A Celebration of Awards … Rewards Gleaned by Giving

Thirty-nine women, one University President, a brunch buffet that defied dieters and 17 awards to be announced. This describes the FCC Annual Awards Meeting July 14, a gathering in the DSAC to celebrate a year of accomplishment, good times, one another and making more dreams come true. It was a beautiful morning, where business was conducted, ten new members were recognized, and a slate of officers acclaimed, champagne toasts made and tears of joy welled, as we learned which wishes had been granted. A few member comments on why we’re so strong at 10 years: Love of Fontbonne and generosity of spirit; seeing the immediate impact of our dollars, not just writing a check; concepts of family, community and CSJ mission; energy, generosity, contagious enthusiasm and dedication of members; seeing ‘kids’ of all ages grow; learning more about higher education in general and Fontbonne in particular; the opportunity to pay forward.
CANSec Workshop Can Enhance Fontbonne’s Cyber Security Reputation

Summertime on FBU’s campus is busy in a different way than it is during the academic year. Some may say the pace doesn’t feel quite as frenetic and the energy level lessens.

Dr. Yi Yang would politely disagree with that assessment. For the past two years, Assistant Professor Yang and the Department of Math and Computer Science, have been planning, organizing and readying Fontbonne for the 10th Central Area Networking and Security Workshop Central States, CANSec 2016, to be held for the first time on the FBU campus. Dr. Yang is chairing the workshop, working with an FBU steering committee: Dr. Mary Abkemeier, Dr. Nancy English and Dr. Guanyu Tian, as well as Information Technology’s VP Mark Franz and his assistant Cheryl Burrus. Yi Yang is in her office every day, along with colleagues and students, readying the vast list of preparations to be completed by the end of July. On October 1-2, they expect nearly 100 participants to descend on the campus.

Fontbonne’s CANSec was awarded FCC funding for equipment (servers) for the cyber defense competition and to cover costs to bring to campus a highly regarded speaker, Dr. XiaoFeng Wang, a well-recognized researcher on system and network security. For Fontbonne students, the cyber defense competition is a focus of the Fall Dedicated semester: “Security, Privacy and Freedom.”

The workshop brings together researchers and practitioners in security and networking-related fields in the central part of the country, attracting attendees from many states and universities. Dr. Yi says, “This event can significantly increase the visibility and reputation of Fontbonne, regionally and nationally, in the cybersecurity research field.”

A successful CANSec workshop gives Fontbonne the potential to host more cyber security competitions and attract high school’s brightest students.

Read more about Fontbonne’s CANSec at http://www.cansecworkshop.org/
FCC Members Enjoy S’More Campus Visits to Award Winning Camps

No campfires at Fontbonne’s three summer camps — after all, it’s summer in St. Louis and time for Camp Cap, Camp F.R.E.S.H. and Camp FIRE (Fontbonne Inspires Reading Excitement). Historically or currently, all are funded with FCC awards. The camps are so special that many kids who were campers return year-after-year to serve as counselors.

Nine intrepid FCC members and two guests came on a warm (and rainy) July 22 for the S’More Tours — a clever nod to that favorite camp snack and the fact that this is additional campus touring for FCC members, following the March tour of other FCC-funded campus projects (read about Camp FIRE on page 4). A few facts about FBU’s other hot summer programs.

**Camp CAP**
Celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, Camp CAP is a three-day event that culminated this on July 24 with a theatre experience that rocked the kids, their siblings and parents. Named for major funding provided by the Capellupo Family, the camp has also received FCC support. Directed and produced by Fontbonne’s department of Communications Disorders and Deaf Education professionals, this annual Augmentative and Alternative Communication Weekend Theater Camp provides an amazing experience for everyone involved. FCC members on the S’More Tours who had attended previous shows raved about the touching performances.

“Our campers all have difficulty expressing themselves verbally for any number of reasons,” explains Dr. Gale Rice, professor and dean of the College of Education and Allied Health Professions. “While they have varying abilities, all have something to say, and that is why augmentative and alternative communication systems are so important.” FCC member and Professor and department Chair Dr. Carmen Russell (also an actress) explained to the tour that the camp was conceived by Fontbonne’s department of Communication Disorders and Deaf Education (CDDE), a passionate group of professionals who have organized and staffed two or three camps each of the past 10 summers. Each camp hosts eight to nine families with children who use augmentative or alternative devices to help them communicate. Entirely donor funded, families pay nothing. It’s a unique opportunity for parents to see their children in the spotlight. The camp also enables parents to engage with one another and explore resources available to them. It helps siblings connect with their own brothers and sisters, as well as with other families. Fontbonne speech-language pathology graduate students learn more about their chosen profession — each graduate student is paired with a child and works with him or her throughout the duration of the camp.

**Camp FRESH: Family Recreation Education Sharing Health**
Camp F.R.E.S.H. at Fontbonne runs from mid-June through early August. This year’s theme is celebrations and festivals around the world, with each week featuring a different continent. The camp takes kids entering 4th-7th grade on an interactive, hands-on journey toward better health — through activities emphasizing nutrition, wellness, physical exercise and creativity. Our FCC touring group was impressed that there were an equal number of boys and girls in the class. Led by Fontbonne’s Family & Consumer Sciences faculty, kids roll up their sleeves and whip up healthy cuisine with international flavor, learn about teamwork and the benefits of physical activity through participation in popular sports, games, dances and field trips geared to each continent’s cultures. The chef the day we visited was grad a student who has come back year-after-year. Kids discover that music, art and nature enhance their physical and emotional well-being.
Camp FIRE Ignites a Love of Reading for Children with Hearing Loss

This is Paula Gross’s fifth year as head counselor at Camp FIRE (Fontbonne Inspires Reading Excitement): A Summer Literacy Camp for Children with hearing Loss.

This is not the first year the FCC has awarded Camp FIRE funds to carry on the experience that began in 2012. This summer Paula has led two week-long camps for students who are deaf—a session for children 3rd through 6th grade and a week for 11-16 years-olds from 8:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. on the Fontbonne campus.

Fontbonne’s Deaf Education faculty designed a theme-based literacy program for campers to address delays in the children’s reading skills caused by their hearing loss. Camp academics are focused on books such as “Wonder,” which tells the story of Auggie Pullman, an ordinary boy born with extreme facial abnormalities, whose first year at school changed the lives and the perspectives of everyone around him.

July campers read a book a day, do science experiments and/or sensory activities to develop complete vocabulary, fluency, written language, phonics and engage in word play.

And they have fun!

“We have a set of bowling pins we were given, and the campers love to bowl — with coconuts. It’s game on, until one breaks, and then it’s OK to eat it,” said Paula. Campers stay on the move during the day, doing crafts in Ryan Hall or the East Building, lunching in the DSAC or writing about their camp experience in the computer lab.

Welcome guests at each session this year were FCC member Janie von Wolfeck and her reading dog, Yankee. Though the children believe they are teaching the dog to read, in fact — with the dog as a comfortable, attentive audience — they are actually teaching themselves. IT'S ALL ABOUT THE DOG, not about the child. No pressure. No embarrassment. No humiliation.

The camp participants make new friends, and their families find networking opportunities. The graduate students develop confidence in working with children who have cochlear implants, as they engage directly with them and assist with their instruction. The FCC award provides a new funding source that enables the camp to continue to grow and enhance this program.

FCC — a Natural Fit for Energetic Kim Distefano

Karen Gedera and Kim Distefano knew each other casually, through mutual friends. When Kim heard Karen talking about FCC, it sounded so intriguing that she was eager to learn more. After attending the CSJ Motherhouse Tour in April and experiencing an instant sense of solidarity with FCC members, Kim said she was ready to join such a welcoming and lovely group of women, who do truly impressive works. “It’s kind of like a reverse investment club” says Kim, “benefitting, not just Fontbonne, but also the wider community!”

Kim and her husband grew up in Macomb, IL, worked together on their school newspaper, then attended Western Illinois University together before marrying. They have a son and daughter, both born and raised in St. Louis, who now each live in Chicago.

As a volunteer for 16 years at St. Joseph’s Institute — in charge of the library there — Kim considered the Institute an ideal outlet for her educational background in health and teaching. She loved working at St. Joseph’s, which she said could top Disney as “Happiest Place on Earth.” With simultaneous service on the board (and eventual Chair) at Missouri Girls Town, Kim has kept very busy. In her spare time, Kim’s been a long-time and avid golfer. She’s now “resting” those muscles and has just taken up biking.

Kim was excited to participate in the FCC voting process, is looking forward to meeting and working with more of the wonderful women of FCC, and hopes to share her excitement and enthusiasm about FCC with other of her women friends. What a great new member!
Jan Johnson Saw Firsthand the Difference FCC Makes on Campus

Although Jan Johnson is one of our newer FCC members, as Director of Grant Support at FBU, she’s been long familiar with FCC awards and the impact the giving circle has on a department’s student and faculty — and on the University. Jan knew that, when the time was right, she would join the FCC. And this was the year.

Jan makes plans and follows through. She made certain that her four daughters got a college education — something she had wanted for herself but hadn’t been able to pursue. Fontbonne played a key role in each of her daughters’ lives and certainly in hers. Two of her daughters are FBU alums and on the faculty at FBU — Jennifer Moore is Assistant Director of Financial Aid and Danielle Johnson an Administrative Assistant. Patricia Johnson Bagby is an adjunct Business Instructor at FBU. Daughter Valerie received her Master’s degree in Deaf Education from FBU.

And, decades after Jan’s high school graduation, she had earned four degrees, all with honors: BA in 2008, MA (in Science) in 2010, Master of Management degree in 2012 and MBA in 2014.

For the past five years, Jan’s role as Director of Grant Support entailed securing federal and private grants and scholarships. From the first year of FCC’s existence, she took note as two pivotal programs were awarded to the Deaf Education Department — to support students traveling to Belize to start an early intervention Deaf Education Program, as well as a Newborn Hearing and Screening Early Intervention in Costa Rica.

During the academic year, Jan also plays guitar at campus Masses, and all who visit her office know to expect music from her always-on radio. Away from her office, her focus is family. Her new loves are travel and spending time with her six grandchildren. Each grandchild’s sixth birthday means a trip someplace special with Grandma. Jan’s big goal is to take them on an adventure, outside the US, for their 16th birthdays.

“When I saw how much was being accomplished with FCC awards, I knew that when I was in a position to do and be a part of something that made a difference in lives, it would be this — the Fontbonne Community Connection. When that time came, it was a no-brainer for me,” says Jan. “I had seen FCC members in the Deaf Education Department — dynamic and strong women who, with FCC help, have made things happen. I wanted to be part of that.”

Jean Fitzgerald — from Canada to St. Louis and FCC.

Jean Fitzgerald grew up in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and attended Mount St. Vincent, a women’s college in Halifax, where she received a BA and BED (Batchelor of Education). She became a Special Education Teacher, for 7 to 10 year-olds, at St Augustine Catholic school in Ontario and also was adjunct professor of Special Ed at York University, Toronto. Jean has been in the U.S. for over 25 years and began volunteering at St Josephs' Institute back when it was still located in University City, only recently “retiring” from that role. Finding herself on her own in recent years has opened her heart to a deeper appreciation for the social aspects of non-profits such as FCC.

After hearing about FCC from her friends Mary Lee Walter and Dot LeGrand, Jean attended the new members’ coffee this spring and was hooked. She said she admires the “very fair and open process to philanthropic donation” at FCC, where she’s found “a wonderful group of women with similar goals.” Although involved previously in several educational scholarship programs, Jean said she didn’t always know so clearly exactly where the money was going or how it was used. Learning project specifics and supporting those that mean the most to teach members is an especially appealing process. Jean found Roundtable participation extremely interesting and enlightening and says she’s “looking forward to coming events and participating in such a worthwhile organization.”

An adventuresome and frequent traveler, Jean returns to Canada every year — she holds dual citizenship in the US and Canada. She is especially fond of cruises and has an upcoming trip to the Baltic countries and St. Petersburg. In recent years, her two adult sons, who live in St. Louis, have been joining their mom for Christmastime trips to Great Exuma, Bahamas. Our new member is very well traveled — but also very well grounded — and an ideal addition to our fabulous group of women philanthropists.
I hope your summer is merrily rolling along, before it begins its annual sprint into fall. So far, this has been an extremely rewarding FCC season, culminating in our informative and collegial Annual Meeting — highlighted, of course, with the announcement of our 2016-17 awards.

As is our tradition, the meeting concluded with each member sharing her FCC reflections in turn, reflecting our circle’s unique and endearing spirit. As this newsletter’s Annual Meeting photos indicate, we owe special thanks to our Events Committee for their warm and gracious hospitality and to fellow EAC members for their multiple contributions — especially our Awards Committee, whose diligent activities throughout the year brought our awards cycle to fruition, to Dr. Mike Pressimone for his university update and to Cathy Pressimone for inspiring us to recognize DSAC’s transformation into a uniquely “sacred place.”

On August 4, the DSAC will again become hallowed ground, as members gather to affirm our commitment to encourage Fontbonne faculty, students and staff to “dare to dream.” Invigorated by past successes, we will collaboratively strategize our 2016-17 fiscal/awards cycle and FCC’s Tenth Anniversary! If you have never attended a fall planning session, I extend this personal invitation — your place at our “family table” awaits you! Your sisters are very anxious to make you feel at home. (See Planning Meeting details on page 2.)

As the FCC Executive Advisory Committee closes the book on our 2015-16 fiscal/awards cycle, we thank you for becoming a precious link in our philanthropic circle. Without you we could not award seventeen new projects. You and our entire membership will provide our award recipients with the financial assistance to transform their dreams into exciting and enriching realities.

More than ten years ago our five founders — Nina Bryans, Dede Caspari, Karen Castellano, Kate Gunn and Carol Spehr — accepted the call to consider what was then a pretty unique idea, a women’s philanthropic giving circle. We continue to grow and are pleased to welcome new members Connie McManus and Teresa Braeckel, who will be featured in our Fall issue.

As we enter our tenth awards cycle, we find ourselves as newly-bonded sisters, committed to Fontbonne University and our mission to make dreams come true. Thank you for playing an indispensable role in this altruistic endeavor!

Maggie

Maggie Gunn Fowler
FCC Chair