



News Bulletin

Vol.29 • No.2 • 2023

Produced by and for members of the Servas community



Meetings are simple as A,B,C in 2023:
Austria, **B**razil and **C**hile.
Or come join us in Spain, Taiwan, USA.



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Hello?

How do you find hosts and how do travellers find you? Email, text, Facebook, phone, Whatsapp?

Are you a member of Couchsurfers, BeWelcome, etc.?

Please tell me about it and I will publish your story.

Thank you.

Your editor, Michael Johnson

newsletter@servas.org

Thank you members who shared your stories and photos.

See photo contest on last page.

Cover photos:

Taiwan, and bottom: Switzerland.



In this issue you will read about wildfires affecting our planet. We have personal accounts by Servas members in Canada who literally had to run (or drive) for their lives.

Also, next issue we'll tell you about Veronique, a Servas member from France who went to Turkey to help after their deadly earthquakes, in a story called the "Hope amid the Rubble."

...



SI President's Message

By Radha Radhakrishna, SI President



Greetings!

Things seem to be getting back to normal for Servas in 2023. It is true that there are wars, earthquakes, floods, and wildfires affecting our planet; which makes our work even more important.

Occasionally there is some good news. Recently some youth activists won a case in the US State of Montana regarding the right to a “clean and healthful environment in Montana for present and future generations.” While these legal victories are heartening, the work that Servas does at the grassroots level – to live a life that preserves this earth for future generations – is vital.

Hosting and travel are getting back to normal this year. I note that meetings and activities have also picked up – and many more are planned for the rest of the year. As always, our teams try to collect stories and visuals about these events and publish them.

Recently, the SI Peace Secretaries, Mei Wang and Francisco Salomon, organized a meeting of national peace secretaries to discuss events for Servas Day in September this year. By the time this goes to press, I hope to get reports of the many events to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Servas.

SI Exco is hard at work to improve many aspects of the Servas experience. For example, recently, Jim Leask, Carla Kristensen and I

met with Servas members who coordinate and actively participate in the SYLE program. We discussed ways to bring improvements to the program. The meeting helped us understand how we should ask the youth coordinator in each country to work. It was also helpful for the tech team. They learned how collecting data about families that have young people can be very helpful for the youth coordinator. Meetings like these are the first step in making improvements – and you will hear from us about these improvements.

Our volunteer tech team is working hard to release Version 2 of Servas.Org by November this year. I am quite excited that it will make it even easier for us to do things together across the world. There are lots of innovations in Version 2.

Photo: Radha during a working lunch with Canadian Jim Leask, near Radha's home in the USA.



However, anything new requires a learning process. May I therefore request the membership coordinator and key people of each Servas group to wholeheartedly go through the training that will be offered in October?

We want Version 2 to be a success. That will depend on the membership coordinators' ability to train area coordinators and interviewers, to implement what they learn. I am confident we will all rise to the task. I urge everybody to do their bit.

I feel sad when I hear that people do not get responses from hosts or travelers. As a host, even if you have to turn down a request, it is polite to write and explain why. I have heard sometimes that hosts do not receive the requests due to inaccurate data on Servas.Org.

Please ensure that you provide an email or phone number on which you can actually receive the message promptly – and that you check regularly. Similarly, as a traveler, if you are not able to visit a host, please write to explain that. Writing to explain why you can't host or visit is an appreciated courtesy. As an organization that supports peace, we should ensure that our personal behavior extends to this courtesy.

I appeal to all of you to make a sincere effort to respond to all the messages within a reasonable time. In our age of emails, phones, WhatsApp and other social media, we now expect a reply within a few days.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the SI Exco members – Jonny Sågänger, Paul Nielsen, Richard Cabassut, Jon Corrado, Jim Leask, Carla Kristensen, Mei Wang, and Francisco Salomón for all the work they are doing to keep Servas working for you.

Please enjoy this issue, and all the stories and visuals about the good work we do together. —Radha

Many Meetings

Check out all the enthusiastic Servas events around the world.

Meetings in 2023 include: Spain, Austria, USA, Taiwan, Chile, Brazil, and in 2024, Switzerland.

Here is the link:

[Events and meetings | Servas Online](#)



Editor's Note:

Radha's message spoke of "earthquakes, floods, and wildfires" and in this issue you will read how wildfires are affecting our planet.

Also, too late for this issue, we received an excellent article about the earthquake relief in Turkey. Veronique, a Servas member from France, went to Turkey. **Photo:** Veronique (centre) with other helpers. Next issue you can read how she helped there, in a story called: "Hope amid the Rubble."



Come Meet in Taiwan, 10-12 Nov. 2023

By JoJo JEN, National Secretary of Taiwan



Please come celebrate in Taichung, Taiwan, the establishment of our Taiwan Youth Team, and the 10th Anniversary of the registration of Servas Taiwan (with the strategic alliance of Providence University).

Theme: Poetic ponderings from a lively city (Taichung, a city in central Taiwan).

Various prices depending on how long you stay. For example: Cost is USD 260 per person for 4 days, 3 nights (two twin beds in one room), including 3 breakfasts + 2 dinners + 1 lunch box, bus fee with insurance, day tickets (based on 2-person share one room at a 5-star hotel.)

Registration and pay by September 8 at:

<https://forms.gle/wWzMSD7VVwUou51R7>
Any inquiry please contact me at +886 966877594 or servas.taiwan@gmail.com

JoJo JEN



Come to the Swiss Meeting

May 18 to May 20, 2024



(Lausanne Youth Hostel, Ch. du Bois-de-Vaux 36, 1007 Lausanne-Vidy)

www.youthhostel.ch/de/hostels/lausanne-jeunotel

Lausanne is the heart of the Olympic movement in French-speaking Switzerland. Culture and enjoyment as well as a fantastic view of the lake await you here. During our long weekend, we have planned:

Saturday: a picnic / bring your own and share.

An *apéro* (apéritif), dinner, visit the cathedral / night watchman, night walk through Lausanne.

Sunday: Breakfast, options of: a walk through the Lavaux Vineyards Terrasses (UNESCO World Heritage), picnic, guided tour in Lausanne, dinner, time together. Also at your own expense, visit: Charlie Chaplin Museum, Gruyère Museum, Cailler Museum, or Excursion to Rochers-de-Naye.

Monday: Breakfast, Check-out 10 am, 10:05 am: photo shoot of the whole group, after departure or options such as boat trip, Olympic Museum.





Accommodation: all double rooms. Meals: breakfast and dinner + packed lunch for Sunday included. Cost in Swiss francs (sFr.): Two nights including breakfast and dinner/ packed lunch Sunday, tourist tax, day tickets, public transport = sFr. 240 with **private** bathroom/toilet/bed linen/towels or sFr. 220 toilet/shower **nearby**/bed linen, bring along your own towels - Children a little cheaper - Ticket (included): Valid for all public transport in the Lausanne region for the entire duration of the stay - Drinks are not included in the price. Arrival by public transport, car or bicycle. Parking spaces approx. sFr. 10/day for car. Reservations recommended. For campers some paid places available, plus cost of meals.

REGISTRATION (valid upon receipt of payment for accommodation).

Deadline:

1 April, 2024. Please request, then complete a registration form, and return it by email to:

hueber.heim@bluewin.ch

or by postal mail to Helen Heim Hueber, Lindenweg 1, CH-8500 Frauenfeld, Switzerland.

More details available in English and German at:

https://en.servas.ch/files/ug-d/25b4a3_42675a8cd7c149ff8eea9e75157c3052.pdf

https://www.servas.ch/files/ug-d/25b4a3_96f62ae700484c408b8b6c57433a0581.pdf



Destination Sweden

By Paloma Begué, Servas Spain

Last May, I bought an Interrail ticket and travelled from Barcelona, my home, to the south of Sweden, stopping in many places in between.

On the way I visited Montpellier, Freiburg, Prague, Warsaw, Sopot, Gdansk, Karlskrona, Vaxjo, Silkeborg, Hamburg and Strasbourg, and other cities, villages, and the countryside. I was hosted by Servas members; some of them became new friends, others were already friends since I had hosted them in the past.

I saw wonderful places:

- > the Camargue marshland and lagoons close to the Mediterranean coast,
- > the Kaiserstuhl vineyards
- > the spectacular Black Forest close to Freiburg,
- > the mountains and forests close to Elbe River in the Czech Republic,
- > huge fields of yellow rapeseed flowers and flat green fields in Poland.

Photo: *Sightseeing in Freiburg and speaking in Spanish with (left) Simone, the daughter of my Servas host Jürgen.*

Photo: *Beautiful trail by Elbe River in Celakovice-Jirina, close to Prague, with my Servas hosts Erzi and Lyle.*

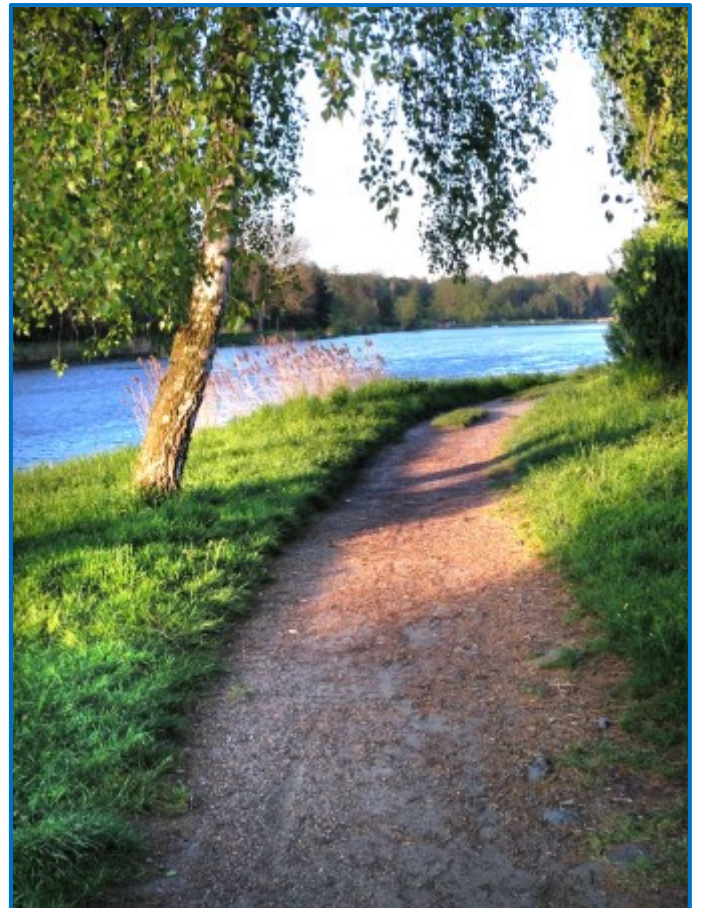


Photo:

Rapeseed flower field, seen from the train after leaving Joanna, my Servas host in Warsaw, and going to Grazyna's and Marius, my Servas hosts in Sopot.

I crossed a calm Baltic Sea and reached the amazing Karlskrona Archipelago. There are so many images in my mind: huge flocks of ducks travelling north, the long bridges between Sweden and Denmark, walking around the historical Danish kings' battlefields, the bucolic Swedish countryside, the busy and lively Hamburg Harbour, and the lovely Elbe River.

**Photo:**

Bike by water: The sunny Karlskrone archipelago, the most relaxing experience using my Servas host Ingela's bike.

**Photo:**

Around the dining table: Swedish anniversary party at Jose's and Eva's home... my Servas hosts in Aseda, close to Vajxo.



Photo:

A lake close to Viborg, with (right) my Servas friend Bodil. Author Paloma (left).

**Photo:**

Very emotional meeting with my daughter's friend Slava (from Syria) and Dirk (left) and Wiebke (right), my Servas hosts in Buxtehude, close to Hamburg.



Lots of intense emotions come into my mind when I remember my trip. I felt very warmly welcomed in all homes and by Servas day hosts Jirina and Ania, who showed me around. I was always surrounded by people who were interested in sharing conversations about each other's cultures and life experiences. We shared tasty meals of local cooking. And I cooked Spanish rice and made salads for my hosts.

The spirit of Servas was always present during my trip and I feel really grateful and lucky for visiting such wonderful people!

■ ■ ■

Bitten by the Hiking Bug

By Anna Sellani

On May 8, 2023, my friend Marta and I travelled to the small green country of Luxembourg. For the first few days, we decided to stay in the youth hostel at Larochette with the purpose of visiting other nearby cities. We made good use of free public transport: Luxembourg became the first country in the world to scrap fares on all public transport in 2020.

Photo: *Marta enjoying her new hobby, hiking, photo by Anna, Servas Portugal members.*

Like many other travellers, we started by visiting the mystical castles in the regions of Larochette, Vianden and Beaufort, where we were transported to medieval times in Luxembourg and we learned about its history and origin. In these castles we could see everything from



princess dresses to soldiers' armour and instruments of torture.

In each city we explored the surrounding forests: that's how we got the hiking bug. We found ourselves more and more often in the middle of the stunning dense forests, walking on various trails.

On May 10, we met our first host, Rosi, in the Echternach Nature Park, then continued to Luxembourg City. We spent an afternoon strolling around the capital, and returned home where we had a memorable dinner and shared our

experiences and different cultures.

The next day, Rosi gave us a guided tour to the historic city of Schengen, the birthplace of the European Union, and taught us more about its history. At the end, she gave us a real surprise, showing us the "Eiffel Tower" located near Schengen just 21 metres from the border of Germany!

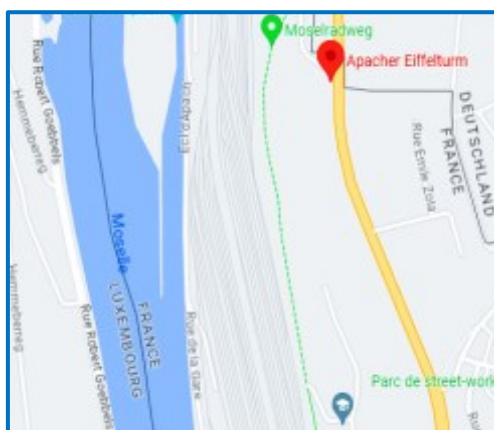
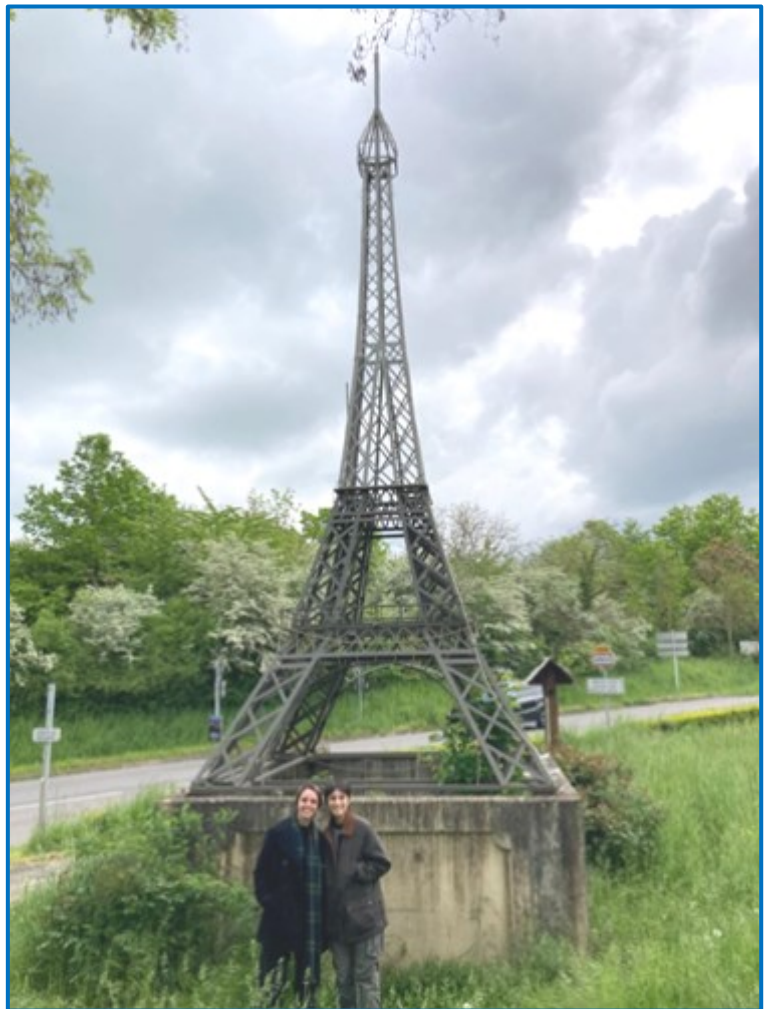
Photo, from left: Marta, with host Rosi, and Anna.

Photos: The Eiffel Tower replica near Schengen, Germany is called Apacher Eiffelturm. It's in Apach, France. Wikipedia shows dozens of such replicas around the world including one in Paris, Texas, USA, wearing a cowboy hat.

Back in the city centre, we continued our adventure until it was time, later in the evening, to meet our second Servas hosts, Susanne and Tobias.

At the end of the day, we met up with Susanne and Tobias, and had dinner out with them and got to know each other on our way back home.

Driven by curiosity, we asked about the University, and the next morning Susanne, a university physics professor, took us to her labs, where we had the opportunity to learn about her research on solar cells. We used the rest of our time hopping from museum to museum, cathedral to cathedral, and taking in the breathtaking panoramic views. We had a last enriching dinner with the couple, full of sharing opinions and enriching discussions on a wide range of topics.





Photo, from left: Marta, Luxembourg hosts Susanne and Tobias, and Anna.

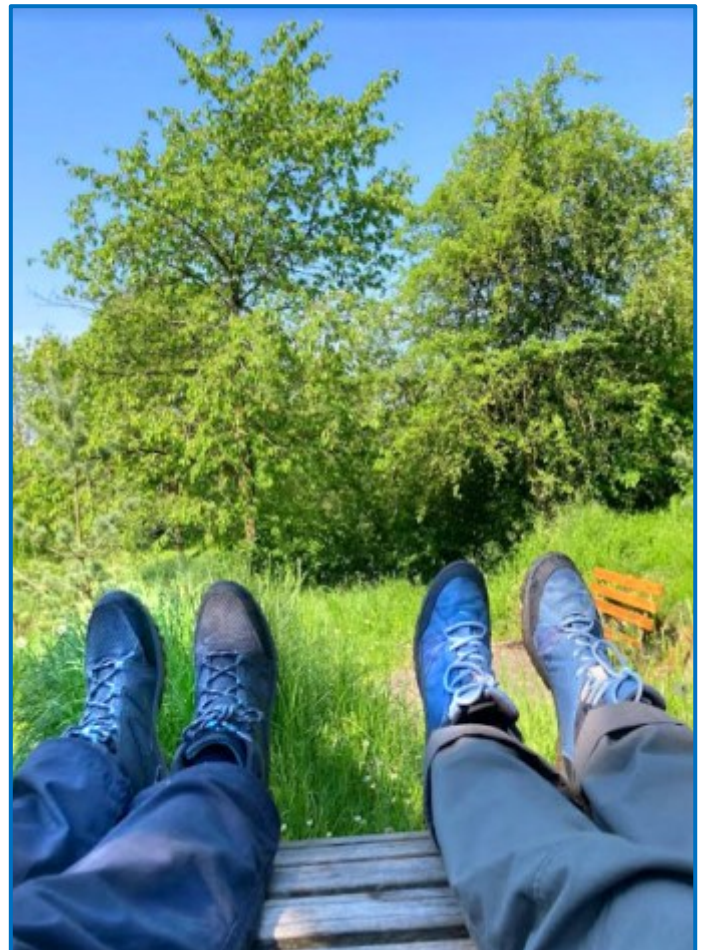
On the last day we decided to finish our trip with our new hobby, hiking!

We are eternally grateful to Rosi, Susanne and Tobias for welcoming us with open arms and giving us this deep and enriching experience while sharing themselves and their country with us.

We return to Portugal with a full heart, three new friends and looking forward to more experiences with Servas.

Photo: Our hiking shoes.

■ ■ ■



Servas Volunteering Opportunities



In the book, [Seeds of Servas](#), the founder of Servas, Bob Luitweiler, envisioned Servas as an organization that provides the opportunity to **work, study and travel**.

Having that in mind, Servas International is launching a new project, named

“Servas Volunteering Opportunities”, which will promote:

(1) Meetings of Servas hosts, (willing to offer longer stays) with Servas travellers (willing to offer their time and skills).

(2) Educational exchanges

(3) Ecological awareness of members who have an understanding about the environment, the impacts of human behaviour on it, and the importance of protecting our planet and nature.

Examples of potential activities might be: volunteer work, language teaching,



or being connected with local peace and environmental organisations.

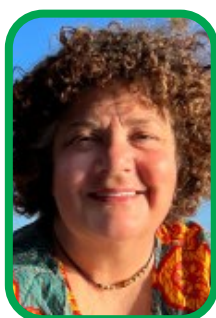
The host(s) and family(ies) will be responsible for all the coordination for their volunteer, including pre-arrival, their actual stay, and activities.

Members' personal help is needed to achieve and promote this new idea! There might be members who are glad

to get some real help in activities (gardening, painting, etc.) or might want to learn new things from their travelers.

At the same time other members, especially young ones, might appreciate giving more meaning to their travels by volunteering and using their time in a more productive and meaningful way.

Following this, I kindly ask members / hosts who are willing to join this project to fill in the following Goggle form. Click on link. Please read it carefully.



<https://forms.gle/ftE9uUHh1hWc876r5>

Thank you all in advance.
With Servas greetings,
Carla Kristensen
SI Vice President
vicepresident@servas.org



Can Travel Reduce Prejudice?

By Marie-Brigitte Sarbach, Servas France



Since I was going to take part in SICOGA 2022, I was determined to take advantage of this opportunity to travel in India for a few weeks. But in France, there are a lot of prejudices about India, such as: *“India is an over-populated country; People are confronted with begging.”* In short, some of my friends (non-Servas, of course) were worried that travelling to India would be shocking and disturbing.

Although I only saw a small part of India, I came back from this trip marvelling at the cultural richness, the colours, the vitality of this country; but above all, deeply touched by the welcoming nature of the people!

I wanted to share all this with my friends with a few photos:

I told them I hadn't been harassed by beggars. In fact, I met far fewer beggars than in our French towns. Instead, my Servas friend and I frequently met schoolgirls and schoolboys dressed in proper uniforms, who were visiting the same sites as us with their teachers. Children and teenagers were curious about us, our nationality, our project in India, and our age (a little astonished that old ladies travelled alone... prejudices about old ladies, maybe?).





Teenagers were eager to know our opinions about their country:

"What do you think of our culture?" a teenage girl asked me. A little taken by surprise, I replied, *"You're very welcoming, very open... And you want peace."* (The Prime Minister of India had recently been quoted as saying, "the era is no longer one of war.")

" Oh yes," she replied with strength and determination, *"and now we no longer have castes; we now have respect for all people."*

What wonderful youth; it made my heart happy!

In fact, what struck me most in India was the kindness of the people, their smiles, their concern for us, their desire to get to know us:

"What do you usually eat at home in the evening?" a young man asked.

With others, there were unexpected exchanges about religion and history:

"What do you think is the cause of hatred of Jews?" asked a young Indian tourist who had recently seen a documentary on the Shoah [the Holocaust].

Or those people who didn't speak English, who invited us into their little temple (to the god Shiva) and offered us each a banana!

Every day, everywhere, we had amazing exchanges with people.

What about slums? I wandered through a small area of Dharavi, Mumbai's great slum, and could give a very different image to my friends. I saw poor houses, of course, but made of brick, with water supply.

Above all, I was struck by the intense activity, the many waste recycling workshops, the mirror factories, the carpentry shops, the tailors' workshops.

I saw a temple.

I walked past a doctor's office. All this demonstrates a structured and active social life.

After hearing my account of my trip, a friend of mine told me how surprised he was ... I had totally changed his vision of India. Until then, he'd had very negative preconceived ideas about this country; he couldn't even imagine going there. This is no longer the case.

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Servas at the UN: Working for Gender Equality

By Kent Macaulay, SI's Main Representative to the UN in New York



Question: What has over 30,000 people, over 1,000 panels and workshops, and an energy that is second to none?

Answer:

The annual UN Commission on the Status of Women conference (CSW)!

In March, over forty Servas members participated in person and virtually in the two weeks of official sessions, side events, parallel events and meet-ups which comprised CSW67. This year's conference looked at education and innovation in the digital age, and the impact of technology on equality among women, men, and boys and girls.

In session after session, the clear message was that technology is a two-edged sword: It can improve communication, collaboration, and support for gender equality, but it can also be used to entrench inequality and undermine respect for diversity.

On the upside, digital innovation and education can link organizations and individuals within countries and across borders like never before, and some significant gains are being made. One specific example is the key role that digital technology played in the successful campaign in 2019 to legalize same-sex marriage in Taiwan.



On the other hand, social media is frequently used as a means to spread intolerance. Furthermore, there is tremendous inequality in the digital world itself. While most of the Internet is in English, 84% of the world's population do not speak English and thus are disadvantaged in using this technology. A high percentage of people has no access at all to the technology, due to poverty, homelessness, or displacement. In addition, women have more difficulty than men do in getting technological information and resources into their lives. Technology has a great potential to narrow the gender gap, but it needs to be inclusive.

During CSW67, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was emphatic in stating, "Women and girls are leading efforts to make

science and technology accessible, inclusive, and safe. The Commission on the Status of Women is a dynamo and catalyst for the transformation we need. Together, let's push back against misogyny and forward for women, girls, and our world."

In that regard, Conference sessions talked about examples of positive action toward equality among genders, from legislation and governance to grassroots change at the level of small NGOs. Participants discussed many successful initiatives to help make the world a more gender-equal place. One such program was described in detail by Fidèle Rutayisire, a Servas Rwanda member who, as head of the Rwanda Men's Resource Centre, spoke about his group's work with men and boys in his country to

strengthen their respect for women and girls. Certain other programs globally are shifting the focus of education from work-training to critical thinking and preparing for a world of cooperation, democracy, and sustainability.

In the words of one Servas attendee, CSW67 brought “gratitude for the opportunity to learn from and with people dedicated to the wellbeing of our humanity....I felt a sense of affinity, a positive energy, that was collectively given and received as a strengthening of resolve in our combined efforts.”

Servas attendees pledged to share information and resources with other Servas members and beyond, to write letters to

legislators and the media about gender equality issues, and to connect with other non-governmental organizations working for equality and peace.

They also offered to help organize Servas participation in the next UN Commission on the Status of Women conference this coming March, where the focus will be on how overcoming poverty works hand in hand with creating a more gender-equal world. Watch the next SI News Bulletin for further information!

Photo, Servas delegates, from left: Paige LaCombe, Christy Sanford, Alvany Santiago, Yosi McIntire, and Natalie Petersen at CSW67.



A Chat with Alba

By Servas Spain

Solsona is a small but dynamic town, located between farmland and mountains in Spain. There you will find a beautiful landscape, and 10,000 open-minded, hospitable people who are lovers of culture and tradition.

Alba Santaaulària, an English teacher who lives in this town, is very active in Servas both as a host and a traveller. We interviewed Alba about her life in Solsona. She told us the following...



I have been a Servas member for 27 years, meeting hundreds of diverse people from around the world. I have joined Spanish and international Servas gatherings, and travelled extensively in Europe, Australia and North America.

During the pandemic, I invited people from other countries to come to my English class online. We had people from Alaska, Australia, Britain, and other places.

Photo: Alba with a Korean Servas traveller in a Korean restaurant in Barcelona, Spain, February 2023.



I live in a beautiful quiet area where my family has always lived. I'm a member of many associations. I'm lucky that Solsona is only a 90-minute drive from Andorra, Barcelona, Lleida, Girona, Tarragona or the French border.

If you travel here, you will be welcome and will meet very hospitable people. Please come to experience the spirit of open doors, hosting, travelling and making friends in a most natural way. Contribute to building a better, more open and tolerant world.

Photos:

Above: Alba exploring Portugal during a Servas meeting, May 2023.

Below: Alba (far left) one week in Seville with Servas friends, January 2023.



Visitors Across Canada

“Out West”

By Michèle Doctoroff and Ted Switzer

After almost four years without a gathering, Servas members in Calgary, Alberta, eagerly came together over brunch, hosted by Michèle and Ted, long-time hosts and travellers.



Michèle and Ted reflected that over their thirty plus years of Servas membership, sadly, many of the local hosts have passed away or are no longer able to host due to health issues.... there were fond memories and pictures to honour the spirit and energy of the legacy of all these wonderful people.

JJ Jansen, who has been a Servas member for 36 years, and Wayne Kelly reflected on their Servas involvement and expressed concern that Calgary is currently down to three hosts and two day hosts, where long ago there were more than twenty hosts. They hope that Servas will interest more youth locally to host. They also hope that more Servas Canadian members will have a desire to visit/ host more Canadian members.

We hope that Servas will again bring us all joy, learning and meaning through new connections and adventures.

Photo below: *Calgary Servas pride was honoured when we reflected that four of our members are currently or were in the past in the Servas Canada Board or leadership positions.*



Photo: *Over a delicious potluck meal, we all shared stories of our travels and visits by travelers, expressing deep gratitude for having found our way to Servas.*

Photo below: *Myra D'Souza, Servas Canada Board member, and Calgary host enjoys her latte in her cherished Servas Canada mug.*

While Myra only had a 10-minute drive to get to the potluck meal, Servas Canada Travel Coordinator Manager John Whidden and his wife Colleen made a three-hour drive from Medicine Hat, Alberta, to join in the festivities.



Visitors From France on Canada Day

By Debora and Tim Durnin-Richards, Headingley, Manitoba

We were lucky that Lionel and Claire (from France) were on a trip across Canada and the northern USA that happened to land them at our home on Canada Day, July 1, 2023.

Photo: *We spent the day at The Leaf, a new installation in nearby Winnipeg, Manitoba, with outdoor gardens and an indoor biome.*

Photo: *In one of the outdoor garden areas, Cree Crowchild taught us how to give thanks with gifts of tobacco and fire.*

It was a hot day in Manitoba, so after a rest in our air-conditioned home, we ventured out to *The Forks*, where the Red and Assiniboine Rivers meet and where Indigenous peoples lived, met and traded with other tribes for centuries before we settlers came to this land. This year, we celebrated the end of the day with one hundred drones lighting up the sky instead of the traditional fireworks. What a cool experience – no noise and no smoke into the atmosphere.

Photo: *We spent most of our meals together on our deck and Lionel and Claire enjoyed the fact that we flew their country's flag while they were here.*

The time went too quickly, as always when you meet and make new friends. What an adventure Lionel and Claire are having – six months travelling through Canada, north to Alaska and then south through USA, ending in Las Vegas. Travelling in their truck and camper, they can be flexible in where and when they go. We are happy they are staying with several Servas hosts along their way.



And so very glad they came to our home while in Manitoba.

Visitors from The Congo

By Michael Johnson, SINB editor

This summer, 2023, we were so lucky to have a wonderful visit by a family from the Republic of the Congo. [The “small and safer part of it” our visitors explained.] They wanted to see Niagara Falls, but although there is a cheap bus to the Niagara Casino from our city, it won’t take children.

Canada has a lot of terrific sites, but getting to them can be challenging. We have a poor train system, nothing like Europe or Japan. I did find them a good train to nearby Toronto – and the tickets were free for the visitors’ children.

Since Covid-19 began, car rental prices have increased. So, when I tried to find a reasonably priced way for our guests to get to Niagara Falls, a distance of only 120 km, I gave up and decided to drive them myself.

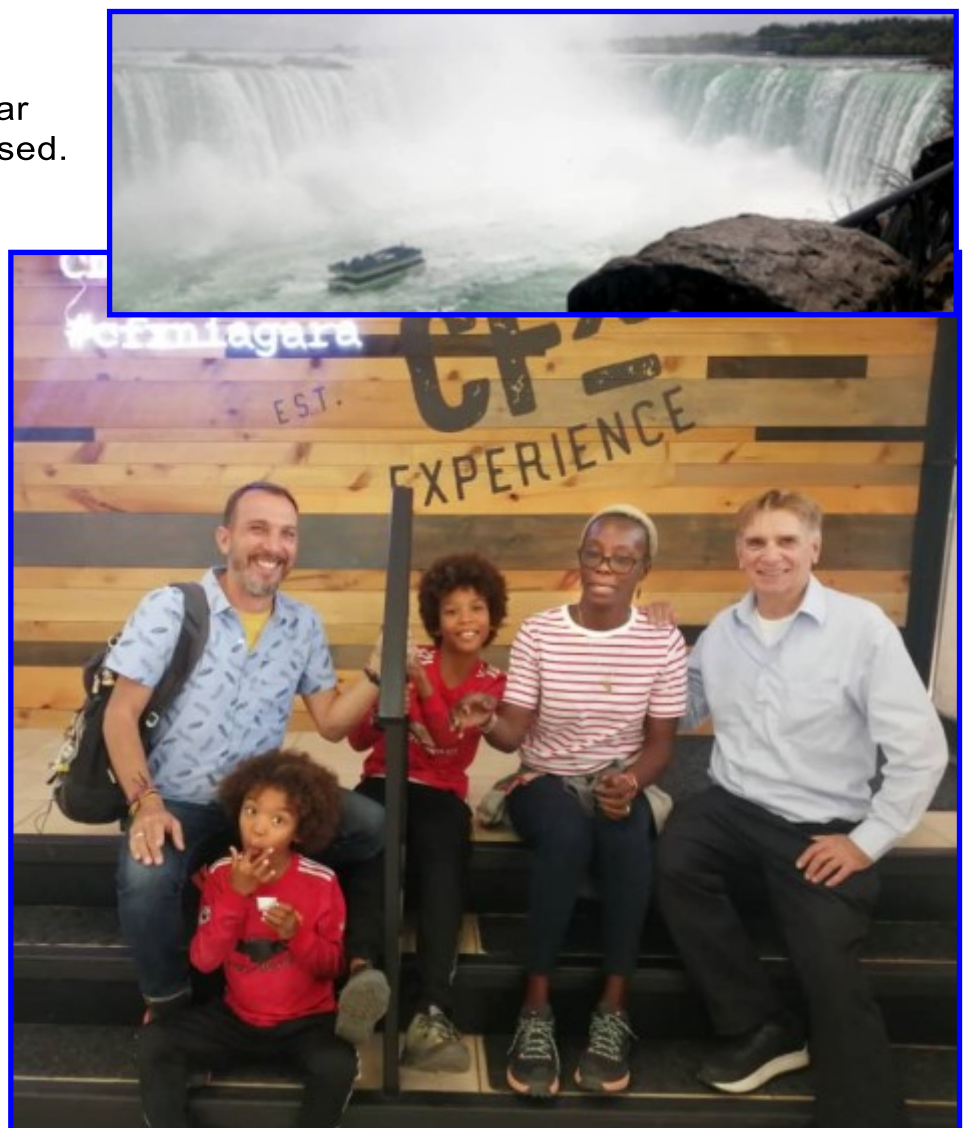
Because every visitor to our city, Cambridge, Ontario, wants to see the Falls, it is not a novelty to us. But I really enjoyed this happy energetic family who clearly liked the sites, including a free tour of a chocolate factory [photo] and some beautiful stops nearby.

If you can help your travellers to see sites in your area, you might really enjoy spending



time with them while discovering things in your own backyard.

Photo: Bottom: Dad from France (left) married Mom from Mali. They live in the Republic of the Congo with their two boys. Host and chauffeur, Michael,



Living with Fire

By Timothy Perrin, West Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada Servas host

A wildfire dubbed the *McDougall Creek Fire* — named after where it was discovered, 10 km north of my home — turned into a huge monster. Within two days the flames were less than three kilometres from our house. With the fire steadily progressing down the mountainside, we were told to evacuate. I finished packing, put the dog in the car and left.

The direct route to “safety” had been blocked by fire. After some hours on back roads, I spent a night on an uncomfortable cot in a community centre. The next day I faced a second problem ... the *Adams Lake Complex Fire* had closed the Trans-Canada Highway. Using secondary roads I reached my wife who was already staying with her relatives.

Photo:

Fighting fire with fire to destroy the trees fueling the fire.

Photo:

Our escape route blocked by smoke and fire.





at about 9:00 am. They kept at it until it became too dark to fly safely. There were sometimes two of them hovering waiting for the one currently

Luckily for us, the evacuation order was soon lifted. My wife and I were able to return to our West Kelowna home five days after the fire started. There are still 10,000 people evacuated in the Kelowna area alone, another 10,000, including us, on evacuation alert. Some are sleeping in their cars or on cots in the recreation centre.

Now home, we listen to the helicopter traffic. Yesterday, four choppers started scooping buckets of water out of Shannon Lake, 100 metres from our deck,

picking up water to get out of the way, so we heard the sound of thwock-thwock-thwock all day.

Nearly 200 structures were lost, most of them someone's home. Almost every one of the 24 members of the Wilson Landing fire department has lost his or her home. The West Kelowna fire chief, the primary commander on this fire, has been evacuated since the first day along with many other firefighters.

Our neighbourhood remains on evacuation alert. The main worry is

that Sunday is supposed to be hot, 30°C with gusty winds.

We've lived in this house since 1996 and this is not the first time we've had issues with wildfires.

- In 2013, the Smith Creek Fire burned to within 1.5 km of our home.
- In 2009, three wildfires broke out in one day around West Kelowna; 20,000 people had to evacuate. The only evacuation route for many people required that they drive *through* the fire.
- The 2003 Okanagan Mountain Park Fire that burnt forty square kilometres, destroyed 239 homes in Kelowna and forced about 30,000 people to evacuate.

Now, after just three days as a "beginner" environmental refugee, I find myself exhausted, grateful to crawl into my own bed at night, to take a shower in my own bathroom and to eat in my own home. I cannot imagine what it will be like for my three teen-aged granddaughters in another 40 years. They could, quite possibly, be true environmental refugees, their homes no



longer liveable. Just like political refugees, they could exist for years, suspended between what used to be "home" and wherever they can find a place to safely live.

And perhaps the truly sobering thought is that this may be just the beginning.

Note: *Timothy Perrin and his wife Terri have been SERVAS members since 2004. In 2005-6, he and Terri spent eight months exploring Europe in a 20-year-old VW van, staying with SERVAS families about half of the time. They made many new friends and are still in touch with several, 18 years later.*



Five Decades with Servas Canada

By Dina Hanson, Servas member since 1971

Most photos taken by Dina or Daryl Hanson

My husband Daryl and I were attending a Canadian university in the mid-1960s when we first heard of Servas. We signed up in 1971, over fifty years ago.

Photo: *Planning our adventure, with a map, through North and South America.*

In October of that year, wearing hiking boots and plaid wool jackets, with backpacks filled with a small tent, sleeping bags, a tiny stove and a needle for mending our socks, we started our 15-month adventure of North and South America.

We hitchhiked from the West Coast of Canada, over the Rocky Mountains and into the prairies, stopping to visit our first hosts in Calgary. We were among the first Servas travellers to stay with fellow Canadians and we became great advocates of Canadians getting to know each other.

[Editor's Note: Most police now discourage hitchhiking in Canada, especially if travelling alone.]

In Quebec the weather turned too cold for us to continue eastward, so we headed south, along the eastern seaboard of the United States. Servas gave us an opportunity to learn more about Quakers and their beliefs, before we spent Christmas in Jamaica with conscientious objectors (COs), opposed to the US military engagement in Viêt Nam. Both the Quakers and the COs strengthened our resolve for non-military solutions to conflict.

Photo: *Dina and Daryl with Albany, New York Servas host, Margaret (centre).*



As 1972 dawned, we were aboard a *frutero*, a boat that had carried fresh fruits and vegetables to Curaçao, going back without cargo, but with two young gringos, on its return to Venezuela.

Photo: *Latitude 0°, 00". The Spanish word, Ecuador, means Equator.*

We journeyed down the west coast of South America, with a side trip to the Galapagos Islands, aboard an Ecuadorian naval ship. There we met marine iguanas, blue- and red-footed boobies, seals, tortoises...and penguins!

We were also aboard a small motorboat when it capsized, while ferrying us to that naval ship, so all our photos have a blue-green tint.

In another minor misadventure, Daryl was apprehended by the island's police for theft, after he rowed an elderly English woman, quite exhausted, to the ship, before returning the rowboat directly back to shore. His imprisonment didn't last long, as I think they didn't want to feed him. And his passport was returned...a great relief.



Photo: *The Galápagos iguana, the only marine iguana in the world.*



In Lima, Peru, we revelled in receiving mail from our families, after eight months without contact. Machu Picchu beckoned, as did Lake Titicaca and the Atacama Desert, and then to Valparaiso (Paradise Valley), in Chile, where we had the pleasure of visiting our only Servas hosts in South America.

Photo:

Daryl, cooking our camp dinner beside the little tent, assisted by a young local girl, in La Poza, Chile



We crossed massive mountains, the Andes, headed south through the Pampas of Argentina and eventually, overnighted in Ushuaia, on the island of Tierra del Fuego (Island of Fire, named such by European explorers after seeing the burning fires of the indigenous residents). There, in the world's most southerly city, we spent the night in an odd "hotel" -- a cell of the state prison, previously used for the incarcerated who had dared express political dissent in Argentina.

From the most southerly place in the Americas, we headed north, making our second mail stop, this time in Brasilia, the newly created capital city in the heartland of Brazil. Northward, northward, to the massive Amazon, the waters of which originate in the Andes, a mere hundred kilometres from the Pacific Ocean. The Amazon carries sediment for hundreds more kilometres east, across the South

American continent and into the Atlantic Ocean. Saying *adios* to this remarkable continent of such extremes of landscape and rich histories of its Indigenous peoples, we returned home to Canada, more appreciative of our opportunities. Servas homes had become OUR homes in Canada, USA, Jamaica and Chile.

Now it was time to settle down and get jobs, so we found ourselves in Faro, Yukon, Canada, at 62°N latitude, where Daryl did mineral exploration and I taught. During the winter months of only a few hours of daylight, we saw no Servas travellers. But attracted to the allure of the Midnight Sun and the Land of the Klondike gold rush, came travellers when the days lengthened to almost 24 hours. Ten sets of Servas guests, from Germany, Denmark, Australia and the USA learned about life north of the 60th parallel.

Each autumn, after the mineral exploration season was over, we drove south to Quick, British Columbia (BC), to work on our 15-hectare property. This meant living in a small walled tent, during frosty days, with three-year-old Ryan and newborn baby Tay. That October, we built a barn, with no indoor toilet or bath/shower, which became our residence when we moved from Yukon in 1981, to resettle in the Bulkley Valley.

It was during this “pioneer” period that we welcomed a British Servas traveller, Brian, who worked alongside us for several weeks, and shared living and eating space with us in the barn. This was the first of three times that Brian visited and contributed to our Servas stories. Another Servas member, Klaus, who lived and worked in BC as a social worker and bike tour operator, eventually returned to Germany to retire.

In Quick, BC, we adopted a son, Taza. In 1987, when Taza was 8, Tay, 10 and Ryan, 13, we flew to the Netherlands, rented a *very* small motorhome and began a three-month journey across Europe, as far east as Turkey.

Photo:

Our 3 sons, Ryan, Taza and Tay, meeting Turkish friends at the travertine pools in Pamukkale, Türkiye

Again, Servas provided us with the opportunity to learn about people and cultures, their diverse geography, and rich histories. We were hosted in the



Netherlands, Germany and Italy. Dirk, a German Servas traveller who had stayed with us in the Yukon, became our host, welcoming us in his Munich home.

We had the very good fortune, over the 38 years we lived in Quick, BC, to welcome 40 groups of visitors to our rural home... from England, Denmark, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, France, Italy, and Poland. Also from the USA, Israel and New Zealand, the travellers brought their curiosity about other places and cultures, their willingness to help, and their commitment to making the world more inclusive, egalitarian and peaceful. And they included our first bicyclists, first travellers with a dog, and first Canadian travellers.

In our new home in BC, in a broad valley near the Rocky Mountains, we have happily welcomed other members of the Canadian Servas family. And we can relive those experiences in the photo albums we keep, of time shared with Servas visitors.

I have been able to play another role with Servas Canada, more joy than duty, interviewing prospective Servas members. They will become part of the Servas family, as travellers and hosts, and will promote world peace through the sharing of homes, time and stories.

A Servas postcard was delivered to us from New Zealand Servas travellers, Peter and Janice, who visited us in 1997. The postcard states:



**SERVAS WELCOMES YOU
TO OUR FAMILY OF PEACE**

Happiness is being among friends.
Join **SERVAS** before going abroad.
Find grassroots contacts throughout
the world.

Map: Below: Major fires in Canada as of 20 August, 2023.

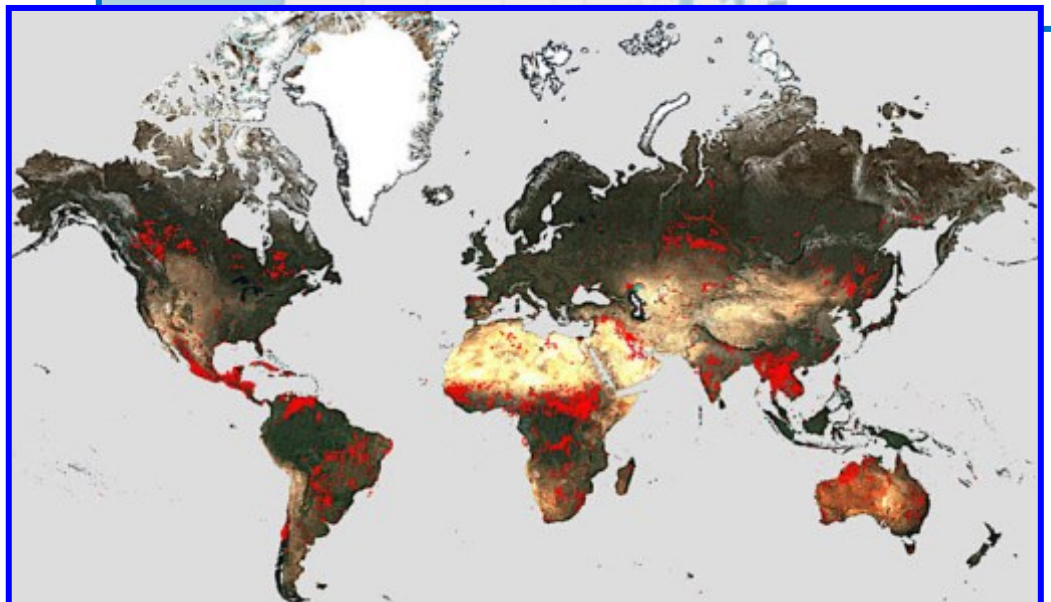
Map: Bottom: World fires, August 4, 2023.

Editor's Note:

August, 2023: Dina and Daryl have already packed their emergency evacuation bags in case they must leave their home due to forest fires.

As of August 17, 5,765 fires had burned about 140,000 sq. km. of land in Canada, seven times the average for this time of the year.

That's an area the size of Israel, Belgium, Denmark, and Slovakia combined. Please check with your hosts if you are planning to visit Canada this year. The same advice goes for much of the world now.



Letters to the editor

By Dee Roye, Norwich, England

Thanks to everyone who put this newsletter [SINB 1 2023] together. I feel exhausted after reading all the articles and seeing all the smiles: long live vicarious travel !

Photos: *Dee + Smiling visitors*

All this news brought a stream of memories to my mind after my 30+ years as a host and traveller. Here are some of them –

1. Hosting a young Yugoslavian who was staying with me when the country was dividing, during which time he had no news of friends and family... Sometime afterwards he sent me a postcard saying “he was going wild with a cooker in Germany!” ...translated meaning he was wild camping with a chef.

2. My daughter ringing me from Australia after a “temporary” collapse of a relationship while travelling in a small van around the country, which is enough to challenge any relationship! So, I phoned the Australian coordinator and gave them the whereabouts of the phone box she was phoning from, which was in the middle of nowhere. I got a phone call several hours later telling me that my daughter was enjoying a bath in a Servas member’s house and getting “loving care” and food.



3. Persuading a traveller from New Zealand not to overstay her visa and later getting a letter thanking me and telling me she was happily resettled and engaged to be married.

I have countless memories of hosting travellers, plus my travels in France, Spain, Portugal, Canada and USA, and long-term friendships with some Italian hosts, plus many stays all over the UK.

Throughout my life I have had the luxury of knowing I would be welcome in Servas homes worldwide. What an amazing organization Servas is. Long may it continue.

■ ■ ■

Which “Age” are you ?

By Michael Johnson, SINB editor

When I first became editor of SINB, I looked for some interesting stories. Who is the youngest, and oldest member for example? I found Dirk, but was he really 123 years old? No, he just hadn't updated his online information.



Members may be looking for someone in your age group but not find you if you don't list your age. That would be a pity.

Speaking of age, are you in the majority age of members?

At servas.org I found [June 2023] that there are 11,686 Servas hosts.

Nearly **10%** do not list their age. But 10,566 hosts do list their age.

Ages: 0-64 = 5,254

Ages: 65-130 = 5,312.

That means just over 50% of hosts are "senior citizens".

How does Servas get more "youth" involved?

If you, your region, or your Servas country have had this discussion, please write to me and I will share it with all our members. Thank you.



A final word on Age:

Two years ago we had an interview with Violette, who is a 103-year-old host in Paris. Recently Isabelle, our French translator, told me:

Violette is well, fit, and still a member of Servas France. In June, she invited half a dozen Servas friends to her flat. They reported that Violette retains her alertness, memory and autonomy. She will turn **106** in September 2023.



"Merci beaucoup" Violette for your years in Servas. May we all be hosting for many years.

—Michael, SINB editor.



Photo: Violette, in the middle, with Françoise and Laurent, active Servas members in Paris.



Key People

by Carla Kristensen

Thank you Daniela Duarte so much for your great work throughout the past years leading Servas Uruguay's national board and its activities, and for the joint activities with neighbouring countries.

I also wish to congratulate the new board. It's wonderful to see new members taking the lead. Please feel free to reach out to us in SI Exco whenever you need.

All the best of luck to all of you, to the outgoing board and to the new board.

—Carla

Uruguay

Daniela Duarte wrote:
As of July, 2023, this is the new board of Servas Uruguay:

Photos: *from top to bottom:*

Marisa Contini – National Secretary

Daniela Duarte – Deputy National Secretary

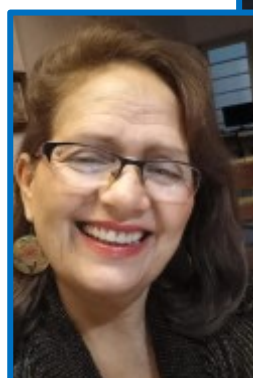
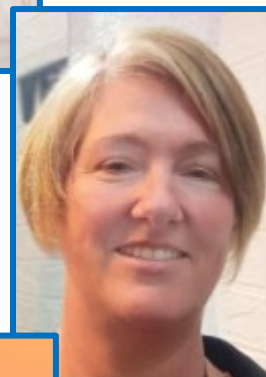
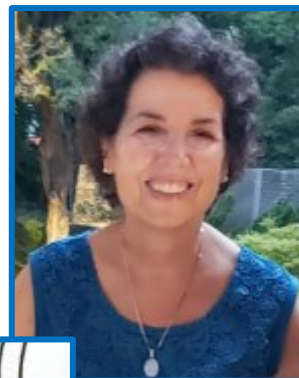
Gisella Mion – List Coordinator

Gianni Mion – Host Coordinator

Willam Troisi – Treasurer

Mercedes Ripoll – Peace Secretary

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SERVAS INTERNATIONAL NEWS BULLETIN

The SINB is a newsletter produced by and for the Servas community.

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Please send your news for the SI News Bulletin to: newsletter@servas.org

We encourage Servas key people around the world to forward this bulletin to all members. Feel free to quote us but please mention the source.

SI EXCO 2022 - 2025

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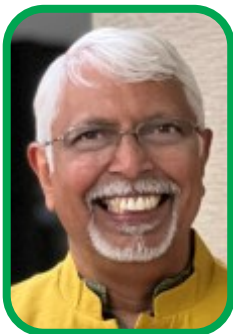
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Co-Peace Secretary, Mei Wang peacesecretary@servas.org

Servas International is an international, non-profit, non-governmental federation of national Servas groups, supporting an international network of hosts and travellers. Our network aims to help build world peace, goodwill and understanding by offering opportunities for personal contacts between people of different cultures, backgrounds and nationalities.

• • •



Radha Radhakrishna



Carla Kristensen



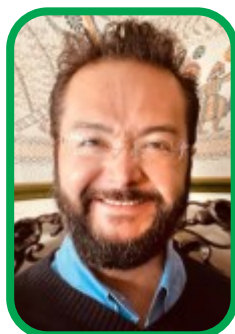
Jonny Sågänger



Richard Cabassut



Jon Corrado



Francisco Salomón Luna



Mei Wang



Paul Nielsen



Jim Leask

Send us your photos please.



Servas International in association with Project Paco Foundation
presents

PHOTOGRAPHY FOR PEACE

on the occasion of International Day of Peace
21st September, 2023

PLEASE ATTEND THE PROGRAM ONLINE THROUGH ZOOM

Meeting ID: 834 8022 9340 | Passcode: 778345

Time: UTC 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm (India Time: 7:30 to 9:00 pm)

The event is organized by Servas International Development Committee

**A PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION
WILL BE HELD ON THIS OCCASION.**

Theme: Peace

- Please send the photographs by 18th September, 2023 to bhudeb.chakravarti@servas.me
- Photographs can be color or B&W.
- Mobile Photography Accepted



ONE STEP TOWARDS
PEACE

