



Perspectives

by Warren Muir, Chairman and Founder of Cyprus Friendship Program

These perspectives have audiences in the U.S., Cyprus, and elsewhere. While some of the stories will be known to some of you, it is hoped that all of you will find something new and of interest in each “perspective”.

While some people who hope for progress in a resolution of the Cyprus conflict focus on the new round of political negotiations currently underway, many of us are encouraged by developments occurring between the two communities. One recent example was an emotional Good Friday service that was held at the Ayios Giorgos Exorinos church in Famagusta in the north of Cyprus. This service was the first service at the church since 1957 and was attended by more than 4,000 worshippers, most of whom had traveled from the south. The Turkish-Cypriot mayor of Famagusta and the Mufti, the Islamic religious leader in the north, joined the worshippers. The service represents a significant gesture toward reconciliation between the two communities on the island and was broadcast live on all Cypriot TV channels and on some foreign media. (See <http://cyprus-mail.com/2014/04/18/orthodox-worshippers-flock-to-famagusta/>.)

Another example of cooperation has been the opening this month of a new sewage treatment plant by the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot mayors of Nicosia. The plant will benefit a quarter of the residents of the island and will supply water and fertilizer to farmers on both sides of the divide. (http://turkey.setimes.com/en_GB/articles/ses/articles/features/departments/world/2014/04/22/feature-02)

Yet another development, which involves CFP, is a cross-community effort to plan an ecocity in Varosha, a sizable and highly symbolic portion of Famagusta that was formerly populated by Greek-Cypriots and that has been vacant since the war in

1974. George Lordos, a CFP director, is involved in the planning of this model ecocity and CFP teens have been asked to help design a sustainable school for the area. This project has already been the cause of a major cross-community conference and will provide the opportunity for many areas of cooperation between the two communities. A film is being created to document this project and its team of promoters. (<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/320929240/the-famagusta-ecocity-project-a-documentary?ref=live>)

The following was written by a girl who applied to participate in CFP's one-week camp in Cyprus and was informed that all the spaces were filled for Turkish-Cypriot girls:

The girl wrote, "I will still tell my boy friends about the places in the camp. I just want to say that the CFP team are doing/producing something great, along with the Cypriot youth. It is very heart breaking for me to live in a country and not know more than the half of my age girls and boys. They are walking on the same land as I am, smelling the same Cypriot air and even sharing the same culture as I have; but we are strangers to each other. They say we are different but in fact we are the same. They say we can't be together but in fact we can make perfect friends, teams and even a peaceful country. You have chosen the right age group of the population; we are tomorrow's politicians, economists, doctors and teachers. If we have the faith, our children and theirs will do as well. I want to thank you for producing opportunities like this to the young ones to come together and be a united family."

You can contribute directly to friendship and peace. If you live in Atlanta, Maryland, New Hampshire, or Northern Virginia, please consider hosting a pair of CFP teens in July. If you can't host and haven't yet made a financial contribution toward the costs for the teens to travel from Cyprus to their U.S. hosts, please consider doing so now.

I will be telling you more about the history of the Children's Friendship Project for Northern Ireland, Inc. (CFPNI) and its links to CFP over several perspectives. One important link that most of you are unlikely to be aware of is John McKinney, a former member of the CFPNI board of directors and member of CFP, Inc.'s board and supporter from the start.

John lives in Northern Ireland in Omagh, where he was chief executive in 1998 when the town experienced the deadliest bombing of "The Troubles." When CFPNI was seeking individuals highly respected by both communities from Northern Ireland to serve on its board of directors, John was the top of the list, because of the sensitivity and professionalism with which he handled the tragedy. After serving as Omagh's chief executive, he was asked to oversee the European Union's peace funds for Ireland. In recent years, Northern Ireland and the EU have provided him as a consultant to Cyprus and to the Balkans as an expert on municipal government.

In December 2008, when I was exploring the possibility of having a CFPNI-like program in Cyprus on behalf of HasNa, John offered to help me get around and to interpret what people were telling us. CFP would never have happened without his behind-the-scenes help. John has seen what such a people-to-people effort can contribute to friendship and peace, having witnessed CFPNI first hand in Northern Ireland. Thanks, John!

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 to supplement and not substitute for the semi-annual newsletter and other communications by the program.

Please share these messages with others. A compilation of the messages are archived on the CFP website (www.cyprusfriendship.org.)

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