

## WHY BECOME AN AATF FUTURE LEADER

In this day and age of easy Internet access to resources, some French teachers may feel that they do not need to take the time to participate in the activities offered by their AATF chapter or by attending the national convention. However, with the heavy workloads of many French teachers, teaching up to five or even six preparations per semester, or feelings of isolation due to being the only French teacher in their school, it seems easy to argue that the AATF is an essential place to meet like-minded professionals who can help ease and improve on the daily stresses of teaching. This is why participation in AATF, at the local and national level is so crucial. To that end, a group of nine teachers from various parts of the U.S. (Sheila Conrad, Julie Crisafio, Megan Diercks, Keith R. Grasmann, Rebecca Léal, Tia Lebrun,

communication, and identifying and recruiting new members, among others.

Throughout my time during the Future Leaders training, I was especially impressed by the openness and easy camaraderie of my peers as well as the regional representatives and the executive council. We were welcomed to join the Executive Council for hors d'oeuvres with a focus on local seafood and blueberries Sunday evening before the official event began. Our facilitator, Janel Lafond-Paquin, treated us to an evening of laughter and bonding at a local restaurant where we sampled their famous chicken and the ubiquitous *poutine québécoise*, a specialty of fries, gravy, and cheese curds. Lunch at the Hotel Montagnais was arranged during our second day so that the Future Leaders could dine with various regional and executive council members

How can others become involved as a Future Leader? The process is outlined on the AATF Web site under Programs: Leadership at [[www.frenchteachers.org/hq/leadership.htm](http://www.frenchteachers.org/hq/leadership.htm)]. In general, individuals who have been members of AATF for at least three consecutive years, and who are willing to serve as a chapter officer in the near future will be considered. Some of us came from flourishing chapters, rich with membership, participation and activities. Others came from chapters whose focus has been solely on student participation in the *Grand Concours*. A few of us are already local chapter officers, while others are looking to dive in and emerge as an officer in the next few years to come. Any French teacher who wishes to make a difference at the local, regional, or eventually at the national level should consider applying for next

---

***the AATF is an essential place to meet like-minded professionals who can help ease the daily stresses of teaching.***

---

Melanie Taylor, Julia Ullmann, and Katy Wheelock) were selected to participate in the AATF Future Leaders Program. Meeting together in Saguenay, Quebec before the National Convention began on July 8, the Future Leaders spent productive days learning all about the functioning of the largest association for French teachers in the world, interacting on a personal basis with the top leaders in our field, and how leadership strategies could be implemented to improve teaching, promote the study of French, and open doors for new opportunities.

A variety of backgrounds rounded out the group: teachers from elementary, middle, high school, community and four-year colleges were all represented from public, private and Catholic schools. Teaching experience varied from those with just a few years of experience, to those who began teaching more than 25 years ago. All came with a desire to return to their own AATF chapter with the skill set and required knowledge to help their chapters grow and flourish. Assuredly, under the outgoing and natural leadership of Janel Lafond-Paquin, Chair of the AATF Commission on Middle Schools, all participants left with a vision on how to improve their local chapters and determine projects to implement upon their return. Goals included increasing communication through creation of chapter Web sites, chapter Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, increasing AATF membership and participation through surveys, new chapter activities,

to get to know them more personally in a smaller setting. These professionals are now new colleagues, friends, mentors, and sources of fresh ideas.

While the days involved a lot of work, brainstorming, and meetings, we also took advantage of local offerings in Saguenay. Visits to the local "Dollarama" to buy materials for the classroom (Québec flags, stickers, and temporary tattoos were among the favorites) and the nearby Archambault, retailer of books, music, games, and toys allowed teachers to stock up on a variety of favorites in French. Since the Future Leaders are asked to attend many sessions of particular interest for leadership, we did not participate in the excursions offered during the convention. Just the same, after the conference concluded, informal excursions with some of the leaders included a short road trip to a Native American museum in Mashteuiash, about 1.5 hours from Saguenay. Instead of the short museum visit we expected, we were able to participate in the 9<sup>th</sup> *Grand Rassemblement des Premières Nations* which included artisanal crafts, foods, personal conversations and a central tent for extraordinary performances during the pow-wow. On the way back to Saguenay, we stopped off at the Microbrasserie du Lac Saint-Jean where locally-sourced food accompanied the award-winning microbrews, and ended the evening with the outgoing manager offering us a private tour of the brewing facilities.

year's Future Leaders program. The program is rejuvenating, refreshing, and rewarding.

Katy Wheelock  
2015 Future Leader  
[[katywheelock@yahoo.com](mailto:katywheelock@yahoo.com)]