

AATF FUTURE LEADERS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM 2011

As most AATF convention-goers were traveling to Montreal in early July 2011, the twelve AATF Future Leaders Fellows were spending two days in an intensive workshop aimed at helping them to develop leadership skills that they will put to use in future service to the organization.

Conceived by President Ann Sunderland and members of the Executive Council as well as the late Barbara Ransford, former AATF Vice-President, the AATF Future Leaders Fellowship Program grew from the desire and need to develop leadership capacity among AATF members. Its aim

is to further the AATF and its programs at both the chapter and national levels by training leaders early in their AATF careers.

The Executive Council voted in 2010 to devote significant funds to this program in order to make sure that strong leadership for the organization continues to be in place. During 2010-2011, Joyce Beckwith, Jayne Abrate, Ann Sunderland, and I planned a workshop experience that would help participants learn about the AATF and its functioning and develop their own skills at leadership.

Each chapter was invited to nominate a "future leader" candidate. Candidates were to be members who had expressed an interest in deeper involvement with chapter leadership but who did not yet have long years of experience. Candidates filled out an application form that asked them, among other things, to outline ways in which they hoped their participation in the program would assist their chapter.

The 2011 AATF Future Leaders Fellows came from all parts of the country. They are Adina Alexandru (Connecticut

Chapter), Ricky Baron (Northwest Indiana Chapter), Nancy Blais (Pays du nord Chapter), Lauren Doyle-McCombs (Florida Chapter), Richard Emch (Ohio Chapter), Frank Giordano (New Jersey Chapter), Marnie Good-

selin and Michel Gueldry.

Jayne Abrate briefed the fellows on issues and organizations across the profession, including the AATF's involvement in JNCL-NCLIS. Furthering the fellows' thinking about chapter-specific issues was Janel Lafond-Paquin (Chair, Commission on Middle Schools) who led a session entitled "Focus on Member Development."

Fellows also concentrated on developing their own leadership skills. One session focused on identifying personal leadership style and its implications for chapter work and volunteer participation.

Sessions on problem-solving, running meetings, and improving communication were aimed at improving skills in the nitty-gritty of leading chapters day to day.

A lunch session with members of the Executive Council gave fellows the opportunity to speak one-on-one with current leaders of the AATF. Finally, the fellows attended selected convention sessions with particular connections to chapter issues, such as member recruitment and special programs like the "Academy of Future French Teachers" (see page 33). Each fellow was encouraged to develop a specific and concrete project that will help to further the goals of their chapter in some area. They are committed to carrying out their projects in the coming year. Projects proposed include re-working the chapter Web site, developing or implementing a chapter communication plan, organizing an immersion weekend for chapter members, improving chapter communication with French-speaking residents of the community, and developing more social events for bonding within the chapter, among others.

Fellows have also agreed to write an article on their experience as a fellow for their state foreign- or world-language association newsletter, and to serve their chapter as an officer at some point in the future. (Some are indeed fulfilling these duties early on—one is stepping in now as chapter president upon the illness of the current president.)

Despite a jam-packed schedule during the workshop, the fellows were ener-



L. to R.: Baron, Giordano, Sieren, Ousselin, Goodfriend, Emch, Hennessy, Doyle-McCombs, Alexandru, Ritz, Blais, Weaver.

friend (Chicago/Northern Illinois Chapter), Susie Hennessy (Greater Kansas City Chapter), Catherine Ousselin (Washington/Alaska/British Columbia/Alberta Chapter), Catherine Ritz (Eastern Massachusetts Chapter), Kristine Sieren (Kansas Chapter), and Jane Weaver (Tennessee Chapter).

This ambitious program was held during the day and a half immediately preceding the AATF convention in Montreal. It included eight sessions, each focusing on familiarizing participants with the AATF organization and development of leadership skills.

In order to get to know the organization better, the fellows perused their own chapter constitutions and familiarized themselves with the responsibilities and roles of chapter leaders. They also heard from leaders in national roles, including Region I Representative Joyce Beckwith; National Headquarters Administrative Assistant Darla Phoenix; Jane Black Goepper, Editor of the *National Bulletin*; Lisa Narug, Director of the National French Contest; former Executive Secretary of the *Société honoraire de français* Amy Hanson; and *French Review* Editor-in-Chief and Managing Editor Edward Ous-

gized and enthusiastic at the end of their two days together. Simply having the opportunity to share information and experiences and to find out how things are done in other chapters was enlightening. "Collaborations [in the sessions] led to lots of inspiration," said one.

For many, the exposure to issues on the national level and the opportunity to hear about the functioning of the national organization were invaluable. Some were inspired by the many ways that they saw to serve their profession and their fellow teachers of French through the AATF. They were able to see their professional lives far beyond their classroom and their school.

Making connections with other aspiring leaders as well as those already in leadership positions made fellows realize the value that they and their talents bring to the organization. "It's great to know there are lots of professionals just like me that I can collaborate with going forward," said one. The sense of camaraderie and support among the group was palpable: The best part of the experience, declared one participant, was "the fellows!"

The Executive Council, in their July meeting, voted unanimously to fund the Future Leaders Fellowship Program for 2012. I urge each chapter president to nominate a candidate for the 2012 workshop (see page 2) which will take place July 3-4 just before the Chicago AATF Convention (July 5-8, 2012). I believe that this is an important way in which we recognize those with the potential to be influential leaders in our organization and make sure that they develop skills and knowledge that they will need as they help the AATF move successfully into the future.

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