



Perspectives

by Warren Muir, Chairman and Founder of Cyprus Friendship Program

This is the time of year when CFP teens from previous years, family members, and coordinators in Cyprus are making presentations and answering questions at numerous public venues across the island (e.g., school assemblies, youth organizations, and radio programs). For many of those who attend, these presentations by teens from both sides of the divide offer completely new views of the other community and introduce them to a non-political, person-to-person effort to build trust, understanding, and friendships between the next generation of leaders on the island.

Many teens are expected to apply to join the program in 2014, more than it has the capacity to accept. However, the interview day will offer all an opportunity to explore friendships with those from the other side in a safe and supportive environment.

Many of you are not familiar with some of the early history of CFP. I will share some of it with you over the coming months, focusing first on the central role of HasNa, Inc. (www.hasna.org), a small Washington, DC-based non-profit organization promoting opportunities and peace between divided communities. Some of you may have heard of HasNa, as it continues to be involved in several cross-community activities in Cyprus. However, you may not be aware of its essential role in getting CFP started and its continuing support of the program.

In 2008, HasNa hosted in Washington, D.C. Nadia Karayianni from the NGO Support Centre in the South and Tulin Aker from the Management Centre in the North of Cyprus to enable them to learn about volunteerism in the U.S. HasNa arranged for them to become familiar with many different volunteer activities. I was involved in one their meetings, which discussed the all-volunteer Children's Friendship Project

for Northern Ireland, Inc. that hosted pairs of teens from across the Unionist/Protestant-Republican/Catholic divide (more than 2,000 pairs over 21 years) in American homes in 18 different states from 1987 until 2007 when we could celebrate the peace that had evolved between the two communities. The two Cypriots both reacted to the presentation saying that such a program was badly needed in Cyprus and would perhaps be possible, given the opening of crossings in the divide and the negotiations underway at that time between political leaders of the two communities. HasNa responded by establishing and funding a pilot-program of ten Greek-Cypriot/Turkish-Cypriot pairs of teens in the summer of 2009. It continued to oversee the program and to provide \$30,000 in 2010 for a second pilot year and in 2011 when the program expanded to 30 pairs in four different areas of the US.

With the support of the HasNa board of directors, Cyprus Friendship Program, Inc. was established as a separate U.S. non-profit managing the program in 2012. HasNa is continuing its support of the program with a 2014 contribution of \$25,000.

CFP is a wonderful example of the type of work that HasNa undertakes. We are deeply indebted to HasNa and its founder, Nevzer Stacey, for launching CFP in the U.S. and for its continued interest and support as we enter our sixth year.

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)