

LTNews

The LTEG newsletter on Long Term Volunteering issues.



December 2008 – N.10

X-Mas Edition: old year's and new year's activities.

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LTNews and LTEG

LTNews is a newsletter for people in SCI who are interested in long term volunteering and long term projects. It follows up developments and activities and publishes true (or almost true) stories about being a volunteer. It is edited by the Long Term Exchange Group and other helpful people.

LTEG, the Long Term Exchange Group, is an international group of LTV activists who represent different national branches of Service Civil International. We put our efforts in improving the international communication between the different LTV working groups, volunteers and projects.

Editorial

With some weeks of delay we finally proudly present the new edition of LTNews. Careful and loyal readers will recognise a slightly different layout. The team of editors has changed after the last Annual Meeting of LTEG. We (Martino (SCI-CH), Svenja (SCI-D) and Anya (SVIT)) took this task over from Mauro Carta who did a great job for a long time and can be considered as the LTNews guru: he was in charge of this paper from 2004 till 2008. We will try to substitute him as good as possible. Thanks for all your work, Mauro! However, the concept will widely stay the same, like you're used to, except for one little difference: We added one new category, called LTV insights where current and former volunteers can share their stories of their LTV time. You are very welcome to publish your own one (see page 5).

Besides, this edition - sparing you from any content related to Christmas, by the way – will inform you about the results of the last annual meeting and the new steering group of LTEG. And last but not least, don't forget to have a look at our announcements and web links on page 6. Have fun reading!

Svenja Heinecke

The LTEG Annual Meeting 2008, Germany

Once a year LTEG members meet to discuss the matters of their working group, to elect the new steering team and decide on the plan of action for the coming year. This time, the Annual Meeting took place in Bonn, Germany. Editor and Steering Group member Anya, from SVIT, Ukraine, summarized the outcomes of this event.

LTEG - what for?

An answer to this question we were trying to find during the long term exchange group's annual meeting held on the 17th - 20th of October in Bonn and hosted by SCI Germany.

We all came searching for answers, bringing our ideas and needs, and while leaving some of us gained a lot more than they expected (new exciting responsibility, more voluntary work :D). Some left with more questions than answers, or with their questions not answered at all., but the seed was planted, we'll see what grows out of it.

During the four days, the group of activists from LTEG supporting branches (VIA-NL, SCI-D, SCI-CH) and just caring people worked out quite an ambitious Plan of Action 2009 during fruitful and sometimes quite long discussions, tried to heal the aching points of the group and simply had good time trying not to fall off the roof or win a table-football match in a local bar.

The highlight of the weekend was for sure the selection of the steering group which was putting at stake all the work done the days before: no Steering Group - no plan of action or whatsoever needed. It's possible to say that the subject of "Will we have a new Steering Group?" remained a cliff-hanger till the last moment! But then the true spirit of SCI appeared magically turning the number of people willing to get involved from one to four! A result anyone could only dream of =).

Participants of the LTEG Annual Meeting 2009

Kathrin	Wünnemann	Prep-team, SCI-D
Sandra	Kowalski	Prep-team, SCI-D
Antje	Leichsenring	SCI-D
Sandro	Cirulli	
Chris	Van der Kooij	VIA NL
Anya	Novgorodova	SVIT Ukraine
Virginie	Duval	SCI-FR
Svenja	Heinecke	SCI-D
Martino	Guzzardo	SCI-CH
Heinz	Gabathuler	IEC
Sarah	Gerster	SCI-CH
Philippe	Marti	SCI-CH

Some outcomes of the meeting

- The new Steering Group members: Anya Novgorodova, contact person (SVIT Ukraine); Sarah Gerster, treasurer (SCI Switzerland); Philippe Marti (SCI Switzerland).
- Some examples of activities in the plan of action 2008/2009: the organisation of a Placement Officer Training in March 2009, improvement and extension of LTEG's communication tools, a new LTV database, a handbook for hosting projects and an intensified cooperation with other WGs within SCI. Other projects may follow.

Now we can only hope that the new Steering Group will bring with them fresh ideas and forces to fulfill the ambitious list of activities and bring LTEG to a place where it belongs. Good luck to us! Good luck to LTEG!



Anya Novgorodova

The new steering group 2008/2009

Here they are, the captains of LTEG that will steer the bath... ah, boat (see picture). Opportunity for them to introduce themselves: their tasks in LTEG and some personal facts.

Sarah Gerster, SCI Switzerland

After her EVS in Russia (Orphanage Malishok in Ulan-Ude) in 05/06 she joined the LTV working group of SCI Switzerland. Her interest for the international coordination of long term activities grew to the point to take part at the LTEG AM 2008 in Bonn... where she finally joined the steering group for the new season. She is the treasurer of the LTEG WG, asks a lot of questions to try to understand how the LTEG world works.. and gets pretty upset if she doesn't get answers... ;)

Personal facts about Sarah

Age: 26; **Occupation:** PhD student at the Seminar for Statistics at the ETH Zurich. I'm working on protein identification...we use a statistical model to give each protein a score... and we hope that the proteins with the highest scores are also the proteins which are truly present in the sample...**The thing I love best:** chocolate! (I was very lucky to be born in Switzerland!) **What I can't stand:** talking about the lovely weather when I just got up... actually, talking about anything just after getting up is terrible!

Philippe Marti, SCI Switzerland

He joined the LTV working group of SCI-CH in 2007. His lack of long term volunteering experience is largely compensated by his motivation to improve the IT tools used by LTEG (eg. new database). And if you currently dearly miss a document on the members area of LTEG... it might be his doing/non-doing...

Personal facts about Philippe

Age: 25; **Occupation:** I'm a PhD student in the institute of Geophysics at the ETH Zurich. I work in the Earth and Planetary Magnetism group. We want to investigate the mechanisms generating the Earth's magnetic field and try to find a model to explain the structure of the Inner Core shown by seismic data. **The thing I love best:** I really like cats. Seeing a cat on my way to work, makes me happy for the rest of the day (or at least a few hours ;) **What I can't stand:** I hate to leave something unfinished, as long as I know I could do better.



The steering group on their day of election, the 20th of October. From left to right: Sarah Gerster (SCI-CH), Virginie Duval (SCI-FR), Philippe Marti (SCI-CH) and Anya Novgorodova. Unfortunately, due to lack of time, Virginie had to quit her work in the SG some weeks after the election.

Anya Novgorodova, SVIT Ukraine

She has been an activist since 2006 and by now, volunteering became a big part of her life. Anya became involved in the LTEG WG in spring 2008 as SG member and was reelected for the SG 2009 during the LTEG AM. She is the contact person for LTEG and if your e-mail was not answered on time it's her fault, you are welcome to complain!

Personal facts about Anya

Age: 22; **Occupation:** GIS [geographic information systems] student, having a great part-time scanning and copy-pasting job. **The thing I love best:** getting lost and found in many different ways, though being found I enjoy much more than losing myself. Also witnesses claim that I like optics, emotions, being critical, complaining and seeing perspective. And of course, apples and chocolate ice cream. **What I can't stand:** I hate it when there is no snow in December. I hate being far from good friends. And the most - when my mom moves the furniture around my room.

Sarah Gerster, Philippe Marti, Anya Novgorodova

LTV insight – Inside LTV

Our brand new category gives you an introspective view of life as a long term volunteer. For future LTNews, we wish to publish your own LTV stories here. This time, Cécile and Svenja will tell about their experiences in Miami and Paris...

“I had the best year of my life!”

By Cécile Fiechter, 24, LTV at the House of Possibilities 07/08, Florida, USA.

Hi my name is Cécile. I'm 24 years old and live in Basel, Switzerland. I was always very interested in working with people but I chose the way into business because I didn't really know at that time what I would like to learn. I thought that this would be the right decision for me. I was still happy with this decision but something was missing. It was just not enough for my spirit. So I thought to work as a volunteer could be a nice opportunity to change these feelings. I also wanted to combine this work with learning about a new culture in a totally different country.

Finally I found SCI at the internet and talked to Sandro Cirulli from the SCI Office in Switzerland. He introduced me to all the background stories about SCI and I was so thankful to find an organisation with the basic interest in peace (through deeds).

Before I left, I met Sarah Gerster from SCI Switzerland and she informed me about everything I had to know as a volunteer, which



land and she informed me about know, including all my rights as was very important for me to

know as a person without any experience in this kind of work. We also stayed in touch during my volunteering at the House of Possibilities, and I felt very comfortable that someone is there for me if I would need help from Switzerland.

August 2007, I took the plane to Miami where I met the woman with special needs and two other co-workers. The House of Possibilities is a provider of residential, vocational and recreational services for adults with developmental disabilities based on the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner. The person I had to take care of was a 24 year old non-verbal woman with autism and a severe epileptic condition (uncontrolled seizure patterns). My duties included providing complete physical care assistance with daily living activities (household chores, shopping, etc.) and companionship during recreational activities (outing, gardening, bowling, swimming, poetry readings, etc.). I learned to communicate with her via “facilitated communication” (alphabetic letter board and assisted technologies devices). I would say we developed a strong personal bond to each other and I really enjoyed the time with her.

A request

By Svenja Heinecke, 26, LTV in the Office of SCI France, 2007

„Why do you still hesitate? Go out and have fun! You don't have to marry him, but you might at least find a local person to be your pal“, my Swedish flatmate tried to desperately convince me when we were sitting 'round the kitchen table in our messy 12-bed-apartment.

Springtime 2007. There I was, in the very center of Paris, after 2 months of my LTV, and some hours ago, I had the first message ever in life of a French guy asking for a date with me. I listened to the mailbox record again and again, wondering what to do.

I looked back to those 2 months. It had not been very easy: I had come out of a whole big emotional disaster from home and was partly still in it; had switched to my weaker foreign language French all in a sudden; had taken loads of work from university with me, sometimes making me spend all night in office after work; had made cleaning and chasing mice in the apartment my favourite hobbies the first weeks. Nevertheless, there were some precious people I could call my friends in the meanwhile, and somehow

Continuations see next page...

I also had a very good time with the other co-workers. We shared all the tasks and worked with a weekly-schedule. I did a lot of cooking and cleaning. At the beginning I did not have a lot of time to go out or I was too tired. It was also not so easy just to go out in Miami without knowing where to go and where not. I was the only volunteer in this household and so I had to find some friends in the neighbourhood by myself. But I have to say that, especially at the beginning, I was so focused on the project - there were so many new things to learn - that I didn't miss to go out. And after two months I met some very nice people who took care of me J

The program at the weekends was most of the time very easy and we went to street-festivals, to the beach or to visit someone from the family of the person I took care of. In May, we went to Great Barrington Massachusetts, to the North Plain Farm a part of Cadmus. (You can find this residence also on the SCI List.) Cadmus is an association of life sharing families. They extended to include adults with mental and/or physical handicaps. I also met Margaret Fait there from the SCI Office USA. My friend (the person I took care of) used to live on the Farm, and since she moved to Florida, the House of Possibilities tries to take her there every year, so that she can meet all her friends and former caregiver from this time. It was the first time for me that I met some other volunteers. There were a lot from Europe (especially from Germany) but also from all over the world. That was a very interesting experience, first of all to live in a bigger community with more people with special needs and with people who did the same work. I found a lot of friends there. After we came back, we moved from South Florida to Central Florida somewhere between Orlando and Cocoa Beach. That was another opportunity to live in a different place and to meet new people. There, we found a lot of activities for people with special needs and it was very easy for the person I took care of to find new friends.

At the end of this great year it was hard for me to say goodbye and to leave my friend. I still miss her a lot.

I would say, without missing my friends and my family during this time, I had the best year of my life! So many things changed, I learned so much, so much about life. I'm very thankful that everything went so great and for the chance to meet all those people who touched my heart and gave me a reason to believe in wonders. ◇

managed to finish my paper for university and the work as placement officer went quite well. Before my application for this 6 months of voluntary work I had imagined it just great to live and actually be really part of every days' life of such an amazing city like Paris...

Like between all flatmates my Swedish friend spoke French to me. In my blurry memories my other flatmate from Israel was doing his casual movements to prepare himself a shisha (but maybe my mind mixes up facts here for the sake of a more romantic setting).

„Come on, simply do it to improve your language skills, then!“ My lacking ability to express a counter-argument against this last utterance was certainly a proof that she clearly had a point in saying so. I sighed.

Some hours later, I wrote a positive message to the French guy. That's how I fully started living in Paris.



Former or current LTVs who wish to publish their stories – any contributions like reports, short stories, poems, etc. - are invited to get in contact with us and send their articles to Svenja (rumeurs@gmx.de), Martino (martino@guzzardo.ch) or to the common LTG mailbox: lteg@sciint.org.

Announcements & Impressum

Have a look at the activities coming soon and put them in your brand new calendar for 2009! Also, if you want to give your opinion about this newsletter, propositions on articles for the next issue or get to know where to click on for further LTEG stuff, you'll find all necessary information here...

Placement Officer Training in Rome, March 2009

Next year's Placement Officer Training (POT), a cooperation of LTEG, SCI Italy and the IS, will take place from **the 2nd till the 8th of March 2009** in Rome. The internal SCI education for future volunteers supporting the branches in the placement season, usually gets organised by LTEG between the Technical Meeting and Easter in order to prepare the long term volunteers for the office work, and set up a colleague network between the beginners. Counting on a grant by the Youth of Action Program, which will hopefully be confirmed in January, the agenda schedules a combination of the relevant exchange procedure, elements of intercultural communication and camp leading. Branches and partners will receive detailed information including an application form at the end of December. Check your office mailbox after the holidays!



LTEG Online !

Some web addresses fighting against possible upcoming boredom during your Christmas holidays:

- **LTEG on the SCI international website:**
<http://www.sciint.org/lteg.phtml>
– what LTEG is, plan of action 2009, handbook for longterm volunteers...
- **LTEG group on Facebook:**
<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/group.php?gid=14894915468>
– become a member of this group and follow the discussions, announcements. Also, check the events area!
- **Long term projects on Youtube:**
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQj-CHBn-ss>
– little movie of a Swiss volunteer presenting the activities of La Citta dell'Utopia as part of her LTV service. Enjoy!

How to subscribe...?

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Older issues of the LTNews are available on <http://www.sciint.org/newsletters.phtml>

Impressum.

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Merry Christmas and a happy New Year!