



Perspectives

by Warren Muir, Chairman and Founder of Cyprus Friendship Program

The US has one holiday each year that is unlike all others. It is a holiday celebrated by people of all cultural and religious backgrounds. It is a holiday devoid of nationalistic history or political significance. It started as a time for all to give thanks for the harvest of the year and is now a holiday of friendship and of thanks for the many blessings of the year. It is a day to share a meal and to just be together with family and friends. This holiday is Thanksgiving.

Although Thanksgiving is not an official holiday in Cyprus, I would urge those who have been involved with and touched by CFP to observe a Thanksgiving by sharing a meal with family and friends from across the divide.

In the US, Thanksgiving is celebrated each year on the fourth Thursday in November. In Canada, the other large country that has a Thanksgiving holiday, it is celebrated on the second Monday in October. The Canadian date is the same weekend that has been the traditional time for the annual CFP graduation celebration. Observing a Thanksgiving that weekend would be a way to continue and to extend the friendships formed through the program.

Coordinators are special people in ways that others of us may not be aware. For example, I participated for several years in the Children's Friendship Project for Northern Ireland before learning that three of the coordinators in the program were widows whose husbands were murdered in "The Troubles." Despite their losses, these women devoted countless hours seeking to promote friendship between the two communities. In Cyprus, several of the coordinators have been abandoned by former friends, have been personally or have had family members threatened, or have had their homes vandalized because of their bi-communal efforts. Yet they

quietly carry on, working tirelessly to promote a brighter future for the island. We owe these special people special thanks.

As we enter the New Year, I want to extend my personal thanks to all the other wonderful people associated with the Cyprus Friendship Program, including the teen participants and their families (who are the hope for Cyprus), the American coordinators and host families (who sacrifice their summers, open their hearts and their homes to provide a safe-neutral place for the teens to build trust and understanding), the CFP directors (who guide and generously support the program). Also, I want to thank the many generous individuals and institutions who financially contribute and otherwise support the program, including HasNa (which founded and has continued to support the program), the CFP Friends and Family Association in Cyprus (who have formed to support the program), the Rotary clubs in Cyprus and across the US (who have contributed financially as well as have members active in the program), and the several foundations, churches, and companies that support the program.

The CFP family may be spread halfway across the globe, but it is made up of wonderful people who are willing to make the efforts needed to make the world a better place to live. Best wishes to all of you in 2014 from snowy New Hampshire.

This series of messages is intended to keep the Cyprus Friendship Program family around the world better informed about the activities of the program, to provide perspectives on its impacts, and to offer some reflections on its background and context. It is intended supplement and not substitute for the semi-annual newsletter and other communications by the program.

Please share these messages with others whom you think might be interested in them. A compilation of the messages are archived on the CFP website (www.cyprusfriendship.org.)