

## AATF 2016 FUTURE LEADERS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM, AUSTIN, TEXAS

The sixth year of the AATF Future Leaders Fellowship Program took place in Austin, TX two days prior to the annual national convention. There were eleven participants from across the country who worked together to develop their leadership skills and to learn more about the national organization's mission, goals, and activities. This training was provided to enhance their skills as chapter leaders and hopefully to pique their interest in working on the national level.

AATF Past-President Ann Sunderland and the late Barbara Ransford, AATF Vice-President, had the idea for this program because they saw the need for building leadership capacity at the chapter level.

The Future Leaders Program aims to assist participants in honing their leadership skills in order to best serve their members. It focuses on member recruitment and retention while at the same time reviewing chapter guidelines and the duties and responsibilities of elected officers. The cohesiveness of the group allows sharing ideas and strategies that they can bring back to their chapters.

Through presentations and discussions, the Fellows learned about their chapters through exploration of their chapter constitution. They also had the opportunity to explore the AATF Web site [www.frenchteachers.org] through an activity that they completed prior to



L. to R.: Nathalie Gorey, Uriel Ornelas, Erin Gibbons, Heidi Trude, Pierre Dairon, Audra Merfeld-Langston, Barbara Brousseau, Deena Sellers, Margaret Newcomb, Nancy Aykanian, Susan Brown

Their vision has become a carefully articulated series of sessions that bring leaders together each year before the annual convention.

This year, the Future Leaders Fellows represented eleven different states: Nancy Aykanian (Eastern Massachusetts Chapter), Barbara Brousseau (Alabama Chapter), Susan Brown (North Carolina Chapter), Pierre Dairon (Ohio Chapter), Nathalie Gorey (Maine Chapter), Erin Gibbons (Chicago/Northern Illinois Chapter), Audra Merfeld-Langston (Greater Saint Louis Chapter), Margaret Newcomb (Washington/Alaska/British Columbia/Alberta Chapter), Uriel Ornelas (San Diego Chapter), Deena Sellers (Metropolitan New York Chapter), and Heidi Trude (Virginia Chapter). Janel Lafond-Paquin (Eastern Massachusetts Chapter) led the program for the third consecutive year.

their arrival. Furthermore, presentations by various national leaders gave participants a wealth of information on the workings of the organization. Catherine Daniélou, AATF President, welcomed the leaders and inspired them with her words of wisdom and encouragement. Jayne Abrate, Executive Director, and Lindsey Gibson, Administrative Assistant, spoke about the AATF headquarters and gave each leader a folder of resources. Catherine Ousselin, Region IX Representative, provided a wealth of technological information and social media that are linked to the AATF Web site and help keep the organization in the technological mainstream. Ann Sunderland reflected on her professional career that led to her election as president of the largest organization of French teachers


in the world and spoke of the relationship between the AATF and the various national, regional, and state organizations. Ann also spoke about the *Société Honoraire de Français* and its new middle school program, *les Jeunes Amis du Français*. Megan Diercks, newly-appointed editor of the *National Bulletin*, presented her plans for the publication and encouraged all to submit articles. Lisa Narug talked about the National French Contest and its new on-line component. Joyce Beckwith, former Region I Representative (Eastern Massachusetts Chapter), shared her expertise on the role of a regional representative. Past-President Mary Helen Kashuba, SSJ, discussed the Exemplary Program for schools and universities that she began. The leaders also had the opportunity to hear from Edward Ousselin, editor of the *French Review*, who explained the submission and review process. When the leaders were not listening to speakers, Program Director Janel Lafond-Paquin covered topics including leadership, chapters, and recruitment and retention of members.

Beyond their commitment to becoming chapter officers or continuing in such a role, Leaders were required to develop a project that they pledged to carry out in the coming year. Many have chosen to create more transparency for their chapter members through the use of social media and updating their Web sites. Others are looking to increase membership or participation in the *Grand Concours*.

With regard to this year's program, everyone stated that their own participation will help them enormously as they go back to their chapters and use what they have learned to make a difference. They highlighted the quality of the presenters as well as the collegiality that united them as a group. They were amazed by all the ways the national office supports chapters and the opportunity to network with other committed colleagues. In summary, the common recurring themes were "sharing ideas with others," "collaborating with colleagues," and "being with like-minded individuals."

We encourage all chapters to nominate a participant for the 2017 Future Leaders Fellowship Program which will be held in Saint Louis. Application information is on page 24 with a December 2016 deadline. If someone has already participated from your chapter, please consider sending another participant in order to strengthen your chapter leadership. If you have never sent anyone, now is the time to select one of your members so that he or she may take part in a program that is sure to reap benefits for

your own chapter organization. We look forward to preparing next year's program for your candidates!

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