a B.S. in engineering physics as a T. J. Watson Scholar at the University of Virginia and an M.A. in theology from Villanova University.

To learn more about GSF, visit www.globalstudiesfoundation.org.



SYA China says farewell to Tim Pettus

One of the most enduring images of SYA China's Tim Pettus is likely to be of a solitary figure riding his bicycle along the rugged mountain trails near China's Great Wall. "I was such a surprising sight biking up the mountain that motorists would smile and give me a thumbs-up gesture," says Pettus, who will be leaving SYA China after ten years of legendary service.

Before coming to SYA China, Pettus had been a math teacher and, for a time, head of the math department at St. Mark's School in Southborough, Massachusetts. His talent as a teacher is well known, and has long been appreciated in Beijing by students and staff alike.

Mr. Pettus has the rare ability to connect with students outside of the classroom. Insightful, understanding, and blatantly honest, he played a tremendous role in helping me transition into life in Beijing.

— Sally Deng CN'10

"Tim is the best math teacher I ever met," says Lili Shi, SYA China's assistant program director. "He works hard to help each student with math skills, spending considerable time before and after classes to help each one of them. Following their time in our program, many of these students agree that Tim is one of the best math teachers they've ever been fortunate to know."

Over the years, Pettus has developed high regard for his SYA China students. "They're very different from most other American high school (as well as college) students in that they're willing to give up their sports, acting, singing and so on and live with a host Chinese family," he says. "This willingness, and even eagerness, on the part of SYA China students to leap into a new situation is the reason I decided to stay in Beijing for the past ten years. They're an exciting group of students to work with."

Pettus also has strong praise for his Chinese colleagues. "The Chinese faculty is the

best group of teachers I've ever encountered," he says. "They're always looking for ways to improve. They sit in on each other's classes, tape classes and spend time evaluating one another and talking about what happens in their classrooms. These teachers also insist on their students being prepared every day and speak only Chinese in class."

For Pettus, living and teaching in China was somewhat of a homecoming. "My father was born in Nanjing and was raised in Beijing, where he graduated from Peking American School in 1926," he says. "My grandfather was in China for more than four decades and united several schools that taught Mandarin to foreigners. He raised \$315,000 in the United States and built a campus in Beijing."

When Pettus first came to Beijing, he visited his grandfather's school, which has since become a community center for Chinese senior citizens. "They use it as a place to play games such as mahjong and cards," he says.

Beyond the classroom, Pettus has enjoyed learning about Chinese society and culture. In particular, several experiences hold especially powerful meaning for him. "I'll always have fond memories of taking my friends, family and students to Sancha, which is a small mountain village located near the Great Wall," he says. "I love taking the students on a seven-hour hike loop in the area that includes several hours on the unrestored wall itself. On the return trip, we visit a Buddhist cave, which is great for exploring. I've also enjoyed our study trips with the entire student body in South China to remote villages where the local people haven't previously seen foreigners. Being greeted in these villages with the women beautifully adorned, playing musical instruments and treating us to rice wine was quite a treat."

Pettus fondly recalls when, one winter's day, he and two SYA students



decided to join the elderly who swim in small pools made available on a year-round basis within Beijing's parks. "The two students climbed in first and started screaming for me to join them, but I decided to make a more grand entrance," he says. "I ran on the ice, planning to slide into the prepared area. However, I tripped and broke through the ice about five meters from the pool. I guess my entrance was grand and different, as I had to break ice just to swim to the pool. Of course, we didn't mind letting everyone know we found the water difficult to stay in!"

Mr. Pettus believed in me when I did not believe in myself. I am graduating college this semester and I can honestly say that Mr. Pettus is one of the greatest teachers that I have ever had. He taught me to never give up and that with hard work and dedication you can achieve anything.

— Hannah Smoot CN'08

Looking back, Pettus says he's grateful to have been a part of SYA China. "The program revived my enthusiasm for teaching," he says. "Much of what I saw was new and different. The students I was fortunate enough to teach were more adventurous and interested in trying new things than were their American counterparts. SYA China was a great and exciting way to end my teaching career."

During my year in China Mr. Pettus was the best mentor I could have dreamed of. He is a unique man, and a teacher I am very glad I had the opportunity to learn from — both in and out of class.

— Alex Meddin CN'11



THE CHEESE AND THE TOFU

By John R. Peters-Campbell, Ph.D.

English teacher, SYA Vietnam '11, SYA China '12

The passenger across the aisle from me on China Southern Airlines ordered the “Western” meal choice. The “Oriental” choice was a shrimp dish with rice. She must have been feeling adventurous despite her conservative dress and Li Ning jacket. Working at the salad with my chopsticks, trying, mostly successfully, not to get bits of lettuce on my lap and olive oil in my ear, I watched her poke her salad cautiously.



Neither lettuce nor raw tomato is common in Chinese cuisine, and cheese almost unheard of. It dawned on me as she delicately picked up a cube of feta what was on her mind. She was thinking the feta was tofu, which is ubiquitous and infinitely varied in China. I almost reached across to touch her arm and shake my head (my Chinese is not nearly as good as that of my students) but I wasn't sure of the protocol. I was too late. The little white cube passed her lips and she bit down; she then spat it onto the back of the seat in front of her. I averted my eyes. I tried to imagine what the experience of cheese, feta cheese no less, is like to a sophisticated mainland Chinese taste.

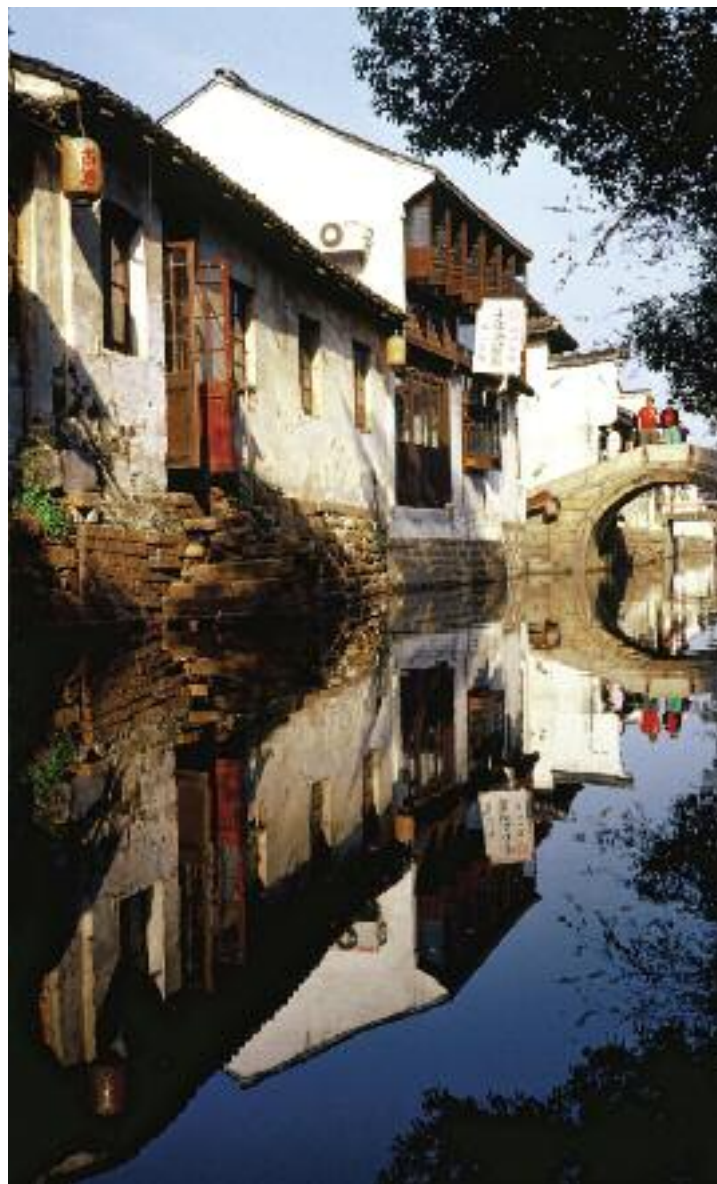
The meaning of “Oriental” — the East — has been on my mind. Arriving in China to live has been diving in and coming up for air disoriented. The irony of being dis-oriented in the Orient hasn't escaped me. Even so absolute a culinary value as cheese requires some rethinking, along with all of my assumptions about taste and right-of-way and common sense. Our assumptions don't work here. China isn't just on the opposite side of the world. China is so far west of everything with which we're familiar that it's difficult to think of it as Oriental at all.

Fifty-four SYA students arrived in Beijing last August after a 12-hour flight from San Francisco. A few had been to China before and some had never left their own country. What they shared, however privileged, was that none arrived feeling entitled. They came to be immersed, saturated in a completely other culture. It's another world. And they were diving in.

New old friends, I watched them watching with wide and bleary eyes the Fifth, Fourth, Third Ring Roads through the haze that reminded me of Los Angeles in the early 1970s. We passed the Dashanzi “798” contemporary art suburb and turned on the Second Ring Road along the moat of the 17th-century Ming Wall. By the time we were camped in the first-

floor lounge of Er Fu Zhong, our host school, fatigue had kicked in. We sat on piles of luggage amid the dating game of matching student to host family. They courageously dove in, waving as they left with their families, *ma* and *ba* for the year. Sometimes they have to assure us, and themselves, that they are waving, not drowning.

We all adjust our perspectives. We're re-orienting, as it were. Two years ago my airplane feta adventure would have been just a travel anecdote. It would have been a brief source of amusement, like the sign in a Beijing park directing us to the “upright no-flatters water-dropping building in the middle ya.” Another realization comes on, though. We Westerners sound (and look and cook) at least as strange to our hosts. We're probably even stranger, though my Chinese colleagues here at SYA are too polite to say, and they cover their mouths when they laugh.



SYA Q&A

What surprised you the most when you first arrived in China?

Everything seemed completely foreign and new. I vividly remember walking with my host mother to her apartment, nervous and making small talk in hastily spoken Chinese. Much to my surprise and pleasure, strangers waved at me and welcomed me to China, making my first impression one of friendship and warmth.

What was the most challenging adjustment?

Learning to observe information from a new, objective viewpoint has been challenging. I have encountered the most challenges in everyday life — while deciding to try some Chinese traditional medicine to cure my cold, while trying to understand why my host family doesn't drink water with meals, and while giving in to my mother's urgings that I wear slippers in the house.

List three words to describe your first day of school.

Guided, welcoming, chaotic

In what ways have your language skills improved?

SYA China has given me the best language instruction that exists. The skills I learn through my written homework and during both of the Chinese classes I take during the day translate into my everyday life. I can walk into any small noodle shop in Beijing and confidently order noodles. Then, I can even talk with the owners about my time in the city while I eat.

Describe a moment when you truly felt “at home” in your host city.

Now, I feel at home all the time in Beijing, but I still remember the first time that a family stopped their car next to me and asked me directions toward a road. I had no idea where the road was, but I was able to politely say to ask someone else.

Your favorite Chinese food is . . .

I absolutely love my host mom's hotpot. Although I also love plenty of other dishes, like Beijing duck, her hot pot is what I look forward to all week.

Three words that describe SYA China are:

Unexpected, extraordinary, challenging

What have you learned from living with your host family?

My host family was my passport to China. No experience is unimportant: There are lessons to be learned in breakfast conversation, in preparations to buy bok choy. I like to think I've become an honorary Chinese, thanks to living in such a supportive, comfortable and authentic Chinese household.

What is your most embarrassing cultural mishap?

I stopped to buy a roasted sweet potato on the way home from school and the owner asked me if I was from Xinjiang, home to a Turkic minority who, at times, look similar to Westerners. Tired and only beginning to get used to thinking on my feet in Chinese, I muttered that I was indeed, from Xinjiang. As he began to ask me questions about my life, I realized what I had said. Embarrassed and confused, I told him that America was my home. I still remember his puzzled look; he was probably thinking: “What a weird foreigner. She doesn't even know where she's from.”

Will you return to China to visit, study or live one day?

When I travel around China, the flight back to Beijing feels like my journey home. I know about the culture here, I know the language and I know what it's like to be in Beijing and love Beijing. China's home, and how could I not come back home?



Bridget Payne

The Hotchkiss School, Massachusetts

What will you miss the most about living in China?

Independence and progress. One of the things I savor the most about living in China is that on Saturdays I can choose to wake up, do some homework and then go to hotpot with some friends or visit a flea market to buy vintage Chinese posters. The second thing is the progress I'm making with my Chinese. I've learned more than I thought could fit in my brain!

One piece of advice you would give a new SYAer is . . .

Don't waste time, take advantage of opportunities and push yourself. I'm referring specifically to Chinese. Traveling around China has awed me. I've seen firsthand how in this country one language, Mandarin, can be used to communicate with people of every walk of life, of every ethnicity and of every background.

Why would you recommend a student to spend a year with SYA China?

Students who are looking for adventure, understanding, language skills and the opportunity to understand Chinese culture should not hesitate to come to SYA China. Everything, from the school environment, to the host family, to the travel opportunities, is beyond amazing. I've lived with the mayor of an ethnic minority village in Yunnan, seen a fabulous concert in the Great Hall of the People and made friends with the owner of a noodle shop near school.

What would you say to an interested student to convince her or him to study abroad with SYA?

SYA is the ultimate portal to the world. It's a program that I become more grateful to every day, and one that has given me a year of a lifetime of stories. If you're interested in expanding your view of the world and straying from the norm, you've already made your first step into what could be your future.

One Chinese word to summarize your experience is . . .

地道 *authentic*





SYA FRANCE ATTENDS GLOBAL ISSUES NETWORK CONFERENCE

By Ellen Taylor

Lakeside School, Washington

Bright and early on a Wednesday morning, a group of ten SYA France students boarded a train that would take them to Luxembourg and the Global Issues Network (GIN) 2012 youth conference. GIN is a conference that brings together students from around the world to address global issues and further inspire the youth community.

The conference took place over three days in mid-March and centered on the theme “Acting Responsibly in a World of Seven Billion.” Topics ranged from e-waste to developing school systems in emerging countries. Among guest speakers were Libby Powell, a passionate freelance journalist and winner of the 2010 Guardian International Development Journalism competition; and Magnus Mac Farlane-Barrow, the man who started a program called Mary’s Meals, which works in underdeveloped countries to provide meals in schools where poverty would otherwise prevent children from attending. “We represented the environmental aspect,” says Eilidh Jenness (Western Reserve Academy, Ohio), one of the three student club presidents. Four SYA students presented the efforts they’ve made in Rennes over the year.

The 15-member Club Environnement et Politique has worked all year to decrease SYA France’s environmental impact and raise awareness in the community. It has successfully started a compost system for the school as well as drastically increased recycling and paper-use awareness. It’s impressive how conservative printing has become, and the new question around school is “Can this be recycled?” It seems as if at every Monday assembly we have a *petite présentation* by the Environmental Club, like the most recent one: a hilarious video touting the benefits of the three R’s: Reducing, Reusing, and Recycling.

This year’s overarching theme for the club is to cultivate community connections and create sustainable projects that the new SYA class can pick up again next year. “The problem in the past,” explains Eilidh,

“has been that with each new year of students, the club had to start from scratch. Our goal is to bridge the gap between classes to create continuous projects that can be built upon each year.” As part of bridging this gap, the club has created an outreach program to build connections with similar environmental groups in other Rennes high schools.

Coming off the success of the conference, the Club Environnement et Politique is as motivated and active as ever. Its work this year developing a *réseau* (network) in Rennes has inspired the creation of a blog, which, it is hoped, will connect with students’ home schools and many of the international schools represented at GIN. Their next big project after this is a “green day” at SYA: a school day devoted to the discussion of how to improve the environment locally. “We’ll screen documentaries, hold workshops and invite speakers from Rennes to talk about their roles in the community,” says Eilidh.

The enormous success of the club this year goes to show how willing the SYA and Rennes communities are to make that little extra effort to be environmentally sound. Eilidh says she’s “looking forward to seeing the environmental club continue after [I’m] gone” as it continues to build upon the accomplishments of this year’s group. In the end, though, the most important thing is to create awareness that incites local changes, however small, that improve the world of seven billion in which we live.



Members of the Club Environnement et Politique at the GIN Conference





Yoonseok "Josh" Choi

St. Andrew's School, Delaware

What surprised you most when you first arrived in France?

The sheer number and variety of activities that were available quite surprised me. Although they were all extracurricular activities, there was everything, from after-school Spanish to Capoeira classes.

What was the most challenging adjustment?

The most challenging adjustment was not being able to eat when I wanted to. French families have very strict rules about snacking, which makes it difficult to eat outside of meals if you're in the house. But if you're out, there's so much food to discover.

SYA Q&A

List three words to describe your first day of school.

Stimulating, different, intriguing

In what ways have your language skills improved?

Bah, I must say learning to use the little words the French use in conversation. Another is finally being able to think in French, when speaking, listening or writing.

Describe a moment when you truly felt "at home" in your host city.

Coming back from an independent trip, after February break, I was tired out of my mind and had just arrived in Rennes. It felt so welcoming and nice to be back to the city, where you just spent six months getting to know it.

Your favorite French food is . . .

Some nice stinky Camembert, *saucissons*, crêpes, mussels and a lot more.

Three words that describe SYA France are:

Free, intellectual, adventurous

What have you learned from living with your host family?

I learned all about cheese and a wide variety of cultural knowledge, from French history to psychoanalysis.

What is your most embarrassing cultural mishap?

During the first six months, whenever I cut bread my host mom eyed me in a very bizarre manner. They told me one day that I had been cutting the bread the wrong way the entire time.

Will you return to France to visit, study or live one day?

Yes, of course! I'll definitely visit France in the near future, and I might decide to live here one day, too.

Why would you recommend a student to spend a year with SYA France?

It's an experience you really don't want to miss. It's an opportunity to learn and discover, and most of all to have fun while doing it.

What would you say to an interested student to convince her or him to study abroad with SYA?

Why not? Spending a school year abroad, especially with SYA, is something really special. I don't think there will be a single student who won't be reluctant to go back to the United States at the end of the year. And I'm sure it will be the same for you.

One French word to summarize your experience is . . .

Bouleversant

Celebrating SYA Italy

Recruiting for SYA Italy's first class began in the fall of 2000, and the following September, 46 students arrived in the town of Viterbo. Faculty, staff, host families, neighbors and friends wholeheartedly welcomed everyone involved with SYA and, through the past 10 years, have continued to be warm and caring supporters of our organization. In celebration of the 10th class to spend a year living in the idyllic town of Viterbo, learning in our classrooms at Via Cavour and throughout the cradle of Western civilization, several students were invited to share their thoughts about their SYA experience. Congratulations SYA Italy, class of 2012!



A SLICE OF LIFE

By Eleanor Runde

Lakeside School, Washington



We ran in with all abandon, stripping away our layers and plunging into the freezing Mediterranean. It felt a little like arriving here. At first the pain hit us hard, but we quickly succumbed to the radiating heat and joy we felt, stemming from our own selves and the people around us. Soon enough we were numb, and we started to enjoy our swim. Soaking and shivering, we splashed about, screamed and laughed at our self-imposed predicament.

The lessons I learned from my Sicilian dip are some of the same I gained from my first months here. First, freedom is not something to be gained by inches and increments. It is to be breathed, grasped, taken to be all your own so you can do with it what you want. That's the

definition of freedom, isn't it?

Second, I realized that intense joy is found in the challenge of the achievement; you've probably felt it after winning a difficult game or summiting a steep pass. Stretching your limits and constantly asking yourself to be better is every person's struggle. A program like SYA manages to make these limits elastic — or perhaps not there at all.

Finally, it's now clear to me that others have more to give you than you know. When you dive in, you realize what you've left behind and how much support you have at home. You also begin to understand the immensity of what you can learn not just from an entirely new culture and language, but also from the individuals with whom you surround yourself. Your peers and your family can be your teachers, if you let them. You can discover these things only by taking a leap, trusting others and never giving up on your own potential to succeed.

WORDS BRIDGE THE GAP

By Ava Van de Meer

Menlo School, California

At first, 6,207 miles can feel a bit daunting. It made me dizzy to think about it, to try to compare my measly, utterly exhausting three-mile run around my childhood town, Hillsborough, California, to the several countries and the entire ocean I would have to cross to reach Italy. And it was different. Every day of the first few weeks consisted of me having to remind myself: This isn't California, this isn't your house, this isn't your language, but this is home, this is your adventure and this is where you belong.

The most shocking thing is how quickly I stopped having to remind myself of this, how quickly it became embedded into my very being. Maybe it happened with my first cappuccino at Café Cioccolatini, the kind of place where you sit down and drink first, then go to the counter to pay. Or the first four-hour Sunday lunch with my extended host family during which I laughed so hard and ate so much that I could barely move the next day. Or, most likely, the first time my littlest host sister, Beatrice (7), told me "*Ti voglio bene, Eva*" (I love you, Ava).

We were sitting on the green chair in the living room, really the only room anyone ever uses, awaiting the sacred words "*Al tavolo, ragazzi*" (to the table, kids), which would mark my favorite time of the day — dinner. We had already exchanged our hopes that it would be *tortellini al sugo*, our mutual favorite, but secretly I was coveting eggplant Parmesan (the type *nonna* makes for special occasions). She was nuzzled under my arm, our legs swinging in unison, as we watched Disney Channel on the ceaselessly playing TV. I turned to her and told her she'd have to help me make an American breakfast for



the family that weekend, to which she replied, "*Certo*." Then, leaning closer to give me a hug and a nightly kiss on the cheek, she said the three words that beyond justified my odyssey in Italy. With a smile 6,207 miles wide, I replied: "*Ti voglio bene, mia sorella*" (I love you, my sister).

THE MOMENT I KNEW

By Connie Wang

Gabrielino High School, California



Connie, right, and classmate Clara Hunnewell, St. Paul's School, New Hampshire

My host family stopped being just my host family at a specific moment, when embarrassing myself became impossible because I had already lost all of my dignity. For me, this crucial, momentous and preferably forgotten, never-to-be-mentioned-again event happened late one night when my host sisters were in Rome, my host mom was asleep in her room and I was locked in the bathroom.

I had three options. There was option #1: *Keep trying to unlock the door*; option #2: *Bang on the door, wake up my host mom and live with the humiliation of locking myself in the bathroom*; or option #3: *Keep my dignity intact and climb out of the window*. Option #3 was clearly the best choice, but there was still one lingering issue: I would still have to find a way back into the house. After carefully reconsidering which

option would best facilitate my desire to keep my dignity intact, I decided to go with option #1.

After an hour of trying to unlock the door, the sound of quiet footsteps caught my attention. The worst I feared had happened. My host mom had risen from her sleep. Panic set in. It was all over. There was no avoiding the inevitable. So, I confessed. In a swift click, I left the confines of the bathroom and, along with it, my dignity. Or at least what dignity I had left at that point. In retrospect, I suppose I had lost most of my dignity when I contemplated climbing out of the window. Nevertheless, it was in that moment when I lost the rest of my dignity and the potential to further humiliate myself that I stopped feeling like I was living with another family. Instead, I felt like I was living *with* family.

CAME TO FIND A WORLD, FOUND A FRIEND

By Kyra Noonan

New Canaan High School, Connecticut

My first night in Viterbo turned out to be my host sister's 20th birthday. Unprepared, with no gift in hand and no word to the wise, after 24 sleepless hours of travel from Boston, my first adventure in Viterbo was going out to celebrate Agata's birthday with her friends. Not able to speak the language or understand, I slowly ate my tiramisu, smiling as often as I could, laughing at what I thought were the most appropriate times. To this day I hope none of her friends noticed the feat, how small I could take bites. A record, one tiramisu, two hours!

Fast-forward six months and "my sister" is sitting on my bed telling me in Italian, which I now speak (on a good



day), how she wishes I wasn't leaving this week. We both count the days until our next encounter, hoping it's the 17 days we scoff at rather than the three weeks it truly is. Both she and I know it's the beginning of the end of my days here. We both laugh as we give each other fashion advice, tease as

we remark on our straightened hair, split ends and all, and roll our eyes at dinner when my host father starts to explain something clearly far above my level of competence in Italian. It's true that in these 17 days I will miss her, almost as I would my own sister in America.

Although there were so many awe-inspiring experiences here, the temples in Agrigento, the intimate lectures in the museums in Rome, the birthplace of the *cannolo* in Sicily, none compares to the warmth I feel when I'm with my host family. When I decided to join this program, I expected to find new experiences; however, finding a new family was a gift I'll forever cherish.

MORE THAN A MANICURE

By Jan DeLozier

Ensworth High School, Tennessee

I had already unpacked my 100-plus pounds of clothing, showered off the last vestige of American scent left on my body and eaten my first authentic Italian dinner. As a brand-new exchange student in Viterbo, Italy, I hadn't the slightest idea what to do next. My host family and I sat at the dinner table, dining *al fresco*, both silently avoiding the fact that they spoke no English and I spoke almost no Italian. We were all waiting for an event — something that would miraculously unite us despite our differences. But that something was not a stupendous event or really anything exciting at all. In retrospect, we needn't be waiting for anything at all; we were simply having a moment.

This moment seemed simple and quaint; even the most antiquated Polaroid camera could capture the tranquility. But that was just the surface. My bewildered eyes scanned the clothesline, the basil and rosemary plants and the purple sky, and I was still in awe that this was my new home. Looking back at the dinner table, my host mother was motioning to a box she had placed on it.

Opening it, I smiled. She also didn't know what to do or what to say, but there was one universal activity we *donne* like to do: paint our fingernails.

Ivana, my host mother, pointed at a ritzy red polish in the box, indicating she liked the color for me. "*Mia favorita!*" I responded, as I secretly patted myself on the back for using the little Italian I knew. After she lit a cigarette, her tan, wise hands lifted the tiny bottle of polish and placed it in front of me. I painted my left hand with ease, but completing the other hand was a different story. I looked up at her and there she was, laughing a delicate smoke-ridden laugh. And then I, too, began to laugh.

I slid the bottle her way and with her divine nature of motherhood, she began to paint my right hand, just as my mom in Nashville would have done. Letting her cigarette fume to its end in the ashtray, I couldn't think of any silly anecdotes about fingernail painting to share with her. And as I also couldn't convey how excited I was to be spending the year with her and her family, I didn't say anything. We simply smiled.



Mary Heath Manning

Norfolk Academy, Virginia



What surprised you most when you first arrived in Italy?

It would be a lie if I said I walked off the plane and was filled with excitement. I was scared and I asked myself on more than one occasion why on earth I had willingly flown thousands of miles away from home to stay for nine months in a foreign country. I mean, what was I thinking? Every single aspect of my life had changed. However, despite all of this, things surprisingly felt normal relatively soon. I felt at home more quickly than I would have thought possible. On a lighter note, I was probably most surprised by the rate at which my capacity to clear my plate increased. One of my friends put it very well: "At first I felt so full, but now I just say 'Keep it coming!'"

What was the most challenging adjustment?

The adjustment to school was much more difficult than I had anticipated. Being in a completely new environment and having to put a lot of effort into schoolwork were definitely not easy.

List three words to describe your first day of school.

Terrifying, exciting, new

In what ways have your language skills improved?

I remember having dinner with my family in the first months and I wouldn't say a word. I would sometimes realize that I hadn't spoken in hours. Now, I talk and laugh with my family for hours a day because I'm no longer afraid to make mistakes. It also definitely helps that I know so much more grammar and vocabulary now than I did just a few months ago!

Describe a moment when you truly felt "at home" in your host city.

I was waiting for my bus one afternoon after school and an Italian woman from another city asked me for directions to a certain piazza. At first, when she noticed I wasn't Italian, she started to turn away, but I was able to tell her exactly how to get where she wanted to go. I felt so proud of myself that I was beaming and she gave me a peculiar look because to her it seemed as though giving simple directions wasn't any sort of remarkable feat. If only she could have known how much her simple question meant to me!

Your favorite Italian dish is . . .

I have to admit that I think my favorite thing I've eaten is my host mother's gnocchi and her homemade tomato sauce. It's a simple dish, but she does wonders with it.

Three words that describe SYA Italy are:

Difficult, rewarding, amazing

What have you learned from living with your host family?

I've learned to appreciate everything for what it is. This statement can be interpreted in two ways. Yes, I now appreciate my spacious shower and fluffy pillows in America a little bit more, but at the same time, I've realized that these aren't the things that make a person happy. I love my slightly

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cramped shower here and the fact that at least once a week the hot water goes away when I still have shampoo in my hair. In the first month, these were the things that made me miss home, but I know that when I'm back in America, these are the things I'll miss about Italy. My appreciation for these simple things, which could actually be considered inconvenient, is immeasurable and I know I only could have acquired it by living with my host family.

What is your most embarrassing cultural mishap?

Apparently, waiting until everyone is served is not a common practice in Italy. The first time I sat waiting for everyone at the dinner table, my family looked at me like I was crazy, so I started enthusiastically shoveling food into my mouth. I wasn't embarrassed at all the first time it happened. However, it's such a habit for me that I forgot again and again. I got the same look every time from my family, and each time my face grew one shade of red deeper.

Will you return to Italy to visit, study or live one day?

There's no doubt in my mind that I'll be back in Italy. Nothing could keep me away.

What will you miss the most about living in Italy?

I'll miss the slowed-down speed of life. Every day here I dread going back to my busy life in America, where no one has time to even say hello in passing. Here, we'll sit at the dinner table for over an hour just enjoying each other's company, and it feels so normal now.

One piece of advice you would give a new SYAer is . . .

Don't worry about making mistakes. This applies to speaking Italian and cultural faux pas.

Why would you recommend SYA Italy?

This experience has truly changed and enriched my life. It has taught me to be independent and responsible. It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and the things I've learned will stay with me forever. Along with all of these very important things, Italians in general are hilarious! I'll sit and listen to a casual conversation at dinner and howl with laughter. If given the opportunity, I would do it again in a heartbeat.

What would you say to an interested student to convince her or him to study abroad with SYA?

You'll most likely never have the opportunity to do something like this again, and it will absolutely change the way you look at the world. I'm not saying that by any means it's an easy thing to do. Actually, I can admit that it's the single most difficult thing I've done in my life. I missed my family, my friends and my house. However, as my time in Italy has started to run out, I can see that I'll miss Italy more than I ever missed America. When I was thinking about doing SYA, everyone said it would change my life and it got to be a little predictable. Now that I've experienced it firsthand, I completely understand why that's what everyone told me. It's difficult to describe it any differently. The bonds you'll make with every person you meet during your year abroad will be unlike any you've made before. It's an incredibly intense experience and you'll do things of which you never thought yourself capable. The only way I can think of to describe it is magical.

One Italian word to summarize your experience is . . .

Meraviglioso!



SYA Q&A

What surprised you most when you first arrived in Italy?

I immediately noticed the difference in the pace of life. Italians take it slower; they tend to take a step back, slow down and enjoy life. Coming from a suburb of New York City where people race to and fro, from one task to the next, the pace and relaxed lifestyle jumped out at me.

What was the most challenging adjustment?

The language. Before arriving in Italy, I knew about two words in Italian. This made the first few weeks with my host family pretty comical. Sitting at the dinner table attempting to comprehend my mom's Italian, which she rattled off at a pace that made my head spin. But now, seven months later, these are some of my fondest and funniest memories of my host family and me.

List three words to describe your first day of school.

Exciting, daunting, nerve-racking

In what ways have your language skills improved?

I arrived in Italy knowing absolutely nothing. After months of struggling to understand and express myself, I finally found a level of proficiency. The learning of a new language is one of my most rewarding experiences. Going from not knowing the basic pronouns to holding a conversation with my host mom about the disparity between northern and southern Italy is one of the most gratifying experiences.

Describe a moment when you truly felt "at home" in your host city.

I had a wonderful host family. They were always so open and kind to me; I never felt alienated in any way. I always felt at "home" but in the beginning of the year it was my home away from home. After three or four weeks of school, we had an orientation trip for three days in a beach town. Although this trip was very fun, it was tiring and at the end I was exhausted. As I settled into my seat on the bus ride home, I remember thinking to myself, "I can't wait to get home and see my family." That's when it really clicked for me: Italy is my home and my "host" family is not my "host" family, but my real family.

Your favorite Italian dish is . . .

My favorite Italian dish is probably carbonara. It is a delicious pasta dish that everyone should try. But the pizza is amazing!

Three words that describe SYA Italy are:

Eye-opening, fulfilling, memorable

What have you learned from living with your host family?

My family showed and taught me so much. They showed me the Italian way of life, how to take it slow and enjoy my time here. My family provided me with an amazing cultural cross section; it was the first time in my life that I could be an outsider looking in at America. I also gained a new worldly perspective. Being put into a family that doesn't have the same views, opinions or experiences as your own is an amazing learning experience. Obviously, my family was a tremendous help with my linguistic development.

What is your most embarrassing cultural mishap?

I was playing five-a-side soccer, or *calcetto*. My coach was asking me if my team was wearing pinnies or not. When I answered him, I mispronounced "*I pini*" and said "*Siamo senza pene*," which roughly translates to "We don't have male genitalia."

Will you return to Italy to visit, study or live one day?

Absolutely; Italy is my second home. I think it's extremely important to travel and study in countries foreign to your own. By placing yourself in a foreign environment, you become more open to new ideas and philosophies. I think living and studying abroad is vital to a well-rounded education.

What will you miss the most about living in Italy?

I'll miss my host family a lot. I don't really believe in the term "host family" anymore, they are my family. They're an integral part of my life; they've taught me so much. I view them in the same light as my American family, nine months of memories, lessons and values instilled in me. They've made an incredible impact on my life and I'll miss them more than any restaurant or city in Italy.



Chris Barnett
Brunswick School, Connecticut

One piece of advice you would give a new SYAer is . . .

Don't wait for things to happen, go out and take them. Make the most of your opportunity. Nine months seems like a long time, but believe me, at the end of your time here it will seem like only yesterday that you stepped off the plane in Rome, scared, timid and nervous. Be proactive: Go out and live it.

Why would you recommend SYA Italy?

SYA has been the most eye-opening experience of my life. SYA forces you to mature and act like an adult. This experience is invaluable. Living in Italy has made me more of a citizen of the world, and if that's not important, I don't know what is.

What would you say to an interested student to convince her or him to study abroad with SYA?

No high school sport's team or group of friends will ever amount to the experience of living in another country. I often think back to the time when I was making my decision about whether or not to attend SYA, and I can't even begin to imagine what I'd be doing right now if I was home. When I talk to my friends back home, they all say the same thing, "Nothing has changed." My main concern about coming to Italy was being the odd one out upon my return, having missed out on a year of normal high school. Now, however, I laugh at the notion of "missing out." My friends back home are the ones who have missed out on a life-changing experience.

One Italian word to summarize your experience is . . .

Sublime (yes, this is an Italian word)

What surprised you the most when you first arrived in Italy?

I was amazed at how quickly I became part of my host family. Family is very central to Italian culture, and they express it in the most kind and loving ways.

What was the most challenging adjustment?

Italian meals: the time they take and their quantity. Sunday lunch with my family can last hours, and the normal dinnertime is around eight. Yet now that I'm used to it, I think it'll be strange going home and eating dinner at six. Things here aren't better or worse. They're just different, and it's only a matter of what you're used to.

List three words to describe your first day of school.

Overwhelming, exciting, welcoming

In what ways have your language skills improved?

I arrived in Italy barely able to count to ten in Italian, and although I still have a long way to go, I've learned enough to communicate with my family, travel around Italy and help translate for my family in America.

Describe a moment when you truly felt "at home" in your host city.

I felt truly at home in Viterbo when my parents came to visit from America around the holidays and I was able to show them the best places for gelato, the way I walked to school every morning and all around town. It was cool because I got to share a whole new part of me with them.

Your favorite Italian dish is . . .

Out of all the delicious types of pizza and pasta, my favorite Italian dish is *pane e pomodoro*: bread and tomatoes, and it's exactly what it sounds like — chopped up tomatoes on top of toasted bread with olive oil and a whole bunch of delicious herbs added. It's one of the simplest dishes, but my host mom always makes it for me when I'm stressed about school or I miss home, and it has a way of just making everything better.

Three words that describe SYA Italy are:

Incredible, eye-opening, challenging

What have you learned from living with your host family?

I love my host family and everything they've done to help me and make me feel at home. After living with them for more than seven months, I now also have a greater appreciation for my own family back home. I don't think we can truly appreciate what we have until we have to live without it.

What is your most embarrassing cultural mishap?

When I first got here, I didn't know how to flush the toilet, nor did I know how to communicate that to my host family. I was so embarrassed, but my host mom totally understood and now it's just a funny story that we all laugh about. Learn from your mistakes — you'll have plenty of them — and don't worry about the small stuff: In the grand scheme of things, it's probably not as big of a deal as you think.

Will you return to Italy to visit, study or live one day?

Absolutely. A part of me will always be here.

What will you miss most about living in Italy?

The relationships I've made, with my host family, friends and teachers at SYA. The people here are incredible, whether it's the teachers and other students who've also chosen to spend a year abroad or the host families who are so eager to welcome you into their family; within a week, you'll feel at home.

One piece of advice you would give a new SYAer is . . .

An open mind is a necessity. Without it, you won't get very far; with it, your experiences are limitless. Try everything, but know your limits. Chances are you're not going to get another opportunity like this, so make the absolute most of it while you can.

SYA

Q&A



Samantha Robinson

Helena High School, Montana

Why would you recommend SYA Italy?

I would recommend SYA simply because it changed my life and my understanding of not only other cultures but also my own.

What would you say to an interested student to convince her or him to study abroad with SYA?

With the new technologies developing every day and new relationships forming between countries and cultures, our world is becoming smaller and smaller, and it's our generation who will have to deal with all its successes and failures. SYA is a program that enables you to go below the surface of each culture and gain a deeper understanding through experience. In coming here, you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Why not? You won't regret it.

One Italian word to summarize your experience is . . .

Inaspettato



FLYING HIGH WITH CIGÜEÑUELO C.

By Eli Kogan

Harvard-Westlake School, California



All of my life I've loved horses; starting at a very young age, I began riding Western. When I moved to London with my family at the age of six, I took up English riding and from then on I haven't stopped. Soon after beginning to ride English, I started jumping at South Medburn Farm. I fell in love with the first jump, and have been addicted ever since.

When I came to Zaragoza this year, I had no idea that I would be riding here, let alone competing in the Spanish national circuit. One of my teachers, Soledad Gutiérrez, introduced me to her stables in Utebo, just outside Zaragoza. There I met Juan Ignacio Lasquetty, a jumping champion of Spain, who I had the extreme good luck to have as a trainer. As the year went on and I learned more and more with Juan, winning a few small shows in the area, he brought up the idea of entering a national competition. Of course, I was all for it, and soon thereafter I found myself in the standings for a national show in Toledo. Juan let me compete with his horse Cigüeñuelo C., an eight-year-old dapple gray with an incredible competition background.

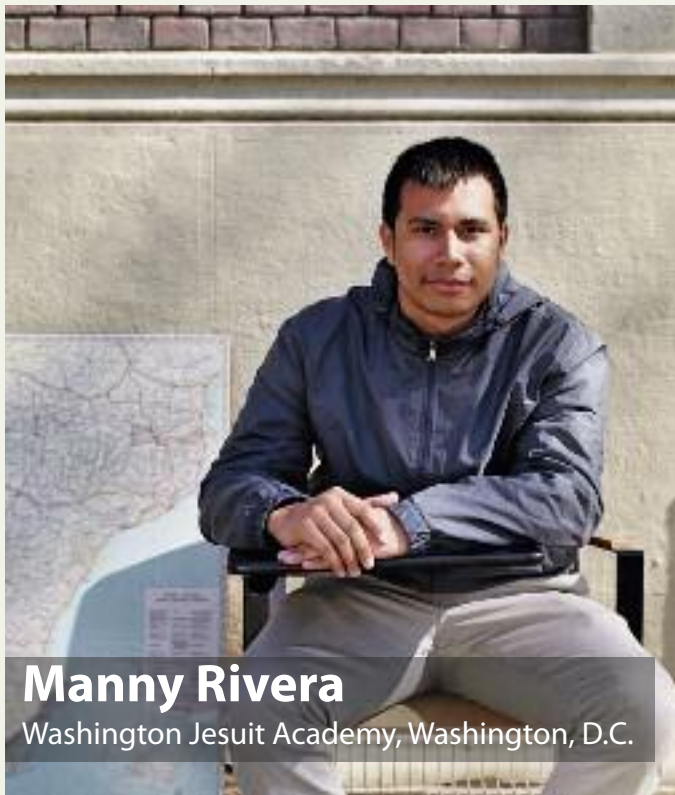
Before I knew it, I was on Cigüeñuelo C. in the warm-up ring in Toledo, set to jump 1.10 meters. With every stride, I found myself getting more and more nervous, looking out at the ring with big-name sponsors such as Coca-Cola, Santander, Tous and El Corte Inglés. Apart from the nerves and the fact that the first time I had ridden Cigüeñuelo was right there in the show, it all seemed to be going well. Eventually, they called me out to the ring and I began. The first jump, a vertical right in front of the crowd, was perfect. We flew over the second, an oxer. As I came around to the third jump, Cigu refused, turned quickly and sent me to the floor. Needless to say, I was downhearted, having trained so hard for that moment and to fall in front of everyone. Juan encouraged me, repeating "*No pasa nada*" and "*Mañana mejor*."

The next day indeed went much better. As I approached every jump, I made sure to tell Cigu that he was going to the other side no matter what. The 12-jump course seemed to last no time, as we completed it with zero

penalty points and within the time. I left the ring with a sense of satisfaction that nothing ever could have matched, until they called me back to the ring. That meant I had made it into the top three. In front of the judges and the crowd were three trophies, two small and one big. I couldn't believe my eyes when the two riders at my sides received the two small trophies and they began to approach me with the first-place trophy. Receiving it was a dream come true: Winning the first-place title after the challenge of the first day was the culmination of hard work and a difficult weekend. I left the ring happier than I ever thought possible, eager to compete again with Cigüeñuelo.

About two weeks later, I was back with Cigu and Juan in Segovia, at another national show. There, I didn't qualify top three the first day, but the second day I managed to sneak my way into first place again. I'm looking forward to the competitions throughout the rest of the year, and am considering coming back to Spain this July to compete again with Cigüeñuelo.





Manny Rivera

Washington Jesuit Academy, Washington, D.C.

What surprised you most when you first arrived in Spain?

My biggest impression was of the hospitality host parents offered to complete strangers. I wasn't expecting to have host parents who were very welcoming and accommodating from day one, making my transition from Washington, D.C., to Zaragoza less stressful.

What was the most challenging adjustment?

Getting used to the mealtimes was a difficult adjustment. I'd like to believe that it was because I'm a growing teenager, but I actually missed snacking every minute I possibly could. Getting used to the quotidian life in Zaragoza was my toughest adjustment. I was no longer in the small city, in my comfort zone, but I was on my own, with a new family, adjusting to their life.

List three words to describe your first day of school.

Daunting, jubilant, confusing

In what ways have your language skills improved?

Prior to SYA, I had basic speaking, reading and writing skills in Spanish. I wasn't very familiar with most of the basic grammar rules in writing, or the Spanish lisp, and my level of reading comprehension was marginal. Throughout the year, I've managed to make vigorous improvements in my Spanish pronunciation, reading comprehension and writing skills.

Describe a moment when you truly felt "at home" in your host city.

It's sad to say, but with the increasing franchises of McDonald's and Burger Kings in the city, I feel like I'm at home. For the most part, I feel "at home" when I have heart-to-heart conversations with my host parents. At one point, when I began to open up, I spoke to my host parents about how happy I was to be in Spain. There isn't a specific moment, but I can think of how I feel at home every day when I come home to share stories about the day with my host family.

What are your favorite Spanish dishes?

Paella, *fideuà* (similar to paella but made with thin noodles like vermicelli), Spanish omelet, *bocadillos*, *jamón ibérico* with a baguette, chorizo with a baguette.

SYA Q&A

Three words that describe SYA Spain are:

Surreal, successful, determined

What have you learned from living with your host family?

I've learned that regardless of where you live, you can always be successful if you're persistent. You can be anywhere in the world, learning a new language you're not familiar with, and if you persevere, you will prevail. That's one of the most important lessons I've learned from living with my host family.

What is your most embarrassing cultural mishap?

Being used to hearing Spanish from Central America can make a big difference when you're in Spain. I would often hear people say "*Qué mono*," which is like telling someone they're cute or charming. I wasn't familiar with this colloquialism, so I understood it with a literal meaning. *Mono* is the Spanish word for "monkey," so for a long time I thought this was an offensive expression. My host parents would repeatedly tell me "*Qué mono*," but I never understood the actual meaning of it. One day, I blatantly, but respectfully, told them, I'm not *mono*. It wasn't until after my reaction that they responded by telling me what it actually meant. I felt really bad because they were complimenting me for months but I thought they were calling me a monkey. How embarrassing!

Will you return to Spain to visit, study or live one day?

I will come back to Spain and visit whenever possible. If I have the opportunity to live in Spain, for studies or a career, I would love to come back.

What will you miss most about living in Spain?

Siesta? No, we don't get those. I'll miss not only the excellent food, but also living in a Spanish environment. After this year, I can say I got cultural experience of the Spanish life. Living in Zaragoza and enjoying all of the cultural experiences will be what I'll miss the most.

One piece of advice you would give a new SYAer is . . .

Never doubt your Spanish-speaking skills. If you're in doubt about how to say something, just say it. The worst that can happen is you're wrong and you're corrected by someone. Keep in mind that this is a good way to improve your language skills. Leave English in the English room, and in the United States.

Why would you recommend SYA Spain?

SYA, in general, is a unique program. Not only is SYA Spain the oldest of all the programs, but it's also a program centered in a great place. Zaragoza is a great place to live. There are many cultural festivities that are held in the city throughout the year, giving students the opportunity to experience them firsthand.

What would you say to an interested student to convince her or him to study abroad with SYA?

If you're serious about learning a new language, academics, experiencing the culture and living on your own, then SYA is perfect. This program challenges you to take this daunting language in a new world, and to own it by making it your world. By the end of the year, regardless of where your language skills were at the beginning, they will improve to perfection, if not more.

One Spanish word to summarize your experience is . . .

Inolvidable





HOME IS HERE

By Andrew Sanborn

Santa Barbara High School, California



I left Santa Barbara bound for LAX at dawn. My dad was driving me to my flight back to Vietnam and we were seriously late and had to burn rubber to make it to the airport before the plane left without me. But there was a reason that we were late — yet another tragedy had occurred in my town and at my sisters' school. Mike deGruy, the world-renowned ocean explorer and cinematographer, amazing friend and teacher at Santa Barbara Middle School, father of two of our classmates, died in a helicopter accident in Australia a couple of days after my uncle Matt died. It was a double shock for my family, as we are all friends with the deGruy family through different connections made over the years, and it was an immeasurable loss for our town, our school and the global ocean community. I was lucky to know Mike a little bit; he was an inspiring man who seemed to love everything he did.

We were late because we wanted to attend a sunrise swim in the ocean held in Mike's honor. We had time to attend the ceremony, but had to make a run for it before it was time to go in the water. As we approached L.A., it became clear that the 405 wasn't an option, so we took a chance and took the overland route down Malibu Canyon. It all turned out fine, and I made the flight in time. The flight time to Tokyo from L.A. was about 12 hours, but my seat was comfortable enough and I was able to watch many movies, so there are no complaints there. I had only a two-hour layover at Narita; I used that time to work on assignments and reflect on the past week I had spent in the United States.

My English teacher in Vietnam has told me that I give too many

details and not enough substance when I write, and she probably makes a good point. But details of the day are like comfort food to me, and you'll need to indulge me a bit.

I slept during the entire flight from Tokyo to Hanoi, from before takeoff straight until landing. It was around 11:30 p.m. when we landed. I breezed through customs and soon found myself back in the familiar chaos that is Hanoi. I have to say I really did enjoy taking a break from the madness on the streets. It was nice for a change not to see any motorbikes, and to have everyone follow the traffic laws. I had about eight hours in Hanoi, because on Sunday morning SYA was leaving on its trip to Hoi An, Da Nang and Hue. I arrived back at the house at 12:30 a.m. and was greeted by my host mom. My host dad was on a business trip and my sister was already asleep. I didn't actually sleep that night. The six hours to Hanoi was enough, so I watched TV and waited for morning.

The past few weeks have been a blur of truly unreal experiences for me, as I've been plucked out of class in Vietnam with the worst kind of news without warning; on a 24-hour journey to my — now unfamiliar — home; being with my grieving family and trying to make sense of an accidental death; days after then confronted with another accidental death; forced to watch helplessly as the community of people who had been supporting us were suddenly grieving themselves. And now, without having had any real time to process these things, I'm back in a foreign land, 10,000 miles from home.

Stranger still is my realization that those things feel like they took place in a faraway land, and only now have I returned home.





SYA Q&A

Jaya Sahihi

The Berkeley Carroll School, New York

What surprised you most when you first arrived in Vietnam?
How different it felt simply walking down the street.

What was the most challenging adjustment?

The most challenging adjustment for me was learning how to be a guest in the house, and be polite and at the same time to really become part of the family and be comfortable in the home.

List three words to describe your first day of school.

Connecting, unfamiliar, welcoming

In what ways have your language skills improved?

This experience really taught me that if you want something, you should give it your all. I wanted to learn this language so that I could become a real part of the city, and to do that I had to get rid of all self-doubts and judgments and just go for it.

Describe a moment when you truly felt “at home” in your host city.

For a while, my Sundays were the roughest days because I would be home alone or with my sibling doing homework and I didn't really know what to do with myself. I remember very clearly the first Sunday I decided I was sick of sitting around and I just wanted to go and I did some of the best exploring. I ended up finding my favorite café and bookstore and that was when I really felt I was getting to know and become part of this busy city.

Your favorite Vietnamese foods are. . .

Rice doughnuts, mango smoothies, *nem*

Three words that describe SYA Vietnam are

Awe-inspiring, eye-opening, motivational

What have you learned from living with your host family?

I don't even know how to put into words what my experience with my host family taught me. I guess most important, they taught me just how much of a difference kindness and acceptance really can make in someone's life.

What is your most embarrassing cultural mishap?

Sometimes it was really embarrassing not being able to understand my host grandparents.

Will you return to Vietnam to visit, study or live one day?

I hope so. If anything, this trip proved to me that I want to dedicate my life to something that involves traveling. And if that works out, I have no doubt that my travels will one day lead me back to Vietnam.

What will you miss the most about living in Vietnam?

The fact that every time I walked out of my house, even just out of my room, there was something new to learn, to see and to discover about both this amazing culture and myself. The growth I experienced there seemed exponential compared to how it is during a normal day at home.

One piece of advice you would give a new SYAer is . . .

You've made it this far and it only gets better!

What would you say to an interested student to convince her or him to study abroad with SYA?

There is absolutely no reason not to. Not only will you be supported academically, you will also learn things that are simply impossible to learn in a normal classroom. At the end of the year, I promise you'll feel you've grown so much and really come to know more of who you are as a person, and, more important, who you might want to become.

One Vietnamese word to summarize your experience is . . .

tuyệt vời!



Zaragoza: My Second Home

By Garanique Williams ES'12, Ángel Vilalta Scholar
Green Farms Academy, Connecticut



I have to start off by saying wow, this school year has been extraordinary, astonishing and unlike any other. Thanks to the Ángel Vilalta Scholarship and my family, I have been able to transform a normal school year into something miraculous. Nothing could ever compare to SYA Spain. Last year at this time I was sitting at my home school, Green Farms Academy, day-dreaming about what SYA would be like for a student like me. Now, having experienced Spain and its culture for almost a full year, I can't sum up my experience in one word. It's everything I imagined and more. The only thing I can say is that I recommend SYA to any student considering it, even in the slightest.

In order to make my experience a little more relatable, I encourage you to imagine a successful school year. Envision a year in which you've learned things both interesting and unique, and enjoyed every minute. Picture having your class in the old cathedral you're currently studying or traveling to a faraway town to witness the unique lives of others. Imagine understanding all of your classes in your target language. Now multiply that feeling of satisfaction and wonder by 100. That's only part of the SYA experience.

This year has allowed me to observe and learn about a culture face-to-face. As a student, I was submerged in the traditions and day-to-day activity of Zaragoza. Zaragoza, one of the prettiest cities

in Spain, is full of surprises. You never stop learning with each and every new day. I'd see someone performing the *jota* in the Plaza de Pilar while sipping an evening coffee. Maybe I'd be running to catch a bus and witness a riot. You never know what will happen in Zaragoza.

Besides the interesting things that take place there, I was able to travel. I experienced different cities in Spain, which helped expand my horizons. I spent New Year's in Barcelona, chewing grapes on the balcony of my apartment, and a *semana santa* in Ibiza. There's much culture in this country, and spending a year here helped me absorb it all.

The faces you come to know are the best part of being abroad. I'm so thankful for all of the friends I've made and my new family members. Everyone who has shared my experience here in Spain holds a special place in my heart. I came to Spain with the idea that I was alone except for the other students in my position. I knew that every student and I were all striving for the same goal, but I also knew there was no more familiarity or comfort zone in my future. Knowing what I knew when I got off the plane I had two options: make the best of it or think about what I would be doing back home. Without a second thought, I chose the first option, and don't regret a second of it. I took my positive attitude and set forth to start my new life in the unknown city. My new family helped me find my way. After gaining some confidence, I set forth to make friends of my own. I soon realized that submerging myself in Spain made it that much easier for me to relate to others. Having some experience made conversation that much easier. When I look back and think about the pride I have now for being able to express myself in Spanish, it makes me smile.

SYA Spain will always be an experience to remember. It has only positive outcomes. It allowed me to discover myself, an unfamiliar culture and wonderful people. I helped me drastically improve my Spanish and increase my independence. This memory will stick with me for the rest of my life. I'm so glad that I was able to familiarize myself with Zaragoza, my second home. 🇪🇸



Garanique Williams and Ángel Vilalta

Shi Lili's deep knowledge and warm heart enhance the SYA China experience

Shi Lili's experience as witness to momentous changes in her native Chinese society has made her an invaluable asset to SYA China and, especially, to student participants in the program.

As she notes, "I know what it's like to experience radical change, to be in an unfamiliar place, so I can understand how different China can seem to our students."

Ironically, one of the biggest changes in Lili's life happened when she was the same age as many SYA China students. She was 16 years old when she was swept into the societal maelstrom known as the "Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside" movement during the Cultural Revolution. "It was a profound event in my life," recalls Lili. "I was taken from my family in the city to live and work in Inner Mongolia."

Working as farmers, Lili and her fellow students gained "a new understanding of how things work," she says. Nevertheless, Lili's time in rural China provided a glimpse into her future. In assisting local residents with knowledge of traditional healing arts, Lili developed an interest in Chinese medicine. "I came to appreciate healing and pain-management techniques like acupuncture," she recalls.

Lili eventually accepted an opportunity to work in a factory's hospital in Tianjin. During this time, she was able to further explore her interest in medicine. In 1978, Shi Lili married Wang Xinzhen, her long-time friend. The couple moved to Beijing, where their daughter, Nan, was born in 1981. Two years later, Lili was accepted into the Chinese Medicine College and embarked upon her medical career after graduation.

While Western society has become familiar with Chinese medicine, Lili points out that much can still be learned about the Eastern approach to health and healing. "Chinese medicine regards illness as a person being out of balance with his or her environ-



ment. Steps are then taken to bring the entire body back into harmony with nature. This is different from Western medicine, in which health issues — anything from a headache to cancer — are a localized problem to be solved," she says.

From 1988 to 1989, Lili joined her husband in the United States, where he was attending college, to live with an elderly couple in Washington, D.C. "They were our host parents," Lili recalls. "I learned a lot from them about America, not only the language but also the culture."

Lili's life took yet another unexpected turn when she was introduced to Woody Halsey, the legendary SYA president who retired in 2011. At the time, Halsey was contacted by Lili's sister-in-law, who was teaching Chinese at Andover. She knew that Halsey was considering the start-up of SYA China and suggested that he contact Lili during his initial scouting trip to her country, in 1993.

"Woody and I had talked about SYA when he came to Beijing," recalls Lili. Subsequently, she was among the first staff to be hired when

SYA China opened, in 1994.

Since then, Lili has helped the program to become one of SYA's most successful global initiatives. She spends considerable time recruiting host families and matching them with SYA students, while also ensuring that such arrangements remain mutually beneficial.

The key to matching the right host family with the right student rests with Lili's proven sensitivity. "A lot of it has to do with really understanding Chinese families and discussing their thoughts and hopes about having a student live in their home," she says.

Similarly, Lili listens carefully to the wishes of SYA students. This is where her own life experiences, from both the Chinese countryside and her stay in the United States, often come into play. "I've been there," she says. "I know what it's like to find yourself someplace that's totally unlike your home. It's very important that our students have a positive learning experience while they're here with us."

To make this happen, she counsels students not only to learn the Chinese language but also to become immersed in her country's culture. "I encourage them to see the world through different eyes, to try and see things from the Chinese perspective," she says. "This is the only way to truly understand another culture and its people."

The results are SYA placements that are meaningful and memorable, thanks to Lili. Indeed, she takes special delight in watching her young students "mature quite a bit," as she puts it, during their stay.

As to the future, Lili would like to see SYA China "expand dramatically," she says, so that more students "have the opportunity to come to China."

And you can be sure that Lili will be part of SYA China's continuing development. "There is great variety in what I do, and there is never a typical day," she says. "Yes, I will remain here for quite a while longer." 🌸

The First Women of SYA



Ruth Ann Gillis: Discovering Cultural Vibrancy



As a junior high school student, Ruth Ann Gillis was excelling in Spanish, so when her parents came across a *New York Times* article reporting that School Boys Abroad would begin admitting female students in 1970, it seemed like an ideal opportunity for their daughter. “I thought it was a great idea, too,” recalls Gillis.

The fact that she would be among the first girls to enter the program was viewed as a sign of progress. “I realized that it was important. But at the same time, I was aware that it was among many ‘firsts’ for the women of my generation,” says Gillis.

Gillis’s placement with the Baiges, her host family, provided a

rare glimpse into Spanish culture and history. “My host father, Juan, was a veteran of the Spanish Civil War, although I was never sure whether he fought as a communist or as a socialist,” she says. “He often talked about that conflict and it just seemed that he had many broken dreams due to the fascist victory in his country.”

Gillis has fond memories of her host mother, Carmen, introducing her to regional Spanish cuisine, including the seafood classic known as paella. She became close friends with her host family’s daughter, also Carmen, whom she accompanied to local discos and parties.

It was Carmen and her Catalán classmates who introduced Gillis to a stark reality of life in Barcelona: dissatisfaction with the fascist regime of Generalissimo Franco, Spain’s dictator. “The tension was obvious,” says Gillis. “The road signs were in Spanish and you couldn’t speak Catalán in public. There were civil guards on nearly every street corner carrying machine guns.”

She continues: “But the students voiced more frustration with the lack of modernization than with the military rule. There was a sense that Spain was falling behind more-progressive European nations.”

One of the program’s most admired teachers, Ángel Vilalta, also expressed concerns about Spain’s political climate. “He shared with us his disappointment about the endurance of the fascist regime and his hopes for a time when the fascists would not be running the government,” says Gillis.

Despite the political realities, Gillis enjoyed the positive aspects of Spanish culture and

society. “I loved the arts,” she says. “Thanks to SYA, we took tours to cities like Toledo, where we viewed many of El Greco’s works — I remember that the blue in the skies of his paintings was the same blue of the Toledo skies, while the long, emaciated faces that he depicted were haunting.” She also admired the art of other Spanish greats, such as Picasso and Goya.

Gillis noted that both she and her classmates were greatly influenced by SYA teacher Vilalta’s views on the importance of cultural achievement. “He showed us that the vibrancy of any culture is measured by the vibrancy of the arts,” she says.

Gillis cherishes specific memories of her time in Barcelona. “Every morning, my school bus would pass Gaudí’s Cathedral, which features unusual sculptural elements by one of Spain’s greatest architects. I can still see the sparkling sunlight of the Mediterranean shining behind this incredible example of Barcelonan architecture.”

She also practices much of what she took from her SYA Spain experience. “I learned many things while in Barcelona,” she says. “I learned to embrace diversity, to see change as an opportunity and to listen.”

Today, Gillis puts these well-learned lessons into play in her roles as executive vice president and chief administrative and diversity officer of Exelon Corporation and as president of Exelon Business Services Company, a leading U.S. energy provider.

“As a business professional, I’ve come to especially appreciate what SYA taught me about diversity — that it should be sought, rather than shunned. There is no doubt that the language, cultural and life experience that I gained in Spain was beyond formative for me,” she says.



Nixon was president. People flocked to see *Love Story*. IBM introduced the floppy disk. *That Girl* was the number one TV show and “Layla” was ubiquitous on the radio. The median household income was \$8,734. The Baltimore Orioles won the World Series.

It was 1970, and School Boys Abroad changed its name to School Year Abroad as the first girls were brought into its program. Some heard about the change through faculty, some from their brothers, others read an article published in the *New York Times*. Word spread and eventually SYA Spain welcomed 13 girls to its school for the 1970–71 academic year. Six of those pioneers share memories of their time in Barcelona.



Michele French: Expanding International Horizons



By the time Michele French began SYA Spain, in 1970, she had already lived in Mexico and Europe, but, she says, participation in the program offered her an opportunity for a multicultural educational experience that was previously unknown to her. “In a way, I enjoyed a new level of independence,” she recalls.

It was French’s mother who first became aware of School Year Abroad. “Although we had been living in France at the time, my mother wanted something more formal in terms of an international education for my brother and me,” says French. “She did some research and came up with SYA.”

French remembers being eager to get started. “At the time, my brother

and I were being tutored because we did a lot of traveling with my mother,” she says, “so the idea of being in a classroom with kids my own age was very appealing to me.”

As one of the first girls in SYA, French found few distinctions between the genders. “It didn’t seem dramatically different, although the staff and faculty were a bit more protective of the girls,” she says.

After speaking Spanish in Mexico, more obvious now were some differences in the Spanish language. “It was similar to an American traveling in England,” she says. “The language is basically the same, but the accent and certain terms differ between Mexican and Spanish.”

Culturally, there were also differences between Mexico and Spain. “The Mexican people seemed a lot more open, rowdier; the Spanish were more reserved,” she says. “This could have had much to do with the fact that Spain was considered almost a Third World country under the dictatorship of Generalissimo Franco.”

It was through language that French became aware of Spain’s sensitive political climate. “The government prohibited local citizens from speaking in their native Catalán, although they would do so in their own homes,” says French. “It was just one example of Franco’s rigid, fascist regime.”

Indeed, French witnessed such oppression firsthand. “A group of us were going to see a concert featuring folksinger Pete Seeger and some local Catalán singers,” she recalls. “We soon found ourselves running from police on horseback and from water cannons, which were used to disperse the crowd, because the government disapproved of the performance.”

Such troubling impressions, however, were countered by many positive experiences. “As students, we would go to class and in the afternoon enjoy getting together at a café to talk and drink coffee,” she says. She made many Spanish friends and went with them to discos for afternoon dance parties.

French frequently took public transit with her girlfriends to wander through the Gothic parts of the city, Barcelona’s oldest sections, constructed during the Middle Ages. She even engaged in her favorite hobby — horseback riding. “I managed to get together a few students and we’d go to a local stable for riding and lessons,” she says.

She has fond memories of her host family, who, French says, included her for all family dinners as well as other special occasions. “At times my host mother would worry that I didn’t take a sweater to school, but I assured her that I knew how to dress,” French says, laughing.

French eventually settled in Mexico, where she has become a successful jewelry designer. Her jewelry is particularly praised for its distinctive international style, with Middle Eastern, Iranian and Indian influences.

Her lifelong love of traveling and living in other countries has made her a strong advocate for programs, such as SYA, that provide such experiences. “Every student should have the opportunity to travel abroad,” she says. “Our world is simply too interconnected today for students not to be aware and appreciative of other nations and cultures.”





Ellen Hoitsma: The Best of Both Worlds



The daughter of a Phillips Academy mathematics teacher, Ellen Hoitsma remembers the day when her father said her entire family would be living in Barcelona by the time she entered 10th grade. “And if my Spanish became strong enough,” she now says, “he told me I could attend SYA as one of the first female students.”

It was 1970, and after the excitement of acceptance into the program, Hoitsma wrestled with insecurities. “I was naturally apprehensive about the idea of living in Spain, being away from all of my friends, but also recognized that it was an awesome opportunity for me and for my family,” she says.

She was further encouraged by a learning opportunity during the summer prior to her departure for

Spain. “I was very fortunate to be able to study Spanish with Ángel Vilalta, SYA Spain’s language teacher, who happened to be teaching Spanish at Andover that summer,” she says. “Thanks to him, I benefited from a crash course in Spanish that helped me feel a little more secure about my entry into the program.”

Upon starting SYA Spain, where her father would be teaching, Hoitsma became far more confident than she could ever have imagined. “I had the best of both worlds,” she says. “I was able to study abroad while living with my own family because of my father’s teaching role at SYA Spain. I began by exploring the city with other students in the program — Susan Rutherford McCouch was one of my best friends. But eventually I made friends with Catalán students, including a Spanish boyfriend.”

Everything about Barcelona was new and thrilling to Hoitsma. “The Spanish art, music, dance, food — all of it was a novel experience for me despite exposure to them back home,” she says. She especially enjoyed trips to the countryside with her fellow students, trekking and skiing in the Pyrenees.

Even the one difference in her yearlong Spanish residency — the fact that, unlike her fellow students, she lived with her own family — turned out to be a positive one. “It gave me the security to spread my wings,” says Hoitsma. “And thanks to Susan, I got a glimpse of what it was like to live with a Spanish family.”

Hoitsma believes Spain’s political landscape further enriched her SYA stay. “It was a very exciting time to be there,” she says. “Beneath the rigid conservatism of the regime of Generalísimo Franco, Spain’s dictator, this Catalán city

— resentful of the government’s repression — was alive with political and social ferment.

“The conservatism played to our advantage,” she says, “because it meant the city streets were very safe for women simply because people were terrified of committing a crime.”

Hoitsma’s awareness of her host country’s turmoil was heightened on many levels. Her Catalán friends, in particular, in private frequently questioned the dictatorship. “And SYA teacher Mr. Vilalta raised our awareness of popular demands for political change,” she says.

Gender issues also figured prominently in Hoitsma’s daily life. “There was a sense that having girls in the program was a learning experience for everyone,” she says. For example, she participated with other SYA girls in groups led by Señora Vilanova focusing on Spanish customs for women, as well as cooking and shopping trips.

Years later Hoitsma discovered what the addition of the first girls meant to the boys. “I discussed the program with several D.C.-based alums who were in SYA Spain at the same time,” she says. “According to them, the boys were happy to have the girls in the program because, in their view, it softened the tone, made it less male-oriented.”

Eventually, SYA Spain influenced Hoitsma into choosing teaching as a career. Today, she’s a third-grade teacher at The Park School, in Baltimore. “I’ll often use my Spanish to capture the attention of my students,” she says, laughing. “More than anything, SYA cemented my desire to encourage children to explore the world and become lifelong learners themselves. I want them to become solid global citizens.”



“... a formative experience that had a lifelong impact”

Diane Runyan Bech: A Wish Come True



It was the wonderful tales of their Spanish adventures shared by her brothers, Desmond Runyan ES'67 and Raymond Runyan ES'67, that first piqued Diane Runyan Bech's interest in School Year Abroad.

“I gained some familiarity with Barcelona, where they attended the School Boys Abroad program,” she says. “But as a girl, I realized I couldn't participate.”

For this reason, Bech was very excited when, in 1970, the program opened to girls during her junior year of high school. “I was already fascinated by Spain, wanting to study there, and, lo and behold, my wish came true,” she says.

Bech's brothers helped her with another aspect of her study-abroad experience. “The father of one of the

families who hosted my brothers came to visit with us in Connecticut. I had the advantage that when I was accepted by SYA, this family requested that I stay with them,” she says.

Nothing could have prepared Bech, however, for experiencing SYA Spain firsthand. “Spain was even more wonderful than I had imagined,” she says.

Among Bech's most compelling impressions about Barcelona, and Spain in general, was of its art and architecture. “I fell in love with it — I even wanted to be an art historian for a while,” she says. In particular, she became a big fan of the early-20th-century architect Antonio Gaudí, whose buildings can be seen throughout Barcelona. She especially enjoyed the SYA-sponsored bus trips that introduced students to the Moorish-influenced art that exists throughout the city and beyond, such as in Madrid.

Bech also became enamored with the residents of Barcelona. “The Cataláns were so full of life — a very industrious people,” she says.

Her fondest memories include browsing the vendors on Las Ramblas, a pedestrian marketplace where birds, books and other merchandise were sold. The Books and Roses Festival, at which outdoor merchants sold roses and books throughout the city, was another favorite.

Bech was greatly influenced by SYA as well, especially teacher Ángel Vilalta. “He was a wonderful language teacher who did a great job conveying the culture and politics of the country,” she says.

Ironically, Bech discovered years later that Vilalta's enthusiasm for SYA had a distinctly

political dimension. “During a visit with my family, he indicated that he wanted to show American students the injustices of Franco, the Spanish dictator at the time, and of his regime. He hoped students would return to the United States with a real understanding of the evils of the Spanish government,” she says.

As one of the first girls in SYA, Bech was aware of subtle differences among staff and instructors regarding boys and girls. “They were definitely more protective of the girls,” she says.

Bech treasures her lifelong relationship with her host family. “They were caring, considerate people,” she says. “The mother, Maria, was blind in one eye. She was also a great cook. One day I came home and found her sitting at the dining room table painstakingly writing down her recipes for me — something that was very difficult, given her limited vision. It was very sweet.”

Years later, Bech shared her host mother's handiwork with Cecilia Magrané, the daughter of the host family. “Her mother had recently passed away and when she saw the recipes, she cried — it was a very touching moment for both of us,” Bech says.

Today, Bech is a successful commercial litigator living in the Philadelphia area. She not only remains grateful for the life lessons learned through SYA but also strongly advocates the same for current high school students.

“We would have a very different world if every sixteen-year-old was given the opportunity to study abroad,” she says. “By developing a broader, more in-depth view of global culture, these students would be able to develop a much better world than the one that exists today.”



Susan Rutherford McCouch: A Heartfelt Sense of Independence



When Susan Rutherford McCouch first learned that girls could be part of School Boys Abroad (which would soon become School Year Abroad), “it seemed to be an opportunity and a challenge that very much appealed to me,” she says.

In many ways, McCouch was aware of the distinction of being one of the first female SYA participants. “It was very exciting,” she says. “On the other hand, I came from a generation where everything seemed to be opening up for women, so my entry into SYA in 1970 didn’t seem all that unusual to me.”

Many of McCouch’s fondest SYA Spain memories center on her host family. “They were a family of very modest means,” she says. “They lived in a small apartment and I shared a tiny bedroom with my host sister, whose name was Montserrat.”

Despite their limited resources, McCouch’s host family proved generous in ways she greatly appreciated. “There was no hot water, but once a week my host mother would heat a pot of water on the stove just so I could wash my hair. It was very sweet,” she recalls fondly.

Living in such close quarters had its advantages. “Because their place was so small, everyone spent a lot of time interacting with each other,” says McCouch. “This helped me a great deal in learning the local customs and language.”

It was this growing familiarity with Catalán society that made McCouch aware of Spain’s political realities. “Once, I was walking with my host sister and Catalán friends who were talking together in downtown Barcelona. Abruptly, soldiers interrupted us and commanded ‘*Habla cristiano*,’ meaning ‘Speak Castilian.’ They were angered that we were talking in Catalán, which was banned in public by the Franco dictatorship.”

Beyond language, McCouch observed street demonstrations that were brutally dispersed by local soldiers and police. “I also had Catalán friends who would speak in private about their opposition to the Franco regime,” she says. “Many of them had relatives who were killed in the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s or were recently thrown in jail.”

But she found much to like about Barcelona and Spanish society. She says she was captivated by the art and architecture of her host country. In particular, she appreciated the urban plazas and the way families, friends, street vendors and musicians interacted within these centers of Spanish life.

The daylight was also compelling. “Because I paint,” she says, “I noticed that Barcelona had a particular type of sunlight — the quality of light and shadow was very distinctive.”

What McCouch took most from her SYA Spain experience, however, was a heartfelt sense of independence. “We would go off on day trips, taking public transit to museums or the countryside,” she says. “Getting out and exploring this place on my own or with friends was very empowering to me.”

After SYA, McCouch returned to Spain as a college student, and eventually graduated from Smith College with a degree in Hispanic studies.

Upon graduation, she embarked on a hitchhiking tour from Massachusetts to Argentina. McCouch traces this experience, coupled with her international development work and SYA participation, as inspiring her to choose a career as a plant geneticist. “The whole cultural cross-pollination between Spain and the Americas — in which plants, foods and agriculture played a large role — led me to graduate studies in plant biology and plant breeding,” she says. Presently, her research on plant hybridization at Cornell University has made her a leader in her field.

McCouch believes in the benefits she gained from SYA as a teenager. “High school students really need to see, firsthand, how the world works,” she says. “If more people were exposed to other cultures at a younger age, they would be less likely to engage in violent global conflict — and would have more global understanding — as adults.”

“I fell in love with art and architecture, which have remained lifelong passions”



Emily Nicklin: A Transformational Experience



It was a flyer posted in the hallways of her Quaker high school that Emily Nicklin often passed without notice — until now. “There was something different about it,” she recalls. “Looking more closely, I saw that School Boys Abroad had become School Year Abroad. I thought, ‘How wonderful: I don’t have to wait until college to study overseas.’”

Proficient in Spanish and French, Nicklin says she was “elated, thrilled” upon her acceptance into SYA Spain in 1970. She describes her SYA participation as “transformational,” putting her in new intellectual and social situations.

Spain’s political realities made a deep impression. Before starting classes, SYA students read George Orwell’s *Homage to Catalonia*, a memoir detailing his experiences fighting with Republican forces against Generalissimo Franco’s rebels during the Spanish Civil War. Franco was still Spain’s fascist dictator when Nicklin lived in Barcelona.

“You knew the bad guys won that war,” says Nicklin. “It was a rigid and strict fascist society.” For example, a scheduled concert by legendary folk musician Pete Seeger was not merely canceled; it became a demonstration of government power. “Because Seeger was scheduled to perform with Spanish singers who favored more freedom, police on horseback and water cannons were used to dis-

perse the students who had gathered to hear the concert,” says Nicklin.

But it was evident even to outsiders like Nicklin and her classmates that change was coming soon. “It was a fabulously interesting place to be at the time,” says Nicklin. (Ultimately, King Juan Carlos I, who was chosen by Franco to be his successor, helped lead Spain’s transition to a constitutional monarchy, in 1975.)

One of Nicklin’s favorite SYA instructors, Ángel Vilalta, supported such reforms. “He was clear that transformation was essential for his country, and welcomed by its people,” she says.

Despite restrictions, Nicklin appreciated the small social freedoms of her fellow students. “We would go to class in the morning, then in the afternoon drink coffee and talk at a little café,” she says. “I’d use the metro and buses to get around the city as I pleased.”

She took trips to the countryside — to farms and to the Pyrenees with her host family. During school vacations, she participated in SYA excursions to Toledo, Madrid and Burgos, which, says Nicklin, were all “remarkable.”

A visit to a monastery, built during the Middle Ages, proved especially spiritual. “I developed an appreciation for a totally different existence, one in which solitude and faith were paramount,” she says.

“For kids from the United States to be somewhere with a history and culture that goes back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,” she says, “it was almost beyond comprehension for us.”

All the while, Nicklin was aware of her role as one of the first female students in SYA. “It was with us — the girls — every day,” she says. “Fascism restricted all the students; sexism restricted only the female students.”

Nicklin believes her group of young women helped set a standard for SYA. “Just the simple acts of attending classes and living our lives, we helped blaze the trail for the girls who followed us in SYA,” she says.

Today, Nicklin is a partner with Kirkland & Ellis LLP, in Chicago, where she is recognized as one of the top litigators in the United States. Her work on behalf of clients such as PricewaterhouseCoopers, Navistar International, General Motors and Accenture has been praised nationwide.

In many ways, some of the roots of Nicklin’s personal and professional success can be traced to the year she spent living and learning in Barcelona. “It gave me a deep sense of the range of human experience,” she says. “At the same time, my SYA participation taught me the importance of empathy, which has stayed with me all my life.”

Class of SYA Spain '71 Alumnae

Diane Runyan Bech

Margaret F. Couch

Michele French

Ruth Ann Gillis

Ellen Hoitsma

Susan Rutherford McCouch

Martha McCoy

Emily Nicklin

Jani K. Rachelson

Pamela T. Rosenberg

Janis A. Tomlinson

Julia Harte Widdowson

Kim Nathan Wright
(deceased)





SYA Spain Dedication Celebration

March 29, 2012
Paseo de Pamplona, 2

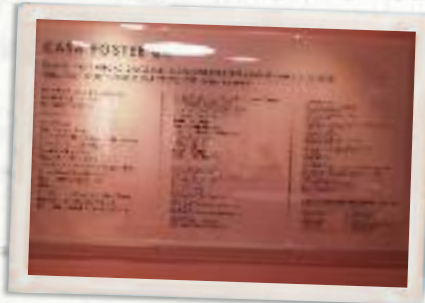
Interim Spain Resident Director John Rosen, Spain faculty, staff and students welcomed more than 100 guests from around the globe to take part in the celebration of the official naming of our new home in Zaragoza, *Casa Foster 64*. In attendance were legendary teacher Ángel Vilalta, Francesca Piana ES'93-97RD, former SYA President Woody Halsey, Becky McCann, wife of former Spain Resident Director and Executive Director Hal McCann, and leadership donors Carlos and Malu Alvarez FR'00P, Nicola Bulgari FR'81P ES'86P, Natalia Bulgari ES'86, and Stephen Foster ES'65, in whose honor *Casa Foster 64* is proudly named. Foster is a member of SYA Spain's first class and served for six years as SYA's first alumnus trustee.



Former Trustee Stephen Foster with ES'65 (left) and Trustee Natalia Bulgari ES'86 cut the ceremonial ribbon to officially name SYA Spain's new home, *Casa Foster 64*.

Guests viewed a video of the reconstruction of the new space, were delighted by a student a cappella performance and an exquisite Spanish-themed piano recital performed by Spain faculty member Oriol Bastardes, and listened to remarks from several speakers, including SYA President Jack Creeden. "We're here tonight not only to celebrate," said Creeden. "We're here to thank the many generous donors who helped make this dream a reality. I'm delighted, thankful and so proud of what has been accomplished here, and I look forward to what this environment will provide for students for many years to come."

The donor wall was revealed, and a heartfelt toast was offered by Griffin Morse ES'02-'11RD (sabbatical). Stephen Foster and Natalia Bulgari, who poured enormous time and talent into creating the dynamic learning environment that is now SYA Spain, cut the ceremonial ribbon and officially dedicated *Casa Foster 64*.



The donor wall unveiled



SYA Spain faculty (from left) Oriol Bastardes, Kim Baker, Pauline Pauzausek, Arik Visser, Antonio López-Piña and Soledad Gutiérrez



Interim Spain Resident Director John Rosen ES'98-'02, '12RD and Ines Trias ES'98-'02F



Becky McCann (left), wife of former Spain Resident Director and former Executive Director Hal McCann, and former Spain Resident Director Francesca Piana



(From left) Sherry and David Berz ES'65 and SYA President Jack Creeden



Nicola Bulgari FR'81P ES'86P (left) and Trustee Carlos Alvarez FR'00P



ES'12 a cappella singers (from left) Tiarra Riggins, Cassie Willson and Destinee Forbes



SYA President Jack Creeden presented Trustee Natalia Bulgari ES'86 with an award recognizing her dedication and tireless efforts throughout the building renovation project.



Faculty member Oriol Bastardes played a musical rendering of SYA's journey from the United States to Barcelona to Zaragoza.



Spain Resident Director Griffin Morse (sabbatical 2011-12) toasted everyone who made SYA Spain's dream a reality.



(From left) Diana Tatarchuk ES'01, Trustee Margaret Conklin FR'74 and France Resident Director Denis Brochu



(From left) Trustees Kristin Lund Vosmik FR'81, Rob Schiller FR'69, Carlos Alvarez FR'00P and Tom Farquhar



Manny Rivera ES'12 (left) and Stephen Foster ES'65



Former SYA President Woody Halsey in Aula 1, the classroom dedicated in his honor.

Event Highlights

SYA Homecoming

July 20, 2011

More than 265 alumni, parents, faculty and friends gathered at the JFK Presidential Library and Museum to celebrate Woody Halsey's 31 years with SYA and to welcome Jack Creeden as SYA's new president.



(From left) Former SYA President Woody Halsey, Trustee Natalia Bulgari ES'86, Board of Trustees Chair Douglas Renfield-Miller FR'71 CN'01P IT'05P ES'10P and SYA President Jack Creeden



(From left) ES'78 classmates Keith Moskow, Brooke Sherpick Mohr and Becky Breyman Leiter



Joining Italy Resident Director Patrick Scanlon (center) are IT'04 classmates (from left) Perry Wilson, Radek Janowski, Ned Henningsen and Mason Bradbury.



(From left) Ping and Alex White ES'00, former China Resident Director John McLoughlin CN'96-'99RD, Joanne Tsao ES'88 and former faculty Stu Remensnyder CN'98F ES'00F ES'01F



Former SYA President Woody Halsey is joined by his FR'81 students (from left) Patricia Davis, Alec Stuart, Becky Dean and Deidre Hamblen.



Members of the Class of FR'71 celebrating their 40th reunion include (from left) Bruce Mee, Harper Sibley, Chip Hilliard, Scott Thompson, SYA Board of Trustees Chair Douglas Renfield-Miller CN'01P IT'05P ES'10P, former faculty David Arnold FR'71F, Tim O'Donnell FR'96P, Bayard Clarkson and John Gaebler CN'05P CN'12P.



(From left) Michael Spence CN'10, Dan Alford CN'09, former China Resident Director Jeff Bissell CN'00-'06, '08-'10RD and Nick Koeniger CN'09



France Resident Director Denis Brochu is joined by members of FR'11 (from left) Tricia Woodcome, Tess Lagor, Ellie Kennedy, Zoe Wood, Sara Fontes, Julia Pingeton and Oliver Rogers.



SYA's Resident Directors Patrick Scanlon (Italy), Griffin Morse (Spain), Vu-Duc Vuong (Vietnam), Denis Brochu (France) and John Rosen (Spain)



Donn Randall FR'70 and his children Alec FR'02 and Alison FR'05

SYA in New York

November 16, 2011

Nearly 200 alumni, parents, faculty, trustees and friends filled the Garden Room at Michael's New York at a reception co-hosted by Michael McCarty FR'70.



(From left) FR'85 classmates Nick Brumm, Andrew Fabens and Clare Huntington



Loxley Bennett ES'10 (left) and Andra Mocanu ES'04



(From left) Wanda Mann ES'89, Chinua Green ES'05, Ashley Allison ES'06, Alex Perry ES'05 and Anthony Arther ES'89



(From left) Aliza Goldberg IT'08 VN'10, Cole Newcomb FR'08 VN'10, Jeeyoung Choi ES'01 VN'10F and Betsy Ray VN'10



(From left) Peter Dayton FR'72, Daniel Wolf FR'72, co-host Michael McCarty FR'70 and John Gaebler FR'71 CN'05P CN'12P

SYA in La Jolla

January 31, 2012

Aime Claire Roche, head of The Bishop's School and SYA trustee, hosted a reception for SYAers in the San Diego area.



(From left) Claire and Wayne Carlyle CN'10P and Dawn Herring CN'12P



(From left) Bruce Bielaski FR'68, Gayle Newhouse and Bill Gladstone ES'67



(From left) Ralph Rubio IT'09P, host Aime Claire Roche and Dione Rubio IT'09P



Kim Peterson ES'05P(left) and Kim Peckham CN'05P

Event Highlights



SYA in Santa Monica

February 1, 2012

Co-host Michael McCarty FR'70 welcomed 50 SYAers to his restaurant, Michael's Santa Monica.



(From left) Co-host Michael McCarty FR'70, Martha Longley Witenberg ES'12P, Betsy Kogan ES'12P and SYA President Jack Creeden



(From left) Mary Jo Ford ES'78 ES'06P, Noel Chun ES'06P, Charlie and Peggy Cook CN'09P ES'12P



Kaitlin Solimine CN'97 (left) and Vanessa Janowski FR'99



(From left) Madeline Fuhrman FR'10, Stephanie Bronson FR'12P and Sheridan Tekosky IT'11

SYA in Napa

February 4, 2012

Winegrowers Kevin and Wendy Corley IT'10P shared their family's philosophy of "sunshine to wine" with alumni, parents and friends.



(From left) Eve Denton CN'07, Jake Conway CN'07, Laura Jacobson CN'07P and John Denton CN'07P



(From left) Hosts Wendy Corley IT'10P, Kevin Corley IT'10P and Burton Lee ES'73



(From left) Former China Resident Director Jeff Bissell CN'00-'06, '08-'10RD, LeeAnn Bissell and SYA President Jack Creeden



Shana Simmons ES'98 (left) and Claudia Cruz ES'95

SYA in San Francisco

February 6, 2012

SYAers gathered in the Pacific Heights neighborhood at an event hosted by Holland Goss Lynch FR'86.



(From left) Chris Olin FR'86, Holland Goss Lynch FR'86, host, and Trustee Paul Chapman



Lara Witter FR'87 (left) and Cynthia Travis FR'87P



Robin Hauser Reynolds FR'82 (left) and Peter Esty FR'77F ES'82P IT'05RD VN'10RD



ES'88 classmates Mimi Maloney (left) and Elena Madsen

SYA in Portland

February 28, 2012

BridgePort Brew Pub was the venue for SYAers at this Northwest Pacific event hosted by Trustee Carlos and Malu Alvarez FR'00P.



Holly Jander Williams FR'75 (left) and Peggy Reid ES'86



(From left) Laurie Crossman, Gary Crossman ES'08F, Ben Stutz CN'11P and Mark Jander FR'75P



Tonada Koch ES'09 (left) and Sarah Eadie CN'08



(From left) Esther Imbue ES'08P ES'12P, Eliud Imbue ES'08P ES'12P, Andrew Holtz DE'73 and Lydia Smith ES'81

Event Highlights

SYA in Seattle

February 29, 2012

SYA President Jack Creeden welcomed SYAers to Lakeside School at an event hosted by Head of School and former SYA Trustee Bernie and Killian Noe ES'06P.



(From left) Casey Runde IT'12P, Ann Lu FR'12P, Tory Laughlin Taylor FR'12P and Elizabeth Runde IT'12P



Tracy Hearing Michigami FR'76 and Russell Bennett FR'78



Kirsten Andrews ES'87 (left) and Alexi Phinney FR'88



Sue and Chester Chen, parents of faculty member Ernie Chen, and SYA President Jack Creeden (center)

SYA in Paris

April 3, 2012

The Honorable Charles H. Rivkin FR'79 U.S. Ambassador to France, along with Chief of Staff Daniel Dozier FR'00, hosted 80 SYAers at the Ambassador's Residence.



At a private tour of *Maison de Verre*, owned by Robert Rubin FR'70, are (from left) David Berz ES'65, Sherry Berz, Malu Alvarez, Trustee Carlos Alvarez FR'00P, Malu Alvarez FR'00P, Francesca Piana ES'93-'97RD, Board of Trustees Chair Douglas Renfield Miller FR'71 CN'01P IT'05P ES'10P, Jean Renfield-Miller CN'01P IT'05P ES'10P, Béatrice Lélou FR'84-96F, Trustee Tom Farquhar, Mary Grady, Jimmy Evarts ES'68, Rebecca Evarts and Shellee Hendricks FR'89 CN'03-'05F.



(From left) FR'74 classmates Seth Aidinoff, Kate Weil, Alice Conklin, Phil Fletcher, Carol Weston, Margaret Conklin and Jan Johnston



(From left) Jimmy Evarts ES'68, Rebecca Evarts and the Honorable Charles H. Rivkin FR'79



(From left) Vanessa Wilcox FR'09P, Jerry FR'73 and Karen McConnell CN'07P CN'09P



(From left) Trustee Natalia Bulgari ES'86, Trustee Carlos Alvarez FR'00P and Veronica Bulgari FR'81



(From left) Mimi Maloney ES'88, John Finlay FR'68, Director of Development Lynn Nathanson, Frans Baviera, and Rebecca and Jimmy Evarts ES'68

SYA in Washington, D.C.

April 18, 2012

Head of Sidwell Friends School and SYA Trustee Tom Farquhar hosted more than 80 SYAers.



SYA President Jack Creeden and Morgan Askew ES'10



(From left) Patty Chu CN'13P, Eleanor Ewing CN'13, Lee Ewing CN'13P, Frank and Frauke Harnischfeger JP'11P CN'12P



(From left) Nathan Resnick CN'11, host Tom Farquhar, Deborah Lodge FR'12P and Rodney Slater IT'11P



(From left) Deborah Lodge FR'12P, James Figetakis FR'78, Carolyn MacIver Millstein FR'79 and Patricia Langan

SYA in Chicago

May 9, 2012

Guests enjoyed dinner hosted by Hannah Judy Gretz FR'74 at Shoreacres in Lake Bluff.



(From left) Pallavi Jailwala CN'12P, Ann Koontz FR'07P FR'10P and Bharat Jailwala CN'12P



Host Hannah Judy Gretz FR'74 and Mark Freeman ES'73



(From left) Joe Nesler ES'09P, George Holmes FR'07P FR'10P and Allison Temple Bacon ES'81



(From left) SYA President Jack Creeden, Ameerah Phillips ES'05 and Annette Phillips ES'05P

Michael Love CN'00:

The entrepreneurial spirit



It was during his SYA travels throughout China that Michael Love established the entrepreneurial road map for his future.

As founder of Pleco, a high-tech firm specializing in Chinese translation software applications, Love is quick to note that his SYA placement helped to inspire his successful entrepreneurial venture.

"I started working on Pleco while I was an SYA student — partly as an excuse to get a Palm Pilot," he says with a laugh, "and because there seemed to be a need in the marketplace that wasn't being filled." Love's first exposure to China came through a school assembly. "A fellow Latin School of Chicago classmate did a presentation about his SYA placement in China during the previous year," Love says. "My parents were big believers in international travel, but I had never been to Asia."

Love subsequently applied to and was accepted into SYA. The following year, in 1999, he was placed with a host family in the Chinese capital, Beijing.

"My host family were absolutely lovely people," he recalls. "The father was an old-school electrical engineer — a crafty do-it-yourself type who was really sweet and generous. My host mother was one of the best conversationalists I've ever met. She sometimes had a better handle on U.S. politics than I did, as well as being an excellent cook. My host brother was an incredibly warm and friendly guy all around."

Love's bond with his host family continues to this day: "Last fall, I visited with them in Beijing and also met with my host brother in Tokyo," he says.

Although new to China, Love was struck by the unique quality of his home city. "Even in 1999, Beijing was unlike the rest of China — something of a culture unto itself," he says. "Back then, it was pretty much the best place to experience China as a foreigner. There were few other places where [SYA students] could walk around and not have everybody staring at us. So, Beijing was well suited for American high schoolers trying to get a handle on the country."

He discovered that China was not much different from other cultures he had experienced. "I came to appreciate how much we're actually alike," he says. "Every culture has its quirks but, in a lot of ways, China's not really much more alien than France or Australia. We're all driven by the same basic humanity; culture and language are just the little habits we've picked up along the way."

One key technological difference, however, did catch Love's attention. "The Chinese had these wonderful little electronic Chinese/English dictionaries but there wasn't really anything equivalent for foreigners learning Chinese," he says. "I set about to create one for my own use but then started giving copies to friends and classmates."

Eventually, Love's hard work and expertise from high-tech manufacturer Motorola and licensed content from the Oxford University Press led to the establishment of Pleco Software, Inc.

Love traces the roots of Pleco's success to his SYA experience. "I got to be a lot better at coping with new situations and people," he says. "The confidence that I gained helped me to take risks that, in turn, had a lot to do with my start-up of Pleco. At the same time, the Chinese-language skills and cultural literacy that I acquired were pretty valuable, too."

Pleco's flagship product, Pleco 2.0 software, is available as an application on iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad, Windows Mobile and Palm OS devices. The process for using the software, says Love, is simple. "You type or handwrite a Chinese word or, in our latest product offering, take a picture of a string of Chinese characters and Pleco tells you what it means."

He adds: "Our search engine is fast and flexible — we've licensed a bunch of great dictionary databases for searches and we include extra features such as flashcards and a document reader. Our goal is to be the complete electronic companion for learning Chinese." Similar applications for Android cell phones, desktop and Web-based versions are currently in the works.

In reflecting on the importance of SYA in his own life, Love strongly advocates that today's students seek similar international opportunities.

"In many other countries, it's expected that students will spend some portion of their upbringing living abroad, and I think that should be the case with American students as well," he says. "One of America's biggest problems is our lack of global perspective. After living abroad, however, it's almost impossible to go back to seeing the world within your little bubble." 🌐

Tara Waters Lumpkin FR'77:

Learning to embrace the passion

Little did Tara Waters Lumpkin realize that her first encounter with School Year Abroad would be a harbinger of things to come. Always known in her family for being self-sufficient, Lumpkin opted to attend her SYA interview alone. Her choice differed from that of most of her fellow SYA applicants, who favored the support of parents during such an important occasion.

"I had driven by myself from Baltimore, where I was attending Garrison Forest School, up to Phillips Andover Academy in Massachusetts," she recalls. "When I got there, the [SYA] interview committee wanted to know where my parents were; they were shocked that I was alone."

Following her SYA acceptance, Lumpkin's self-sufficiency continued serving her well during a semester spent in Rennes that was highlighted by considerable change. For example, she proved quite adaptable when her initial placement with a young French couple was cut short upon her host mother's hospitalization due to hepatitis. A placement with another student was arranged in the home of an older French woman and her two adult children. "My new host mother had lived through World War II," says Lumpkin. "Because of the generational difference between these host families, it was almost as if I was experiencing two cultures."

A third dimension was added to Lumpkin's stay when she and the other student received a diagnosis of bronchitis. "I remember that the doctor's remedy involved rubbing something smelly on my chest and drinking milk with rum — I think that's when I developed my interest in medical anthropology," she says, laughing.

"I wore high-heeled boots and thought how French I was," Lumpkin remembers fondly. "I also traveled a lot to Paris, the Mediterranean and the French coast."

Lumpkin is quick to credit her SYA placement with teaching her much about

the world beyond her Maryland home, as well as about herself. "I discovered what a lot of anthropologists know — that if you truly immerse yourself in a culture, you can see the entire world differently. I also learned that I have a natural aptitude for being independent and self-reliant. Looking back, I can see that SYA started me down a path that I've now been following all my life."

That life has been filled with a thirst for knowledge and travel, as well as a desire to make a positive difference globally. A graduate of Yale University, Lumpkin later earned her doctorate in medical and environmental anthropology and then a master's degree in creative writing. She has participated in several international relief efforts, such as creating a photography project for Rwandan orphans scarred by genocide; guiding Panamanian communities to create an empowering ecotourism blueprint for the Panama Canal watershed; and helping to establish a health clinic and training midwives for a remote Tibetan community.

Partly as a result of her relief work, Lumpkin became a certified practitioner in Somatic Experiencing, which is a naturalistic body-centered approach to treating trauma. "Once you slow down enough to understand how you respond to fear and pain, you can make better judgments and responses that enable you to overcome your adversity," she explains.

Also resulting from her global initiatives, plus her work as an environmental journalist, Lumpkin established Perception International. This nonprofit promotes perceptual, cultural and biological diversity through worldwide projects.

In 2009 Lumpkin founded and became director of the nonprofit's project Izilwane, which seeks to improve relationships between humans and animal species, in particular by addressing human overconsumption and overpopulation. "We take an anthropological approach to biodiversity loss," she says. On her website, which serves



as an educational e-zine, she writes about how Izilwane professionals travel "around the globe and into the human psyche to explore why humans are destroying other species and our environment — and what we can do to stop this pattern."

On Izilwane, Lumpkin says, "we have published articles about the sixth great extinction, wolf reintroduction and studying visitors at a gorilla exhibit at the Woodland Park Zoo; an interview with Michael Soulé, the grandfather of conservation biology; and several beautiful photo galleries."

In the coming months, Lumpkin will travel to Washington, D.C., seeking funding for the continuation of her nonprofit's initiatives, including support for her digital magazine's efforts to educate the public about how people can protect biodiversity. She also hopes to complete a memoir about how other species have improved her own life.

As for the long term, Lumpkin will continue immersing herself in new adventures and experiences. "I learned long ago that I'm someone who isn't happy or satisfied unless I'm embracing the passion," she says. "SYA was key in teaching me this about myself." 🌍

Shawn McHale FR'77: From France to Vietnam



In retrospect, it seems that Shawn McHale's SYA placement was destined to lead to a thriving career in international teaching and research.

Born in Malaysia, McHale spent most of his childhood in the Philippines and Saudi Arabia. "I was predisposed to be interested in global culture," he says. Consequently, in 1976 he leaped at the opportunity to study in Rennes, France, with SYA.

Looking back, McHale says he feels fortunate to have been placed with the Leveau family, hosts familiar with SYA. "They were veterans in caring for SYA students," he says. "They were so good that I was placed with another SYA student, Steve Keogh, within their household." One of the family's former students was McHale's older brother, Jonathan FR'75.

McHale's host father was a typesetter at

the *Ouest-France* newspaper; his host mother engaged in several activities including serving as a Sunday school teacher. A son and daughter, both younger than McHale, made up the rest of the family.

McHale remembers his host family as "very warm and loving people." In particular, he says he's grateful to his host mother for allowing him to engage in one of his favorite French customs: "I wanted to go home for lunch like my French classmates did," he says. "She agreed and was always there waiting for me when I returned for lunch during the school day.

"Rennes was an engaging, provincial city," he says. "Because my host family had many friends and acquaintances, Steve and I quickly became integrated into the community. I was impressed with the importance of family to the French."

In many ways, McHale's SYA experience enabled him to expand his personal horizons. "I became politically aware and active," he says. "I met members of a local French Trotskyist group. I also helped at a day-care center, which was fun." SYA trips to Normandy and Brittany, as well as to Paris, led him to develop a greater understanding and appreciation for French society.

At the same time, McHale cherishes the opportunity for personal growth that SYA afforded him. "Having to make an experience like living in another country succeed enabled me to depend on my own resources," he says. "It really gave me a sense of incredible accomplishment."

It is not surprising, then, that McHale readily credits his SYA opportunity with, as he puts it, "directly influencing" his choice of professional pursuits. He currently serves as director of the Sigur Center for Asian Studies and the Asian Studies Program at George Washington University, in Washington, D.C.

"My time in Southeast Asia as a child, coupled with my immersion in French language and culture during my SYA place-

ment, led me to focus on the history of Vietnam, especially during the French colonial period," he says.

Through his work, he has undertaken extensive research trips to Vietnam, in 1989, 1999 and 2000 and from 2007 to 2008. The transformation he has witnessed there has been "nothing short of remarkable," McHale says.

"During my first trip," he says, "there were no relations between the United States and Vietnam. The country was, in essence, a closed society that was also one of the poorest nations in the world." Arriving as a graduate student, McHale used his time to become familiar with Vietnam and, in particular, deepen his knowledge of the Vietnamese language.

By 2000, however, Vietnam had undergone tremendous change. "At that point, Vietnam had become a major destination for foreign investment," he says. "The Vietnamese were constructing new houses everywhere. The government was building bridges and roads, and making enormous strides in reducing poverty."

However, like many other emerging nations, Vietnam has its problems: "There are serious issues with corruption," says McHale. "Citizens who advocate for a multiparty democracy are still often thrown in prison." Nevertheless, McHale views Vietnam's ongoing development as encouraging: "Especially among young people, there's a thirst, a hunger to become connected with the world," he says. "This can be seen in the high Internet connection rate among the younger generation."

As he looks forward to pending trips to France and Vietnam, McHale remains a strong advocate for learning-abroad opportunities. "I trace my utter belief and faith in foreign study to SYA," he says. "I've come to realize that there's a lot of value in immersion. You can read about a country in books but obtaining that firsthand, experiential sense of a place is invaluable." 📖

Tim Trinidad FR'04: SYA independence sets the pace for entrepreneurial spirit

In reflecting on his SYA experience in Rennes, France, Tim Trinidad quickly makes the connection between the self-confidence he built abroad and his current efforts as a high-tech entrepreneur.

"Being independent, making my own decisions in France, all of it helped give me the self-assurance to take the career leaps that I've made," says Trinidad.

Trinidad first became interested in studying abroad through two German exchange students who attended his high school. "I liked the idea of seeing a different culture, much like they were doing," he says.

Upon arriving in France, Trinidad was delighted to discover that he was the fifth American student to stay with his host father, who was employed in the agricultural industry, and his host mother, a part-time babysitter. "Along with their kindness and generosity, they were very familiar with SYA students," he says. He remains in frequent contact with both of them, as well as their grown daughter and two sons.

Trinidad fondly recalls that he "loved being in a different country with a different language," and, he says, especially enjoyed "the ease of travel to Paris and throughout Europe — the train system was amazing. Being able to observe a culture firsthand rather than reading about it in a textbook was invaluable." A highlight, he says, was an 11-hour excursion to Munich, during which he sampled the luxuries of European sleeper-car trains.

In addition to discovering French culture, Trinidad focused on personal development. "I signed up for classes such as dance and jazz piano," he says. "Previously, my parents would schedule activities for me. The fact that I could now make these arrangements myself was a big step forward."

It was through such opportunities that Trinidad developed a lifelong thirst for learning — a trait that eventually led him to create what he calls his "side project" while still in college. "I was in my junior year at Washington University in St. Louis," he says, "and a couple of classmates and I started a note-sharing website. It was a way for students to upload and download class notes."

The website's popularity led Trinidad and his partners to enhance its versatility. "We successfully upgraded the interface so that users could review notes from similar classes or make recommendations for similar classes," says.

Soon, Trinidad and his colleagues came to an important realization that ultimately charted the course of their project. "It occurred to us that what we were doing was very similar to social networking," he says, "so we set out to create a comprehensive learning management system based on the social networking model."

Toward this goal, professors were given access for uploading their class notes as well as course descriptions. Eventually, social networking was built into the site by enabling teachers and students to



post comments, messages and suggestions, on both a personal and a group basis.

Shortly afterward, it was time to take the site (which, by then, was called Schoolology) beyond the borders of the Washington University campus. "We worked in our spare time at night creating a demo," says Trinidad. "We then brought the demonstration product to high schools in the St. Louis area."

Reviews were generally positive, but local high school administrators expressed concerns about privacy and issues such as cyber-bullying. In response, technological safeguards were added in order to protect users.

Although pleased with their ongoing success, Trinidad realized that Schoolology had reached its limit without additional support. "As students, we were having difficulty finding the time necessary to devote to the project — it was especially difficult keeping up with the software updates that were required," he says.

Fortunately, angel funding — financial support provided by private investors — was forthcoming in April 2009. "This enabled us to go full time upon graduation," says Trinidad. "We soon opened up offices in New York City, and the company has been moving forward ever since."

Response to Schoolology has been very enthusiastic, according to Trinidad. His product is now operating within school systems in all 50 states and is even used by educational institutions in France, Spain and Malaysia.

True to the sense of optimism and adventure he first experienced in Rennes, this SYA alum is upbeat about his company's future. "We're looking to double in size very quickly," says Trinidad. "Basically, our feeling is that wherever our company takes us, we'll go." 🌐

CLASS NOTES

ES'65

Class Correspondent
Jeff Eastment
eastment@maine.rr.com

ES'66

Class Correspondent
Leslie Reizes
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ES'67 45th REUNION 2012

Can you volunteer to be your class correspondent or class agent? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

Bill Gladstone writes, "My newest book, *The Golden Motorcycle*, has been published while my previous novel, *The Twelve*, is now in 25 languages."

ES'68

Class Correspondent
Vincent Pasternak
vpasternak@aol.com

Class Agent
Ken Krushel
kkrushel@earthlink.net

Your class will celebrate its 45th reunion next year. Can you volunteer to be part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

Graham Faiella writes, "Would have liked to go to Zaragoza for the dedication celebration. Congratulations, SYA, and all the best wishes."

FR'68

Class Correspondent
David Rubin
dh.rubin@verizon.net

Your class will celebrate its 45th reunion next year. Can you volunteer to be part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

ES'69

Class Correspondent
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FR'69

Class Correspondent
Tolly Taylor
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Class Agent
Carter Eltzroth
celtzroth@helikon.net

ES'70

Can you volunteer to be your class correspondent? Please contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

FR'70

Class Correspondent
Timothy Lydgate
831-462-3710

ES'71

Class Correspondent
Neil Ryder
neilryder@comast.net

Turn to page 22 to read about SYA's 40th year of coeducation featuring alumnae from our class.



FR'71 classmates Douglas Renfield-Miller CN'01P IT'05P ES'10P and Jamie Broderick at the reception in Paris

FR'71

Class Correspondent
Dave Davenport
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DE'72 40th REUNION 2012

Class Correspondent
Andrew Holtz
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ES'72 40th REUNION 2012

Class Correspondents
Sarah Cleveland
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Spencer Dick
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FR'72 40th REUNION 2012

Class Correspondent
Ted Pease
ted.pease@gmail.com

Jay Markell attended the funeral of his 92-year-old host mom, Madame Yvonne Bareau, last summer. He writes, "Please let students know that these contacts and friends can be for a lifetime."

DE'73

Class Correspondent
Andrew Holtz
holtzreport@juno.com

Your class will celebrate its 40th reunion next year. Can you volunteer to be part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

ES'73

Class Correspondent
Brook Sulloway
sulchiro@yahoo.com

Class Agent
Eric Weaver
EWeaver829@aol.com

Your class will celebrate its 40th reunion next year. Can you volunteer to be part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.



Janet Bates Poth FR'73 and her son Pierre Poth CN'04 at the Ambassador's Residence in Paris

FR'73

Your class will celebrate its 40th reunion next year. Can you volunteer to be your class correspondent, class agent or part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.



Juanita Donnelly ES'74 visits with Ángel Vilalta during a recent trip to Barcelona.

ES'74

Your class needs you! Can you volunteer to be the class correspondent? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

Juanita Fenton Donnelly writes, "I thought you might enjoy seeing pictures of my visit to Barcelona, during which I was able to have *un café* with Ángel Vilalta and introduce him to my husband, George, and my daughter, Catherine. Catherine is just finishing a year studying at the University of Barcelona. It was wonderful to see Señor Vilalta. Although he claimed to have memory problems, he remembered not only me, but also some of the funny incidents that happened during my year with SYA. We spent



FR74 classmates Seth Aidinoff FR'07P, FR'08P Kate Weil, Alice Conklin FR'07B, Phil Fletcher, Carol Weston ES'05P ES'08B, Trustee Margaret Conklin and Jan Johnston enjoying the gardens of the Ambassador's Residence in Paris.

almost two hours with him in a plaza near his home drinking coffee and listening to his continued interest in young people. I was also able to reconnect with my host family. The special joy of seeing them was that it was as if I had never left. We were able to reconnect very easily and enjoyed catching up. It is truly worthwhile to introduce high school students to other cultures. It was an experience that has shaped my life in profound ways. It even carried over to my daughter, who has fallen in love with Barcelona and the Catalán people and culture. Thank you to all who work to make this experience possible."

FR'74

Class Correspondent

Carol Weston

carol@carolweston.com

Salut, les amis. Many of us (**Seth Aidinoff**, **Dwight Whiting**, **Newt Logan**, **Alice Conklin**, **Dave McKean**, **Paul Eldrenkamp**, **Kevin Shustari**, **Carol Weston**) have sent an *enfant* or two to SYA, and this year we're sending two more. Congrats to Antonia (Annie) Smith, daughter of **Jan Johnston**, who is headed to SYA Spain in the fall, and to Hannah Shustari, daughter of **Kevin**, who is en route to Rennes. Speaking of France, there was a mini reunion in Paris in April *avec Alice et sa jumelle Margaret* (née Peggy), **Seth**, **Carol**, **Jan**, **Kate Weil** et **Phil Fletcher**. We did our best to represent F'74, and the ambassador, Monsieur Charles Rivkin (F'79), gave a charming bilingual speech. We also toured la Maison de Verre and met for lunch and dinner. *Oh là là, c'était bien amusant.* On a side note, if any of you like seeing movies in French, **Hannah Judy Gretz**, Kate and I *avons parlé du cinéma*, and we recommend *Summer Hours*, *Queen of Play*, and *Tell No One*.

DE'75

Class Correspondent

Andrew Holtz

holtzreport@juno.com

ES'75

Class Correspondent

Sabrina Hewett Matteson

sabrinam@fb.org

FR'75

Class Correspondent

Deb Zurkow

deborah@zurkow.com

Class Agent

Olivia Garfield

oliviagarfield@att.net

Holly Jander Williams writes, "I recently started working in the international finance group at Mercy Corps as an assistant finance officer. I work with the Democratic Republic of Congo and Haiti, among other countries. For the first time in my working life, I'm actually using my French skills . . . lots of fun!"

ES'76

Can you volunteer to be your class correspondent or agent? Please contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

FR'76

Class Correspondent

Matthew Judson

Can you volunteer to be your class agent? Please contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

Faculty member **Georges Krivobok** writes, "Enjoying living and traveling in Germany and France every summer and Naples, Florida, in the winter months. We are amazed at how SYA grows and thrives." The Alumni Office is sad to share the news of English teacher Charlie Pratt on May 27. Read the obituary at <http://tinyurl.com/prattobit>.

ES'77

35th REUNION 2012

Can you volunteer to be your class correspondent or class agent? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.



Anthony Moor FR'77 with his daughters, Carolyn and Maggie, and wife Karen, during their trip to Europe

FR'77



35th REUNION 2012

We are grateful to James Barrett for his efforts as class correspondent over the last few years. Please contact smclean@sya.org if you can volunteer to be your class correspondent.

Matt Salinger writes, "I had a very enjoyable lunch with **Brad Clason** in New Canaan in late fall, and it looked as though living the Pennsylvania-country good life suits him to a T. We shared some Monsieur Bierry stories that had us both laughing. I recently had dinner with **Mira Stout** up in Vermont. She was back from London for a few weeks to take care of her dad. I don't think she'd mind my sharing that she's expanding her fiction writing, has written a superb play, and is also shooting a documentary film. Seeing them both, seeing **Steve Keogh** now and then at the pool, and corresponding a bit with **Haun Saussy** on the birthday he shares with **Pharibe Wise** made me remember what an extraordinary group it was, and what fun we had! My son Avery did the summer program two summers ago; he did a different program in Paris this past summer and he said it couldn't compare to SYA. *Mais, naturellement!*"

Mitch Bradbury writes, "In February I had lunch with **Chris Oberbeck** at Mary's Fish Camp in the West Village. This year I graduated from playing grand masters lacrosse to half-century lacrosse, and after a year off after spinal fusion from a lax injury last January, I'm ready to hit the field again. I played in the Grand Masters National Lacrosse Championships in Florida in January with Team Florida (even though I live in New York). Had fun, will have neck surgery as a result, only so I can do it again next year! Regards to everyone." **Marc Lipsett** writes, "Busy, busy, busy." **Laurie Allen Marsden** writes, "My daughter Hannah was married on December 31, 2011. Daughter Christiana works for ERG in Boston and our youngest, Jeremiah, is a sophomore at Calvin College in Michigan." **Anthony Moor** and his family spent their summer vacation in Europe. He writes, "This was our first time back to the old country since

we had children, and my kids are now 14 and 11! Nevertheless, Monsieur Gorguès would probably smile to know that on a few occasions people mistook me for a French citizen, at least until I asked "How many francs?" instead of euros. It was my elder daughter who precipitated our trip: She plays bassoon in the San Jose Youth Symphony, which was on a tour. The highlight was her performance in the Mozarteum in Salzburg, a Beaux-Arts hall filled with appreciative Austrians in dirndls and green blazers. Our next-most-important highlight, however, was sitting down with Ambassador **Charles Rivkin** (FR'79) at the U.S. Embassy. I like to say that Charlie speaks French because of me. Heck, I got his brother, **Bob**, to come to Rennes for the second semester in '77 and after that my school in Chicago sent off a whole host of kids to SYA, including both of my younger brothers and Charlie. (My mother keeps saying that I should have been the ambassador to France "because you speak such good French.") We received a tour of the ambassador's stunning residence from the energetic chief of staff, **Daniel Dozier**. I noted Daniel's great French and he said he'd spent some time in France in high school. Yes — he was an SYAer, FR'00. I didn't connect with my French family — you'll remember that I won the housing lottery our year, and lived in the mansion of the vice governor. Monsieur Bouleau died in the early '80s and his kids, mostly older, scattered to the four winds. I spoke by phone to my French mother and youngest brother several years ago after tracking them down. She was as jolly as ever, living in a flat outside Paris. Our home is once again Northern California. Yahoo! hired me to lead its development of a local news and information franchise in late 2009. This comes after eight years moving around the country while I ran newspaper websites in Rochester (N.Y.), Orlando and Dallas. Here's a hearty *bonjour* to everyone. I look back on Rennes as an amazing time despite taking place while we were in the throes of the teen years. Please look me up if you're in Silicon Valley or drop me a line. I'm on Facebook and LinkedIn, like everyone else, I guess, and would love to reconnect."

Tara Waters Lumpkin and **Shawn McHale** are featured in this issue's Alumni Profiles. Turn to pages 37 and 38 to read about them.



Chris Schmidt ES'78 visited with his host sister Pilar Lluch and her husband Alberto Marti.

ES'78

Class Correspondent
Diana Root
dianaroot@mac.com

Your class will celebrate its 35th reunion next year. Can you volunteer to be your class agent or part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

Only two updates this time — where is everybody? Here are some great stories about staying in touch and continuing the traditions. **Brooke Sherpick Mohr** writes, “I still live in Norwich, Vt., as do **Keith Moskow** and his family. We see each other less often than I’d like because he works in Boston at his architecture firm during the week. Keith and I have been trying to set a date to get together with **Mark Allen**, who lives north of us in Vermont. Hopefully soon, as Charlie and I are chasing warmer weather by moving to Asheville, N.C., sometime later this year. The North Carolina has been bought and is waiting for us to take residence after our house sells up here. I’m working my way out of my bookkeeping job at our local bookstore and expect to be footloose and fancy-free for the summer. I met **Ellen Hale Humpert** in Asheville for a week in March. My middle stepson got married in Mexico in May and Charlie and I are planning a three-week road trip around Spain in September. I’m looking forward to seeing SYA Spain in Zaragoza. These trips will give me an opportunity to get my Spanish back in shape; not too many Spanish speakers in Vermont. Our daughter Taylor is now 19, living in Providence and attending Rhode Island College and riding her horse almost every day. I hope you’re all well. Cheers!” **Chris Schmidt** reports, “My oldest daughter spent a semester studying at the University of Barcelona. While there, she was not able to live with a Spanish family but rather was in an international student dormitory. (For anyone whose children are considering a study-abroad program, push the homestay option! It makes a huge difference in the quality of the experience.) This limited her interaction — meaning friend making — with

Spanish youths. Despite that, her Spanish improved tremendously and she actually got good grades. I visited once and had a great time showing her my old haunts and letting her show me her new finds. She did befriend the daughter and son-in-law of my SYA Spain parents. Pilar and Alberto took her to the Costa Brava one weekend and treated her to several Cava-heavy elegant meals. So now the second generation of Schmidts is keeping in touch with the second generation of Lluch. I’m sure Señor Vilalta would be proud. Greetings to all my old classmates!” Here in Virginia Beach, we’re eagerly awaiting spring. I [**Diana Taylor Root**] continue teaching taekwon do three nights a week and am working toward my third-degree black belt. Masha (age 13) and Annie (age 9) take ballet, jazz, modern and tap dance at a nearby studio at the same time, so it works out well. Lee’s sons have now given us four grandkids — ages four months to four years — two in D.C. and two in Mill Valley, Calif. We enjoy Skyping with them on weekends. Masha is taking Spanish 1 and loving it. We’re talking about a 2013 trip to Barcelona, southern France and Greece to visit my husband’s family . . . can’t wait. Stay in touch — hope to hear from more of us next time.”



James Figetakis FR'78 took classmate Deirdre Marshall FR'78 and her daughter Erin out on the town during a visit to Washington, D.C.



Lindsay Hong and Share Chen, both IT'11, with their high school headmaster Andrew Wilson FR'78

FR'78

Class Correspondent
Andrew Wilson
awilson@grier.org

Your class will celebrate its 35th reunion next year. Can you volunteer to be your class agent or part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

Lorena Galvan writes, “We have a doctor in the family! Our eldest son, Raúl Eugenio, graduated from Monterrey Tech and is doing a year of social service in the community before pursuing his specialty (he would like to be a cardiologist). Needless to say, Eduardo and I are as proud as can be.”

Russell Bennett writes, “I just returned from México, where a half-drunk travel agent accused me of being a polyglot after I tried to evade his inquiries on my origin. He started out by suggesting I spoke Italian after he heard my Argentine-accented Spanish. I would have paid him more attention if he had understood my Japanese but I was too hungry and needed to order dinner and he wasn’t our waiter. I’ve just met the new SYA president, Jack Creeden, during his visit to the Northwest and extend him my support to further SYA’s mission in an educational landscape (market) that is much more vibrant and competitive than it was 20 to 30-plus years ago. Send him your sons and daughters, or your neighbors’ kids if your own aren’t suited. As expected, you won’t get returned in May the same who were sent out in September. Go SYA!” **Jeff Gratton**, a supplements buyer at the busiest vitamin store in America (Whole Foods Union Square), has accepted a position with New Chapter Inc. as its New York City-area product specialist. New Chapter, based in Brattleboro, Vt., is the foremost herbal supplements and organic vitamins company in America. From **Andrew Wilson**: “I continue as headmaster at Grier School, near Tyrone, Pa. It’s a boarding school for girls in grades 7–12. We have 263 students, most of whom I interview either here at school or in their homes in many foreign countries. My travels take me all around, so I’m quite well served by my SYA experience. One of my students this year, Ana from Monclova, Mexico, heard about Grier from Lorena. Thanks, Lorena! Two of my students, **Share Chen (IT'11)** and **Lindsay Hong (IT'11)**, spent last year in SYA Italy. They came back with wonderful stories.” **James Figetakis** writes, “How time flies! Attended the annual SYA event in D.C. and we were already brainstorming about how best to commemorate SYA’s 50th anniversary.

Many of us lobbied for holding it in our SYA countries in spring 2014. Two days later, **Deirdre Marshall**, an amazing plastic surgeon in Miami and the mother of six children (ages 7 to 18) visited us in D.C. in April with her eldest, college-bound daughter, Erin. I took them around Georgetown University Foreign Service School, to which Erin is accepted, and introduced her to students and the campus. We then hit Georgetown hot spots by night (see photo), reciprocating Deirdre’s taking me out in Miami many times over the years.

ES'79

Class Correspondent
Katie Eiden
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The Honorable Charles H. Rivkin FR'79 welcomed classmate Dr. Margaret D. Burchell FR'79 and her children Jonathan and Peter to the reception at the Ambassador’s Residence in Paris.

FR'79

Class Correspondent
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Eve Nelson
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Class Agent
Carolyn MacIver Millstein
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The Alumni Office is grateful to the Honorable **Charles H. Rivkin** for hosting another spectacular event at the *Ambassador’s Residence* in Paris this spring. **Marty Burchell** and her two sons attended. There are quite a few legacy students at SYA this year. **Alex Alger** writes, “A dream has come true. My son **Davison Chung** is at SYA China.” **Charlie DeBevoise**’s son **Simon** is at SYA France, along with **Amy Jedlicka**’s daughter **Sophie**. **Harrison Alter**’s daughter **Isabel** is at SYA Italy. **Allyson Cornish** writes, “I continue to work for the Department of State. My son and I relocated to Costa Rica in 2010 and we’re both using our Spanish skills.”

ES'80

Can you volunteer to be your class correspondent or, agent, or part of a reunion committee? Please contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

FR'80

Class Correspondent

Vin Bankoski

vbankoski@gmail.com

Class Agent

Wendy Williams

wdwmail@earthlink.net

Louise Ambler Osborn writes, "I'm back in school, getting a master's in nursing at Mass. General Institute of Health Professions. My daughter **Annie CN'09** is a sophomore at Stanford, rowing, playing violin and majoring in earth systems."

ES'81

Class Correspondent

Ned Hoyt

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Class Agent

Ted Ramsey

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FR'81

Class Correspondent

Scott Aiges

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ES'82



30th REUNION 2012

Class Correspondents

Walker Bardsley

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Lydia Middleton Reed

lydmiddleton@gmail.com

Tanya Kane-Parry writes, "Back in L.A. teaching theater and dance at Cal State and creating new works with my company, Opera del Espacio. The last years have been filled with many adventures: treks in the Peruvian Andes, the Nepalese Himalayas, the Brazilian Amazon and the Argentinean and Chilean Patagonia. Managed to piggyback some teaching and directing gigs as part of these travels. This past fall I worked with the Houston Grand Opera on a new production of *The Barber of Seville* with director Joan Font, of Els Comediantes, and his design team of insane Cataláns. In addition to being the assistant director, I had to translate among catalán, Castellano, Italian and English, which was much like herding angry, screaming cats. Had a wonderful dinner with **Lydia Reed Middleton** and her partner last winter in L.A. And now, in between teaching and rehearsing, am sneaking away on the

weekends to the mountains to train for my next trek up Kilimanjaro. **Lynn Kupfer Kane** says she went to Barcelona with her youngest daughter in the summer of 2010 and it was really fun. Her news related to SYA is that her son **Daniel Kane CN'11** went to SYA China last year and had an amazing year. He loved it. Her youngest daughter, who is a freshman in high school, is practicing her Italian with the hope that she will go to SYA Italy. **Ned Cabot** writes that he's "chugging along here in Portland, Maine, single(!), working at Whole Foods; returning to work after recently being laid up with a broken rib suffered on my icy back stairs." **Louisa Edgerton** is doing well but unfortunately won't make Barcelona this year. I keep up with Louisa's doings on Facebook. **Bill Ambler** has entered (or reentered?) the wild world of parenthood. He writes "Molly and Bill are delighted to announce that Sarah Franklin Ambler (Sally to her friends) finally decided to join us. She arrived at 4:50 p.m. on Wednesday, February 8. She was a dainty 8 lbs 14.8 oz and a lissome 21 in." Everyone is happy and healthy, and, as of this writing, they were still clinging to the hope that someday they would catch up on their sleep. Congrats to Bill and Molly!

Wendi Goldsmith writes, "My news is that I got married last October (and not to the same fellow who joined me for the last reunion . . .) to an old friend and fellow geologist named Brian Balukonis. Ned Cabot joined the festivities and added a nostalgic element to the weekend of fun, including sharing a blown-up photo of teenage me sporting a hippie outfit, which greatly amused my teenagers and was a little shocking to some of my business and military friends! My daughter Sylvie is now 16. My son Alexei will soon be 14. I acquired a stepson, Simon (a redhead, unlike my own kids), who is 15." **Jon Cole** says, "Now that *The Campaign for Spain* is approaching its final stretch (hint, hint: There's still time to be a part of this milestone fund-raising effort), I've embarked on my next project, bringing international standard resort travel packages to the fast-growing Brazilian middle-class market." Jon and his Catalán business partner launched the International Residence Club in Natal, in the northeast of Brazil, in January, and the product appears to be well received by customers. Jon considers his time in Brazil as SYA 2.0 as he quickly picks up Portuguese because of his near-immersion in the language (he says near-immersion, as he stills makes time to watch satellite broadcasts of all FC Barcelona games with friends from the large Spanish expat community). Natal will

be one of the 12 World Cup sites in Brazil in 2014, so feel free to contact Jon if you're interested in attending the games. **Walker Bardsley** dodged the "What's new with you" question as well, but he's already booked his flight to Barcelona, so you'll just have to be there to find out what's happening with him. As for me (**Lydia Reed Middleton**), I can't remember when I last updated on myself, but in the last four years I've gotten divorced and remarried and am blissfully happy on that front. My three kids are doing great, heading into high school and middle school, respectively. I'm still president and CEO of AUPHA, which affords me a lot of opportunities to travel, many with my husband, which is great, and means that he and I will be piggybacking Barcelona onto a trip a week later to study the Dutch health-care system. How good is that?"

FR'82



30th REUNION 2012

Class Correspondents

Jason Bernhard

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Stefan Winfield

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*Salut, nos amis. Nous sommes de retour après un long silence pour lequel nous vous présentons nos excuses les plus sincères. Merci à tous ceux qui ont répondu à notre sollicitation de dernière minute. It's been 30 years, people: That's a triple-X for the Romans! Stand by for a reunion announcement. Make sure the SYA Alumni Office has your current e-mail address. Big news for **Stefan Winfield** and his wife, Shelley: On October 20, 2011, their son Wesley entered the world and has been spreading *la joie* ever since. For pictures, check out the alumni section of the SYA website — and create your profiles and post your own pictures while you're there. **Jason Bernhard** spent three days last June with his 10-year-old son in Rennes visiting his French family, and happily reports that they are all fine and healthy. He made an impromptu visit to the school and got a tour from the current head there. Nothing had changed in the house itself, which was nice, and there is a now a studio and additional class room in what was the back part of the garden. Jason is still at Lazard in New York City, with one child at Andover and two others still at home. **Lisa Mellow** writes that she has just returned from a 16-month *séjour* in Paris. "I'd wanted to live in Paris ever since we were in Rennes, and I finally decided that now was most definitely the time. My time there was beyond wonderful. I took French lessons and art classes, met incredibly interesting people and got to know Paris inti-*

mately. Leaving France was one of the most difficult decisions . . . my next adventure will be to move to Boston." **Susannah Hill** writes, "I'm learning Spanish from a CD designed for learning while driving, called *Spanish from behind the Wheel*. How is that for a taste of California? Repeating the phrases from the recorded voice takes me straight back to high school French class, and I even hear the words of Monsieur Bierry when he told us not to aspirate our consonants so hard. Words to live by." **Ben Haskell** is a ski-mountaineering guide in the Cascades. There's a wonderful YouTube clip of Ben being interviewed during a tour of Mount Baker. **Pauline Chen Halsey** writes, "We're doing well in Avignon this year. Woody is very happy to be back in France, and we love our neighborhood (a bakery three doors down, an Asian grocery store two doors down, a greengrocer across the street and a butcher on the corner). The twins, now nine-year-olds, are doing well with their 'SYA experience.' They're attending a Montessori school about 15 minutes away by foot. Their first impressions of French school? That they have two hours for a lunch break and that the school lunches are served in three courses — appetizer, entrée and dessert. 'Mommy,' one of them said to me, 'they take everything and make it taste SO GOOD!'"

Maggie Levine returns to teaching in September after a nine-month sabbatical: "Tried to keep myself satisfied with singing and Italian lessons but they weren't enough, and can't wait to get back to teaching." She's planning a trip to Brittany and Normandy with her family in August to "retrace some of our visits to Mont-Saint-Michel, Honfleur and the D-Day Museum." Maggie's son Willie is a competitive fencer. She writes, "I'm seeing lots of new American cities and their massive convention centers as I chaperone him to national fencing tournaments."

Robin Hauser Reynolds is working on a documentary film about a high school cross-country coach who is suffering from ALS. "He's my daughter's coach," she writes, "and he holds the record for the most high school state championships in California history." Robin's daughter Holland will be attending Colgate University in the fall and will run for its cross-country and track teams. **Robi Ravicz** and twin 10-year-old sons are enjoying life with Heffalump, their 138-pound Newfoundland dog (you've got to post those pictures on the website, Robi!). **Andy Rebele**'s daughter Lily will be heading off to SYA China in the fall for her junior year. **Karen Sullivan** has an endowed chair in medieval literature at Bard College. She writes, "My third book, entitled *The Inner Lives of*

Medieval Inquisitors, came out last spring, and I'm in the middle of writing a book on Arthurian romance, about how one can be led astray by literature and why that's a good thing. I have a King Charles spaniel and a Japanese garden" (again, great potential photo subjects for alumni-profile show-and-tell on the website!). We end with the saddest of news: Our dear classmate **Robin Randolph** died on December 10, 2011. An obituary was published in the *Boston Globe* from December 15 to 18, 2011. On behalf of the class of SYA France '82, we extend our heartfelt condolences to Robin's family.

ES'83

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Your class will celebrate its 30th reunion next year. Can you volunteer to be your class agent or part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

FR'83

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Your class will celebrate its 30th reunion next year. Can you volunteer to be part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

Scott Schang continues to love his work at the Environmental Law Institute in D.C. He and his partner of 10 years traveled to Bhutan this spring for a vacation. **Juan Carlos Peinado** lives in Santa Fe with his girlfriend of 10 years. He works at the Institute of the American Indian Arts, where he single-handedly upgraded the graphic and video arts program by designing and building the only mobile digital dome in the world. I, **Nicole Alger**, am in the throes of an especially busy time: In addition to raising two boys, and on the heels of my first New York art show, my family and I are renovating a barn in Connecticut where classes and seminars of all stripes will be held. Think *salon*-style! Keep that in your back pocket if it sounds of interest. Also, I have a nephew at SYA China [**Davison Chung**] this year — how can that be possible already? Please reach out and send me some interesting tidbits about your lives.



ES'84 classmates Randall Studstill and Steve Powell visit in the L.A. area.

ES'84

Class Correspondent
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Randall Studstill writes, "During a visit to L.A. I had a chance to see **Steve Powell**. We had a great visit. One of the things I did while I was there was scan some of his pictures from Spain. Here's a link: <http://tinyurl.com/es84photos>. What have I been up to? Mostly trying to get a job. I graduated with my master's in library and information science about a year ago. The search for a library job has been discouraging. I finally got two part-time librarian jobs at local colleges, but it remains to be seen how many hours I'll actually get. Ideally, these part-time jobs will give me the experience I need to get a full-time position." During his free time, he says, he likes to be in his wife's second-grade classroom.

FR'84

Class Correspondent
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Kim Brown writes, "I've applied for Canadian citizenship and still work for the University of Montana and teach at the University of Victoria. I launched an eating-disorder website: www.healthy-reflections.org and I foster a German shepherd puppy. Life is grand!"

ES'85

Class Correspondent
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Nora Daily writes, "In February I moved back to New York City from London to take a job as general counsel of Cortview Capital; sadly, my husband was stuck in London until the end of April. We visited Barcelona several times while we lived in London; before that I hadn't been there in 25 years and I had pretty much forgotten the layout." **Marc Pierrat** writes, "I'm in L.A. these days working on another software startup. I

was in Mendocino not long ago on one of my road trips, visiting the coast, doing some wine tasting and bar hopping. It's the places locals find 'mundane' that I find most interesting because they remind me, once again, how valuable it is to move around, even if it's within your own state, and 'live' somewhere in your mind. As we bustle about doing our daily business, our perspectives and opinions get cozy in our minds like a pair of worn jeans. A bit of immersive travel is healthy. It's easy to forget that." **Courtney McDonald Fernandez** writes, "After many years in Russia and then some time in South Africa, I live in London. We lived here 10 years ago and are happy to be back — now with three children!"

FR'85

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Suzanne Lyon Lehman writes, "I'm the assistant dean of academic affairs for the Pennsylvania Institute of Technology, a fully accredited two-year college serving students predominantly from economically and academically disadvantaged neighborhoods in the Philly area."

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ES'87 25th REUNION 2012

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FR'87 25th REUNION 2012

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FR'88

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Your class will celebrate its 30th reunion next year. Can you volunteer to be part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

Erik Rothman's parents, Martha and Elliot, visited with Erik's host family, *la famille LeBerre*, during a recent trip to France. Also in the photo are the Rothmans' grand-nephew Alec Rothman, who studied in Paris this year, extending the SYA family.

ES'89

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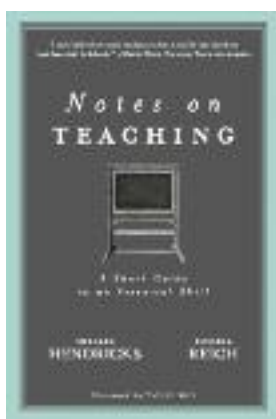


Martha and Elliot Rothman, parents of Erik FR'88, with la famille LeBerre in front of their house in St. Gregoire.

FR'89

Class Correspondent
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Shellee Hendricks, who taught for SYA China ('03-'05) writes, "I've coauthored a book called *Notes on Teaching*. We wanted *Notes on Teaching* to be a foundation — a beginning, not an end — for teachers," says Hendricks. "Quite a few people from the SYA community are mentioned in the acknowledgments, as I have indeed learned so much from the people I encountered through SYA both as a student and as a teacher."



Published in 2011, Shellee Hendricks FR'89 contribution to the Notes On series, the highly reviewed *Notes on Teaching*, offers practical insights into the art and craft of teaching.

ES'90

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Thanks to social media, I [**Amila de Saram**] was able to catch up with a few folks. **Miriam Vega** works for the Latino Commission on AIDS in New York City. She travels nonstop around the region and the country building organizational capacity. Puerto Rico is among the places she goes for work. **Sylvia Aguirre** continues to manage the family winery in the Livermore Valley. Her daughter, Victoria, will be three next month. Sylvia lives in San Francisco and would love to catch up with any classmates in the area. **Lisa Miller** wrote that she's finishing up her tour in London this summer (working for the State Department). She's taking a year off next year — and isn't sure if she and her family will stay in London or head back to the States. Lisa and **Angela Stoddard** met up in London in January along with their families. How great! Please get in touch with Lisa if you're passing through London town. Angela is doing great. Her boys are 1½ and 4½. The family just returned from a trip to India to visit Angela's husband Lac's family. Angela reports that "it wasn't the easiest trip overall while we were there but we have such great memories of it now that we're home." **Ana Tavares** teaches high school Spanish in Great Neck, N.Y., and has been doing so for the

past 13 years. She loves every minute of her life because, she says, "I love to teach and now I spend my time balancing between loving my job and loving my daughter. Having Sofia is like having a 'mini me.' She's full of life and love. It's amazing to be a mom." Ana is figuring out whether she should go back and finish her doctorate in Spanish American literature. As for me, I'm still in Sri Lanka with my zany seven-year-old daughter, Anya. I do consulting work in development communications for the UN and write for a couple of international magazines on politics, economics and development issues in Sri Lanka. Stop by if you're in the neighborhood: I can offer you sun, sand and a mean curry.

FR'90

Class Correspondent
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Bienvenus, mes amis. My [**Aria Yow**] favorite valentine this year came from Sonali Bedi, the beautiful two-year-old daughter of Vivek and **Amy Elefante Bedi**. The valentine featured photos of the charming Sonali, who takes after her mother. **Esther Conrad** spent two weeks in Bergen, Norway, in June 2011 at a conference with PhD students from around the world. She made the most of the long days: hiking and taking boat trips through the fjords. Esther is working on her doctorate in environmental policy at the University of California Berkeley. To celebrate the 10th birthday of their eldest son, Cameron, in the summer of 2012, **Katrina Kaposts Smith** and her husband, Cameron, plan to take the family abroad. At press time, the destination was unknown. Among the possibilities are Turkey and several South American and Pacific destinations. Katrina and Cameron were aiming for a location "as far from Western culture as we can get, so Cameron [the younger] can see how differently people live in other parts of the world." The Smiths and their three children are still in Portola Valley, Northern California. Katrina has started making jewelry as a hobby. In May 2011, **Sara Raymond** and her husband, Henry, welcomed their second son. Beckett Alexander was almost 11 pounds at birth, has a head full of red hair and has eyes only for his big brother, Hank. *Quant à moi*, I'm still living in Northern California and working at UC San Francisco as a program analyst. I'm thankful for my interesting job helping researchers get their work "translated" into practice. More important, I'm grateful for the health and happiness of my friends and family.

ES'91

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ES'92



20th REUNION 2011

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FR'92



20th REUNION 2011

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ES'93

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Your class will celebrate its 20th reunion next year. Can you volunteer to be your class agent or part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

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Your class will celebrate its 20th reunion next year. Can you volunteer to be your class agent or part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

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Seven classmates from ES'95 met for tapas in San Francisco's Mission District in June 2011. From left to right: Marissa Fladten Henry, Claudia Cruz, Aaron Baker, Katie Myers, Colleen Reid, Jessica Bernstein-Wax and Shulamite Shen

ES'95

Class Correspondent

Claudia Cruz

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Saludos, amigos. It's with a heavy heart that I inform you that our friend and classmate **James William Craig**, 34, died on Sunday, February 26, 2012, in Houston. After James returned from his year in Barcelona, he graduated from The Hotchkiss School in Connecticut and went on to receive his BA from Colorado College. James is survived by his parents, his sister **Ann Befroy (ES'92)** and her husband, and his brother, grandmother and numerous aunts, uncles and cousins. He will rest at St. Josaphat's Catholic Cemetery in Belleville, Kans. In response to this news, **Melissa Dana** shared how "deeply sad" she felt "for the loss of this magical light in the world." A shocked **Laura Kitchings** remembered the walks to school with James and that he was a great guy. Many expressed that James was someone they had wanted to get back in touch with, and **Colleen Reid** says she now realizes "you can't put off

these things." She remembers enjoying calculus class because of James. Our condolences go out to his family. From Florida, we get news from **Gaelle Evan Corrales**. Gaelle teaches middle school science and with her husband and sons, ages two and four, runs a farm. On Sundays, they sell their free-range eggs, *guarapo*, purple carrots, seasonal fruits and veggies, honey, candles, soap and lip balm at a farmers' market.

Marissa Fladten Henry had a baby boy, James Christopher, in July 2011 to keep his big sister, Anna, busy. **Shulamite Shen** and her husband, Steve, had a baby boy, Zachary, in December 2011 and **Alex Dunev** and wife, Diana, are the proud parents of little Olivia, who turned one in April 2012. As of this writing, Colleen was expecting a baby in April and will postpone her PhD for a bit. **Aaron Baker**, a surgical resident at UC Davis Medical Center, has gotten engaged. **Nick Papageorge** will soon finish his PhD in St. Louis and just accepted a position at Johns Hopkins as an assistant professor of economics. He'll start in September. **Rebecca Onion** lives in Austin and will complete an American studies graduate program at the University of Texas Austin soon. I'm [**Claudia Cruz**] still in the Bay Area working as a reporter, as is **Jessica Bernstein-Wax**. I'm enjoying the weather, the hikes, the music, the food and the people. Let's stay in touch, *meu amics!* *Fins un altra!*

FR'95

Class Correspondent

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Here's an update from our English teacher and her family: **Mrs. [Becky] Moore** continues to teach at Exeter

and is taking a teaching trip to the Asian University for Women in Bangladesh. The family has an SYA photo up on the fridge to remind them "that year remains our best family trip ever." **Mr. [John] Moore** coaches the St. John's [Worcester, Mass.] JV crew in the spring and fall, **Nick Moore ES'02** is a second year architecture student at Rhode Island School of Design, Davis is a portrait painter and canoe-camp counselor and Tim will graduate from Harvard this spring. **Megan Hughes** married David Johnson on September 17, 2011. At the wedding were her sister, **Sarah Hughes Douglas FR'98**; her dad, **Robert Hughes ES'68**; cousin **Anna Hughes ES'06**; and **Jennifer Boggs Serfass FR'95** and **Sloane Starke de Caloca ES'95**.

CN'96

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ES'96

Class Correspondent

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Lucas Klein's translation of *Notes on the Mosquito: Selected Poems*, by the contemporary Chinese poet Xi Chuan, will be published by New Directions in April.

FR'96

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CN'97

15th REUNION 2011

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Although I'm reporting from Los Angeles, I [**Kaitlin Solimine**] was in Beijing recently and searched Xijiekou Boulevard for the Mirror Restaurant, but to no avail. Nevertheless, the McDonald's on the Number 22 bus route is still around. Some things change, some stay the same . . . As for changes, **Rob Watts** had several pieces of impressive news to report. For one, his second son, Pete, was born March 2, 2011, in Yokosuka, Japan, where Rob was stationed. Unfortunately, a week later, the earthquake hit and his ship went to sea to support relief efforts. This past summer, he



Future SYAers Chip and Pete, son of Rob Watts CN'97



CN'97 classmates Caitrin McKiernan, Menna Demessie, and Evan Kelley (left to right) at a mini-reunion in NYC.



Menna Demessie CN'97 with President Obama and the First Lady

returned to the United States with his family and began a new tour as the operations officer on the USS *Monterey* (CG 61), a guided-missile cruiser based in Norfolk, Va., his hometown. Rob reports: "Although it was neat to live in Japan for a year and a half and to be in Asia again for the first time since college, it's great to be back home." There are some SYAers still on the other side of the Pacific, including **Chris Burtch**, who lives in Singapore and works in banking. He reports that he's "married with two dogs, no kids." While home in Vermont for a bit this winter, he met up with **Sean Dougherty** for some skiing, as they're from the same hometown. **Annie Rollins** has also been a world traveler as of late. She recently returned to her hometown of Minneapolis from a Fulbright fellowship year in China, where she was researching traditional shadow poetry. Always eager to hold me to my word (i.e., that there's no update too small), she notes that she "appreciates Cleveland's airport the most because it has free WiFi. Also Tina Fey's new book is really funny." Thanks, Annie, but I think I'll pass on Cleveland. Of course, Annie and I are still partners in



Joining Megan Hughes FR'95 at her wedding in September was her sister Sarah Hughes Douglas FR'98; her dad Robert Hughes ES'68; her cousin Anna Hughes ES'06; and fellow SYAers Jennifer Boggs Serfass FR'95 and Sloane Starke de Caloca ES'95.

crime — last summer we hung out in Beijing, where Annie introduced me to the pleasures of street-side corn on the cob and Chinese wedding decor. Our hobnobbing classmate **Menna Demessie** is changing the world, one presidential hangout session at a time. She lives in D.C., where she's a senior research and policy analyst for the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation and an adjunct professor at the University of California Washington Center. She had the pleasure of meeting President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama in her first two weeks on the job. She loves her work. She also enjoyed reuniting with **Caitrin McKiernan** and **Evan Kelley** in New York City last fall, when the trio caught up at the Zinc Bar and watched an Afro-Brazilian band perform live. Glad to hear they're keeping the SYA spirit alive. Last summer I also experienced an unexpected reunion in Beijing. While at a Starbucks near Sanlitun, I heard a familiar voice calling 'Solimine! Solimine!' When I turned, it was none other than **Jeremy Paster**. We had a nice time catching up over coffee, and he informed me that he's been living and working in Beijing for a few years but is considering a move someplace warmer, such as Singapore. He was also studying Cantonese, proving that he's quite the linguist. As for me, I finally tied the knot with my long-term partner, Joseph, in September in a small ceremony in Dominical, Costa Rica. The highlight of the wedding (aside from the fact that almost every

guest jumped into the pool) was the presence of my Chinese father, Chen Guanmiao, and Chinese sister, Chenxi. My Chinese father actually first visited Joseph and me in Los Angeles, then traveled with us to Costa Rica, where he developed a newfound love for ceviche and mangoes. Chenxi served as my maid of honor. Clearly, the bonds formed during SYA have been incredibly significant to me, as I know they've been for many of you as well. This year marks our 15th reunion (that's right, folks, we're getting old). Anyone interested in organizing a reunion that coincides with the general alumni events SYA offers should contact Susan McLean (smclean@sya.org).

ES'97 15th REUNION 2011

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Class Correspondent
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Kosta Dafoulas was married in July 2010. He lives in Boston and works at Staples in the treasury group. In his spare time, Kosta is looking to buy a house, playing soccer, and in general enjoying life. As for SYA-related activities, Kosta sees **Blake Loveless** here and there. This past summer he was back in Barcelona and had a great time reliving the past, including having lunch with Señor Vilalta! Kosta says that Señor Vilalta is still the fantastic,

lively individual we remember from our year in Spain. Kosta is looking forward to the 15-year reunion and reconnecting with his classmates.

Cliffe Killam has been living in his hometown of Laredo, Texas, for about a year now, working with his family's companies. He recently bought his first home. Prior to moving in Laredo, Cliffe lived in Houston and worked at an energy consulting firm and then an international energy investment bank. After quitting his job in Houston but before moving to Laredo, Cliffe took six months to do a road trip through the Rocky Mountains to find good hiking. He also traveled across India and backpacked in Chile in the Atacama Desert and down in Patagonia. Over the years, he has remained good friends with **Will Hixon**, **Markus Stadler ES'96**, **Gabe Ponce de Leon**, **Jeff Glidden** and many others from SYA, including his host family. He hopes to get back in touch with other SYAers. Most recently Cliffe attended Jeff Glidden and Janet Mendiola's wedding in San Antonio, an event that held special interest for him, as he was with Jeff the night he met Janet after a Spurs basketball game in San Antonio.

Gwen Floyd got married to Joshua Kauffman in Toronto in July 2011.

Gladys Silva Hernandez lives in California and has been married for eight years. Her five-year-old girl just started kindergarten. Gladys has been teaching kindergarten at a dual immersion school (Spanish and English) for eight years now and lives in American Canyon, the gateway to the Napa Valley. **Nina Freeman Hanlon** is at Greenwich Academy as a middle school history teacher and rowing coach. She says she's been enjoying the return to the classroom. She hopes to continue acting during the summer and other school vacations. In addition, she plans to write a one-woman show or screenplay. As of this writing, **Pauline Hsieh** was expecting a girl. After a great year and a half of adventures in Kodiak, Ala., and then Klamath Falls, Ore., she and her family moved to Greenville, S.C. **Elisabeth Carey Bishop** lives in Atlanta and looks forward to any SYA visitors who are passing through! She's back in the Montessori teaching world (for now), and is always eager to talk about parenting and get the scoop from the parents on the front lines. She asks, "Does anyone have kids yet?" **Yuri Lawrence** is a small-animal internal medicine resident at Oregon State University College of Veterinary Medicine in the Department of Clinical Sciences, where he is pursuing his PhD. Yuri says **Jonas Valenti** is still one of his dearest friends and that he spends time

every year or two at Jonas's family home in western Connecticut. In addition to being in contact with SYA friends, Yuri has stayed in touch with his Spanish host family and looks forward to visiting them in Barcelona soon. Yuri says he's loving life as a bachelor and is passionate about running marathons, human rights and animal rights. **Ricardo Sanchez** and his wife bought their first home, in New Orleans, to accommodate their growing family; they just had their second child. They're quite excited about these big changes. Ricardo's wife has also just finished her residency and her fellowship to begin practicing medicine soon. Jonas is pursuing a master's degree in Latin America studies and economics at the University of Cologne, Germany. He's studying Spanish and Portuguese languages, literature, history and economics. He's also researching Caribbean economic topics, and looking for companies to sponsor his master's thesis. Recently, Jonas spent a semester in Mexico and Brazil and is headed to Jamaica to the University of the West Indies to continue his research. A few of his hobbies are swimming, playing water polo, performing in Portuguese-language theater and making wire sculptures. In addition, he helps distribute his mother's artwork in the Caribbean (www.valivalenti.com). Jonas concludes his update: These aspects and accomplishments are "all part of my nomadic life that SYA encouraged by giving me the opportunity to get to know Spain." **Jonah Burke** met up with **Amy Berliner Carson** and **Adam Mendelson** for breakfast to celebrate Adam's engagement. **Dave Klivans** and his wife, Crystal, are expecting their daughter Savannah Rose Klivans sometime in June.

FR'97 15th REUNION 2011

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Emile Desjardins lives in D.C. and is engaged to **Erica Reynolds FR'00**. See photo on page 48.



Host sister Chenxi and host father Chen Guanmiao at the wedding of Kaitlin Solimine CN'97 and husband Joseph Smolen in Costa Rica in September.



Engaged SYAers Erica Reynolds FR'00 and Emile Desjardins FR'97.

CN'98

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Your class will celebrate its 15th reunion next year. Can you volunteer to be your class agent or part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

Beth Goldberg and her husband are Foreign Service officers serving in Baghdad.

ES'98

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Your class will celebrate its 15th reunion next year. Can you volunteer to be your class agent or part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.



Ashleigh Garza Byrne FR'98 and her son Caden

FR'98

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Your class will celebrate its 15th reunion next year. Can you volunteer to be your class agent or part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

Alyssa Condon Corry writes to say she got married back in October 2010 and that she and her husband, Shane, have moved permanently to the island of Nantucket, where she recently got a job managing a jewelry store. **Yumi Lim** has moved back from Tokyo to Fairfield, Conn., but plans to move to New York City by the end of the year. She just had her second boy, who is now three months old. Her older son is three. **Ashleigh Garza Byrne** finished her anesthesia residency this summer and is now doing a pain fellowship in Boston. She's hoping to continue working on the East Coast afterward. In the interim, she says she's enjoying spending time with seven-month-old Caden, to whom she speaks French and Spanish only. **Julia Diamond** graduated from Columbia this spring with her master's in arts administration. **Anne-Carmene Almonord** married Egya Appiah in July 2011. As for me, **Gabriela Herman**, I'm plowing away in Brooklyn making a living as a freelance photographer.

CN'99

Class Correspondent
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April Rabkin has been awarded the Osborn Elliott Prize for Excellence in Journalism on Asia for a three-part series of stories illuminating how Chinese society is changing. The awards program, for which she received a \$10,000 cash prize, was held on May 21 in New York City. The prize is awarded annually to a writer, or team of writers, who has produced the best example of journalism about Asia in print or online during the calendar year. Criteria are the impact of the work and its originality, creativity, depth of research and educational value in informing the public about Asia.

ES'99

Class Correspondent
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Many congratulations are in order for our class. **Sophie Beal** and her husband welcomed their first child, Gabriel James Shen, on December 5, 2011, in New Orleans. **Andrea Halverson** is teaching research methods at Boston University and is preparing for doctoral study in organizational behavior come September (institution to be determined). She has enjoyed recent trips to Sweden, Norway and France and is planning a visit to Tuscany to visit **Laurel Bel-lante**. **Tara Kenney** writes, "I'm

recently engaged to my boyfriend, Ben Rubin. We're getting married on Cape Cod in the fall and I couldn't be more excited. We live in Boston and hope to move to Portland, Maine, in a few years and soak in the simple life . . ." **Logan Schmid** took a new position as a producer at digital agency R/GA and will mark one year there in April. **Maya Smith** graduated from her PhD program in romance languages and linguistics at Berkeley in May. She writes, "My dissertation is on language acquisition and use among Senegalese immigrants in Paris and Rome, looking specifically at language ideologies and conceptualizations of identity." **Elizabeth Pope Smithgall** writes, "I turned 30 on November 11, 2011 (coincidentally, so did my buddy **Michelle Hulme-Lippert**). Life is good here in Atlanta; in April, my darling husband, Jason, and I will celebrate our six-year anniversary. I work in corporate communications for AT&T and love it. I was part of the team that launched the iPhone 4S and learned that my role is evolving to also cover major sponsorships and events, such as *American Idol*, SXSW, the Olympics and some upcoming political conventions, which should make this year very busy and interesting." **Kitt Stephenson** is in Kyoto studying Japanese and the psychology of haiku. Last July, **Vanessa Gerber Stickles** and her husband welcomed their first baby, Kara, born at 9 lbs and measuring 21 in. She writes, "We're having so much fun with her!"



A New Year's Eve wedding in New York City for Lauren Berg FR'99 and Jarrel Price.

FR'99

Class Correspondents
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Vanessa Janowski writes, "I'm graduating with my PhD this year from Caltech. Excited to be a doctor. I'll be headed to MIT this fall as a postdoctoral scholar, and would love to reconnect with any other alums back East." **Lauren (Berg) Price** writes, "I got married on New Year's Eve in New York City to Jarrel Price, from Woodbury, Conn." **Allison Carter** writes, "I'm living in Los Angeles, doing outreach and teaching creative writing at Reasons Eating Disorder Center. My second book, *Here Versus Elsewhere*, is forthcoming from Insert Blanc Press." **Virginia (King) McCune** is an orthodontist living in Atlanta (she has three patients who speak French, so she actually gets to use her French from time to time). She and her husband, Dave, have a two-year-old daughter named Hannah and a second child due in June.

CN'00

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Read about **Michael Love** on page 36.

ES'00

Class Correspondent
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McKenzie Kamp Bezates and husband Nick welcomed Barrett Nicholas Bezates to the world on September 23, 2011. She writes, "When I'm ready to return to the work world, I'll reopen my accounting business. In the meantime, I'm enjoying every minute being a stay-at-home mom (or domestic engineer, as I like to call it) and waiting patiently for his birth certificate so we can get him a passport and introduce him to the amazing world around us. ¡Hola, compañeros! Watch out, Mark Zuckerberg: Our class has a few budding entrepreneurs and they're set to be stars. **Cecilia "Cecy" Ramirez** recently moved back to New York City after 10 years in Philadelphia to start her own event consulting business, C-Luxe Events. Cecy had been in the industry part time and is now pursuing her dream full time. Go, Cecy, go! **Raquel (Leonard) Moreno** wrote her first book, *La Nena's Kitchen*:



McKenzie Kamp Bezates ES'00, husband Nick and newborn son Barrett Nicholas

A Guide to Plant-Based Cooking at Home, which was released this spring. When she's not writing or working in her garden, Raquel is the manager of the Healthy Living Initiative at the Food Bank of South Jersey. Across the world in China, **Alex "Nacho" White** writes: "This fall I moved to my wife's hometown of Beijing, where I'm now teaching economics at Tsinghua University. Looking forward to dropping in on SYA China when I get the chance." After working for Google in New York City for three years, **Azita Habibi** is set to start an MBA/MA international studies dual degree through the Wharton and Lauder schools at the University of Pennsylvania in May. **Elizabeth Marshall** works as the director of strategic planning for Common Good, a nonprofit in New York City. She wed her fiancé, Jeffrey Leeds, on March 16. Congrats, Elizabeth! And I, **Ife Babatunde**, last June graduated from business school at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. I now live in Brooklyn and work for Ogilvy & Mather.



Dan Dozier FR'00 and Director of Alumni Relations Susan McLean at the Ambassador's Residence in Paris.

FR'00

Class Correspondent
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Malcolm Bowles remains busy in Portland, Ore., while applying to medical school, where he hopes to specialize in psychiatry. He trains emergency-department scribes and provides physician support for the implementation of electronic medical records. He had been working in Alaska and will soon begin training doctors in Salem, Ore., at the largest emergency room in the state. For those lucky enough to be dining in the Portland area, he's also selling homemade local, seasonal, organic pies (*pâte brisée pur beurre!*) to keep up his culinary school skills. **Juliane Jones** completed a master's in music in composing from University of London in 2009. She's working on her doctorate in music at the University of British Columbia. She finished a pop album called *We Love We Live*, which is available on iTunes. You can follow her on her Facebook music page to show your support. **Sian Evans** just finished her MSLIS at Pratt Institute, in New York, and is now a senior library relations associate at ARTstor. She lives in Brooklyn, close to many other SYA alums. **Daniel Dozier** is still in France, working at the *Ambassador's Residence*, and has invited us all to visit. He helped arrange the SYA event held there in April. **Erica Reynolds** lives in D.C. and is engaged to **Emile Desjardins FR'97**. (See page 48 for photo of Erica and Emile)

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ES'01 Classmates Liza Covington, Jeff Clewell and family friend celebrating with Darcy Pottle Meals

In January, **Jeeyoung Choi** started a job in marketing at Bank of America. She works on briefing materials for the marketing executive and does branding research. She's working on film projects on the side and hoping to travel to Spain at some point this year to do a flamenco project. She still lives in New York City and sees local and visiting SYAers **Claire Frost** (New York City), **Diana Tatarchuk** (London) and **Katie Coon** (Brooklyn) as often as possible. Katie started a new job in September at Springer Science + Business Media, a publishing company, as the account specialist for sales to academic and governmental institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean. She's also in school part time for a master's in library and information science. She recently wrapped up a vacation in California, where she spent a few days with **Amie Vaccaro** in San Francisco (reminiscing about Zaragoza). **Justine Harman** and **Abram Mendel** also live in New York City. Justine works as a freelance writer. Just this February she accepted a full-time position in the features department at *Elle* magazine. Abram works in a family business in the leather industry. Most recently the company launched a line of men's luxury leather goods: www.SterlingKane.com. **Chelsea Bauch** lives in Portland, Ore., where she recently switched gears from arts/culture writing to advertising at Wieden+Kennedy. She still sees **Kirsten Johnson** and **Maggie Tillman** regularly and went white-water rafting with **Jeff Clewell** last summer. **Charles Gillespie** still runs the online gambling business he started at the University of North Carolina (Gambling.com). He moved to Monaco last year. Before that he was in Shanghai for three years. His SYA host brother Eduar Vallejo moved to Shanghai for the last year Chuck was there and they were roommates all over again. Chuck sees **Christian Kunkel** and Abram regularly, and spends most of his days trying to learn French. **Nafeesah Allen** lives in New Delhi, where she serves as a vice consul for her second tour with the Department of State. She also recently worked in São Paulo, Brazil, at

the start of the year. We all send huge congrats and well wishes to **Darcy Pottle Meals** on her recent marriage to Clifton Meals.

FR'01

Class Correspondent
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Ana Nikonorow is traveling between Jordan and Iraq to create strategic and political reports for the NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq; this follows a yearlong fellowship in Syria.

CN'02



10th REUNION 2011

Class Correspondent
Sara Bernstein Graham
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Hope you're all doing well. Can you believe it's been 10 years? Happy reunion year! **Sara Bernstein Graham**, **Dawn Cleveland**, **Rachel Mandell**, **Natalie Lempert**, **Meghan Skaer** and **Christie Emberly** got together for Sara's wedding in Marina, Calif. Sara's host sister was there as well. It was a glorious reunion. Dawn also married over the summer, in Seattle, to Calder Danz. Natalie lives in D.C. and works on the Latin America team at Freedom House.

ES'02



10th REUNION 2011

Class Correspondent
Alexandra Garrison
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I [**Alex Garrison**] can't believe almost 10 years have passed since we left Zaragoza as high school juniors and seniors. Many thanks to all of you who submitted updates. Last summer, **Elena Stewart Turevon** moved from D.C. to North Carolina to live with her husband, Patrick, and to begin a doctoral program in cultural anthropology at Duke. **Daphne Johnson** attends Oregon State University College of Veterinary Medicine. This summer, she and other students and veterinarians will travel to Nicaragua to set up a clinic and serve the local animal population. This year **Offiong Bassey** is releasing her first full-length album, a fusion of original African soul, jazz and gospel. She's based in Boston and travels the country performing; she also toured in South Africa. Offiong is really excited to share her music with you. You can hear her songs and join her mailing list at offiongbassey.com and become a fan on facebook.com/OffiongBassey. **Melissa Vickery** completed her master's degree in civil engineering in Canterbury, New Zealand. She is lives in San Francisco and works for a struc-

tural and earthquake engineering firm. She recently reconnected with **Julia Anderson** and they discovered that they live in the same neighborhood. **Katie Dalton** teaches Spanish and ESL at the Stratton Mountain School, in southern Vermont. She works with her fiancé, Rob, and they look forward to their wedding this summer. **Alisa Gragert** is in Argentina, making and selling goat's-milk yogurt, growing food and dancing the tango in the Córdoba province. **John Petzold** recently traveled to Brazil to visit his sister **Lisa (FR'99)**, who works for the State Department in São Paulo. I still live and work in Atlanta. I had the wonderful opportunity to have dinner with **Kristen Ardani** in D.C. last November. *Abrazos.*

FR'02 10th REUNION 2011

Class Correspondent
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Nicole Melas writes, "I still live in L.A. and would be thrilled to meet up with anyone visiting or living on the West Coast."

IT'02 10th REUNION 2011

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Ana Nikonorow is traveling between Jordan and Iraq to create strategic and political reports for the NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq; this follows a yearlong fellowship in Syria. **Ian Temple** just launched The Future Project in New York City, D.C., and New Haven. This is a program that pairs high school students with volunteer college students and professionals who have a shared passion; they are challenged to take on a project that will change their community for the better. For more information, visit the futureproject.org, or contact Ian directly at ian.temple@thefutureproject.org. **Doug Gates** recently returned to the States after serving four years in Yokosuka, Japan, as a member of the staff for the commander of the U.S. Seventh Fleet. He recently bought a house in Annapolis and is starting a two-year tour as an instructor of political science at the Naval Academy. **Faye Gallant** works at the University of Alaska Fairbanks as a research administrator for the master's in public administration program. She lives with her husband and two dogs.

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Your class will celebrate its 10th reunion next year. Can you volunteer to be part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

Claire Simeone writes, "Life has just been amazing. Since SYA, I went to college in Scotland and vet school at Virginia Tech, and was able to travel to Chile, Tanzania, St. Barthelemy, Turks and Caicos, and Baja Mexico for wildlife/conservation work. I'm completing a medicine and surgery internship at a specialty practice in San Diego, and am one of the final candidates being considered for a fellowship at SeaWorld San Diego. In the future, I want to have my own international conservation company with programs that combine education, humanitarian work and wildlife and ecosystem conservation."

FR'03

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Your class will celebrate its 10th reunion next year. Can you volunteer to be part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

IT'03

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Your class will celebrate its 10th reunion next year. Can you volunteer to be part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

CN'04

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Will Faulkner ES'04 and SYA Spain faculty member Angeles Errazu in Zaragoza.

ES'04

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¡Hola, mis compañeros! **William Faulkner** is in New Orleans looking for jobs while putting the finishing touches on his master's thesis, presenting at conferences and driving a pedicab around the French Quarter. The future is a giant hazy unknown for him, but he's angling toward a PhD, hopefully in England, within a couple of years. Will also attended the dedication celebration of SYA Spain's new home. **Mirielle Eaton** graduated from Sciences Po Paris with a master's in international affairs in the spring. She moved to Colombia to look for work but first visited with **Ashley Gardner** for a long weekend in Paris. **Laura Wasserson** is launching a jewelry line called WXYZ Jewelry (WXYZJEWELRY.com). **Danielle Valner** teaches kindergarten full time at a charter school in L.A. and is simultaneously getting her master's in education at UCLA. **Lila Holzman** is working in outdoor nature education just outside of L.A. and received an assignment from the Peace Corps to do sustainable agriculture work in Panama. **Sofia Warner** is applying to medical school and working at Mass. General Hospital in Boston in the

meantime. She went out to San Francisco and saw **Tess Kenner** last June and **Yasemin Gunday** came up to Maine with her at the end of the summer. Sofia also saw Pepe (**Joe Elias**) in Boston for the SYA Homecoming last summer. Last August, she was in Spain with her family visiting their Spanish relatives for a week in Burguete, in the Pyrenees. She writes, "It was a blast, and my wonderful host family drove me up from Zaragoza and stayed to have lunch with us. It was great to have my American family, Spanish relatives and host family all together. Just as much fun was watching my host dad, Domingo, run the New York City marathon with my brother, parents and Maria Emilia, my host mom. We had a great weekend with them and it was great to see them in the United States for the second time. As of this writing, and if all goes according to plan, my parents and I will bicycle the Camino in late May, so I'm looking forward to another trip to Spain." **Halley Caldwell** lives in Hong Kong, works in investment management and enjoys the beautiful getaways of Southeast Asia. **Leslie Heimer** is back in school getting her master's in leadership for sustainability education at Portland State University, and she'll graduate in June 2013. At the same time, she continues to work as a garden educator at Learning Gardens Laboratory teaching sixth-graders. She's volunteering with lots of food-security and community-building organizations and has become part of several community-run operations such as a goat milking cooperative, with four goats living in the city, and a rabbit meat collective. **Bonnie Hutton** runs a nonprofit that rehabilitates and finds homes for Thoroughbred racehorses. **Hannah Raymond** lives just outside of D.C. working full time as a nurse. She's been traveling a lot lately and her next trip is to Ecuador for three weeks to do a medical mission. **Tyler Sadwith** is a federal employee working for the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation, a division within the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Established by the Affordable Care Act (the health reform legislation of 2010), CMMI works to identify, design and scale innovative healthcare-delivery systems in order to expand access, improve quality and lower costs of healthcare for all Americans. He likes to play basketball and mentor neighborhood kids in Baltimore, and "platicar en español cuando sea posible." After a wonderful year working in Admissions at the SYA home office, **Leah Boch** ventured to Puerto Rico to lead 10 students for a month and then packed her apartment and moved to Wiscasset, where the official town tagline is the "prettiest

village in Maine” to be the director of admissions at the Chewonki Semester School. Her first year has been busy but spectacular as she juggles residential boarding school life with a new job. One of many perks is having five miles of running trails 10 feet from her front door. **Tess Kenner** lives in San Francisco and works as a producer at an ad agency there. **Andra Mocanu** was honored to have been nominated as a global delegate, now ambassador, for the One Young World summit held in Zurich this past September. Referred to as the “Junior Davos,” the summit brought together young leaders from 170 countries to participate in plenary sessions and interact with speakers such as Muhammad Yunus, Desmond Tutu, Jamie Oliver and the Crown Prince of Norway, as well as many other extraordinarily inspiring current and future changemakers. She’s excited for the opportunity to visit her new friends from multiple continents. As for me, **Sally Stuart**, I’m still living in New York and onto my fourth year working in the management consulting services practice at Infosys. Hope everyone is well.

FR’04

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Read about **Tim Trinidad** on page 39.

IT’04

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CN’05

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Alden Gatt lives in New York City and works as a pianist, teacher and conductor.

ES’05

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After graduating from Tulane University with majors in Latin and ancient art and archaeology and minors in art history and business, **Anna Barden** has been working as the newest member of Christie’s New York Antiquities specialist department. **Shannon Cummins** lives in North Carolina now, in her first year at Wake Forest School of Medicine. If anyone is ever in North Carolina, she says to stop by. **Jeremy Green** will be starting medical school at LSU New Orleans this August and got engaged over the Christmas holiday. **Tristan Levey** spent last year as a winemaking intern at Evening Land Vineyards in Lompoc, Calif. He’s finishing up his first year of medical school at Case Western Reserve University. **Rachel Levy** works in investor relations at a boutique investment management firm in New York City. She has been in finance for almost three years, after graduating from Sarah Lawrence College with a concentration in economics and European history and politics. After SYA, Rachel never lost the bug for travel and adventure and continued her studies abroad, at Oxford University,

during her third year of college. Although she’s firmly planted stateside in Brooklyn at the moment, she looks forward to her next move, wherever it may be. **Merritt Moore** is headed to Oxford to pursue a physics PhD in quantum information processing. After a year in Abu Dhabi, **Melissa Nozell** spent last summer in Europe, including a visit to see her host family in Viterbo, and is now pursuing a master’s in Islamic studies at Harvard. In part because of his time in Viterbo, **Benny Sachs** is on the long road toward becoming an architect. He’s finishing up his fourth semester of the master of architecture program at Yale, and will return to Rome this summer with his classmates for a drawing course. **Stefanie Surchev** attended her host brother’s wedding in May 2010. **Zoe Stathopoulos** works in global health and development in D.C., is getting her master’s in international communications (health communication) and has joined an Italian club!

CN’06

Class Correspondent
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Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga writes, “I’m in Beijing studying at Peking University for the first year of a dual-degree master’s in international affairs with Peking University and the London School of Economics. My thesis is on Chinese bureaucratic competition over North Korea policy, and in my free time I’m running a lecture series bringing Chinese professors’ research to a Western audience and a blog series for an Australian think tank interviewing Chinese academics.” In addition, the Alumni Office lets us know that Nathan visited SYA China in March and spoke to the students during assembly. He’s also running BEAM: Bridging Education and Mobility, a new charity for migrant children in Beijing. BEAM’s first project is collecting unwanted but otherwise useful life essentials from international students as they leave Beijing and donating these items to underprivileged migrant-worker communities through charity schools around Beijing. **Wilson Hailey** writes, “I’m a senior at BLCU, studying Chinese literature. I work as a scriptwriter at So Ucool Films (金扫帚电影). I’m also an editor at *China Kids English* magazine (中国青少年英语报). I teach IELTS (北京雅思)) and judge children’s English competitions (蒲公英英语大赛). I live with **Tom Brett** and

Stone Yu and have a futon perpetually open to any SYA member.” **Mary Lane** visited New York City last summer after her Fulbright Journalism fellowship ended and caught up with **Zander Pease**, **Tyler Perry** and **Kevin Vichyastit**. She landed her dream job with the *Wall Street Journal* as a foreign correspondent covering the euro crisis and culture — including fashion, art and film — in its Berlin bureau. In the spring, **Mirielle Eaton** graduated from Sciences Po Paris with a master’s in international affairs. In March, after a five-month stint working in a consulting firm, she moved to Colombia to look for work, but not before visiting with **Ashley Gardner ES’04** for a long weekend in Paris. Zander Pease graduated from Princeton with a degree in physics. He spent most of his last few months there building superconducting quantum circuitry for his thesis. He also spent quite a bit of time designing, writing and running MetroGnome, a novel approach to music-education software currently on iOS. Zander has joined Union Square Ventures for his first real job (!) and looks forward to seeing everyone in New York City. **Mark Frykman** is getting his master’s in mechanical engineering at Stanford and is working as a teaching assistant in the student machine shop. **Elizabeth Cayne Rosen** graduated magna cum laude from Washington University with a bachelor’s degree in international and area studies. She married Max Rosen on July 3, 2011, in D.C., and works as an assistant director of undergraduate admissions at WU.

ES’06

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CN'07 5th REUNION 2011

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Liz Paisner graduated from Harvard in the spring and moved to Mumbai to work for Mahindra & Mahindra. She writes, "All SYAers are welcome and encouraged to visit." **Margie Root** finished the National Outdoor Leadership School's Patagonia Year and will begin graduate school studying nuclear engineering in the fall. **Henry Christoph** is a junior at the U.S. Naval Academy majoring in Chinese. Following graduation next May, he hopes to be commissioned as a Navy pilot. As for me, **Allison Rabkin Golden**, I graduated from Yale this spring. Hope everyone has been doing well.

ES'07 5th REUNION 2011

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Can you volunteer to be your class agent?
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Martha Cullen has been in Florence for the last two years studying literature and working as a waitress for an endearingly loud and vulgar Tuscan chef. This summer she hopes to get a new visa to enroll in the Accademia delle Belle Arti Firenze for painting. **Claire Moskowitz** is in Paris, working on a master's in global communications at the American University of Paris. She'll be there through summer and will then move to Tel Aviv in September. **Jenna Matecki**, after graduating in May 2011 from Barnard, was hired as a political and public affairs consultant for Tusk Strategies, whose focus is primarily on New York City (Mayor Bloomberg, corporations, non-profits) but has projects across the country. On the side, she's a visual artist and paints at her studio in Brooklyn. Still close with *famiglia* Corinti-Pacini, Jenna will be headed to Italy soon. **Ariel Royer** graduated magna cum laude from Ithaca College with a bachelor of arts degree in culture and communications in May 2011. During the spring of 2011, Ariel presented a paper, "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: Informal Sector Recycling in Amman, Jordan," at the National Conference of Undergraduate Research. Based on work she did while studying in Jordan, it was also published in the NCUR 2011 journal. **Kiki Fox** graduated from Duke last year with a bachelor's degree with distinction after double-majoring in classical languages and civilizations. **Anna Hinck** spent the 2011 spring semester in Rome and graduated from William Smith College.



FR'08 classmates Charlie Aidinoff, Alexandra Ellis, Mary Annunziata and Harper Gany-Beitler in the gardens of the Ambassador's Residence in Paris.

CN'08

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Your class will celebrate its 5th reunion next year. Can you volunteer to be part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

Sam Schultz is spending his junior year in Beijing.

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Your class will celebrate its 5th reunion next year. Can you volunteer to be part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

Chris Brozdowski is studying cognitive sciences at the University of Connecticut. He's involved in research on electrophysiological responses to syntax violations, as well as discussions on the nature of sign-language acquisition. This summer he'll begin work on his own project, investigating the abstract/concrete distinction in semantic networks. **Celia Rostow** spends most of her time waiting to find out if she can go to Paris this summer to research her senior thesis. Apart from that, she's helping to business-manage the Yale Women's Slavic Chorus, procrastinating doing her Mandarin homework, and enjoying delicious dinners every now and then with fellow Yale **Chris Medeiros**. After taking a gap year, **Cherrie Angeles** spent her freshman year at NYU in London, and is now a sophomore at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. During her gap year, she fulfilled a nine-month AmeriCorps term of service and worked in a Seattle public school. Her experiences working in education are part of why she's majoring in public policy with a field concentration in education.

policy. She's also a member of the non-profit Students for Education Reform. She has an internship at KIPP charter school in New York City this summer. In the past year, she has seen **Julian Moore** in D.C., **Sarah Lockwood**, **Charlie Aidinoff** and **E. J. Nisbeth** in Boston and **Miriam Greenlee** in Chapel Hill. **Stephanie Nass** writes, "I recently launched an e-gift shop (foldedvictory.com) as an extension of my blog (Folded Victory: foldedvictory.blogspot.com). My best friend and I wrote an app of the best burgers in New York City called The Big Burger (find it on iTunes), which all SYAers should use when they visit New York. Otherwise, I'm a junior at Columbia, studying art history and busy looking for an internship this summer. **Jamie Silverstein** is pursuing a master's degree in social policy and planning at the London School of Economics and Political Science. As a component of his studies, he's preparing a dissertation that explores the political practicability of instating libertarian paternalist (or "nudge") policies in the United States. Jamie most recently reunited with **Alexa Whiting**, who lived one block away from him in London. Alexa completed an internship in London at the Overseas Development Institute this past fall, working with economic research and development, and her spring term was in Dublin at The Integration Centre working with refugees and antidiscrimination efforts in Ireland. **Chris Gellert** is majoring in French and comparative literature at New York University. There was a recent spotting of Charlie, **Mary Annunziata**, **Alex Ellis** and **Harper Gany-Beitler** at the SYA event in Paris.

IT'08

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Your class will celebrate its 5th reunion next year. Can you volunteer to be part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

Abi Pollokoff writes, "I'm graduating early this spring with a bachelor of arts degree in English, French and Italian with a minor in medieval and early modern studies. Next step: conquer the job applications. I also had po'boys

and beignets with **Rixon [Rouse]** when he had a work trip in New Orleans. **Julia Millon** is studying both Spanish and history at Universidad de Alicante, in Spain, for the semester. Upon her return to the University of Colorado Boulder, she'll finish her Italian major and write an honors thesis on translation and fascism in Italy. **Brendan Kopp** graduated from Harvard this spring. He'll be moving to Chicago to work as a business analyst for Sears Holdings. He says he's sad to leave Cambridge but excited for new adventures. **Aliza Goldberg** is a sophomore at Barnard College double-majoring in ancient studies and English/creative writing and double-minoring in art history and environmental science. This summer she'll intern at the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi in its economics section. Over winter break, Aliza caught up with **Rixon**, **Mallory Owen** and **Patricia Leslie** in New York City. **Jesse Glicker** ran a marathon last May and is now studying in Rome. She recently visited her host family in Viterbo. **Charlotte Dean** is studying in Rio de Janeiro and says she loves it. **Olivia Crookston** loves being in Brussels studying business. In January, she completed an internship in finance at a Belgian company called Euroclear. She also au-paired for a family in Terracina, Italy, over the summer. **Remy Bourget** studied in Amman, Jordan, and graduated from Brown this spring. While abroad, he ran into **Anisah Giansiracusa**! **Tim Brennan** finished his bachelor's degree in civil law (BCL) in Cork this spring. **Ellis Greene** was in Beijing studying Chinese, and then headed back to the States. In the fall she'll begin her senior year at Smith. **Kai Fehring** is currently taking part in the RDNA (Regenerative Design & Nature Awareness) program in Bolinas, Calif. It's a nine-month course

focusing on permaculture, nature connection, tracking, bird language, community building, primitive skills, wilderness survival and much more. **Kamilah Welch** studied abroad spring semester of her junior year with CIEE in Cape Town. While there, she took classes at the University of Cape Town, volunteered weekly at two prisons with incarcerated youth and spent time exploring the country. She also did three homestays, two in townships and one in a rural community, and cherished the time she spent with her host families. **Emma Jesberg** studied in Paris this past fall and is now back at Trinity College.

CN'09

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Annie Osborn is a sophomore at Stanford, where she's rowing, playing violin and majoring in earth systems. **Tommy Christoph** spent last summer in Beijing doing intensive language study with IES Abroad.

ES'09

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Hannah Bardo and **Sophia Bernazani**, both sophomores at George Washington University Elliott School of International Affairs, participated in the school's alternative spring break program by volunteering with Habitat for Humanity in New Orleans.

FR'09

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Hope Erdmann is studying French and Spanish at Boston University. She spent the fall semester in Madrid. **Allen Rowe** writes, "I spent the fall semester studying in Sydney."

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Albert Behar FR'09 and SYA France Resident Director Denis Brochu at the reception in Paris.

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Mariam Dingilian attended Princeton in Beijing last summer. Last fall she performed at Merce Cunningham's minEvent 2010–11 at Mount Holyoke and Amherst Colleges. Mariam says she plans to return to China this summer.



In March, Luke Lorentzen ES'10 (left) was spotted in Zaragoza with a copy of the latest issue of *El Guíño*, the journalism class's publication.

ES'10

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Madeline Fuhrman's release of her first single, "Should Have Known,"

was on Sunday, April 29. You can see the video at www.youtube.com/MAD-forJazz and buy the single on iTunes, Amazon, and so on. **Maddy Maxey** launched her line of stylish blazers; check out www.madisonmaxey.com.

IT'10

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Sarah Lambert is off to Richmond. Go Spiders! **Martin Chavez** is going to Jordan for two months this summer. **Dixy Yong** writes, "You can't actually walk in Memphis." **Mattie Thomas** will be attending Northwestern University's School of Education and Social Policy this fall and plans to take off spring and summer 2012 to focus on her riding. **Taylor Spratt** wants to take a gap year and go back to Spain, among other places, traveling, in part, through Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF). **Tom Glascoff** is at Dickinson College. **Caroline Cadieux** is enjoying college and says she's become a total ski bum in Vermont. **Riley Nolan** is going skiing in Alaska and is, sadly, a Patriots fan. **Marc McFarland's** life has taken a totally new direction: He's in Tanzania after spending two months in Spain. Next destination? South Africa. He says he misses everybody and can't wait to get back to the United States by the end of the academic year. **Katya Handler** writes, "I'm not that old, and therefore I'm not an alumna but rather a permanent student of the SYA school system. Don't even think about using *usted* with me!" **Lexi Quinn** writes, "I miss Spain every time my Spanish 5 teacher forgets to speak Spanish, but for now I'm just waiting for colleges to accept me, trying to keep in touch and doing my best to live in the present, not the past." **Sophia Cantizano** is waiting in anguish to hear back from prospective colleges. As she waits, she'll be playing varsity lacrosse at Sidwell Friends and interning with jewelry designer Julie Wolfe. **Lizzie Hartson** is preparing for the ballet *Sleeping Beauty* while she decides among colleges. **Alex Collingsworth** is planning on taking a double gap year: "miss Spain more than I can say. ¡Viva la fiesta!" **Shawneice Floyd** writes, "I started a film society at my high school that raises money and awareness for The Gathering Place (a resource for families and individuals touched by cancer), and I'll be attending Grinnell College next year." **Chanel Branch** is ready for round two whenever you are. **Katie Cohen** has continued practicing Spanish by mentoring Hispanic elementary school students, and is starting to learn Arabic. She hopes to spend the summer traveling to France and Hungary, and will study international relations next year, wherever she ends up. **Sharika Tharani** writes, "SYA Spain made me love the Spanish language so much that it was one of the main reasons for my going to the University of Miami next year. I can't wait for the new experiences that are in my future, but they'd better be good, considering nothing has lived up to my incredible year in España."

Angelina Mercado is recuperating from SYA withdrawal and will probably still be doing that at George Washington University next year. Go Colonials! **Hannah Brewster** writes, "I have a number of newfound interests/hobbies inspired by my SYA Spain experience: studying, doing math problems, Sudoku, crosswords, jigsaw puzzles, Pokémon cards, COD, CryptoQuip, Scrabble, discussing politics, reading Shakespeare aloud, World of Warcraft, watching cat videos on YouTube, creating online anime personalities, Neopets." **Lex Davis** finished at Tabor Academy and is looking forward to college. He still thinks about Spain all the time and says he can't wait to go back. **Porter Hahn** writes, "I still miss Spain every day, but life is great. Can't wait until college, possibly Tulane University." **Nina Poole** writes, "I've been working on my art and wishing I was sitting on a bench near the Ebro watching horses escape while a herd of old people slowly approach." **Arlene Bigirimana** writes, "I'm not really sure where I'll be attending next year, but I'm very hopeful for the future. However, school is going well, as we're coming to a close, and I can't wait to see what happens next." **Jackie-Anne McLenaghan** is attending Molson School of Business at Concordia University in Montreal and continues to speak Spanish with her Spanish-speaking friends. **Maximillia Holtzman** is transferring to Concordia University and is eager to learn French. **Chi-Chi Davis** writes, "My year back has not been nearly as exciting as last year. Stuff has been good but it's hard to enjoy much knowing what I had last year." **Fiona Nugent** writes, "Missing my abroad experience tremendously, but trying to keep up my Spanish and seeing my SYA friends often. I began working at the Mexican Embassy this spring. **Jacob Oleshansky** writes, "It's hard to be home." **Regina Saravia-Wintergerst** is enjoying her last term at Exeter, hoping to travel to a Francophone country over the summer and most likely attending Boston College in the fall. **Ngoc Nguyen** is happy at



In Memoriam

James William Craig ES'95
Robert P. Pierce CN'00
Charles W. Pratt FR'76F
Sarah F. [Robin] Randolph FR'82
Isaac B. Solomon ES'05
Jonathan B. Tucker FR'71

Georgetown and looks forward to spending her summer in Europe. **Chris Onorato** is also at Georgetown and is having a great time. In March, **Sandia Ashley** spent a week with her school chorus in Prague, where they participated in the Young Prague Festival of Choirs, and received a bronze medal for their performance.

FR'11

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Many classmates felt as though there wasn't much to say; their lives are boring compared to their experience abroad last year. **Maggie Strode** will attend Ithaca College in the fall. **Jamie Kalff** got into her two top-choice schools with scholarships: Pace University and Marymount Manhattan College; at the time of this writing, however, she still hadn't decided where she wants to go. **Maya Mariner** is in Oberlin College, adjusting to her life in a small town and trying to make the best of it. She hopes to visit Italy sometime in the near future. **Ava Hoffman** and **Helen Matsumoto** both got into Tulane University but are still keeping their options open as college letters start to roll in. Ava also works at an Italian café called Emporio Rulli, where she meets Italian and European visitors with whom she can

practice her Italian. **Lola Harney** was accepted to New York University in the Global Liberal Studies program, and she may study in Florence for her freshman year. **Amelia Dickinson** writes, "I've not been up to too much this past year except college apps. I've applied to 13 and plan to major in international relations. This summer I'll be working for my school's library as an archivist for the second year in a row." **Maggie Chutter** has applied to several colleges, and is waiting to hear back from them all before she decides where to go. She is still unsure what she will major in (maybe linguistics or something similar), but she's considering a career in veterinary medicine. She plans to study Italian in college, and hopes to study abroad again at some point. The Alumni Office reports that Maggie was named Oyster River High School's Class of 2012 Valedictorian. **Eric Harmeling** writes, "I'm on staff at Parrish, Pulleyn, and Young Wealth Management while attending Wake Technical Community College in Raleigh, N.C. I plan to transfer to the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill; I'm already a part of its Italian Club." **Gabi Crisafulli** writes, "I'm a senior at Moses Brown High School, where I'm the leader of the school's Italian Club. I was able to continue studying Greek this year, although it isn't the same without **Mr. Sammartino**. I miss Italy, especially the food, and I miss traveling across Europe. I hope to go to college on the East Coast next year, and I can't wait to go back to Italy. I continue to speak Italian to some of my family members to master the language." **Olivia Gillingham** writes, "Since graduating from SYA Italy, I have returned to school for my senior year at The Culver Academies. My days have been filled with lots of homework and leadership responsibilities, but happily I've still found time to have fun. I participated in cross country this past fall, and just finished my last high school swim season. After an almost undefeated season, losing only one meet, Culver Girls Academy Swimming became the sectional champions for the first time ever. It was lots of fun to be a part of. Although Culver has been and will remain a special place to me, I continuously find myself looking forward to graduating in early June and moving on to college. So far I've received acceptances from Sewanee (University of the South) in Tennessee, as well as the College of Charleston, in South Carolina. I'm waiting to hear from Kenyon College, in Ohio, as well as Tulane University. Going to school in Italy last year really piqued my interest in art, and my plan, as of now, is to major in art history. I look forward to seeing how it all plays out. I'll

end by saying that nothing can beat the days we spent wandering around Rome or getting lost in the museums of Florence, or the times we spent sipping cappuccinos in the piazzas after school or eating meals with our host families. Not a day goes by when I don't think of Italy and my experiences last year and wish I could go back."

Reed Bruce writes, "I'm attending the University of Mississippi. My major is still undecided, but I'm working on all my required classes for admission to med school. I've been pretty busy on campus, being a member of the Ultimate Frisbee team, singing in the university's all-male a cappella group, joining a fraternity, and being a member of the Green Dot organization for raising awareness and stopping sexual abuse on college campuses. I also joined two honor societies. I'm studying Spanish but continue to

speak Italian as part of the Italian Club and with **Helen Matsumoto**. I spent time with **Michael Stapleton** in my hometown over spring break." (See photo of **Lindsay Hong** and **Share Chen** on page 42)

JP'11

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Can you volunteer to be your class correspondent or class agent or part of a reunion committee? Contact Susan McLean at smclean@sya.org.

VN'11

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SYA's Class of 2011 Boasts 43 AP Scholars

CHINA

AP Scholars with Distinction

Derek N. Gulick-Stutz

Henry O. Singer

AP Scholar with Honors

Kai-Erik M. Jensen

AP Scholars

Aissatou R. Barrie-Rose

Tyler I. Bayley

Anne Y. Fong

Alison G. Fritz

Gregory W. Ho

Georgia A. Horstman

Jason M. Lau

Eric D. Truog

FRANCE

AP Scholars with Distinction

Danielle N. Feffer

Audrey G. O'Brian

AP Scholars with Honors

Margaret S. Austin

Cameron S. Bills

Emma L. Sager

AP Scholars

Lydia A. Davenport

Sara d. A. Fontes

Skyler K. Inman

Oliver C. Rogers

Helen E. Sprainer

ITALY

AP Scholar with Distinction

Taylor P. Holcomb

AP Scholars with Honors

Bridgette J. Slater

AP Scholars

Eric J. Harmeling

Max T. Silbiger

Emilie C. Tréhu

SPAIN

AP Scholars with Distinction

Mark J. Hensel

Marc L. McFarland

Ngoc P. H. Nguyen

Christopher J. P. Onorato

AP Scholars

Katherine A. Cohen

Alexander B. Collingsworth

Danielle P. Conway Lewis

Katya R. B. Handler

Paige E. Peterkin

Sofie C. Szkobel-Wolff

Dixy H. Yong

VIETNAM

AP Scholars with Distinction

Paul F. Dillon

Katherine V. Svec

AP Scholar with Honors

Elizabeth W. Patterson

AP Scholars

Alexandra V. di Suvero

Sonya A. Schoenberger

Eliana J. Schulze

AP Scholar with Distinction: average score of at least 3.5 on all AP Exams taken, and scores of 3 or higher on five or more of these exams. **AP Scholar with Honors:** average score of at least 3.25 on all AP Exams taken, and scores of 3 or higher on four or more of these exams. **AP Scholar:** scores of 3 or higher on three or more AP Exams.



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謝謝您 *Merci Danke Grazie धन्यवाद Gracias cảm ơn* ありがとう *Thank you*

“We give to SYA because fluency in another language has immeasurably enriched our personal and professional lives, and we want to make sure that high school students today have the same opportunity. We loved our extraordinary French and American teachers, our group vacations from Normandy to Provence, and the lifelong friends we made. SYA gave us and our classmates the language skills, the open-mindedness and the confidence to pursue fulfilling lives and careers anywhere in the world.”

— Margaret Conklin FR'74 and Alice Conklin FR'74 FR'07P





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