



PARTNERS of the AMERICAS
Connect • Serve • Change Lives

Trip Report Binka Le Breton April/May 2013

The following information is very important. It will help Partners of the Americas' Washington Office as well as your own Partners chapters assess the impact of your travel on partnership's activities, report back to our funders and prepare proposals for new grants to support your work. You may attach additional pages. Photographs, newspaper media reports, flyers, and materials you used are very helpful and should be included.

Trip reports must be submitted **no later than thirty (30) days after the completion of your trip.**

Partnership: MG/CO

Name of Traveler: Binka Le Breton

Date of Application **February 17th, 2013**

Profession/occupation and title **Director, Iracambi Rainforest Research Center**

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Travel Dates:

Left Home **March 28 2013** Returned Home **May 30 2013**

Itinerary **Rio – Washington DC – Denver – Rio**

Binka Le Breton

Traveler's signature

Date June 16th 2013

Binka Le Breton

Print Name

- 1. Purpose and Activities:** What was the main purpose of your trip? (should be same as purpose stated in your travel grant application). What specific activities took place? (please include your final schedule)

The main goal of my trip was to attend and present at the Partners Regional Meeting on What Works, in Greeley CO May 22-24th 2013. In preparation for this I participated in preconference activities connected with planning for the 50th anniversary of POA in 2014.

However since I spent a considerable length of time in the US prior to the conference I also carried out a number of activities, many related to Partners.



Rio de Janeiro March 2013



Cherry blossom in Washington DC April 2013



Snow in Colorado, May 2013

Tuesday 14th May

I arrived at Denver International Airport and was met by my hosts and longtime friends and Partners, Roger and Betty Brown.

Wednesday 15th May

The day began with a 6 am meeting at the First Presbyterian Church where I joined a breakfast discussion group.

The preconference team: my colleagues Lin Allen, (chapter president from Colorado,) Nara Nogueira from Belo Horizonte and I, based ourselves at the University of Northern Colorado and began to brainstorm ways of documenting Partners history for the 50th anniversary in 2014, as

well as devising strategies for attracting new chapter members, focusing on youth. We also prepared a list of Partners attending the regional meeting and contacted them to set up interviews.



Lin Allen Nara Nogueira

In keeping with the theme of preparing for the 50th anniversary, we then started on Day 1 of the preconference program, considering the word Legacy and basing each day's activities on one letter of the word. We began with the letter L and Launched the preconference program through a meeting with a team from local non-profit Jobs for Hope which offers job training skills to former gang members to help them become productive members of society.

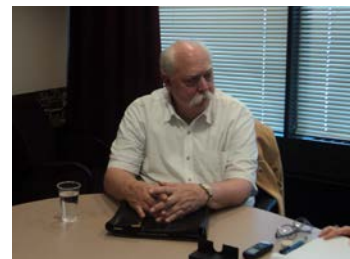
This program could be one for the Colorado POA to support directly, and has many parallels to the POA A Ganar program for endangered youth in Mexico, Central and South America. Also present at the meeting was Dr Maria Sanchez, a public health specialist who herself comes from the migrant community served by Jobs for Hope. She and her husband Lou are hosting our colleague Nara in their home.

We later visited the Currier Inn to explore the possibility of setting up a student-run event for Greeley community members to introduce the program of Jobs for Hope with program coordinators and Greg Ehler and Vanna In. But unfortunately we were not able to coordinate a time and place over the time available, and reluctantly had to postpone it until a time that would be more convenient – for the staff of Jobs for Hope, for the Currier Inn, and for the student population of Greeley which is currently on vacation.

Later that evening Betty Brown and I had a meeting with Mandi Huston, who is just about to start a graduate program at the law school, University of Denver. She was able to update us on the situation with trafficked and prostituted women in Greeley and Denver.

Thursday 16th May

Our team returned to UNC to continue planning for interviews as meeting participants and international board members come into town next week. Nara began interviewing past presidents of the Colorado chapter, including Fred Kail – picture opposite.



Our Legacy letter E took us to learn about Entrepreneurs, with reference to the work of professional volunteers in Family Court where we learned how volunteers (including Dr Allen,) mentor at-risk

Fred Kail

families in the community. There is a large immigrant population in Greeley, and tensions arising between the different communities, as well as economic hardship for some and unexpected riches for others in the wake of the oil and gas boom, lead to heightened level of family disputes. Under the family court system, at-risk children are given a mentor to support the children in the family situation if possible and to act as a champion for the child.

We later had dinner at the house of Roger and Betty Brown to debrief them about our Legacy work, and see how we can help towards final conference preparations.

Friday 17th May

Legacy letter G for Grants took us on a visit to the Downtown Development Authority where we were able to see how a small committed body of visionaries was transforming the inner city through judiciously awarding incentives and grants to small businesses, as well as restricting the flow of traffic, planting trees and creating seating areas. We were then able to visit Greeley's top tourist attraction, just across the road from the DDA. The world famous Freight Train Museum features a 5,500 square foot HO gauge model railroad layout, more than 20 scale miles of mainline track, hundreds of buildings and thousands of hand-made trees and scenery. There are about 175 locomotives on the layout, all powered, and over 2,000 box cars, gondolas, tanks, flats, and passenger cars. The trains are operated and dispatched by an enthusiastic body of engineers, just like a full sized railroad operation.

Later in the day we had dinner at the Brown's house with Maria and Lou Sanchez, and were able to gain very interesting insights into the various migrant communities who have settled in the region, attracted first by large scale agricultural operations and more recently by the oil and gas boom. Maria has extensive experience working with the immigrant and refugee communities, and Lou volunteers with handicapped children in a local elementary school.

Saturday 18th May

We drove to the outskirts of Boulder, to participate in an interesting discussion at one of the regular board meetings of the American Scientific Affiliation. ASA is an organization of scientists whose mission is to explore the intersections between science and religious faith, and the discussion centered on ways to make science more accessible to non-scientists (using the model of Cafés Scientifiques,) as well as continuing the conversation between scientists who are committed members of a religious group. This model of informal meetings and conversations with scientists is highly popular in the US and Europe and could easily be copied in Brazil. We also made a lightning trip to the local Apple store which proved to be an exercise in team building as we collectively used our skills with GPS, hand made maps and traffic control from the Apple Store guiding us in.



Barbara Bloch

Barbara Bloch arrived to join the house party at the Browns and we dined that evening at the Browns, together with Sherrita Wilkins from head office and Jan Waechter, co-coordinator with Betty Brown of the regional meeting.

Sunday 19th May



Starting in the early afternoon chapter members and supporters gathered in the home of Roger and Betty Brown to make final preparations for the regional meeting, stuffing conference bags and going through logistics for the following week. After sharing a pizza with assorted Partners and volunteers, we visited the Kress Theater in the downtown area of Greeley for the weekly free movie showing.

Monday 20th

Continuing our legacy theme, with the letter A for Archives, Nara, Lin and I met with other chapter members at the Kress Theater to plan for a future Partners meeting to take place at the theater, featuring showing a Brazilian film. We discussed several Brazilian films that could potentially be of interest to the local community and encourage new members to join Partners, and also thought of holding a parallel event in Belo Horizonte to screen a film from the US.



That evening I attended a board meeting of the Lauren Johnson Foundation (having previously delivered the annual Lauren Johnson Memorial lecture at the Korbel School of Human Rights at Denver University on May 3rd.) After the board meeting my colleagues and I joined members of POA's international board over dinner.

Tuesday 21st

Today our legacy theme featured the letter C for coordinates – partnering with local agencies – and we attended a very interesting hearing at family court under the CASA program, followed by a meeting with Judge Kopcow. We learned that each year in Weld county, there are over 500 children who have been physically, sexually or emotionally abused or neglected and who are in desperate need of a caring, committed CASA volunteer to speak up for their best interests. One of the children who was fostered under the CASA program is quoted on their website as saying *“To give a child a CASA volunteer is to give them a voice. To give them a voice is to give them hope, and to give them hope is to give them the world. I believe that with all my heart.”*

That evening Nara and I had a lengthy interview with international board member Tasso Lugon from Espirito Santo, Brazil. This interview was at the request of head office in Washington DC as part of documenting the ongoing Partners story. Tasso is the retiring president of the international board, and has a long and fascinating history with Partners. We later attended a lively reception for the international board, much enhanced by the presence of several Partners who are talented musicians: Lou Sanchez from Greeley, Mario Corona from Guadalajara, and Tasso Lugon.

Wednesday 22nd.

This was the day for reinforcing our interview team with two young staff members from the DC office: Taylor Nelson and Gabriel Equale. Taylor and Gabriel operated the video and we were able to interview Alex Truesdell from New York City who runs an inspiring and innovative program adapting designs for people with limited mobility. We also interviewed Merrill Raber who is writing a history of the Kansas Paraguay partnership and was able to give us some fascinating insights on their challenges and triumphs over the years.

The conference team then set up in the First Presbyterian Church Celebration Center where the meeting was to be held, my colleague Dale Beckmann and I were able to check the AV equipment and make last minute adjustments to the youth panel presentation to be delivered on



Friday 24th, and the Legacy team liaised with Partners to be interviewed over the next few days. That evening conference attendees met at the Crabtree Brewery, and registration began.

Conference organizers: Jan and Betty

Thursday 23rd

BRAZIL DAY

As Partners, staff and board members gathered, it was exciting to see delegations from New York, Washington DC, Indiana, Wyoming, Texas, Utah, Kansas, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, South Carolina, Washington and Oregon, alongside partners from Minas Gerais, Espirito Santo, Bolivia, Venezuela, Florida, Dominican Republic, Grenada and Trinidad. The conference began by discussing the best practices by chapters in the past and incorporating those into regional goals for the next 50 years.

Matt Clausen, from the DC office, spoke on Partners Connect, and the concept of making multi-lateral partnerships with not only our chapters, but outside organizations and individuals as a way for the organization to increase flexibility and effectiveness.

Breakout groups then discussed a range of issues including leveraging resources, creating strategic alliances and realizing chapter potential.

The interviewing team continued to work at odd moments during the day, interviewing Carmen Rosario, Iliana Diaz, and John Schoch.

We then heard from Steve Richards (Kansas/ Paraguay) on emergency preparedness and working with the special needs population in many locations, followed by a workshop given by Alex Truesdell on Adaptive Design. The day ended with a capoeira display and Brazilian drumming, accompanied by caipirinha and feijoada.



May 24th

The second day of the conference began with a continuation of what has worked in the past, and ended with a presentation on the vision for the next 50 years. There were four main discussion topics: Youth Engagement, Bridging Cultures, Fundraising, and The Partners Fifty-Year Legacy.



The morning session kicked off with the Youth Engagement panel where my colleague Dale Beckmann and I gave a presentation on our highly successful program of Junior Scientists@Iracambi, which arose out of a Farmer to Farmer visit paid to Iracambi where Dr

Beckmann helped us refine our research goals and develop a program of Citizen Science which in turn led to the program of Junior Scientists. Other presentations by panel members included a

discussion of Youth Ambassadors presented by Jhani Laopus (Indiana/Rio Grande do Sul) a presentation by Dorly Piske (Wyoming/Goias) on youth programs in Wyoming where students make and sell biojewelry as a way to raise funds for acquiring medical equipment in Goias, and a presentation by Taylor North (Utah/Bolivia) on Partners Campus.

The second part of the day focused on how to successfully bridge cultural gaps, something that Partners has focused on since its founding in 1964. Community events, informal and formal partnerships, and university linkages were discussed in the context of creating a larger, but more unified Partners community. Topics discussed included speaker series to familiarize northern members with southern hemisphere culture, a Brazilian film festival held in Chicago, student exchanges Kansas/Paraguay, and a Partners trip to Vina Vieja, Peru to help the community rebuild after a devastating earthquake.



Steve Vetter

The conference ended with a discussion about the next fifty years of Partners, presented by CEO Steve Vetter. After this, we celebrated our success with margaritas, zumba and extensive networking. We left invigorated – thank you Colorado Partners and especially organizers Betty Brown and Jan Waechter!

Saturday 25th and Sunday 26th



The weekend was spent relaxing, clearing up and informally debriefing. On Sunday I paid a highly enjoyable visit to Mishikawa Canyon in the Rocky Mountains with Lin, Maria and Lou Sanchez. We decided it would make an excellent and somewhat unusual location for a future Partners meeting. The day ended with a barbeque at the house of Lou and Maria where we were joined by Roger and Betty Brown.

Mishikawa Canyon

Monday 27th

Today we sadly came to the last letter of our Legacy. Y stands for Yesteryear, and we held a debriefing at the Blue Mug coffee house to discuss the regional meeting, register our successes and lessons learned and look forward to our next adventure with Partners.

2. Results/Impact:

2a. Did you accomplish the purpose of your trip? Describe the results in measurable terms. Please include names of institutions/organizations you worked with. Summarize all discussions held, lectures or workshops given, type/size of audiences.

Amply. As well as visiting a number of universities and presenting at a further number, I was able to make several new professional connections in the Partners network, as well as reinforcing many existing ones.

Presentations I gave included:

Partners Campus, American University (*Los Desaparecidos de Colombia*) 15 students

Emerson College, Boston, *Los Desparecidos* (video conference with Colombia,) 85 students in both countries

Emerson College Environmental Science, *Brazil on the Rise* 30 students

Emerson College *Los Desaparecidos de Colombia* 30 students

Brandeis University, *Brazil on the Rise* 10 grad students

Lauren Johnson Memorial Lecture: Joseph Korbel School of Human Rights, **Denver University** *Forced Disappearance in Colombia, State Sponsored Crimes and Coverups*. 50 grad students

University meetings: **American University** - meeting with dean of study abroad to discuss a program for their students to study at Iracambi in 2014.

Virginia Commonwealth University - meetings with the departments of environmental science, sociology and global studies about potential courses to be held at Iracambi.

Colorado College - meetings with the environmental science department which has an exchange program with the Federal University of Juiz de Fora to discuss ways of a three way partnership to include Iracambi.

Denver University - meeting with the Dean of the Joseph Korbel School of Human Rights to strengthen the relationship between DU and Iracambi in terms of sending graduate students to study at Iracambi.

POA Regional Meeting What Works - Presentation on Junior Scientists@ Iracambi

US Brasil Connect meeting to discuss potential ways of collaborating with US/Brazilian students by sending them to Iracambi to enrich their experience in Brazil.

Rocky Mountains Bird Banding Station where I attended a bird banding session in the course of which several school groups were involved.

On my return to Brazil we shall be hosting 22 students one professor, and a family of four from Ball State University in Muncie Indiana, a Partners connection. Another serendipitous outcome from the Regional Meeting is the Iracambi visit scheduled by a large group of students from the Republica Dominicana at the end of July. This student exchange came out of dinner at the Browns with Waldo Brea from the DR who is bringing a large group of students to Rio for World Youth Day in July. He will be traveling with 400 students, but sadly we do not have room for all of them!

2b. What difficulties did you encounter? What lessons did you learn that might be useful for future travelers?

None. From the outset everything went smoothly. The POA office in DC was super helpful over ticketing and visa procedures (as was the US consul in Belo Horizonte and the consulate in Rio,) and, in addition to the extraordinary hospitality extended by my host family Roger and Betty Brown, the chapter president Lin Allen and other partners in Greeley, I was warmly received by partners in other parts of the country: George Kasper and Manoj Thomas in Richmond, VA, the DC staff and students at Partners Campus at American University, and Bob and Dorothy Hernquist in Chicago.

2c. Please describe how the host Partners chapter was involved with your visit? And what kinds of follow-up activities are likely?

The host chapter was intimately involved in every aspect of my visit since they were pulling together to produce the highly successful regional meeting. Partners in Colorado hosted me, involved me in local activities, provided transport, meals and loving kindness.

Followup activities include ongoing links with universities: University of Northern Colorado, University of Denver, American University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Colorado College. Sadly I was unable to fit into the schedules of several other universities due to the timing of my trip (end of semester/quarter.)

Working with Nara gave us both some ideas on how to reinvigorate the Minas section of the partnership –and we pressing hard to adopt a higher level of technology, thereby allowing farflung chapter members like Iracambi to participate in meetings.

Iracambi Research Center's future plans to incorporate aspects of 100,000 strong in the Americas alongside Ciencias Sem Fronteiras and Ingles sem Fronteiras are under discussion with several Partners both in the US and in Brazil. Stay tuned!

2d. What are the expected or anticipated long-term benefits of your visit to the hosting chapter? (Specific examples are most useful)

Ongoing relationship with the Colorado chapter supporting a successful program in MG operated by one of the MG partners – Junior Scientists@ Iracambi. Our chapter should benefit enormously from sending two members to Colorado to met with other partners, and learn from their successful projects – as well as their not so successful projects shared informally as part of the learning process.

3. Follow-up

3a. How do you plan to share this experience with your own Partners chapter/ your community?

I will share the results of this meeting with the MG partners by skype if they are able to hold their meeting in a place with internet access. I am confident that some of the younger Partners will be able to convey the importance of being connected. Sadly speakerphone connection is probably not good enough, but at worst case we could try a speakerphone via skype.

I also plan to encourage farflung potential partners in this large unwieldy state to investigate Partners Connect.

3b. What follow-up activities do you recommend to continue building on the items carried out during your visit?

Continuing work on putting together a program of corporate sponsorship for Brazilian students and students from the US and beyond to work together at Iracambi on skills in leadership, science and language. This will be in line with the government of Brazil in its aim to qualify Brazilian students in science and language skills (Ciencia sem fronteiras and Ingles sem fronteiras) and the US government program 100,000 Strong in the Americas.

I hope to work with Nara encouraging the MG partnership to emulate our CO partners in providing attractive programs for its members and events to stimulate new membership.

4. Please provide any other general comments/suggestions regarding your trip.

I had a great time, and thank you to the the members of the Colorado chapter, staff from the DC office, and all Partners, friends and connections who helped to make it possible.

5. Are you a member of Partners of the Americas? Yes x__ No__

If you are not a member of Partners of the Americas, do you now plan to join the chapter that sponsored your trip?

6. Please report the number of hours of volunteer time you spent on the visit, including preparation and follow-up activities. Please log your time using the attached form. Thanks.

Please fill out and return this report with your:

- Expense report with respective receipts
- Copies of any newspaper/media reports or photos of you engaged with host country nationals in professional activities.

Trip reports must be submitted as soon as possible following your return and no later than thirty (30) days after the completion of your trip.

Send to: Partners of the Americas

**Att: Membership Services
1424 K Street, N.W., Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20005
(202) 628-3300, Fax: (202) 628-3306**

NOTE: We cannot process claims for reimbursement of appropriate travel related expenses, as well as visa entry or exit tax, unless we receive a satisfactory trip report.

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