



News Bulletin

Vol.30 • No.3 • 2023

Produced by and for members of the Servas community



Youth Eco-Camps in Italy & Brazil

**Plus: Peace Day in
India, Iran and Israel**

What's in this issue:

<u>President's Report Card</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Distant Voting Increases</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Hope Amid the Rubble, Turkey</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Two Youth Eco-Camps, Italy & Brazil</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Servas Brazil</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>The State of Servas</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>Come to Britain</u>	<u>19</u>
<u>What is a Focal Meeting</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>Treated like Family in Korea</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>A Malawi Experience</u>	<u>25</u>
<u>Art for People with Disabilities</u>	<u>27</u>
<u>Pathways Together in Italy</u>	<u>28</u>
<u>Unite and Create Peace</u>	<u>31</u>
<u>Peace Day in Iran</u>	<u>32</u>
<u>Peace Day in Israel</u>	<u>34</u>
<u>Servas Reps in the UN Geneva</u>	<u>36</u>
<u>Letters to the Editor</u>	<u>39</u>
<u>The Voice for Global Peace</u>	<u>40</u>
<u>Key People</u>	<u>42</u>

**Thank you members who shared
your stories and photos.**

**Your editor, Michael Johnson
newsletter@servas.org**

• • •

My Report Card

By Radha B. Radhakrishna,
President of Servas International

I have been the President for a little over a year now. It is perhaps a good time to present a report card.

I have spent much of 2023 meeting with many of the country boards and attending some international meetings. Again and again, I was told by all of those who spoke to me that we are a peace organization.

We work for peace in many ways. We also care for the planet and work to preserve it for future generations.

Working for peace or taking care of the planet involves collective action – getting together with others.

The meetings I attended were an excellent example of that. During these meetings, we collectively did diverse things like planting trees, and singing peace songs in the town centre that led to an impromptu community dance – all of which furthered our ideals for a better world.

Photo 1: Radha with Javier Heusser Delgado, National Secretary, Servas Chile at Tree Planting Ceremony at the Latin American meeting in Argentina.

Photo 2: Miriam Kerekes, National Secretary, Servas Mexico reads a poem during the tree planting ceremony in Argentina.



It has become clear to me that working on projects as diverse as sharing art, language exchanges and classes, peace schools, planting trees, cleaning trails and beaches along with hosting, are all different ways we can work for peace and protect our planet.

We are not just a hosting and travel organization, but an organization whose members get together to do amazing things to foster peace and to protect the planet.

I ask each of you to explore what works best for you to contribute. There is much that each of us can do that is both fulfilling and in line with the spirit of Servas.

During 2023 we have seen excellent examples of members coming forward to do different things. Some examples are – (a) the peace forums initiated by the peace secretaries, (b) expanding the idea of running peace schools in other countries, or (c) just connecting on Zoom with other countries to share culture and goodwill.



I am also sure that many more ideas are being generated all over the world that we are likely to read about in the coming SINBs. It gives me hope that Servas is in a good place.

You will receive this edition of the newsletter in early 2024. I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season. I wish you all the best for the new year.

Photos, from top:

Radha (right): When a Servas Song turns into a community dance.



Radha (centre) with members of Servas Argentina at the Latin American Meeting.

• • •

Increased Online SI Distant Voting

**By Jonny Sågänger, SI
General Secretary**

Servas International's Member Groups earlier this year started to use an online procedure for making decisions between General Assemblies.

It's been a successful move away from the previous email-based process for the Servas International Distant Vote (SI DV) system.

At the November 2023 SI Distant Vote there was a participation of 47 SI Member Groups out of the 60 that were eligible to vote. This was a substantial increase compared to the May-June SI Distant Vote when 33 of the then 57 eligible Member Groups participated.

The increased participation of the SI Member Groups strengthens the Servas International system for representative democratic decision making.

At the November 2023 SI Distant Vote, the member groups voted on four motions and adopted all of them:



- SI Exco was authorized to arrange for a distant Extraordinary Online Servas International General Assembly (EO SIGA 2024) in May 2024 in lieu of the May 2024 SI Distant Vote.
- Servas Peru was reinstated as a Servas International Member Group.
- Servas International's financial statements for April 1 2022 - March 31 2023 were adopted.
- The Indian company Sen & Ray, Chartered Accountants was reappointed as Servas International's external auditors for the fiscal year 2023–2024.

The next SI Distant vote is planned for May 2024.

...

Hope amid the Rubble

By Veronique MARRIE, Servas France

When I joined SERVAS just a year ago, I never imagined this adventure. It has been a long time since I lived so chaotically.

When Mehmet Ateş called for two international volunteers for the Peace School, which was set up after the terrible earthquake that devastated the region, it made sense to me to go and help Turkey, this country that I hold so dear to my heart.



Photos from top:

Author, Veronique

One of the buildings post-earthquake.

Participants at the Eco-Camp.

Next page:

Veronique with other volunteers in Turkey.





Despite a difficult journey, I finally arrived to join the small community of volunteer teachers in the village of Hatay, a region which had much destruction.

In all of Turkey over 50,000 people died and 100,000 were injured or went missing, in a land where the earth still trembles daily.

As soon as I got there, I sensed its welcome, its joie de vivre, its music, sharing and friendship, but also its fatalism: "That's the

way it is!" No more family, no more home, nothing! That would destroy even the most optimistic, but not them! To the questions "Do you believe in God?" I heard, "No, we just try to be good people"; "Do you pray?" "Yes, to keep an open heart, whatever happens."

Far from shutting themselves away in their suffering, many have worked hard, especially for young people. We picnicked with children and planted seeds, even artists came to perform!

People from a psychology school came to try out dance therapy. Teenagers put aside their laptops to devote themselves to dance.

Everything is so essential in the state of emergency that has already lasted for five months and is likely to continue.

Amid the rubble, ideas, exchanges and joy have helped daily life. Teachers from Izmir and Istanbul have left their posts to come and teach in the tents to some sixty pupils of three different school levels.

Some of them, like Esra and Selen, come from the Peace School; others have travelled there during their studies. Erasmus (a European programme for students going abroad) has transformed them into committed and willing citizens of the world. It's hard not to marvel at their strength and know-how.

Every day, the Peace School offers new activities and new surprises for children from age five to fifteen.

My hosts showed me the Troglodyte Church of Antioch: a magical place with a superb view of Antakya, now a vast refugee camp.

I was able to learn about mosaics and Turkish cooking. I danced with the women and spent precious moments "sitting" with them. "Sitting" translates better to "being together and sharing."

My thanks go out to Mert, Nâdir, Ersen, Derya, Esra, Selen, Önur (and to her delightful parents), not forgetting Ersen, Rushan, Funda and her husband and her daughters.

Thanks also to Sylvie, who preceded me on this journey, and to all those I hold dear to my heart.

All of you have changed the way I look at the world and, I hope, made me a better person.

...



Two Youth Eco-Camps: Close but an Ocean Apart

Here are two reports by members under 30 of the Eco-camps in Italy and Brazil.

Eco-camp in Italy

Hi everyone! Sebastiano Foresti here!

I am 21, Italian, and I've been member of Servas for seven years now. I want to tell you about a beautiful experience which took place in August, 2023...

We wanted to gather a nice group of under-30 Servas members from all around the globe. A group of young people from Servas France and Servas Italy, along with some international friends from Turkey, decided to create a Servas Eco-Camp in the mountains around Cuneo, Italy.

What does *Eco* mean? Well, that's easy! We tried to reduce our impact on the planet, by





cooking only vegetarian meals, moving around by walking and discussing our planet's future with some experts.

The response was amazing! Almost thirty people from several different nations came to spend some time together, learning from each other, getting closer and, most importantly, sharing experiences.

The activities were various and interesting. We walked around

the area to explore the places of world-war conflicts, which became places of peace at the boundaries between Italy and France. We did sports and took walks. We had a very interesting workshop with the friends of *ClimateFresk* about the challenges to our planet, the climate crisis and the need to change our daily habits. [<https://climatefresk.org>]

But to me, the most important thing was creating something that could last. Relations that

could be a beginning for an international web of Servas Youth. And I think a very promising step was taken at this camp, because everyone noticed that meeting each other as young people from different places made us closer. As youth, we share the same hopes, the same issues, sometimes even the same stories.

It's wonderful to meet someone who comes from the other side of the world and realize that the difference you thought there would be between the two of you vanish as soon as you start talking.

At the end of the camp, with a little bit of sadness, as always when something you really like ends, we did two important things. First we gathered, as an organizing team, hearing feedback about every aspect of the camp, to be even better next year; and second, we talked about Servas from our own point of view, sharing our visions about the association, imagining ourselves in Servas in the coming years. A very interesting exercise for our minds.

On the final day, we had breakfast all together for the last time and cleaned the house before saying goodbye. It was a week full of laughs, of talks, of ideas and experiences. Let's do it again.

• • •



Eco-Camp in Brasil

– Paiol Grande Camp

By Diego Oblitas Novoa, Servas Peru

My name is Diego, Peruvian, and I am 25 years old. Servas for me has become a very special organization. Twenty years have passed since my first meeting with Servas when I was only five years old and some young Servas members from Canada stayed at my house.

Photo:

Youth members climbing Ana Chata rock.

Since then, my family has not stopped receiving incredible people from around the world, always being able to exchange experiences and values, as well as getting an incredible perspective on life.

“We are people who belong to all parts of planet Earth, wherever our adventurous heart directs us,” is one of the most important messages that Servas has left me. That and always sharing and building love and respect with others, At the end of the day, we are all human beings.



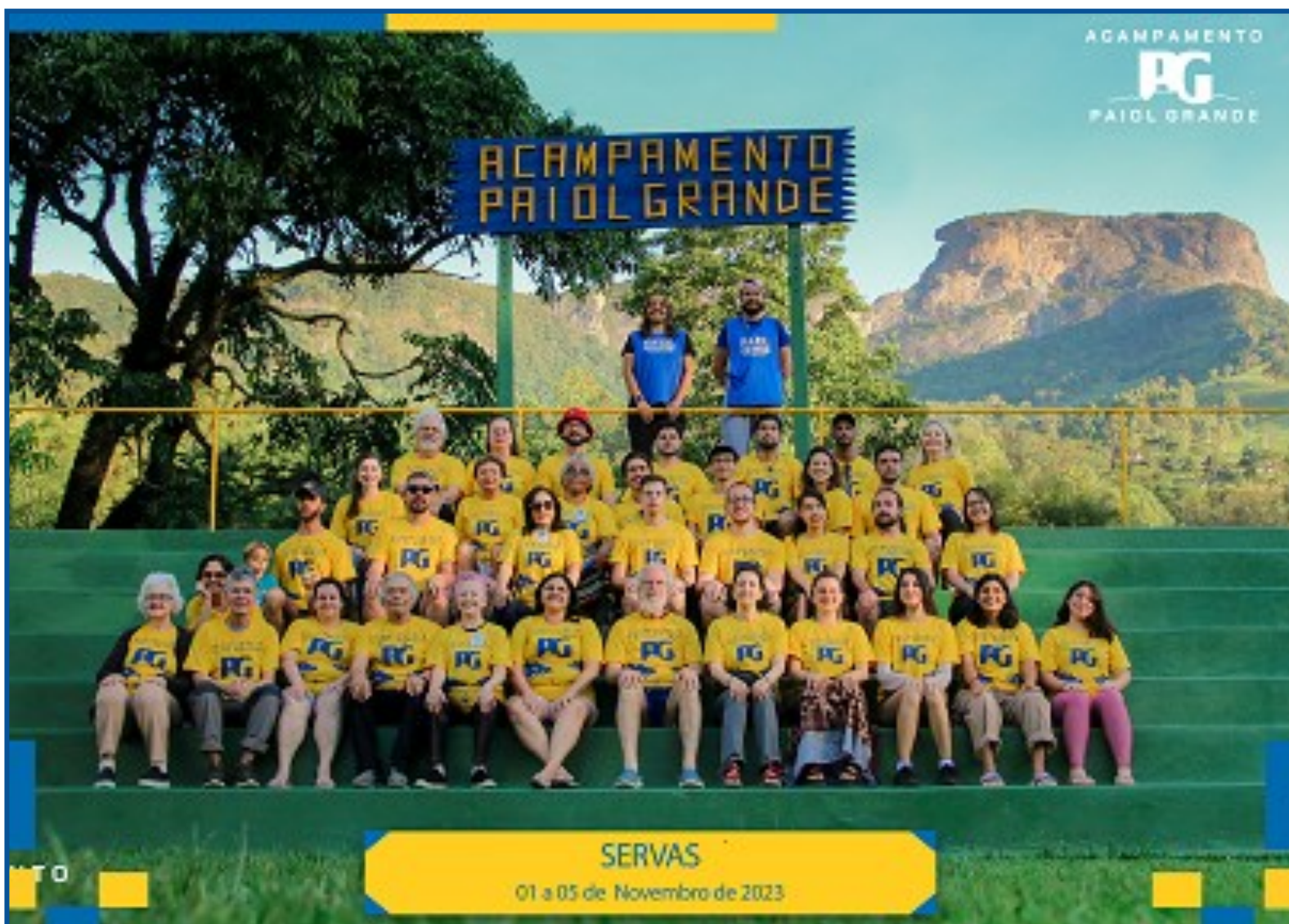
My Servas Youth meeting in Brazil was one of the most incredible experiences I have been able to experience throughout my short life. I met many young people who were interested in getting away from monotony and meeting other human beings, guided by curiosity. We exchanged: words, knowledge, hugs, experiences, laughter and, above all, we found a great family.

The objective of this Latin American meeting was to establish relationships between young SERVAS from the same continent with the aim of promoting peace. There were young Servas members from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru, and one from the USA and another from France. Although not all of us spoke Spanish, this was not a barrier to establishing great relationships and friendships, in fact, they strengthened them.



At the Paiol Grande camp, one of the loveliest places I have visited in my life, we were surrounded by beautiful nature and people with big hearts. We carried out several activities where we could get to know each other better and generate a closer connection. Even though we were without much technology and we spent the entire day doing activities with each other, and even if it was a simple talk, it became a very special one.

The camp promoted peace through human connection and allowed many young Servas members to experience what it is like to know other cultures and know that, in the end, we are all human beings.



We all want to experience peace, love and respect for our environment and others.

This meeting of young people in Sao Paulo, which I greatly thank the organization of Servas Brazil for making it possible, has created ties of friendship that will take root increasingly stronger and will achieve the goal of uniting us Servas Youth - promoting love and respect for others and the world.

The fruits of Servas help make us better people every day. They help us to understand that the current conflicts in the world are due to the lack of connection and empathy for the other. In this world let us continue spreading a more positive consciousness.

Photo:

Participants in the National Assembly and the Latin America Youth Eco-Camp.



Servas Brazil

By Neuma Dantas, National Secretary, Servas Brazil

Both events, the Servas Brazil National Assembly and the Latin America Youth Eco-Camp, were hosted at Acampamento Paiol Grande in the city of São Bento do Sapucaí, state of São Paulo in Brazil, from November 2 to 5, 2023.

There were 40 participants, with 19 youth and 7 people from 6 countries outside Brazil (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, France, Peru and the United States).



The youth event was financially sponsored by both Servas International and Servas Brazil.

Once we are officially a Servas National Group in Brazil, our institutional emails should return to .org.br instead of .com.br. Our national statute was approved and now the national board is providing the other steps to finish the process.

Photo captions:
National Secretary Board and Coordinators (Matheus and Neuma are missing)

Painting of APG's mural as one of Servas activities.

...



The State of Servas

By Carla Kristensen, SI Vice President



“Alone, we can do so little; together, we can do so much.” —Helen Keller

I feel really inspired by the incredible stories of friendship and peace that have blossomed lately within the Servas community. Our organization, rooted in the spirit of understanding and connection, has become a beacon of hope in a world that, at times, seems divided.

Photo: Carla at the 2013 Servas Iberian Meeting in Évora, Portugal

Let me share with you a beautiful initiative undertaken by Francisco and Mei, the SI Peace Secretariat – the creation of the Peace Forums for Servas members worldwide. In a world where physical borders sometimes seem insurmountable, Francisco and

Mei envisioned a digital space where we can come together, transcending distances and forging friendships that know no bounds. In 2023 we have had four Servas Peace Forums. To them, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for fostering this global sense of unity.

It's heartening to notice that regions like East Asia, Latin America, Italy and Spain, to name a few, have hosted significant events in 2023. It appears that these gatherings not only serve as a testament to the cultural richness within our community but also play a vital role in energizing our members. **Events become a catalyst**, a source of inspiration that infuses vigour into our shared purpose. In 2023 we had two Servas Youth Eco-Camps, in Italy and in Brazil, which were largely appreciated by our younger generation, the future of Servas, our future.

In my role as Vice-President, I envision a future where Servas groups worldwide actively organize **more events and activities**. These occasions are not just gatherings; they are opportunities for members to create profound bonds, to share experiences and cultures, and to discover the motivation needed to turn the values and

mission of Servas into meaningful action.

Imagine Servas as a catalyst for **positive change**, a force that extends beyond borders, promoting friendship and peace in every corner of the globe. It's within our collective power to make this vision a reality.

So, let us commit to organizing, participating, and cherishing these moments of togetherness. Through **events and shared activities**, we can strengthen the fabric of our community, weaving a tapestry of friendship that transcends borders and fosters a world where understanding and peace prevail.

Thank you, Servas members, for your dedication, and let us embark on this journey together, hand in hand, as ambassadors of friendship and peace.

Carla Kristensen, Servas Portugal, SI Vice President

carla.kristensen@servas.me ;
vicepresident@servas.org

P.S. Events that welcome foreign Servas participants can be shared on www.servas.org (Events and meetings | Servas Online). Send me your announcement and I will gladly share it on the website.

• • •

Servas Britain and Ireland

Come to our National Gathering 2024

By Rachael Clayburn

Please join us at our national gathering in Southwest England in 2024! Situated on the edge of Dartmoor National Park, there will be plenty of activities including Saturday day trips and a big Sunday meeting. There are good rail connections close to the youth hostel [<https://www.yha.org.uk/hostel/yha-okehampton-bracken-tor>] and there is the chance of holding a *ceilidh* ([*kay-lee*] – a traditional dance – lots of fun for everyone!) on the Sunday night. Do get in touch if you are interested in coming along – accommodation will be allocated on a ‘first-come, first served’ basis.

If you have any questions, please contact Rachael Clayburn (Travel Secretary): travel@servas.org.uk

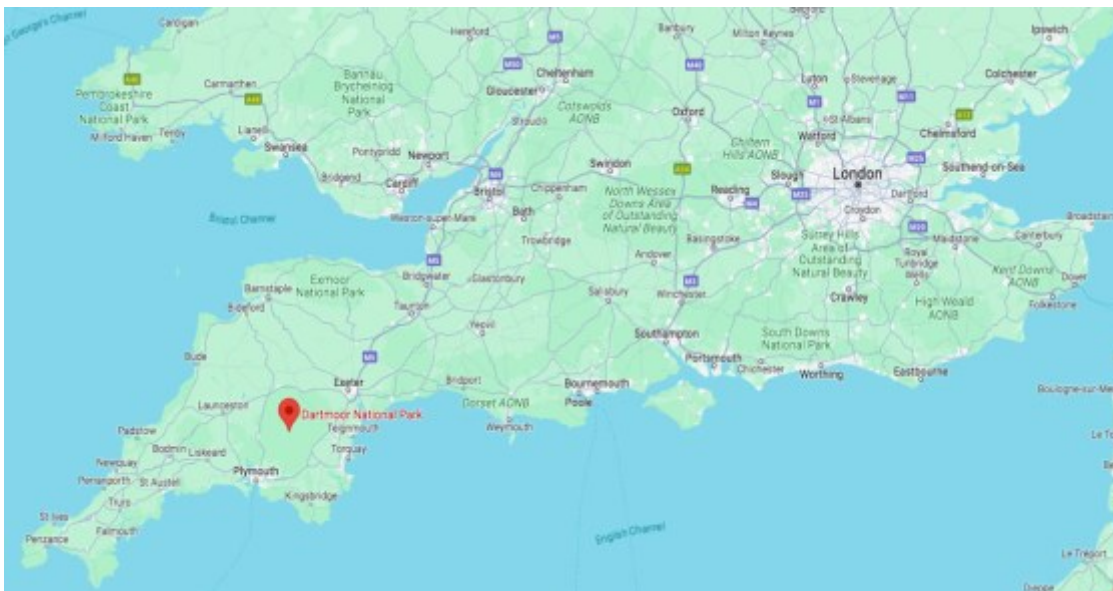


Date: Friday, April 26 – Sunday, April 28 2024 (2 nights)

Place: YHA Bracken Tor, Okehampton (House), EX20 1QW: <https://www.yha.org.uk/hostel/yha-okehampton-bracken-tor>

Travel: Approximately 4 hours from London by train

Space: Bunk beds for 35, dining room, kitchen, nice lounge and gardens, 15-minute walk from train station





Activities:

Friday – arrive from 5pm, bring and share supper, evening entertainment (music/travel stories tbc*)

Saturday – Breakfast, outings (Exeter, Castle Drogo, Lydford Gorge, Okehampton, Dartmoor Walk tbc*, everyone to arrange own transport/lunch/snacks), light evening meal, evening entertainment (film/board games tbc*)

Sunday – Breakfast, 10am check out, Servas-related discussion or activity, buffet lunch, depart.

Cost: *(International payment methods to be confirmed)*

Option 1: **£90** max 35 people: 2 nights accommodation, tea/coffee, 2 x breakfast, Saturday light evening meal, Sunday buffet lunch

Option 2: Sunday only **£15**: with tea/coffee, buffet lunch

Option 3: **£140**: Sunday evening meal, ceilidh, 3rd night accommodation, breakfast (if there is significant interest).

Extra: Sunday Night Ceilidh **£15** (if there is significant interest)

To Book: Please choose your option and contact Rachael Clayburn to register your interest.

*tbc = to be confirmed.

• • •

What is a Focal Meeting?

By Pablo Colangelo

It is a way Servas can bring together people from “regions in conflict”.

HOW?

By organizing events: walks, camps, peace schools, etc.

Servas exchanges promote solidarity among people from different origins or beliefs.

Different kinds of Focal Meetings:

- Among groups or individuals within the same culture or country. For example: Servas Colombia increased efforts to have indigenous people become hosts.
- Among existing National Servas Groups. Example: Servas India and Servas Pakistan held a meeting together.
- Between an established National Group or an individual and new potential national groups or individuals. Enabling the creation of Servas in new places. Such as Servas Belgium that contributed to creating Servas Congo.





What these meetings should promote:

- There should be a clear demonstration of understanding, peace, and friendship among humans from diverse cultures.
- It should unite people who feel distant from others, and foster friendships.

WHAT I'M TRYING TO DO?

For years, in unison with Servas UK, I was searching for individuals living in the Falkland Islands (*Malvinas* in Spanish) to find

someone to start a Servas group there.

Due to cruise ship tourism, there is a big potential for Falklanders to become day hosts there. Do you know someone in the region? Do you have any connection to help establish a group there? If so, please let me know.

Pablo Colangelo

Local contact (advisor for the Falkland Islands)

pcolangelo@gmail.com

• • •

Treated Like Family



By Paula G. Cullison

This was my first time in Korea, so I was up for a brand-new adventure. Also, the Korean language was new to me. All I could master was: *gamsa hamnida* (thank you) and *annyeong haseyo* (hello).

While planning our trip, I reached out to Servas members. I've been a member since 1996. Before our arrival, NamHee, Former President, contacted Choi Byungwan, the

current President of the Servas Seoul group, who invited us to his PowerPoint presentation on their 28-day trek on the Annapurna Trail in Nepal.

The group was so very welcoming. Many of the members then walked us back to the hotel, so we didn't get lost. We were moved by such kindness.

Earlier that day we were treated to a fabulous gourmet lunch. Our hostess was



HyeYong Jang, a noted artist and long-time friend of InHee, my friend from Phoenix. NamHee and Hyeyong had an instant rapport. They both met us at the hotel, and Hyeyong drove us to the restaurant within a beautifully manicured park. We visited several art galleries, where we met artists, and relaxed in a traditional tea house.

During our week in Seoul, we visited many wonderful places; as well we took day trips to Nami Island, the Garden of Calm and the DMZ (the demilitarized zone at the border of South and North Korea).

I hope that you will enjoy my full article on our trip to Japan and Korea:

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/enchanting-japan-korea-paula-g-cullison>

• • •



A Malawi Experience: 2023-2024

By Demelza Benbow

Malawi now offers a well thought-out and certainly one-of-a-kind, four-to-six-week language and cultural exchange program. It is not a traditional SYLE, but one that is open to any current Servas member, of any age.

Malawi is commonly called the “warm heart of Africa” and has a population of 14 million.

These are the requirements for taking part:

Be a model Servas traveller.

Have an up-to-date Servas LOI.

Be prepared to give a PowerPoint presentation about your life, your country, your Servas group.

Buy and pay for your air travel and insurance.

Be between the ages of 18 to 80.

Pay \$25 for four Chichewa language lessons.

Pay \$100 SYLE fee (50% goes to the NGO that you volunteer with).

Be fit and have health Insurance.



Be able to communicate comfortably in English.

Pay for your own lunches, local buses, and incidental expenses.

Pay for the ingredients and cook one meal for each long-stay host.

Have an up-to-date Servas LOI.

Have funds to travel the last week around Malawi.

You will be met at the airport and taken to the home of our National Secretary where you will stay for two nights to settle in before beginning your SYLE.

Week 1: Stay two nights with three or four Blantyre hosts.

Week 2 - 3: Stay with two hosts, one per week while doing daily volunteer work with an accredited NGO.

Week 4: One week of self-funded travel around Malawi.

For more information visit: https://usservas.org/International_News/13255353 or contact:

National Secretary:
demelzabenbow@gmail.com
WhatsApp +(265) 999-482-983

SYLE Support: Jacqueline13
@hotmail or call +(265) 997-376-475
or 993-920-386.

...



Bill Magargal

Art for People with Disabilities

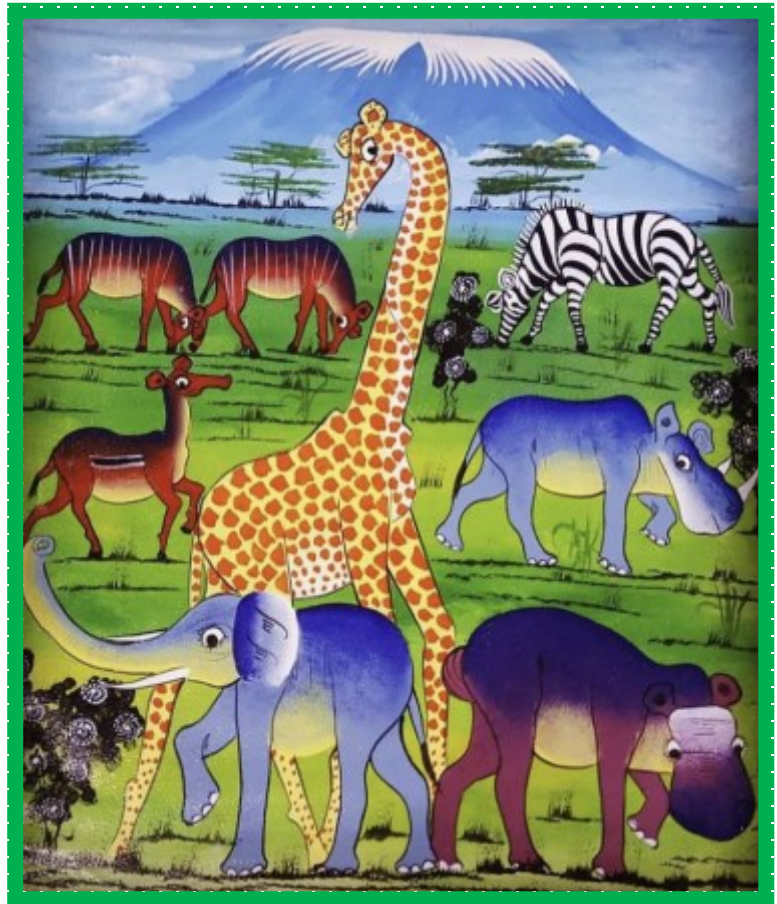
Servas Tanzania will host a painting workshop where attendees will paint artwork for a Servas Tanzania Art Auction. Proceeds from the auction will benefit rural people with disabilities by providing wheelchairs, tricycles and other devices.

The project is spearheaded by David Kabambo, a Servas Malawi member whose art is upbeat, colorful and brings smiles to all who see it. Since 2016, David has raised funds to purchase 57 wheelchairs for people with a mobility disability living in rural areas. He hopes that this new project will result in the donation of 100 wheelchairs.

After the workshop, Mr. Kabambo has arranged for attendees to visit Serengeti National Park. The workshop and safari will surely delight participants and create long lasting memories, new friendships, while contributing to the improvement of many lives in rural Tanzania.

The project will occur in 2024. For details visit:

https://usservas.org/Peace_Justice/13255354



...

Pathways Together in Piedmont (Italy) – July 2023

by Filippo Ceragioli (translation: Markus Kuhlmann and Franca Liuzzo)



“Pathways Together” or **“Sentierinsieme”** as it is called in Italy is a group gathering organized for many years by Servas members to hike in the Alps (Italy, France, Germany, and Switzerland). For roughly a week participants get to know each other, to discuss, to sing and dance together, as well as taste local food and beverages.





The 2023 event was organized by Servas members of the **Piedmont** region in Italy who evaluated where to host the event and opted for the **Oropa area**. Oropa is one of the biggest sanctuaries in the Alps, a huge and splendid architectural complex (its "**Sacro Monte Mariano**" is part of the UNESCO World Heritage). A vast natural and protected area ("**Riserva speciale**") surrounds it. Besides the beautiful scenery, Oropa has enough places for 100 people, and is easily accessible by public transport. It also offers different levels for hiking – short to long distance with different levels of changes in altitude.

The "Pathways Together" 2023 edition offered, for example, a mini-trek of only two days from Oropa to the nearby sanctuary of "San Giovanni" and back to Oropa by bus. Another option was "hard level" trekking in the Aosta Valley with two overnight stays in Alps huts with altitude changes of 1,400 meters per day.

Besides the hiking there was an evening dedicated to non-violent training, another evening singing together songs of different countries, a folk music concert with traditional dances, and many other things shared together.

The requests to participate in "Sentierinsieme 2023" were overwhelming. We could only

take 120 people due to limited places available in the Alps huts for the trekking, and we had a long “waiting list”.

Weekend excursions were guided by local Italian Servas members, who explored the itineraries before, while the trekking activities were led by professional Alpine guides, members of the *Wool Travel Experience*, a network of guides operating in the Biella Alps for a few years.

The weather was fine for five days: raining only on the last day. The Oropa reserve area proved to be the right choice; we got many messages of thanks and appreciation from the participants.

Pathways together **2024** will take place in Bavaria, Germany, from 19th to 25th July.

For more about Sentierinsieme 2023, please see: <https://servas.it/viewpost/350>.

• • •



Unite and Create Peace

By Dr. Hamsavahini Singh, SI UN Coordinator
and Peace Secretary of Servas India



Mahatma Gandhi said something like:
“The Earth has enough resources for the **need** of all, but not for the **greed** of even one person.”

If we really desire peace, we will first have to overcome our greed to reach a peaceful, happy future. Yes, we can reach our destination – peace, joy, and happiness – by adopting the **values of Servas**. In our beloved and esteemed Servas family, people open their homes and their hearts to others, to share what they have. We, the members of Servas can spread this mutual trust, friendship, active cooperation, harmony and understanding, by holding regular meetings, by writing stories and sharing Servas experiences.

We can give presentations about Servas in schools, places of worship, and in our communities.

On **International Peace Day** let me share a peace wish:

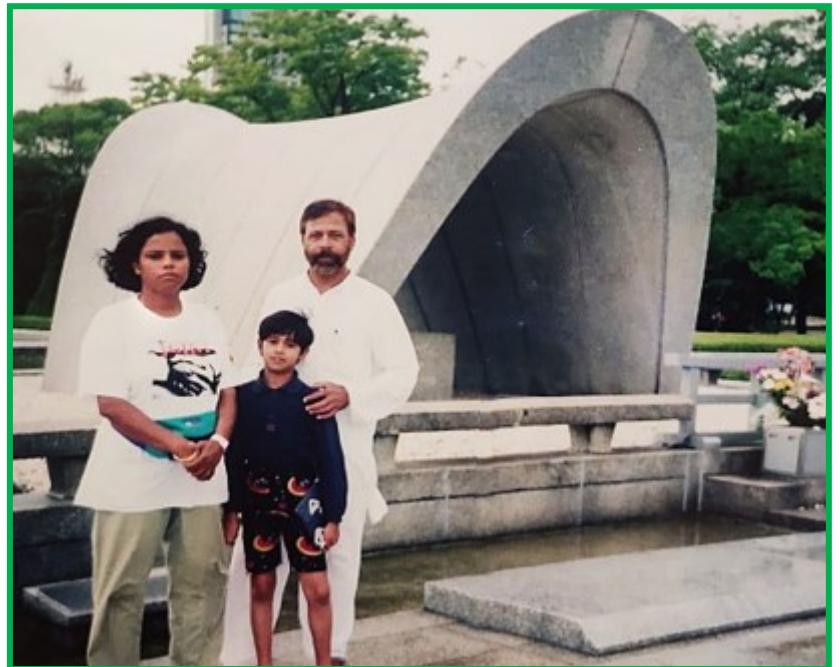
“May **peace** flow over the whole universe.”

Anyone interested in reading the full article may click here:

[Message for Servas on Peace Day Sept 21, 2023 | Servas Online](#)

Photos: Dr. Singh with her family at Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. Meeting with the Hibakusha and members of the Peace Park.

• • •





Peace Day in Iran

By Amir Hosein Asaadi,
Servas Iran Deputy

On September 21, 2023, a group of Servas Iran members gathered at Parvaz Park in Tehran to celebrate International Peace Day. Among the attendees was a guest, a female traveller from Germany who had arrived in Tehran alone by car. We introduced ourselves and took a walk together, sharing Servas memories.

After the walk, the group went to a coffee



shop to discuss the importance of peace. We talked about how peace can be achieved through understanding and acceptance of different cultures and beliefs. The group also shared their personal experiences of how they have contributed to promoting peace in their own communities.

Later in the evening, we set up a telescope to observe the moon and Saturn.



We invited other people to join us watching the sky, and it was a beautiful sight to behold. The group then watched the famous *Pale Blue Dot* video by Carl Sagan, which is a reminder of how precious life is, to treat one another kindly, and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known.

Finally, the group took a photo to commemorate the occasion. The event was a reminder of the importance of peace and how it can be achieved through unity, understanding, and acceptance. It was a beautiful evening filled with meaningful conversations, stargazing, and a celebration of peace.

[Amir is a computational neuroscience researcher.]

• • •

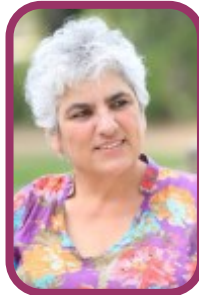


Servas Israel Celebrates Peace Day

September 21, 2023 in Jish (Gush Chalav) Israel

By Sarah Lekach

In honour of International Peace Day, 30 members of Servas Israel visited and toured the village of Gush Halav in northern Galilee. We were met there by George Simaan, an accomplished musician and storyteller, who took us on a tour of the ancient centre of the town, pointing out his favorite places, while telling stories of the history of Gush Halav.



Its name literally translating as “a block of milk”, Gush



Halav (known by the locals as Jish) got its name because of its unique white rocks and fertile lands. Seven layers of excavation reveal that it was first inhabited 5,000 years ago, but became renowned as a centre of Jewish life 2,000 years ago.



Today Jish has a majority of Christian Maronites living peacefully together with Muslims and Greek Catholics. Only a few kilometres from the Lebanese border, it was a customary spot to rest and change donkeys on the trade route.

[Since October 7, 2023, some of this “border area” has been evacuated. – Editor.]

George who was born Christian has committed himself to bringing people of all faiths together with his “religion of Music”, which he does by explaining the history of the many instruments that he plays, how they crossed borders and evolved to playing many types of music.

In the parlour of his exquisite ancient home George performed (on five instruments) Arab and Hebrew songs from traditional chants to contemporary songs translated by him.

No day trip is complete without a taste of the local cuisine at Arazim restaurant, with an amazing view of the valley below.

Watch this video – George sings Sparks of Love, Ehud Banay’s song.

<https://youtu.be/0XVCUVgBPMQ?si=1gyd82annKBvmdDf>

• • •



Servas Reps in the UN Geneva

(54th Session of Human Rights Council) and in Vienna.

**by Dr Hamsavahini Singh, SI UN Coordinator,
National Peace Secretary, Servas Foundation India**

There is great value in having SI's representatives to the UN meet in person. Because of this, SI's three Main Representatives to the UN and I have agreed to meet in person once a year to discuss and plan Servas involvement at the UN, including submitting written and oral statements, offering side events, and arranging for Servas members to participate in certain UN conferences and meetings in person or virtually.

Photo, from left:
Dr. Hamsa Singh, SI Coordinator to the UN,
Angelika Hofmann, SI's Main Rep to the UN in Vienna, and
Kent Macaulay, SI Main Rep to the UN in New York.



In October 2023, Daniela Dönges, Helga Merkelbach, Beatrice Castera, Kent Macaulay, Magnus Adams and I gathered in Geneva for a few days, to see the UN offices and to participate in the 54th session of the UN's Human Rights Council (HRC). It was also a great opportunity to get to know each other better, and talk about Servas, global issues, and other topics.

This autumn, the Servas team at the UN in Geneva submitted a written statement to the HRC on the theme of women and poverty, focused particularly on women in situations of armed conflict. The team also prepared oral statements on a few specific topics on the HRC's agenda.

In addition, on October 3, the Geneva team organized a side-event: "Women, Poverty, and Human Rights". Helga, Daniela, and Magnus were the speakers, with Kent as the moderator.



Joining the six of us representatives at the side event were 16 others, most of whom were representatives of UN member countries.

In Vienna, Kent and I joined Angelika Hofmann, SI's Main Representative to the UN, for the Servas Alpe-Adria meeting in Linz, Austria. We had the opportunity to talk to the Servas members from 15-countries about Servas at the UN and about our activities.

After this event, Angelika, Kent, and I took part in events at the UN in Vienna, on October 9 and 10. We sat in on a dialogue about international human trafficking and met with the NGO Committee on Sustainable Development.

As an organization aiming to build peace through greater understanding among people, Servas International was able to make its voice heard through these presentations.

We spread the word about Servas and met many interesting people along the way. Through these platforms, we can have our message heard through dialogue and negotiations. Especially with the current world situation, peacebuilding has become essential, and we as SI members seek to convince people about the need for peace and security, the basics that any person would want.

Photo, from left:

Kent Macaulay, SI Main Rep to the UN in New York

Helga Merkelbach, SI Rep to the UN in Geneva

Hamsa Singh, SI Coordinator to the UN

Beatrice Castera, SI Rep to the UN in Geneva (standing)

Daniela Doenges, SI Main Rep to the UN in Geneva

Magnus Adams, SI Rep to the UN in Geneva

at a monument to peace, on the grounds of the UN in Geneva



Letters to (and from) the Editor

By Michael Johnson, your SINB editor

Servas online is a great resource. I wrote to Servas members over age 90 and got this reply...



August 2023

I will be 99 years old on September 14, 2023. Ann, my wife, and I joined Servas Canada a year after it was formed. My dear Ann died in 2011, but I remained a Servas host member. I'm currently 99 years old. I am the past treasure of Servas Canada. Five years ago I hosted the Servas board. We met in a room at my golf club. I had a visitor from Australia many years ago. At the time he was 20 years old so I invited my niece, the same age, to meet him for lunch. They fell in love, got married and now have two teenage children: they live in British Columbia, Canada. In World War II I joined the Canadian Air Force as a wireless operator and Gunner. On some missions we dropped the leaflets to lure the German fighter planes away because the leaflets showed on the radar as invading planes. I was luckier than my brother who was killed in a Lancaster bomber on a bombing mission coming back from Germany. Paul



Our Team Grows

We are very happy to welcome Cynthia to our SINB team. She has joined our other fine translators...

I'm Cynthia Granados Posada, performance artist and arts manager from Mexico. I've had the opportunity to live and study in Italy and Australia, and travel to many wonderful places around the world. I've been in Servas since 2016 and am currently part of the Servas Mexico board as Youth and Arts Coordinator.

I love eating crepes, roller skating and playing the ukulele. [Linktr.ee/Cynthiagraps](https://linktr.ee/Cynthiagraps)

...

The Voice of Servas for Global Peace

What is Servas International?

Servas International is a peace organisation promoting dialogue and reconciliation through its programs. Since its founding Servas has always opposed wars on moral grounds. Ending violence and achieving peace requires listening to each other, making accommodations, promoting exchanges, and supporting peace-committed organisations.

Servas has many members, relatives, and friends worldwide who are affected by conflict - including Ukraine, Russia, Israel, and Palestine, to name a few. We care about all people.

How do we feel about the wars and the resulting violence affecting many parts of the world?

We remind ourselves of the many wars, violent conflicts and emergency crises around the world that are affecting every continent. They all deserve our attention and comprehensive efforts to work towards peace.

No conflict can be resolved by violence, revenge, terror, and war. Only a desire for peace, and a willingness to listen to each other and to make accommodations can ensure peace, justice, and the protection of human rights. Only then we can have lasting peace that guarantees a life of human dignity and security for all.

We therefore call on every country currently at war – Ukraine, Russia, Israel, Palestine, and any others – to find a way to stop the war and violence and to start a meaningful dialogue for peace.

We call on all states that are currently declaring their solidarity with only one side of any conflict to come together and work with the United Nations or any other appropriate international framework for a sustainable and just solution. This is the only way to lasting peace.

[Editor's note: This announcement was made during the event on Human Rights Day.]

...

Key People

By Rita Dessauvage in charge of the Key List

All year round Servas groups elect or appoint new board members or the complete board.

Congratulations to the newly elected or appointed board members.

Thanks for taking your responsibility seriously.

It's so important what boards do and how they do it. The board has not only to ensure that Servas survives, but also succeeds for generations to come.

Their success is of vital importance for the growth of Servas.

Thanks to the outgoing key people for their contribution to Servas; we are grateful for the time and effort you have devoted to Servas.



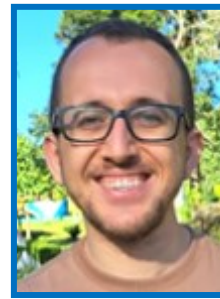


SERVAS BRAZIL

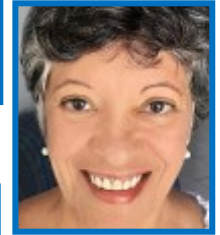
In the beginning of November Servas Brazil held National Assembly, they selected a new National Board for the period 2024-2025

This is the new board, from the top:

National Secretary:
Matheus Nienow



National Deputy:
Neuma Augusta Dantas e Silva



National Peace Secretary:
Alessandra Serrazes



National Treasurer:
Salvador da Matta



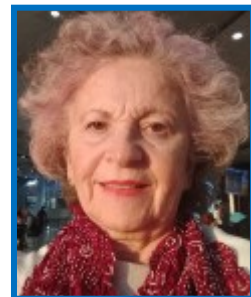
Communication Coordinator:
Ígina Gabriela da S. Pereira



Servas Online Administrator:
Alvany Santiago



Host List Coordinator:
Terezinha De Paula



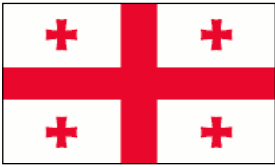
Youth and Family Contact:
Luisa Costa



Programs:
Alvaro Da Matta



Outgoing board members:
Dorly Schutz,
Silva Yara



SERVAS GEORGIA

Since October, Servas Georgia (Europe) has a new board.

National Secretary:
Nino Khundadze

National Deputy:
Kate Maisashvili (photo)

National Deputy:
Nino Piroshmanashvili

Outgoing board members:
NS Mary Ellen Chatwin (moved to Switzerland),
Marianna Zonenberg.



SERVAS GUATEMALA

In November, the national board of Servas Guatemala (Central America) changed.

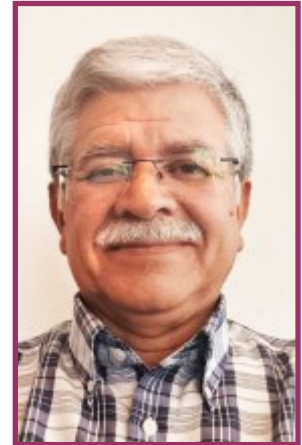
Photos from top:

National Secretary:
Héctor Castro Monterroso

National Deputy:
Adela Segura

National Peace Secretary:
Priscilla Rojas

Outgoing board members:
José Roberto Montes,
Mauricio Martinez





SERVAS HONDURAS

We are happy to announce that Servas Honduras (Central America) is “back in business”. The group will be represented by (the couple) Cinthia and Roberto.

Photos from top:



National Main
Contact:
Cinthia
Espinoza

National
Host List
Coordinator:
Roberto
Alvarez





SERVAS IRAN

Here is the current lineup of our new management team:

(Parisa Nazari and Neda Rahmani have stepped down.)

Hamed Ghasemian – National Secretary

Amir Hosein Asaadi – NS Deputy

Faranak Kavehian – Treasurer

Zahra Karimi – Peace Secretary

Hossein Sarafranz – Servas Online

During our recent General Assembly, we made some key decisions:

- ◆ New membership fees were set.
- ◆ The tenure for Servas Iran's executive team was extended to three years.
- ◆ We plan to hold face-to-face gatherings for Servas Iran members four times a year to foster closer relationships within our community.



SERVAS MALAWI

Changes in the board of
Servas Malawi (Africa)

National Secretary:
Demelza Benbow.

Welcome back Demelza
as National Secretary,
Newsletter Editor and
Host list coordinator.

Members are calling for a
review of roles, and
maybe soon there will be
changes. Demelza hopes
that new members will
come up with new ideas.

We wish Demelza and
her members good luck
to find a new team.



SERVAS MEXICO

In July Servas Mexico (Central/North America) elected a new board.

Photos from top:

National Secretary:
Miriam Kerekes



National Deputy:
Patricia Fuentes

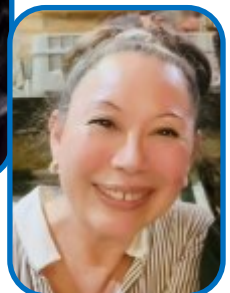


Servas Online Manager:
Fabián Trejo



National Peace Secretary:
Ofelia Perdomo

National Treasurer:
Rosalinda Cázares



Communication
Coordinator: Patricia
Flores

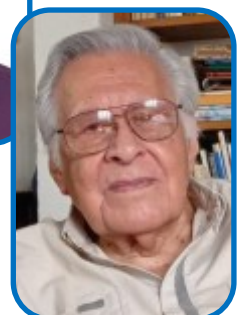
Youth & Culture
Coordinator: Cynthia
Granados



Development Coordinator:
Rodolfo Alvarado



President Emeritus:
Dr. Héctor Peralta



Outgoing board members:
NS Francis Salomon Luna
Aburto (now SI Peace
Secretary), Roxana
Aguilar, Jorge Rendon.



SERVAS MOROCCO

Due to circumstances the changes in the board of Servas Morocco (Africa) at the end of 2022 weren't mentioned in a previous SINB. In November 2022 Servas Morocco had an informal meeting with various persons, members and non-members. Result: two committees, an action plan and a road map have been created.

The Current Board
of Servas Morocco.
Photos from top:

President:
My Abdellah Nabaoui

National secretary:
Radouane Himdi

National Treasurer:
Ahmed Lamzari





SERVAS NEW ZEALAND

Here are the current board and coordinators of Servas New Zealand (South Pacific)

National Secretary:
Derek Carver

National Treasurer:
Michelle D'Souza

National Peace Secretary:
Saskia Schuitemaker

Newsletter editor:
Diane Bargas

Coordinators:
Derek Carver,
Jessica Andrades, Phil McCarthy, Birga Ruder, Michelle D'Souza, Saskia Schuitemaker

Outgoing board member: NS Peter Debney



SERVAS NORWAY

Since November 2023 Servas Norway (Europe) has a completely new board.

Photos from top:

National Secretary:
Rita Torsvik

National Deputy:
Yuri Makassiouk

National Host List Coordinator:
Lidia Kouzguinova

Outgoing Board members: NS Michael Wechsler, Liv Melbye Wechsler, Raguhild Andersland.





SERVAS PANAMA

This is the current board of Servas Panama (Central America)



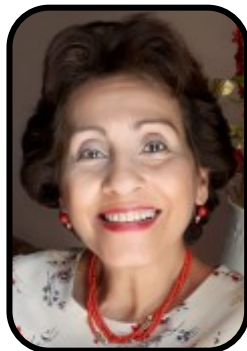
Photos from top:

National Secretary: Eufrazio Centella



National Deputy: Maria Sang

National Peace Secretary: Flor Cano de Picota



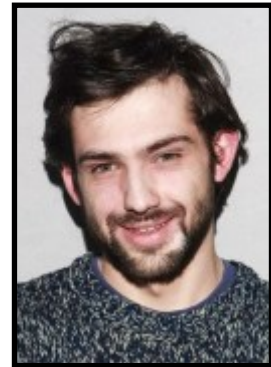
Outgoing board member: Julissa Alfaro Diaz



SERVAS POLAND

Elections in Servas Poland (Europe) were held in April 2023.

Photos from top:

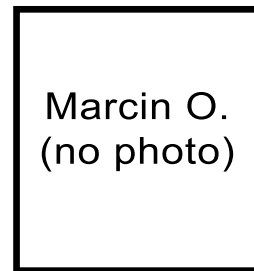


National Secretary: Janek Dzierzawski



National Deputy: Joanna Mozga

National Treasurer: Marcin Ostaszewski



National Board Member: Aissa Zakrzewska



National Board Member: Jagoda (Genowefa) Wiatrak

Outgoing board member: Malgosia Dominiko





SERVAS VIETNAM

In November there was a change in the board of Servas Vietnam (South East Asia).

National Secretary:
Nga Vu

National Youth &
Family Coordinator:
Duyen Nguyen

National Treasurer:
Ngoc Vu

Outgoing board member: Nam Nguyen moved to Sweden but will still assist Servas Vietnam with IT matters. Servas Vietnam is very grateful to Nam.



“Today is a good day to have a great day!”

Best of luck to all Servas groups! Go for it!

Rita Dessauvage
rita.dessauvage(at)telenet.be
keylist@servas.org



SERVAS INTERNATIONAL NEWS BULLETIN

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

Editor and Graphic Designer: Michael Johnson

Proofreader: Picot Cassidy

Translators: Isabelle Girard, Lilly Kerekes, Cynthia Granados Posada

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

President: Radha Radhakrishna president@servas.org

Vice-President: Carla Kristensen vicepresident@servas.org

Treasurer: Richard Cabassut, Co-Treasurer: Jon Corrado treasurer@servas.org

General Secretary: Jonny Sågänger generalsecretary@servas.org

Membership & Technology Secretary: Paul Nielsen mts@servas.org

Membership & Technology Co-Secretary: Jim Leask mts@servas.org

Peace Secretary: Francisco Salomón Luna Aburto peacesecretary@servas.org

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