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Editor's note

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Message from OMEP-USA President

Jean Simpson, Ph. D

Over the past year OMEP-USA has attempted projects in Jamaica, Liberia and now China. In Jamaica, we attempted to set up a committee to provide a summer institute for one week whereby a small group of OMEP members will perform direct project works to ECE teachers or children at a center or university in one of the local communities. My plan was to make a preliminary visit to Jamaica with my Jamaican contacts, assess what was most needed and what a small delegation of OMEP ECE volunteers could do best. Needless to say, my plans got altered and I could not make the trip. One of our board members, Dr. Carol Darcy continues to make trips to Jamaica and she sees a need that OMEP-USA can fill. Hopefully in 2018 we will be able to provide a direct service project in Jamaica as a part of our work to help some of the most vulnerable children. If you are interested in traveling to Jamaica for at least 5 days during the summer of 2018, to help with teacher education, please let me know.

Another OMEP-USA board member, Barbara Ferguson-Kamara, has been working in Liberia to help established ECE programs at all levels. Over the past few years OMEP-USA has provided textbooks so that teachers there can have some resources as they teach young children. Also members of OMEP donated lots of children rich books appropriate for preschool children. Currently Barbara has sent us a request from the We Care Library and the Liberian Association of Writers (LAW) asking if we can assist in reviewing manuscripts for preschool children books. There will be about 80 manuscripts resulting in 10 being selected for publication. Barbara is asking that an OMEP-USA committee coordinate this effort. A rubric has been developed that can be used. If you are interested in leading this review or assisting, please let me know.

Dr. Rosemary Burton is our board liaison contact to China. At the present time, China is interested in recruiting teachers to commit to teaching Early Childhood Classes in that country. Rosemary will provide information and full details at our North American Regional conference in Atlanta, February 20-22, 2017. This is a great opportunity for anyone wanting a paid abroad experience. Please let me know of your interest. As you can see, OMEP-USA is busy in its international efforts. We are strongly committed to making a difference in the lives of children around the world. As a member of OMEP, you are part of a great team. My contact information is: (703) 593-7676 and drjean15@yahoo.com.

OMEP Website & Facebook

The OMEP-USA website has a new look and is available for you to obtain information. Even though the website is evolving, you will find important links, history and events of interest to the student of professional with international interests.

The website address is: <https://omep.us>

Join OMEP- USA on Facebook : [omepusa1](#).

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Post some information, share a thought or a picture.

Take advantage of this great media opportunity.

OMEP Regional Vice President's Report

Judith T. Wagner, Ph. D

World OMEP Deputy President

Vice President for North America and Caribbean

REGIONAL CONFERENCE IN ATLANTA IN FEBRUARY: The biggest and best news from our region is that OMEP-USA will host the first ever conference for our region in February 2017. Ours is the only region that has not had regular conferences, so this is a giant step forward for us. The World Executive Committee is so very impressed and appreciative that OMEP-USA has taken this initiative, especially so soon after hosting the 2015 World Assembly and Conference in Washington, D.C. Congratulations to Jean Simpson and the conference committee.

REPORT FROM THE REGIONAL MEETING IN SEOUL: Eighteen people attended our regional meeting in Seoul during the 2016 World Assembly. All three countries – Canada, Haiti, and the US – were represented. We discussed the primary challenge we all share, namely the need to increase membership in our national committees and to promote more active participation by our members. We also brainstormed ideas for increasing the number of student groups and community chapters, as well as ideas for retaining collegiate members after the graduate from college. Another topic was the selection of the next Regional Vice President. National presidents will receive nomination forms within the next few weeks. We discussed the possibility of nominating someone from Haiti for the position, since it has previously rotated between Canada and the United States. Those at the meeting agreed that this might be a good idea if a candidate from Haiti can be identified.

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AWARD: I was so very proud that members of OMEP-Whittier College and the Broadoaks School Children's Chapter of OMEP received one of five 2016 ESD Awards during the World Conference in Seoul. This marked the first time the award had gone to an American and the first time college students and children had been acknowledged for their work in sustainability. For those who could not attend the conference in Seoul, we hope to have a presentation on this work at the Regional Conference in Atlanta in February. Attracting college students and other young adults is key to our organization's health and sustainability.

2017 WORLD ASSEMBLY AND CONFERENCE IN CROATIA: The 69th World Assembly and Conference will be held in Opatija, Croatia June 19-24, 2017. The conference title is Early Childhood Relationships: The Foundation for a Sustainable Future. Early registration continues through March 31. The deadline for submitting presentation abstracts in January 14, 2017. The location is spectacular and the program promises to be outstanding as well. Croatia is one of OMEP's newest national committees. One of their goals upon acceptance was to host a world conference. We know how challenging (and rewarding!) hosting a conference can be, so let's support our colleagues in Croatia. The conference website can be found at <http://www.worldomep.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/>

WORD FROM HAITI: Our colleagues in OMEP-Haiti all survived the recent hurricane disaster, but they report that destruction is wide-spread throughout the country, with the worst challenges for children in the high-risk areas that are experiencing flooding and extensive infrastructure damage. We await updates from them to determine how we can help.

OMEP'S 2016 DECLARATION: Each year the World Assembly produces a declaration. The idea is that our members around the world will use these documents as advocacy tools. The 2016 declaration adopted in Seoul is entitled, Urgent Call to Address the Rights and Needs of the Youngest Displaced, Migrant, Refugee, and Asylum-seeking Children. We have been able to use the declaration many times in various position papers and advocacy efforts. We have presented it to the UN High Commission on Refugees and the UN Committee on Migration, currently chaired by Dr. Maria Pia Belloni, one of OMEP's representatives to the United Nations. Please take a look at the declaration on the World Website: <http://www.worldomep.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2016-OMEP-Declaration-English.pdf>

OMEP'S TEAM IN NEW YORK: OMEP has 7 representatives to the United Nations. They are assisted by the "New York Team," comprised of people who support our representatives and, whenever possible, attend meetings and events in New York. Of course it is advantageous to have team members who live in or near New York City, but interested people who do not live close by can also assist with drafting or reviewing documents, networking, and disseminating information. Please let me know if you are interested in becoming involved in OMEP's global policy work at the United Nations. My email address is jwagner@whittier.edu

Blythe Hinitz

Bullying: A Worldwide Educational Challenge

A Keynote Address on the conference theme: Combating Contemporary Challenges Through Education.

Fourth International Conference on Research in Education ICORE 2016.

Quaid-i-Azam Campus, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

What's New about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)? An Update

Dr. Edna Runnels Ranck

Former President, OMEP-USA & Washington Liaison

By now we all know that the United States is the one and only nation out of the 196 members of the United Nations that has not ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Although we know some of the reasons and understand many of the historical roots of why this is true, we also recognize the irony of one of the leading countries in the world, one that contributed significantly to the writing of the original document, not having ratified it after 27 years. Thus, we as Americans must explain to ourselves and people in other countries why the United States has not ratified it. Among the reasons are these:

Since 1776, the United States has frequently refrained from “entangling alliances” and has avoided ratifying many treaties, including human rights treaties. Those decisions reflect a preference for isolationism. For example, we were late in entering World War I and President Woodrow Wilson’s request to join the League of Nations was rejected, much to his sorrow. Even today, with growing globalization, many Americans resist getting too involved in the affairs of other countries or entering multinational agreements. Many Americans choose to believe that signing the UNCRC would override our Constitution. This is incorrect. A careful reading of the U.S. Constitution and the Preamble of the UNCRC will allay these concerns. Some believe that to grant children rights is to deny parent rights. First, rights are not “given,” but belong inherently to each citizen. Second, language in the UNCRC repeatedly states that parents are the persons most responsible for their children. Just as parents are not permitted to deny protection from abuse and neglect, or to ignore the provision of fundamental materials and services for a child’s well-being, neither can children be excluded from the decision-making process inherent in living in families and communities; they must be invited to participate in appropriate ways.

World OMEP was established as an international organization with a voice acknowledging children as rightful citizens of the various nations in the UN. It has supported the implementation of the UNCRC and encourages its national committees to provide the support and resources to enable children to benefit from the UNCRC. Another organization that works to link the world’s children with their basic rights is the World Forum Foundation (WFF), formed as a NGO in 1999. It is the non-profit part of Exchange Press, the publishers of Child Care Information Exchange, a bi-monthly journal primarily for early childhood care and education administrators and advocates.

The 11th World Forum for Early Childhood Education, an international conference now held triennially, will be held in Auckland, New Zealand in May 2017. The WFF sponsors 14 working groups, one of which is the Children's Rights Working Group (CRWG), founded at a meeting in Norway, in 2012. One subcommittee works on a long-term project called Voices of Children, a video documentary sharing information from children in many countries. Another effort is called Images of Rights: Children's Perspectives Project. The project has been featured recently in two articles published in Exchange. A third article on this topic will appear in Exchange early in 2017. In "A Beginning-Images of Rights: Children's Perspectives" (Greenwood, et al., March/April 2016) the authors review the intent of the UNCRC and outline the CRWG's recent work. A sidebar presents the experience of a group of early educators and parents living in Chicago who could not answer the question "What are your children's rights?" illustrates the detailed work involved when people begin to talk about "living their rights." The group then spent over a year addressing aspects of children's rights, focusing on the three main categories of children's rights, known as Provision, Protection, and Participation (pp. 20).

In the second article (Ranck, Boulton & Hall, September/October 2016), the CRWG invited representatives from eight nations (Argentina, Bhutan, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, Norway, Singapore and Uganda) to describe how their country had implemented aspects of the UNCRC in their country's policymaking. The responses varied from very positive contributions to actions that need more effort to become completely successful. Lastly, the details of the Images of Rights project were described and illustrated with examples of children's replies. Detailed information about collecting data for the project is available at www.worldforumfoundation.org/images-of-rights. From the perspective of American citizens, the global issue of children's rights must continue as a major topic. We will share information, dialogue with fellow countries from all continents, and endeavor to ensure that the rights of American children are understood, encouraged and thoroughly supported. Once again child advocates in OMEP-USA, WFF and other organizations will advocate the president of the United States and the U.S. Senate to pursue the process to achieve ratification of the UNCRC.

References

Campaign for the United State Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Retrieved from www.childrightscampaign.org.

Greenwood, M., et al. (2016, March/April). A Beginning-Images of Rights: Children Perspectives Project, Exchange, 228, 18-21.

Ranck, E. R., Boulton, P., & Hall, E. L. (2016, September/October). Implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: Global Successes and Challenges. Exchange, 228, 30-35.

Studying Abroad in Belize, Central American: Transformational Opportunities for Undergraduate Students

Dr. Judith Lynne McConnell-Farmer

President Elect of OMEP USA

Director and Developer, Washburn University Study Abroad in Belize Program

Seldom do my Washburn University undergraduate students have a venue to experience an international transformational experience and the chance to become part of a culture quite different from their own. The Washburn University Study Abroad in Belize Program is an important and vital opportunity to travel away from what is familiar. It widens one's horizons, to face the unfamiliar, learn from it and resolve to make the world a better place having experienced a transformation in a high impact service learning program in Belize. For the sixth consecutive year Washburn University's Department of Education sponsored the Washburn University Study Abroad in Belize Program located in Belize City and Caye Caulker, Belize, Central America. This past year sixteen students, Tina Williams, Washburn University's Study Abroad Coordinator, and myself, as the developer and director of the program, participated in this study abroad program from December 28, 2015 to January 11, 2016. All of our Washburn University students attended and gave Power Point presentations at the 7th Annual Belizean International Symposium for Education located in Belize City, Belize. The audience at the symposium was composed of 75 scholars in the field of education from around the world. The symposium was developed and is directed by Dr. Pamela Cook, a former Adjunct Professor in the Department of Education at Washburn University.

As a group our study abroad program met at the 4 Point by Sheraton Kansas City Airport Hotel on December 28, 2015, the night before our departure. Meeting prior to our flight to Belize gave us an opportunity to meet for a two-hour planning session. During the session we weighed all check-through luggage and packed them with donations to the maximum of 50 pounds each. After being sure that everyone had their passports in hand we discussed our departure to Belize the next day and procedures to follow at Customs once we walked down the airplane steps to the tarmac at the Philip SW Goldson International Airport in Belize. Excitement and anticipation built, for some in our group it was their first flight, first time to travel outside the United States, and, the first time to see an ocean. For many it was the first time to see the poverty of others. Our program was full of personal adventures and awakenings as seen in the following students' reflections:

“On December 29, 2015, I was sitting on a plane headed to Belize. On the two-hour, forty-five-minute plane ride, I couldn’t help but think about the journey on which I was about to embark. So many things were running through my mind: What was it going to be like? Would it live up to my expectations? The picture of Belize that I had in my mind was bountiful palm trees, clear blue water, and white sand. However, when we landed in Belize City I was taken aback by how impoverished it was. Indeed there were palm trees, but there wasn’t much sand and the water was a dark, murky green color. I knew we were there to help the people of Belize for a reason, but I still was shocked by the conditions of the city. Trash littered the streets, and many of the buildings were falling down. However, I did love the city. It was full of culture and the people were full of life. Despite their city’s poverty, the people were some of the happiest and most friendly I had ever met.” Sadie McGough

“I had a lot of strengths because I faced a lot of fears and firsts. ‘Flying on a plane without my parents for the first was hard.’ But I would say that is a strength, because I accomplished it with ease. I hate being underwater so not facing my fear of snorkeling was defiantly a limitation but I would say for me that would be the only big limitation. I had way more strengths because I tried so many new things. For one jet skiing is something for me that I never thought I would do. I am a very save person, I don’t like to do things that scare me but when in Belize. So that was the motto I lived by going through this trip, try new things because this can only happen in Belize. So zip lining through the jungle and jet skiing in the ocean are just a few of my strengths I learned I had from this amazing experience.” Radie Keller

“Being as this trip was my first time out of the United States, I was a little worried the night before we left. I remember hoping so badly that it would be a life-changing experience. When we woke up the first morning in Belize City and took in the view of the sun rising over the ocean, I knew that my hopes were being fulfilled.” Lexi Barton

Volunteering is at the core of our activities in Belize. We teach planned lessons with the children at the Dorothy Menzies Children’s Home, a public school orphanage, in Belize City. When not interacting with the children we cleaned the buildings and performed yard work. On Caye Caulker, one of the many islands of Belize, we tutored children and assisted the teachers at the newly built elementary and middle school, La Isla Carinosa Academy. I spoke at the school’s formal dedication and Tina plus my students attended and were publically recognized at the dedication ceremony. In addition to donations of materials and supplies for the teachers and their students our Washburn University students wrote and gave to the school a set of 20 laminated activity plans to be housed in the school’s library. Volunteering our time and talents at the orphanage and at the island school were truly unique experiences for our Washburn University students as they related below:

“The most important highlight of my trip would have to be volunteering at the orphanage. My heart was so full being able to play with the children and making them feel special while we were there. I fell in love with a little boy named Marvic and our bond was so strong in the short time I was there.” Stephanie Brown

“There were many strengths to this trip so it was difficult to pick just one highlight of my experience while in Belize. Some strengths include: having the opportunity to work with children in an orphanage and a school, being able to plan out activity plans to practice making lesson plans in my future career and actually doing the activities with the children, the fun excursions we went on, the train tour of the city, the chance to go to the oldest Anglican Church in the Caribbean, and the opportunity to try so many new things. If I had to choose one highlight from my experience I would choose having the opportunity to get to meet, work with, and know some of the children there. It was inspiring to me to see the strength some of them had especially knowing how hard some of their backgrounds have been.” Samantha Comstock

“Even though I am not an education major, I loved being able to interact with the children at the orphanage and the island school. They touched my heart in a way that I did not expect. I remember one little boy from the orphanage in particular who shared my interest in soccer, or futbol, as they call it. He was astounded when he found out that a girl could play futbol, and I think his jaw almost hit the floor when I actually scored on him a couple times. This particular little boy taught me to love the game all over again. For him, it was still just a game that he was passionate about. As a college athlete, it is sometimes easy for me to view soccer as a job or another duty that I have to fit into my daily schedule. Looking at the enthusiasm in this boy’s face as he put on his tattered gloves to play was something that I will never forget, and it taught me to slow down and appreciate what fortunes I have in front of me at home. At the island school in Caye Caulker, I met another little boy who was able to open my eyes in another way. This particular boy had a vibrant personality, and Americans would probably consider him the ‘class clown.’ I could tell that he was showing off for us international students, and his teacher seemed exasperated with attempting to make him behave. There was one other thing about this boy, though; he was brilliant. It was obvious that he was intellectually ahead of his classmates, so he was just entertaining in this free time. I instantly bonded with this boy because he actually reminded me of myself. He didn’t think of himself as intelligent, and that was something that I struggled with for years. As I engaged in more and more conversation with him, I began to push him intellectually, and he blossomed right before my eyes. By the end of the day, he was teaching his classmates. This form of peer teaching was new to these children, and it was an amazing feeling to think that I helped facilitate it.” Lexi Barton

As stated at the beginning of this article, our study abroad program, like others at Washburn University, is an important and vital opportunity to travel away from what is familiar to our university students. Studying abroad can widen one's horizons, expose students to the unfamiliar and give them a chance to learn from the unknown and different. After having experienced a transformation traveling abroad many of my students resolve to make the world that they return to a better place. This spirit of transformation and resolve is seen in their following reflections:

"I really can't emphasize enough how greatly this experience positively impacted my life. It opened my eyes to a whole new world and has made me want to continue to travel and learn as much as I possibly can about other cultures. The overall experience made me realize how truly lucky I am and I just feel so lucky to have been able to be a part of this program. I seriously do encourage all students who are presented the opportunity to study abroad through Washburn to do it if there's any way possible for them to do so because it will change their lives for the better." Samantha Comstock

"I would like to tell Dr. Mac that this trip changed my life. I'm sure these long trips have so many hoops to go through and can be very stressful! I thank her for being such a good leader and making this trip such a memorable experience. Visiting another country is such a transforming experience that forces you out of your comfort zone. I am happy to share this with you, Dr. Mac". Nicole Stack

"I appreciate SO much how much Dr. Mac put work into this program. I know that it cannot be easy so it is so great to have someone like her willing to do so for us students. I've realized that some people work really hard to still just get by, and I should appreciate all that I have a lot more. I have also realized (even more so) that children are so delicate and it's our job to lift them up and give them courage. I've been transformed in the way people are so polite in Belize, the poverty, the hard work people do, and of course the children." Paige Roudybush

We participated in the Washburn University High Impact Community Engagement Practices (HICEP) Video Project and benefited from having Tina Williams as our videographer. The high impact of our Washburn University Study Abroad in Belize Program was forever captured on film. This video will help to validate the numerous benefits of our service learning study abroad program. Tina reflected on her involvement in our Washburn University Study Abroad in Belize Program in this statement, "As an educator and a professional in the field of international education I welcomed this unique opportunity to participate in the HICEP video project. I enjoyed working more closely with faculty, students and professionals on site to document the high impact of engagement in service learning abroad. It is clear the combination of academics and experiential service learning through immersion is a guaranteed transformational experience."

The current Washburn University Study Abroad in Belize Program is scheduled for December 28, 2016-January 9, 2017. If you are interested in developing a study abroad program for undergraduate students at your university and have questions on facilitating one, please contact Dr. McConnell-Farmer at: judy.mcconnell-farmer@washburn.edu. For more information on the upcoming 8th Annual Belizean International Symposium for Education, in 2017, contact Dr. Cook at, prcook12@hotmail.com or prcook12@google.com

OMEP's 2017 North America and Caribbean Regional Conference

Judi Simmons Estes

Vice-President Elect of OMEP-USA

The first OMEP North America and Caribbean Regional Conference will be held in Atlanta, GA February 20-22, 2017. The theme of the conference is “Sustainability at its Best: Case Studies from Around the World.” Since 1948, the World Organization for Early Childhood Educators (OMEP) members have worked to create sustainable early childhood programs around the world. As a result, unprecedented worldwide interest in culturally-aligned Early Childhood Education is growing in every country. A current effort is to promote the United Nations Millennium Goals (UNMG) relating to sustainability. OMEP has taken the lead in exploring this question: how can we educate everyone -- from little children to our oldest citizens – about taking care of the environment? How can we promote understanding of the interrelatedness of the physical, social, and economic environments, and realization that world peace can only be achieved when each of these environments is strong, stable, just, and equitable.. This OMEP US National Conference will provide an opportunity for sharing the stories of early childhood related programs and initiatives that are working on behalf of young children and their families, within the US and/or abroad.

What does the term “sustainability” evoke for you? What strategies have you found that have contributed to the sustainability of your efforts in serving young children and their families? What challenges have you encountered as you attempt to develop a sustainable initiative? What lessons have you learned that you would like to share with colleagues? What questions do you have, for which you are seeking answers? Whether you are a paraprofessional, teacher, support services provider, administrator, professor, social service worker, parent, or advocate, think about what you can bring to our conference in Atlanta in February 2017. We look forward to seeing you there.

The conference will begin February 20th, with an evening opening honoring the 10th Anniversary of the passing of Dr. Asa Hilliard III, a Fuller E. Callaway Professor of Urban Education at Georgia State University. Dr. Hilliard is known for his work on the relationship of culture and geography to educational policy. The conference will begin the morning of Tuesday, February 21, and end at noon on Wednesday, February 22nd. The closing keynote will be from Dr. Judith Wagner, OMEP Deputy World President and World OMEP Vice-President for North America & the Caribbean.

Proposals are due Nov. 30 and early registration continues through Nov. 30. Submit presentation proposals, as a word document, to the following e-mail: papers.atlanta2017@omep-usa.org
For additional conference information contact info.atlanta2017@omep-usa.org

UNIVERSAL CHILDREN'S DAY

Dodie Sailor

Advocacy- OMEP and Universal Children's Day

Dear OMEP Members and Friends

Help Others Celebrate Universal Children's Day and Remember OMEP-USA Children's Day November 20th!

If not you and me, then who will take the time to spread the message and who has more interest in the rights and welfare of all our children? All children need adequate food, healthcare, a home and parents or someone to care for them, a name, a nationality- their own country, their education, friends, a place to play, protection from physical and emotional abuse and from neglect and violence, from freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, and the right to express their opinions especially when it involves them. The four underlying principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) are Survival, Protection, Development, and Participation.

What can you do?

- Send a letter about celebrating Universal Children's Day (UCD) to your local newspaper.
- Make UCD Flyers and place them in the library, school or other all children.
- Help children appreciate a few of these rights such as a right to a name and nationality (Article 7), an identity (Article 8), the right to have parents (Article 18), have and choose friends (Article 15, and the right to play (Article 31.1). For older children choose other rights such as the right to get and provide information (Articles 13 and 17), the right to protection from harm (Article 19), and the right to form and be part of peaceful associations (Article 15).
- Plan an activity in your classroom, after school setting, place of worship, etc...
- Best of all— Have a party on or near Nov. 20 and let the children plan the celebration.
- Choose one or more of the rights as a theme. Have fun.
- Check the OMEP web site www.OMEP-USA.org for possible information such as a poster or sample letter. www.childrightscampaign.org.

Mark your calendars to attend the OMEP-USA 2017 Regional Conference in Atlanta, GA.

As we join together in understanding issues of sustainability within the early childhood profession from scholars and practitioners around the world. The registration and call for papers are open with additional information available on the website. We look forward to an insightful conference in Atlanta where we work toward the betterment of children.

**OMEP-USA 2017 Regional World Conference
Canada, United States, Caribbean**

**February 20-22, 2017
Atlanta, GA**

***“Sustainability at its Best:
Case Studies from Around the World”***

**Proposals due November 30
Early Registration Rates through October 31**