

International Fellows sponsors make a joyful noise with enduring impact

Carol Kerr, Public Affairs Office

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April 30, 2015 -- A large outpouring of camaraderie and cheer characterized the group of International Fellows, their spouses, and sponsors gathered to congratulate each other for a year well done.

The largest class of International Fellows in history,



79, called for the largest group of sponsors. On the evening of April 30 in the Letort View Community Center, Army War College leaders joined the International Fellows themselves to add a sober nod to the serious nature of the sponsor program, as well as the obviously joyful nature.

Col. **John Burbank**, IF Program Director, led the formal portion of the evening, speaking of the college's deep appreciation for sponsors' willingness to spend time and energy for the success of the International Fellows and Families' stay in the United States. Burbank gave special attention to several long-time sponsors. **Bob Reitzel** was recognized posthumously; he and his wife, **Debbie Reitzel**, supported the program since 2007. **Harold and Eileen Swidler** were singled out for their 26 years as IF sponsors, **Bernard and Honey Griffard** for 21 years, and **Laszlo and Margaret Pasztor** for 15 years with the sponsorship program.

USAWC Diplomatic Advisor **Daniel Shields** recently joined the Army War College following service as U.S. Ambassador to Brunei and called his current assignment a homecoming for this Pennsylvania native.

"I always had the sense that people of Pennsylvania are warm and friendly and welcoming -- and to see what the sponsors do here really vindicates that sense that I had, that the hospitality in central

Pennsylvania and particularly here in Carlisle is unbelievably warm and sends such a great image of our region to the world.”



“Through the interactions between International Fellows and community sponsors, we’re really building connections between the United States and countries around the world,” said Shields, referring not only to the sponsors’ help and friendship but to the way that international officers, their spouses and their children offer understanding of their countries.

Deputy USAWC Commandant Col. **David Funk** asked the American sponsors in the audience to imagine the difficulty of being uprooted to live as a stranger in a strange land, needing to assimilate into the language, cultures, norms – and schools – of a foreign society.

“Our job is make [the International Fellows] as comfortable as they can be because not only are they here in a foreign land, but we are putting them through some pretty tough academic rigor,” said Funk. “We are asking them to learn the same things that the American students are learning.” What you all bring is the ...

Because of the simple honesty of the sentiment, Funk quoted Will Hammer, the 16-year-old Youth of the Year here who spoke recently at the Volunteer Appreciation Ceremony for Carlisle Barracks. Funk repeated his words: “I volunteer for me. I get so much out of what I do. By giving I get more in return.”

“It is my sincere hope that you – whether new to us or one who has been doing this for 20-plus years -- feel the same way, that you get as much out of this as you give,” said Funk. “The International Fellows program is that much richer for all that the community sponsors give.”

