

Press Releases: Deputy Secretary Sullivan To Deliver Remarks at 2017 AAFSW Secretary of State Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad

Notice to the Press
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
November 6, 2017

Five winners will receive the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW) Secretary of State Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad (SOSA) at a ceremony on Tuesday, November 7, 2017 at 11:00 a.m. at the Department of State. Deputy Secretary John J. Sullivan will deliver remarks to congratulate the winners and highlight their exemplary service.

SOSA awards recognize U.S. government employees; family members, including domestic partners; and other members of household at embassies and consulates who performed exceptional volunteer service to their communities, mission or host country, or rendered outstanding assistance in emergencies. This year's award winners include:

AF – Grace Anne Turner, Dakar, Senegal

Upon arriving in Dakar and viewing the severe poverty and inadequate medical care around her, Grace Anne Turner looked for opportunities to work as a clinician. She joined the staff of the House of Hope, a large primary care clinic that sees 35,000 patients per year. Impressed by her dedication and commitment to quality of care, the clinic asked her to oversee a staff of physicians, nurses, and auxiliary staff that provided care to 50 children a day.

Grace Anne focused on two areas for immediate improvement: patient intake and treatment of dehydration. Dr. Grace formed a cadre of expat volunteers and designed a screening and training program for them to administer; with the help of these volunteers, the previous slow patient processing sped up dramatically. Regarding dehydration, a common and serious ailment among Senegalese children, Grace Anne devised an ingenious way to train mothers to rehydrate their ill children at home.

She also trained House of Hope staff to use a version of the World Health

Organization triage system, designed to prioritize those at greatest risk of death or disease transmission. In its first operating 18 days, the new system identified 45 critically ill patients (26 of them children). The new procedures were instrumental in identifying and stopping a potentially dangerous outbreak of measles throughout urban Dakar. Noticing several patients who met the definition of suspected measles, Grace Anne immediately contacted the health ministry. An intervention team (including Grace Anne) found a large number of cases in a marginalized (and unvaccinated) community. That same team conducted an intensive education and vaccination campaign that stopped the outbreak in its tracks.

"Dr. Grace" raised the profile of the clinic in the local community and internationally, drawing in thousands of dollars in donations, medicines, and materials. During her time at House of Hope, Dr. Grace improved its training programs, its material and human resources, its treatment algorithms, and its strategic planning for the future.

EAP – Craig Houston, Chiang Mai, Thailand

Working entirely without compensation, staff, or a budget, Craig Houston created a multi-faceted website (<http://www.chiangmaiair.org/>) to promote air quality awareness during northern Thailand's annual agricultural burning seasons, provide sustainable solutions to the problem, and support information sharing. He partnered with local government air quality experts, NGOs, schools and film directors to tackle this issue.

To increase awareness and reporting of seasonal high pollution levels, Craig met with local schools and small businesses to provide training on the use of air quality monitors, and by the end of 2017, he will have assisted eight schools and local businesses to obtain and install air quality monitors.

In addition to his work on air quality awareness, Craig is the Chair of the Consulate's Green Team. Under Craig's leadership, the consulate has screened films raising awareness of air quality issues, partnered with local U.S. government grant recipient NGOs who work closely on the issue, and participated in numerous community service endeavors including tree planting and city cleanup projects.

Craig's selfless dedication to this vitally important issue has helped improved the health and lives of northern Thailand's residents and visitors.

EUR – Alesia Krupenikava, Kyiv, Ukraine

As the first ever Regional Ambassador of the Technovation Challenge in Ukraine, Alesia was able to recruit more than 150 girls from all over Ukraine to participate in the program, find 50 mentors to coach them, raise over \$20,000 to send a team to the finals in San Francisco, sign up partners like Microsoft and the Ministry of Education, and recruit a team to take over and grow the program when she departs post.

This was the first time Technovation, the world's largest tech and entrepreneurship contest for girls ages 10-18, had been conducted in Ukraine.

When the original Regional Ambassador stepped down, Alesia was asked to take her place. Alesia was a tireless recruiter and promoter for Technovation, holding numerous meetings and information sessions and spent countless hours answering calls and emails to explain the program. The most meaningful thing for Alesia was that teams were signing up from all over Ukraine and from all backgrounds, including a team made up of girls with HIV, and others from orphanages and centers for families in crisis. Supporting the teams became an almost full time job by itself, and Alesia was a constant motivator and cheerleader for the girls.

The culmination of the program is a live event where the teams present their projects in demo sessions and give a “pitch” to a panel of judges and the audience. Alesia recruited the top technical university in Ukraine to host the event and another university for housing. She formed partnerships with organizations such as Microsoft to support the program, and was able to raise over \$20,000 to pay for travel to Kyiv, prizes for the teams, and for one team to attend the World Pitch Event in San Francisco.

SCA – Lisa A. Hess, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Lisa Hess created and leads the U.S. Embassy Colombo community outreach team that provides great benefits to Sri Lanka while also providing the U.S. mission community an opportunity for service.

Many of Lisa’s actions engaged U.S. Navy sailors visiting Sri Lanka. In 2016, the Captain of the USS Blue Ridge, command ship of the 7th Fleet, requested two days of community relations activities involving 30 U.S. and 10 Sri Lankan sailors. Lisa volunteered for this task and identified a community center in a poor area that provides education, food, medical treatment, and much more. Lisa raised the funds to pay for paint and materials needed for the sailors to conduct a renovation project at the center and make a contribution towards new playground equipment. The American and Sri Lankan sailors, community center patrons, and Embassy staff worked together to paint desks, tables, benches, classrooms, and playground equipment.

Lisa also organized outreach for U.S. and Sri Lankan sailors from the USS Hopper and USS Comstock to, including an activity at dental clinics in which children practiced their tooth-brushing skills on a sailor wearing a giant alligator costume, as well as cleaning debris from children’s playing fields. Other community outreach included repairing a local no-kill animal shelter, and cleaning and painting rooms at a local school for the deaf and blind.

Within the Mission, Lisa coordinated bake sales; helped prepare food for and serve our entire embassy community at our Black History Month breakfast; helped manage the U.S. booth at the overseas School of Colombo fun fair; and led a book drive for the school library. Funds raised in the bake sales and fun fair were used to establish a library for an under-privileged local school.

WHA – Maritza V. Wilson

As a Nicaraguan who practiced medicine in her native country before becoming

a U.S. citizen, Maritza Wilson has been uniquely equipped to make a significant contribution as a volunteer in Nicaragua.

Maritza focused her efforts through a non-profit organization called Amos Foundation (Fundación Amos), a group that serves a local community (barrio) in Managua via a walk-in clinic, home visits, and health education. Maritza became one of the regular volunteer doctors at the clinic, participating in home visits and home surveys to better understand the needs of the barrio and train members of the community in basic home health care—ensuring the sustainability of her efforts. Maritza's work with Amos Foundation also extended to Nicaragua's rural areas, including a remote village on the opposite side of the country in the impoverished Caribbean Coast. Serving that community for one full week, she instructed villagers in basic community health concepts, such as how to use (and clean) filters to avoid water-borne illness.

Maritza's work also involved the hosting of training teams, known locally as brigades, from the U.S. Maritza's knowledge of both cultures and languages has enabled her to integrate many of these teams seamlessly into the local context, maximizing their effectiveness. Maritza has organized and led training sessions for more than 1,000 high school students at four schools, offering instruction that covered reproductive health and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. She has also worked alongside U.S. neurosurgeons visiting Nicaragua each year to provide training and assistance in neurology treatment at the main public hospital in Managua.

Maritza has also worked to develop economic opportunities for families in her home village of San Juan de Oriente, a community famous for a unique type of pottery. Maritza started a non-profit venture to expand marketing opportunities for local artisans' pieces and to create new ceramics products. Maritza plans to leave the business in the hands of the families she is serving—ensuring her volunteer efforts will have an enduring impact on this community.

For more information about the award, please visit:

<http://www.aafsw.org/services/sosa>

The award ceremony is open for press coverage. Members of the press wishing to attend should contact Public Affairs Officer Brenda Greenberg at 202-647-1679.

Pre-set time for cameras: 10:15 a.m.

Final access time for all press: 10:45 a.m.

Media representatives may attend this award ceremony upon presentation of one of the following: (1) a U.S. government-issued identification card (Department of State, White House, Congress, Department of Defense, or Foreign Press Center), (2) a media-issued photo identification card, or (3) a letter from the requester's employer on letterhead verifying his/her employment status as a journalist, accompanied by an official photo identification (driver's license or passport). Those who do not have a State

Department building pass should allow adequate time for security processing at the 23rd Street entrance.

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