

AATF 2018 FUTURE LEADERS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The eighth year of AATF's Future Leaders Fellowship Program took place in La-Pointe-du-Bout, Martinique one day prior to the annual national convention held there. The group consisted of six participants from across the country who worked together to develop their leadership skills and learn more about the national organization's mission, goals and activities. This training was provided in order to enhance their skills as chapter leaders and hopefully to pique their interest in working on the national level.

AATF Past-President Ann Sunderland had the idea for this particular program because she saw the need for building and increasing leadership capacity at the chapter level. Her vision has become a carefully articulated series of sessions that bring leaders together each year before the start of the annual conference.

This year, the six Future Leaders Fellows represented six different chapters: Dawn Fiorilli (New Jersey Chapter), Cynthia Matthews (Maine Chapter), Cristina Kubicki Ivanov (Central Florida Chapter), Thomas Sapp (Chicago/Northern Illinois Chapter), Henriette Sindjui (Maryland Chapter) and Heather Tedder (North Carolina Chapter). Janel Lafond-Paquin (Eastern Massachusetts Chapter) led the program for the fifth consecutive year.

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 for much sharing of ideas and strategies that they can in turn bring back to their own chapters.

Before the actual meeting day in La-Pointe-du-Bout, presenters from National shared their expertise during two three hour webinars on July 2 and 3. Presentations by various people who work on the national level gave participants a wealth of information on the workings of the national organization. On Day one, Jayne Abrate, Executive Director of AATF, welcomed the leaders and spoke of the organization's relationship with JNCL, ACTFL and regional and state organizations. Ann Sunderland, past AATF president and founder of the program, reflected on her professional career that led her to her election as president of the largest organization of French teachers in the world. She also spoke of the *Société Honoraire de Français* and its new middle school program and gave the leaders a summary of the *French Review* and its contents. Day one ended with Catherine Ousselin's engaging presentation that provided a wealth of technological information and social media linked to the AATF website that help keep the organization in the technological mainstream.

Day two began with Lindsey Gibson, Administrative Assistant, who spoke of AATF at the national level and presented to the leaders a variety of resources that they could use in their chapters. Lisa Narug talked about her work as director

of the National French Contest and summarized the results of *Le Grand Concours*. Katy Wheelock, Representative for Region III, shared with leaders the Exemplary Program for schools. Megan Diercks, editor of the *National Bulletin*, spoke of the publication and encouraged all to submit articles. Anne Jensen, newly-elected president of AATF, shared her expertise on the role of a regional representative.

During the face-to-face portion in Martinique, the program's director Janel Lafond-Paquin covered topics including leadership, chapters, and recruitment and retention of members. Leaders also were given the opportunity to participate in small group discussions at different times throughout the day. They learned about their own chapters through exploration of their chapter constitution and had the opportunity to explore the revised AATF website [www.frenchteachers.org] through an activity that they completed prior to their arrival in Martinique.

Beyond their commitment to becoming chapter officers or continuing in such a role, the Future Leaders were required to develop a project that they pledged to carry out at the chapter level in the coming year. Many of the leaders chose to organize a session to be presented at their state conference highlighting the benefits of AATF membership as well as implementing activities to recruit new member. Others are looking to update their website and/or their constitution.

With regard to this year's program, everyone expressed that their own participation will help them tremendously as they go back to their chapters and use what they have learned to make a difference with their own membership. They spoke of the enormous amount of information that they had received both online and in person. They were amazed by all the ways that national supports chapters and the opportunity to network with other committed colleagues. In summary, the common recurring themes were "very supportive environment," "very informative," and "lots of good ideas."



Left to right: Henriette Sindjui, Cristina Kubicki Ivanov, Cynthia Matthews, Thomsa Sapp, Dawn Fiorilli, Heather Tedder.

Janel Lafond-Paquin

Director, Future Leaders Program

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