

□ COMMUNITY COORDINATORS □

The Community Coordinator program (CC) has been in place for the past three years. The nature of the program has been discussed in several previous numbers of Liaison, and a Circular Document (No. 15/85 ADTB) dated April 1, 1985 outlines its mandate in detail.

Liaison has asked three CCs to give us their impressions and share their experiences with us. We posed several questions to Valerie Judd, who was the CC in Washington, to Valerie Bryce who was in Geneva, and Margaret Mailloux who was in Kuala Lumpur.

Sylvie Gauvin: • *In what way do you feel the program has improved the situation for new arrivals at the Post?*

Valerie Bryce: The employee who is at a post, or about to arrive, can consult the newsletters from the post at the Posting Services Centre, or at the mission information centre. The CC can inform the employee and dependants about their new surroundings, working conditions, and spare time activities available there. The CC is a resource person who can be a link between newcomers and the mission and can be of particular help when new arrivals do not speak the language of the country.

Valerie Judd: The program has provided an opportunity for concerns to be addressed before arrival at post. New arrivals are ensured a more 'personal' welcome, easing the transition between headquarters and posts, or one post and another. More community interaction is made possible through the

coordination of activities within the embassy. In short, the community coordinator program may help new arrivals settle in faster and more easily.

Margaret Mailloux: The community coordinator (CC) usually provides an information pack on arrival at post,

The CC program allows one to deal with certain problems before the arrival of newcomers to a mission, and to give them a more 'personal' welcome, thus easing their transition between headquarters and the mission, or between missions.

or even in advance of arrival, and the CC can be called on for further information or advice as questions arise. The CC would probably arrange a coffee morning or something similar so that the new arrivals can meet each other and the people already at post. The CC

would probably organise a tour of the local shops or markets or other important landmarks to fill the immediate needs of the newly arrived families and give them a starting point.

• *Is the program useful to those who are accustomed to being abroad?*

V. Bryce: 'Old Hands' will appreciate better than anyone how much time can be spent in the first year of a posting finding out how the local scene operates. Secretaries for instance who are on two year assignments know that they must quickly get established.

On a first posting there is a lot of excitement and novelty in 'discovering' a new country and pursuing new interests. On subsequent posts there are often the quite complex needs of young family to organise and people are also more concerned about continuing with their established activities and interests with as little wasted time as possible.

V. Judd: I believe the program is useful even to the most experienced of foreign service personnel and their families. In fact, those who are accustomed to being posted abroad may be more aware of the hurdles they will face and may rely on the community coordinator to answer their questions and concerns in advance of their arrival. Unfortunately, each move has its own set of difficulties and experience doesn't necessarily make the move easier.

M. Mailloux: Absolutely! Those veteran travellers still need a starting point. The CC library is invaluable for browsing through to see what is available in the new country, making notes of useful telephone numbers, and noting who at the post is interested in which activity.