

POSTING NEW IDEAS by Carol Walker

Former Community Coordinators reunited recently with the Posting Services Centre team for a lively exchange of ideas and information. The meeting generated new ideas for more effective service on missions.

The Washington coordinators noted that to the surprise of most new arrivals, their service was invaluable in balancing the contrasting lifestyles and values of their American counterparts. By hand-delivering their news bulletin, Motria Koropecy and partner Marion Barton kept in personal touch with people and helped to give them the high profile in the mission that was missing.

The problem of serving a wide array of people on missions posed a dilemma for most coordinators. Community Coordinators are paid according to the number of Canada-based staff at a mission, but frequently look after many more individuals in need of attention.

Strategies for coping with the work load were suggested at the meeting. Hilda Cowan, in Moscow, arranged for someone in the same Embassy section to welcome newcomers at the airport, using Embassy vehicles. New arrivals found food in the fridge along with a welcome bottle of chilled champagne. Gillian Cohen, in Nairobi, started a Canadian Women's Club. By holding the same office hours as the adjacent medical clinic, Gillian facilitated a convenient stopover for visitors, and thus saw more spouses.

Attitudes of Mission administrative staff towards coordinators varied. According to Catherine Stephens, Islamabad offered great cooperation, though this experience was not shared by all other coordinators.

The role of "listener" was discussed in detail. Marjorie Caverly reminded us that confidentiality was crucial to the job and must be clearly understood by the



post. To facilitate resource use in times of need, Judy Matheson emphasized the importance of establishing relationships with clientele. In addition, a coordinator must recognize when a problem warrants professional attention, and know how and where to refer them. Brenda Abud-Lapierre of the Employee Assistance Program, asked for suggestions of ways to extend the EAP service abroad.

Calling cards were considered a useful tool for the performance of professional responsibilities. Some coordinators regularly found themselves "out-of-pocket" for the extras that they spent doing their jobs. In Nairobi coordinators ran a "Happy-Hour" at the mission and used the profits to run their programs. Other fundraising suggestions included asking other government departments, private companies and non-governmental organizations whose employees and families benefit from the program, to contribute to it financially.

Catherine Stephens stressed the importance of getting to know the country and its people before starting the job. Valerie Bryce emphasized using the community to its fullest. In fact, all agreed that the secret to enjoying their posting was to get involved locally. By knowing the possibilities, coordinators can encourage everyone to get involved, for the benefit of all!

Brenda Abud-Lapierre (EAP)
Dawn Jones (FSCA)
Judy Matheson (Athens)
Motria Koropecy (Washington)
Catherine Stephens (Islamabad)
Loréa Giannetti (PSC)
Valerie Bryce (Geneva)
Marie-Aline Wood (Bridgetown)
Carol Walker (PSC)
Gillian Cohen (Nairobi)
Hilda Cowan (Moscow)
Anne Robison (Moscow)
Absent:
Carolyn Brereton (Tokyo)
Barbara Ryan (Bangkok)
Marjorie Caverly (EAP)
Elizabeth Campbell-Pagé (Liaison)