

Servas Canada

Newsletter 10 - February 2005

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1. Joint Canada-USA Servas Conference in Vancouver, August 5-8, 2005

The first-ever Canada-USA Servas Conference is planned for August 2005 (specific dates will be published as soon as they are known) at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, B.C. The main theme is "The Travel and Exchange Experience". Other related topics feature increasing youth involvement and the role of peace in Servas.

The purpose of the conference is to offer interesting and stimulating discussion, fun social interactions, recreational activities and multi-cultural experiences in the Vancouver area. There will be a variety of speakers, discussion groups, workshops and social events. Members of both USA and Canadian Servas Boards will be there, as well as Servas International (SI) representatives. All Servas members and potential members are welcome to attend. Bring a guest if you like. There will be a conference fee to cover costs.

Accommodations will be on the UBC campus, with prices ranging from \$25 for a single room with shared bath to \$136 for a two-bedroom self-contained suite sleeping up to four people. If you want to stay longer, rooms will cost the same before and after the conference. More details will be available in 2005. If you have any questions or would like to get involved in the conference planning, contact Penny Pattison at 250-382-9190 or Canada@servas.org. People are working very hard to make this conference a great success. Will you be fortunate enough to be part of it?

Get excited! Mark your calendars! Build this August weekend event into vacation plans to visit B.C. and the Pacific Northwest. B.C. Tourism website is www.HelloBC.com. How about driving across the continent visiting Servas families along the way?

2. How does Servas Canada work?

We are a group of hosts and travelers from coast to coast interested in promoting peace and friendship at the grass roots level. The organizational direction comprises up to nine volunteers serving as a Board of Directors that meets face to face every two years, and is in constant telephone and email contact. There is, of course, an official constitution.

National Secretary - Penny Pattison (British Columbia)

Primary spokesperson for Servas Canada, contact with Servas International, responsible for the day-to-day operations, including communications with hosts and travelers in and outside Canada. Responsible for communication, publication and distribution of the newsletter, arranging website operations, preparation and distribution of our annual Host list. Consults with the Board of Directors, delegates specific duties, keeps the Board informed of matters concerning Servas Canada and Servas International.

Assistant National Secretary - Julie Dotsch (Ontario)

Keeps informed of all Servas-related activities, assists the National Secretary in any way he/she can, and assumes the duties of the National Secretary in his/her absence.

Treasurer - Elizabeth Sebastien (Ontario)

Keeps the books, collects stamp fees and Host list deposits, distributes SI stamps to interviewers, sends fees to SI, and prepares year-end financial statement.

Host List Coordinator - Sandy Yudin (Ontario)

Maintains international host list library, supplies current host lists to Canadian Servas travelers, refunds deposits, maintains contacts with interviewers and the Treasurer, and deals with procedural problems.

Peace Secretary - Sylvia Krogh (Alberta)

Keeps contact with the SI Peace Secretary and the Servas representative at the United Nations, supports local and national peace movements, and suggests the peace organization to which Servas Canada donates 0.3% of its annual revenue.

Youth Activities - Julie Dotsch (Ontario)

Responsible for developing youth interest and activities both locally and internationally.

Members at large

Michael Johnson (Ontario)

Lesley Regnier (Québec)

Anyone interested in serving on the Board should contact the National Secretary.

3. Notes from Servas Canada Board of Directors meeting, October 30-31, 2004

The eight Board members were met on their arrival at the airport by local hosts who put them up for the weekend. Meetings ran both Saturday and Sunday, and Saturday evening the Board joined the Edmonton area hosts for a potluck dinner and social evening. Our Board meets in a different city every two years, which also provides an opportunity for area hosts to meet Board members.

Notes from the 2004 Board meeting.

1. Our 2005 host list will be sent out to all Canadian hosts this year, but only every second year hereafter because of the high cost of publishing and mailing.
2. Our annual charitable donation this year goes to the Steven Lewis Aids in Africa fund.
3. There have been a number of complaints about email abuse. Members must not use Servas host email addresses for any purpose other than Servas business.
4. Our general travel guideline is always a stay of two nights. However, individual hosts and travelers may make arrangements for a one-night stay if mutually agreeable.
5. Board changes. Sylvia Krogh replaces Lesley Régnier as Peace Secretary, and Julie Dotsch replaces Benny Beattie as Assistant National Secretary.

Benny Beattie has since resigned from the Board, but remains an interviewer in Montreal.

4. What about Servas International and EXCO?

The SI General Assembly meets every three years in a different country. Each member country has one voting delegate, and may have additional participants for meetings and workshops. The General Assembly debates issues, decides policy and elects the Executive Committee (EXCO) and the other officers for the day-to-day running of Servas worldwide. Servas International consists of:

- * Committees – Audit, Nominations, Appeals, Technical, etc.
- * Elected or appointed persons such as Newsletter Editor, Archivist, etc.
- * Area coordinators – resource people for all or part of a continent
- * EXCO – a committee of six people

1. President – SI Conference, EXCO meetings, spokesperson
 2. Vice-President, – development, contact with area coordinators
 3. Host List Coordinator – ensures host lists are available and updated worldwide
 4. Treasurer – handles finances, prepares budgets and financial reports
 5. General Secretary. – informs member countries of EXCO news, general tasks
 6. Peace Secretary – maintains Servas peace role
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5. Notes from Servas International Conference, Spain, July 2004

About 250 people attended this weeklong conference of meetings, workshops, excursions and endless discussions in large and small groups. These people are members of EXCO and other SI committees, area coordinators, national secretaries from member countries (55

voting delegates) and interested observers.

The working language of the General Assembly is English but, for most of the delegates, this is not their mother tongue and translators were kept busy full-time! Our National Secretary was very impressed by the wonderful multicultural facet of Servas, bringing together such a vast diversity of people from around the globe sharing the same ideals of spreading peace and understanding at the grass roots level. Some important accomplishments of the conference were:

- * Election of a new EXCO for Servas International
- * Approval of the 2005-2007 budget and annual financial statements
- * Decision to maintain the current SI organizational structure and SI stamp fee model (which is the primary funding source for SI activities)
- * Election of the SI Newsletter editor, and agreement to publish the newsletter in English, French and Spanish
- * Approval of two host list printing and distribution pilot projects, to help spread costs more evenly
- * Approval of a permanent international Youth Forum for SI

6. Comox Valley (B.C.) Hosting Project

Most of us have the opportunity to travel overseas and stay with Servas hosts in different countries, but people from developing countries can rarely afford to visit us. With this in mind, hosts from the Comox Valley launched a project to bring a Servas couple from Central America to visit hosts in Seattle, Vancouver and the Vancouver Island areas. Servas Canada helped with the travel costs while local hosts covered local expenses.

David and Raquel Espinoza, Servas hosts in Honduras, met some 75 Servas members for three weeks in the summer of 2003. David, a medical doctor and Raquel, a social worker, stayed in 11 different homes in Seattle, Vancouver, Victoria, Duncan and the Comox Valley. They attended Servas gatherings, visited fairs, met local doctors, went sightseeing and had a marvellous holiday. David also shared ideas with a Nicaraguan doctor connected with the development of a fair-trade coffee project.

Participating Servas hosts felt very uplifted by the success of hosting this delightful couple from Honduras, such a positive experience that enriched the lives of both hosts and travelers. Congratulations to you B.C. hosts for such a fantastic initiative!

7. Regional News

In some cities, hosts meet regularly at a designated restaurant once a month or two, just to meet and chat, and bring along a friend or guest. A number of places have area potluck dinners once or twice a year.

Vancouver - The area hosts are an active bunch. Each year Vancouver and Seattle put on a joint potluck gathering, in one of the two cities. Then in the fall, they have about 50 local members get together for their own party.

Edmonton area - About 35 hosts held a Saturday evening potluck dinner at the end of October, and members of the Board of Directors were delighted to attend and enjoy the western food and warm hospitality in the party room of Sylvia Krogh's condominium.

Bracebridge, Ontario - At the end of July, Sandy Yudin and Norm Yan hosted a potluck dinner at their B&B for Muskoka area members. A visiting couple from Montreal were happy to be included, and really enjoyed meeting this group of interesting people.

Kitchener, Ontario - Hosts held their dinner in late November. About 25 people attended, including a visiting traveler from Australia.

Toronto - About 25 area hosts met at a restaurant for an evening get-together this fall.

Montreal - In early December, about 40 hosts met chez Benny and Gita Beattie for a bilingual Sunday brunch. Two years ago, when the Board met in Montreal, local hosts rented a church hall and invited local travelers and friends along as well.

8. Electronic Mail Usage Guidelines

Electronic mail is an excellent communications tool for Servas hosts, travellers and volunteers alike. To ensure maximum effectiveness of e-mail, please consider the following guidelines when communicating via e-mail:

1. Respect the privacy of Servas hosts. The e-mail addresses contained in host lists are to be used for official Servas Canada communications (such as distributing newsletters and nation-wide alerts), for notifying hosts of local Servas-related events, and for contacting prospective hosts to request visits. No Servas Canada member shall use the host list to circulate any kind of information regarding any group or cause that has not been approved by the Servas Canada Board.
2. Use a descriptive subject line such as "Request for Servas visit - June 2005" or "Trip Report from France". Avoid subject lines such as "Information you requested yesterday".
3. Keep message sizes small. Many people download their mail via dial-up connections. Reduce the size of images to 640x480 or 800x600 pixels and minimize the use of file attachments.
4. Pick up the phone. If you need an immediate response to your message, consider using the telephone instead. Do not assume that people read their e-mail every day, or even every week!

9. Odds and ends

* Worldwide, we are about 15,000 hosts. Breaking this down (in round numbers):

Canada - 630
USA - 2000
Europe - 8300

Central America - 300
Asia - 1500
Africa - 450
Australia/NZ - 1000
South America - 550

*Number of Canadian Servas travelers: over 400 a year (about half from Québec)

*Number of travelers worldwide: just under 6000 a year.

*Recently, travelers from Germany have fallen by half, while France has doubled.

If you have not been receiving many travelers recently, this is due to a general decline in Servas travelers worldwide, 9-11 being one of many causes for this decline. We are also an aging group, so we need to encourage more young people to join Servas.

*Here's an interesting twist. A Servas couple from Montreal traveling in Italy began their trip by renting a villa in Tuscany for a week, and then invited all the local Servas hosts to a party. Yes, they had a memorable trip!

*Another Montrealer traveling in southern Italy was surprised to find her hosts making arrangements for all her future accommodation with Servas families!

*A Montreal host welcomed a couple from southern France. They kept in email touch, and she ended up house-sitting for a month in France while they traveled to Russia!

The editors of this newsletter are from Montreal, which explains the source of the above anecdotes. Please, for the next issue, send us your lively tidbits.

Questions, comments, suggestions, etc. from around the country? Contact your host coordinator, e-mail canada@servas.org, or visit our website: www.canada.servas.org

Remember – Canadian hosts traveling in Canada do not need a LOI. Simply refer to the Servas Canada host list.

Oh yes, the buddy system. This newsletter is only being sent by email. So those of you who have been buddied with a non-email host family, please be sure to pass on a copy to them. And host coordinators, if you have not yet set up the buddy system in your area, please do so, to make sure every host gets a copy. Merci – Thank you – Gracias – Grazzie – Danke schön – Spasiba – etc.

With best wishes for a joyful holiday season together with our hopes for a happy and healthy New Year, in peace and friendship,

Benny Beattie and Lesley Régnier.