



Children's Friendship Project

F O R N O R T H E R N I R E L A N D

SPRING 2006



Here's What the Teens Had to Say About the Residential:

WHAT DID YOU ENJOY?

- Making new friends.
- Having proper discussions of Protestants and Catholics
- Getting to know my partner and leaders better.
- Florence go-karting!!!

WHAT DID YOU NOT ENJOY?

- Going home.
- The weather.
- Doing the presentation.

HOW DO YOU FEEL?

- Looking forward to the project and learning a lot more.
- Glad to be part of CFPNI.
- Thankful to be on the program.
- Tired, sore and more aware of the problems around me.

WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE?

- Stay longer.
- Get up later.
- Fry in the morning

CFPNI Teens Love the "Residential"!

SUBMITTED BY CHRISTINE ROBIDOUX, CFPNI PRESIDENT

Since January, 2006's CFPNI teens have been meeting weekly in their small groups of ten to twenty young people. Over time, they have gotten to know each other, and reached a certain level of comfort with each other and their volunteer coordinators and leaders. In April, groups came together for intensive two-day workshops that focused on team building and addressing some very sensitive issues. Throughout the weekend, coordinators would also observe teen pairs to make sure the matches were working out, and give the teens the opportunity to talk one-on-one with their coordinators to discuss any

stereotypes are, where they are learned, and how they are used. Although some were tentative at first, I was very impressed with the teens' awareness of how their culture dictated their view of others.

After a delicious lunch, the groups moved outside to participate in the team-building exercises. Luckily there was a break in the rain. The CFPNI coordinators encouraged while a local organization led the teams in several challenges that required good communication skills and the ability to work as a team. Teens had to remove and then replace in correct order three colored tubes from a tall



concerns. This year, I attended the Fermanagh, Omagh, and Derry/Londonderry Residential held at Ulster American Folk Park in Omagh. Forty teens and their coordinators came together for two days, staying at the Western Education and Library Board's Residential Center.

After the ground rules were set and the group contract agreed upon by all (which unfortunately also included a 2 a.m. lights out), teens were asked to write three fears and three expectations for the weekend. By far, the two biggest fears were doing their presentations on Sunday morning, and being accepted by others. What was the most common expectation? Having fun!

Teens were then divided into five small groups of eight, where they were asked to work together to draw a picture of a person from five different cultures. Each group drew either a Chinese person, African person, American person, Irish person, or Scottish person. The pictures were presented to the whole group. They were very artistic and creative—although not altogether accurate. For example, the American person was shaped like a cheeseburger, carrying a cell phone, and wearing a beer cup hat (the ones with the straws leading from the beer cup to the mouth). OK, so maybe it's *close* to accurate. This exercise led to thoughtful discussions about stereotyping. Teens broke up into small groups again and were asked to talk about what

stick using only ropes, while standing outside of a marked area. They also had to build a bridge over a "crocodile pit" and get all their team members across using two milk crates, one short board, and one long board (but not long enough to reach across the pit). Another challenge was getting all team members through a "spider web" without touching the web, and without using the same hole twice. Two other challenges including matching up same shaped objects—while blind folded and then without talking, and building a tube out of many smaller tubes, in order to roll a ball through the tube into a bucket – several feet away! The final challenge of the day for the team building activities was a go-cart relay race. The team that had been in last place all day took the lead and won the day!

It was an exciting, though somewhat exhausting day, but there was still more to come. We had a delicious dinner, where the coordinators and leaders noticed some of the teens starting to mix with other groups besides their own, a sure sign that the walls were coming down.

The teens broke into small groups again to discuss prejudice and do an exercise called the Kidney Machine. In this activity, groups were asked to choose which one of several candidates would receive life-saving treatment for a

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THANK YOU TO ALL OUR DONORS. HERE ARE JUST A FEW:

Carbon County, PA AOH

Once again the Carbon County PA AOH has donated \$ 1000.00 to CFPNI. This is the 5th year in a row that the Division has made this donation. The fundraiser takes place during the Annual St Patrick's Day Parade held in Jim Thorpe, PA. Prior to the parade CFPNI volunteers assist with parking cars with all donations turned over to CFPNI. Over the years Beth McCabe (Former Vice President of CFPNI), and US Coordinators Pat and Don Guziewicz have assisted at the parade. For the last two years members of The Celtic United Pipes and Drums have also assisted. The check was presented at the Grand Marshal's Dinner.

St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Columbia MD

St Paul Catholic Church, Ellicott City MD

Ancient Order of the Hibernians, Annapolis MD

St. Brigid of Kildare Church, Dublin OH

City of Dublin OH

Dublin Interdenominational faith groups, OH

Rotary Club of Newtown PA

Rotary Club of Doylestown PA

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, Bucks County PA

Sean MacBride division II AOH, Glenside PA

PA Clinical Trial Services, Audubon PA

PA CCC Celt, Newtown PA

We thank the following organizations for their generosity in donating day passes for our teens and families to enjoy:

Wyando Lake

Paramount Kings Island

Columbus Symphony Picnic with the Pops

Rock 'N Roll Hall of Fame

Watercounty, Portsmouth NH

Cانبie Lake, Salem NH

And for the generous use of vans so that families can transport their enlarged family groups to out of town events:

Nelson Auto Group, Marysville OH

U.S. RAFFLE TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE!

If you would like to purchase or order additional raffle tickets please contact Peggy Barrett at (888) 524-0648. Prizes include four \$500 cash prizes, and six lovely Belleek items. The drawing will be held June 15, 2006. This is CFPNI's only national fundraiser in the US. Your support is sincerely appreciated. Winners will be contacted and announced in the Fall/Winter Newsletter.

CFPNI Teens Love the "Residential"!

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kidney disorder. Candidates varied by age, lifestyle, gender, and ethnicity. Teens were asked to discuss and stand firm on their decision. Although initially opinions varied as to who should receive the treatment, in the end all the groups chose the same person. Ethnicity was never a factor in the difficult decision for any of the groups. Further information about the candidates was then revealed, although it did not affect the decision each group had made. It did however lead to an open discussion about prejudice, including judgments and assumptions made about each candidate before all the information was revealed. This was the final exercise of the day.

Sunday morning brought us all together again for the group presentations. Each group, Omagh, Fermanagh, and Derry/Londonderry, was asked to prepare a short presentation of what they had been working on in their local groups. The presentations highlighted *overcoming* prejudice, stereotyping, and racism by addressing ways people can come together, regardless of their religion or ethnicity. Although most were very nervous initially, the teens supported and encouraged each other. You could see that they were all really enjoying being together. There was a smile on every face!

After lunch on Sunday, teens broke into small groups once again to discuss what I felt

was the most sensitive issue for them; the issue of their own cultural identity. They started very generally speaking about expressions of cultural identity, like clothing and displaying flags and other symbols of allegiance to a certain group. Teens who were just minutes before laughing and joking with each other became quite serious and some very quiet and closed. The CFPNI leaders did a fantastic job of gently coaxing them to talk openly, and they soon found that they all felt the same anxieties and uncertainty. It was not long before they were sharing information about their own culture, protestant or catholic, which the "other side" didn't know. It was a wonderful moment to witness as a quiet observer, and it left me with so much hope for the future.

The discussions could have gone on longer; the floodgates were opened, allowing teens to discuss these issues openly with their partner, and hopefully with their friends outside the program. Sadly, the day was soon to come to an end, but not before the evaluation boards were completed! Teens were asked to share what they enjoyed most, and what they enjoyed least. The most common activity that was enjoyed most was meeting new people, while the most common expression on the least enjoyed board was that the weekend had to end.

WE NEED HOST FAMILIES AND VOLUNTEERS

To apply online, or download an application, go to www.cfpni.org today!

For more information, or to volunteer call **1-888-524-0648** or contact a local coordinator.

IN THE US:

Peggy Barrett

Founder & President Emeritus
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TO MAKE A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION:

Glenn Martinsen

Treasurer CFPNI
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CFPNI is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) organization.



WWW.CFPNI.ORG

GREAT LONG DISTANCE RATES TO NORTHERN IRELAND!!

All calls from the U.S. to Northern Ireland are 3 c per minute and 53 c to connect. Just dial 10-10-987 before the number. So you would dial, 10-10-987-011-44-28... Charges will appear on your local phone bill.

Letter from the President



Next year, we will celebrate 20 years, of "promoting understanding through interaction". As the times have changed and progress has been made toward a peaceful resolution, our program has evolved.

The Children's Friendship Project for Northern Ireland focuses on providing selected teens with leadership skills so that they will make a difference in their own communities, and some are in fact are making a difference around the world (see the alumni

page). **Our Leadership Program** is so strong thanks to the commitment of Florence Brunt, Principal Coordinator in Northern Ireland, as well as all the Northern Ireland Coordinators that give of themselves so generously week after week meeting with the teens both before and after they come to the US.

The weekend of April 1st, I attended a CFPNI Residential in Northern Ireland that included the Fermanagh, Omagh, and Derry/Londonderry groups (see cover story). Throughout the weekend I saw the teens gradually becoming more comfortable with one another, allowing them to have discussions on sensitive issues like stereotyping, and racism. It was quite easy for them to discuss other cultures, but when it came to discussing the differences between Protestants and Catholics, they became visibly nervous.

Under the guidance of the Northern Ireland Coordinators, they opened up, and realized they weren't so different after all. It was truly remarkable to watch and very inspiring. This is part of the process of overcoming the divide that has segregated them for so many years.

The question often comes up when we are recruiting host families whether or not the US Host Family Experience is still needed. At the end of the residential weekend, in one of the small discussion groups, I was quite surprised to hear the comment made "what can I do? I am only one person. It will never change." This sentiment was echoed around the table. It is that attitude that we need to address most when they come to the U.S. Getting them away from home and their local friends and communities gives them the opportunity to be independent. It empowers them and inspires them.

US Host Families continue to open their hearts and homes to pairs of teens every summer, allowing friendships to blossom and grow strong. The **US Host Family Experience** is life changing for everyone involved. Thank you to all the US Host Families and Volunteers who make these four weeks a time that no one will ever forget.

This fall the **Alumni Program** will be underway, thanks to a group of alumni volunteers under the leadership of Gertrude Carey, Northern Ireland Coordinator/Volunteer (see related article). Adding the Alumni Program will strengthen the bonds formed during the teens' year with CFPNI, and allow the CFPNI alumni to support each other over the course of their lives.

In this issue we have highlighted just a few of the alumni that are doing great work both at home and around the world. There are many around the world suffering from poverty and war, many of them children. In fact many of these countries are watching what is happening in Northern Ireland now. They are learning from them, so that they can put into practice what has worked in Northern Ireland in order to resolve their own conflicts. Our young people are a part of that process. A program like ours affects many around the world both directly and indirectly. We still have work to do.

I am honored to be leading this great organization of volunteers as we prepare to celebrate our successes over the past 20 years. I am looking forward to a wonderful year, with another truly inspiring group of young adults. Thank you all for all you do!

Christine Robidoux, *President*

From the Chair

Greetings to our 2006 host families and a special welcome to our new ones! CFPNI is such a positive program of peacemaking, preparing future leaders and fostering reconciliation. Our program has a proven track record of committed teens returning home to make a difference in the future days for their country.

Oh behalf of the Board of Directors, I thank you, the host families, for giving your time and, most importantly, yourselves for this commitment.

I thank all who have given financial contributions, which this year are greatly needed for the continuation of our program. If you have not made a donation recently, please consider helping in this way.

We greatly appreciate the untiring dedication of our coordinators in N. Ireland and the States.

Thank you!

George R. Demass, *Chairman*

FUNDRAISING NEWS

An Elegant Affair, the 15th Annual CFPNI Auction

BY ALEXIA SMALL & TAMERA DROZD

The 15th Annual CFPNI Auction Fundraiser was an elegant and enjoyable evening. The event took place at the Washington Dulles Marriott Hotel in northern Virginia on March 11, 2006. Funds raised at the event will be used for the CFPNI teens' air-fare to the US for the 2006 summer program.

CFPNI Board Member, Rosemary O'Neill, was instrumental in inviting several distinguished guests to the evening. Mr. Tim Losty from the Northern Ireland Bureau, Michael Gallagher from the State Department, and Aoife McGarrey from the Irish Embassy attended the affair and provided well received remarks to all guests. Also present were Kerry McKenney, from Congressman Payne's office and Laura Parker, Capitol Policy and Information Officer, Senate Sergeant-at-Arms Office.

Northern Virginia Coordinators welcomed CFPNI Board Members Rosemary O'Neill, Warren Muir, John Dempsey, Bill Skane, and Charles Arndt.



Entertainment was provided by the band, "Better Together" who played a beautiful rendition of Tommy Sands' *There Were Roses* alongside a slide show of various CFPNI teens who've participated in the program in northern Virginia over the years. Additionally, the Maple School of Irish Dance pleased the crowd when three of their top dancers performed several dances.



There were many desirable items on the auction block that evening, including an award-winning oil pastel drawing by CFPNI 2004 teen Elaine Sheerin, two trips to Ireland, several vacation homes, a six-hour evening on the town, and a white water rafting trip. Many thanks are extended to those who donated items and to everyone who volunteered their time to ensure the evening was an enjoyable and successful night.

WE NEED YOUR PHOTOS!

Do you have CFPNI photos you would like to share? We would like to put them on our website. Please send photos along with a brief description to webmaster@cfpni.org or mail them to Glenn Martinsen, 7 Olde Manchester Rd, Derry, NH 03038 USA. *Please indicate whether or not you would like your photos returned.*

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR COORDINATORS



Lynsey Cathcart leading a discussion with the teens at the April 1, Residential

CFPNI Alumni (1992) Lynsey Cathcart, Fermanagh

My name is Lynsey Cathcart and I'm a volunteer youth leader with the Fermanagh CFPNI Group.

I am a full-time, professional Youth Worker with the Western Education and Library Board Youth Service in the Fermanagh Area. I trained in Youth and Community Work at Strathclyde University in Scotland, and have been involved in youth work for ten years.

I am a product of the Children's Friendship Programme, in that I was one of the teens who travelled to the US in 1992. The trip for me was a life changing experience; that's why I'm such a great advocate for the programme today.

I visited Baltimore, Maryland and was hosted by a fantastic family, who treated my partner and I like we were part of their family. I am still in touch with them today, and have many fond memories of my stay.

My positive experience of the Children's Friendship Programme left me with no hesitation to volunteer, when I was asked to become involved by Sonya Johnston, Volunteer Leader with the Fermanagh group.

I have been involved with the group since 2003 and I truly believe in the Children's Friendship Programme as a vehicle for promoting 'good relations' between the divided communities in Northern Ireland.

Often Community Relations Work in Northern Ireland simply focuses on bringing the two communities together, whereas CFPNI takes this an important step further, where the young people are encouraged to learn about each other in a non-threatening way. This helps then to identify and recognize their differences but also to find their similarities or 'common unity'.

Through the dedication and guidance of Florence Brunt, our Northern Ireland Coordinator, and through the hard work and belief of an amazing group of volunteer leaders, we have designed and implemented a worthwhile and extensive Community Relations Programme, which the young people genuinely gain a great deal from. Obviously, the programme would not be possible without the same dedication and belief of the US Co-ordinators, and the kindness of Host Families who are held in the highest regard by so many teens.

Every year the young people involved continue to amaze me with their enthusiasm and willingness to participate and learn, and I thoroughly enjoy watching their progress through involvement in this life-changing opportunity.

Thank you Lynsey for being such a terrific leader and role model for the young people of Northern Ireland!

"Looking Back to the Future"

BY ROXANNE LANDIS



"I'm only just now beginning to realize what the summer meant to me." Those 13 words instantly brought tears to my eyes as I read the letter on my way into the house from the mailbox. They came from a 27 year old *man* who we hosted through CFPNI when he was *17 years old*. He and his partner were our very first pair. They were two, very extraordinary young men and the time they spent with our family in 1990 was a learning experience for all of us. They got along well and were very open to discussing what life was like for two young men growing up in a very segregated society. We knew they understood the concept of what CFPNI stood for, but being teenagers, we weren't quite sure how deep their understanding were. As we all know, years bring maturity and a deeper understanding of things, and to read these words ten years after the CFPNI summer experience took place, only solidified in my heart and mind that what CFPNI strives to do is not fruitless. We don't always see the results right away and that can be so discouraging, but to produce good fruit, it takes time. It takes someone to plant the seed and someone to tenderly care and nurture that seed. I'm beginning to see the successful harvest of this fruit each time I visit Northern Ireland, and each time I receive a letter or telephone call from one of our teens. I believe that many of the teens who have participated in CFPNI over the years aren't always able to put into words what their experience with the program has meant to them, but I'm sure that many, if not all of them feel the same way this man does.

My husband Rick was diagnosed with brain cancer two days after our last pair of teens went home and he died four weeks later at age 43.

Throughout his brief illness, when he wasn't confused, he would talk about our children as well as talking about "our kids" from Northern Ireland" He sometimes wondered if we made as much of a difference in their lives as we thought we did. How I wish he could have lived long enough to read those 13 words that came in the letter mentioned above. I wish he could have seen the outpouring of love and care from all of our teens after his death. We did make a difference and it showed in the love they showered on me and our four children during this most difficult time and in the years since.

Because of turns their lives have taken, not all of our teens have remained close, but every one of them have communicated to me in one way or another what they have learned, not only about themselves, but what they have learned about others and the society they grew up in. They all believe that things have changed and will continue to change in Northern Ireland. They all hope for a better future for their children. They all believe they played a small role in those changes. They are in occupations that will afford them opportunities to use what they learned through CFPNI in their dealings with others. All of the occupations bring them into contact with people from all walks of life and I know their CFPNI experience helps them to treat others with dignity, respect and integrity.

Because of my circumstances, I am no longer able to host, but remain committed to CFPNI and what it stands for. I have enlarged my "family" and that doesn't just include the teens. It includes their families as well. Two of the families have visited my home many times and their friendship is something I dearly treasure. Rick and I were able to visit Northern Ireland two

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"Looking Back to the Future"

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times together and I travel there each year in my role as CFPNI's secretary, and I am always welcomed into the homes of our teens and their families as well as their extended families, with such grace and hospitality. These teens, their families and CFPNI have entwined themselves into my heart and my life forever.

I could write volumes of our experiences with each teen that has passed through our home, but space here does not allow. I will however, close with part of a letter from one of our teens that left me speechless when he wrote it to us upon his return to Northern Ireland in 1992. It meant so much, and I was so pleased that it was included in the section of

CFPNI's website titled "Letters." It says, **"My partner and I have developed more than a friendship—almost a brotherhood. Through our experience we have developed a closeness which can straddle any religious or political divide—a friendship of a lifetime. I would willingly trust my life in his hands and his in mine. We both made a lot of good friends and learned a lot about the value of friendship and of freedom. We established an understanding about Northern Ireland and its problems and share a friendship that can never be broken."**

Hasn't this been an amazing look back to the future and doesn't the future look bright?

Northern Ireland Update

FROM FLORENCE BRUNT, PRINCIPAL COORDINATOR, NORTHERN IRELAND

The CFPNI Program is well underway for the 2006 teens in all areas. The Fermanagh and Omagh groups have both had their fund-raising Table-Quiz. This has a dual function by giving the parents of the teens an opportunity to meet in a neutral venue and get to know each other. The teens prepare the Questions, collect prizes and carry out all the duties required on the night. The parents of each pair of teens form the teams. Both quizzes were successful and everyone had a good time.

The CFPNI program is providing a great opportunity for our young people to discuss and come to understand the issues affecting their lives here in Northern Ireland. Now that we have a cease-fire we need to work even harder to achieve the ultimate goal that people will accept each other for their talents rather than labeling them, which is still as strong as ever. It is sad when you hear an important board member saying that the new Board should have a Catholic chairman rather than

asking that the new chairman has the best qualifications and attributes for the post whatever his or her religious affiliation. It is this type of attitude that is keeping Northern Ireland from moving forwards. Intransigence of some political parties has denied us the chance of having the Assembly running again. The young people who have come through the CFPNI program and visited the USA saw many cultures living side-by-side and working together for the good of their communities. I feel it is so important that we can give as many young people who have leadership potential the opportunity to come on the program so that we can make a difference. On behalf of all the teens who have visited USA as part of the Program I would like to thank the Host Families who have and continue to do such a good job in developing our young people.

Florence Brunt, *Principal Co-ordinator N.I.*

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ALUMNI NEWS



Adrienne Murphy, CFPNI participant in 1991, was married in May of 2005. Her partner, **Karen McFarlane** was a bridesmaid. Adrienne and Karen were featured in the 2004 CFPNI video filmed in Armagh. In the video, Adrienne, a Catholic, points out that thanks to her experience with the program, she was "now engaged to a Protestant."

Karen McFarlane will be married in June of this year. We wish her and her family a joyous occasion! Karen is the daughter of CFPNI's Northern Ireland Administrator and long time volunteer Fiona McFarlane.

Louise Carey, another CFPNI Alumni, acquired an actuary degree from Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh Scotland. She has devoted two years of her life working with the street children of Bolivia in South America. This entails living in shared accommodation with other young people, with only the basics necessary for survival. The street children spend their time surviving life by glue sniffing, and by stealing to make ends meet. Louise and the other volunteers have acquired an office where the children can meet during the day and must be free from glue during this time. She delivers bread and milk (with essential vitamins) to these children on a daily basis. She organizes camping trips away for these young people, who only know life from living under a bridge not far from where Louise lives. She relies entirely on fund raising from home (Derry/Londonderry) to make this programme manageable. Louise feels her experiences with CFPNI have given her the confidence and desire to give back a little of all she has received in her own life.

A NOTE FROM GERTRUDE: TO ALL CFPNI PARTICIPANTS

Your Programme has not ended; it has only just begun! For more information on your Alumni Programme contact:
gertrudecarey@hotmail.com

IN REMEMBRANCE

Margaret Jean Elizabeth Crawford

In early April, Florence Brunt's mother Margaret Jean Elizabeth Crawford passed away unexpectedly. Our deepest condolences are offered to Florence and her family. Flowers were sent on behalf of her CFPNI family. Florence sent the following note in appreciation: *"I am very touched by the support and thoughtfulness of my CFPNI friends. It has been very comforting."*

Margaret Demass

February 23, 1913 - January 29, 2006

On January 29, 2006, Margaret Demass, mother of the current chair, former President and longtime CFPNI supporter and volunteer George Demass, passed on. On behalf of CFPNI, we offer our condolences and prayers to George and his family during this difficult time. George sent the following note in appreciation.

*To my CFPNI family,
During the time of sorrow we learn how much our friends mean to us. Your thoughtful kindness will always be treasured.
Sincerely,
The family of Margaret Demass*

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