



# Ready to set standards?

## Welcome to Global Connection and be part of the new benchmark!

Hilly van Swol-Ulbrich is an intercultural trainer and author and public speaker who has lived in the Netherlands and the UK before moving to Germany. Throughout Europe she trains expatriate families, runs spouses workshops and transition classes for Expat Kids.

"...My husband and I were relocated by my company. Our relocation and experience have been somewhat unique, mostly because of the way my company chose to structure our expat contract and the mere fact that my husband moved here for my career. No support was given for him as my spouse and in retrospect we would never accept a contract again that did not provide for spousal support. He seems to be in a unique situation that also comes with unique challenges, since most couples are typically being relocated for the man's career".

Should the above statement seem familiar to you, either as a spouse or as an HR expatriate manager -

you will know that the described situation is not unique. Many trailing spouses, male or female, with or without a family, with or without dual career issues, all face challenges that, although unique to their own particular situation, have been well chartered over time.

Regardless of recent trends in the duration of the assignment or it's character, when corporations are questioned about the contributing factors to the success of an assignment, the role of the partner is still seen as crucial and acts as the backbone by providing emotional support and stability for all the family members. This has been reconfirmed through numerous studies which detail that in order to retain qualified expatriate personnel, corpora-

tions have to develop sustainable expatriate policies including options for the spouses.

Over the years we have witnessed an awakening in corporate HR- where the common knowledge that the spouse can make or break an assignment led to the encouraging first steps towards including the spouses in the decision making, the pre departure trainings and in providing options for dealing with the loss of income.

## "Sharing your feelings can be a lifeline when you are going through a rough time"

And still ... having to re-invent yourself in a new cultural environment, struggling with language barriers, whilst trying to obtain a sense of control and maintain a level of normality is no minor thing to do. There are so many questions to ask, opinions to seek, advice needed and from time to time the wish to just contact someone who has been there, done it, eaten the pie and gotten the T-Shirt.

"Bundle your knowledge and resources!"  
"Create a platform of shared learning!"

These have been the war cries of professionals in the field and we have found people, who like us, were not satisfied re-inventing the wheel for each individual expatriate assignment.

Rather than write the well-known critical "Destination X black book" the inspiring foundations of the Global Connection is to utilize the rich experiences off all its members, regardless of the corporate affiliation. A Partner Network driven by the stakeholders, and we are all stakeholders; the expatriate worker, the expatriate partner as well as the expatriate manager. The diversity of the network represented through the different genders, ethnici-

ty, religions, age and professional backgrounds are a guarantee to stimulate solution-oriented creativity when addressing the individual needs of its members.

What is more: the Global Connection is also about empowerment.

Corporations by putting trust in the insight and the knowledge of the partners in the different locations are sending an important message out that spouses are not just trailing spouses but represent a body of valuable information for all concerned. This newly defined partnership between the parties gives a face to the sustainability aspects of expatriate policies.

So, welcome to the Global Connection, it is yours! It is yours- to share your experiences, to ask for and offer advice. It is yours to create through contributing your own individual skills and to make it work in order to meet your and our own unique needs. Be part of the new benchmark. ●

Traveling pen

## Moving and Turtles



Sandra Teakema writes about her life in New York since she has moved from Japan

Japan feels like an eternity away. I am ensconced in an apartment in New York, my home for the next few years. Moving houses is always a chaotic experience and in New York an Japan it took over two months before everything was in order. After six weeks lodging in hotels and temporary apartments, I was longing to settle in my own place.

And now the culture shock is affecting me. In Japan I didn't suffer from the infamous up and downs but here it is different. The people are so utterly different and I find myself becoming deeply frustrated by the carelessness of the movers, the fact that it is impossible to find someone who can repair our couch properly and the endless search for plug adapters. The New Yorkers are rude, ill mannered, brusque, pushy, and always in a hurry.

When I was analyzing the characteristics of my new city it dawned me that this description would fit the average Dutch citizen too. So what is my problem? I guess it's the huge difference with the Japanese. Anyway, I trust this is going to be a new fantastic experience.

With my visa in my pocket and a permanent address I went to request a work permit but this takes three months and I am only half way through the procedure. Decorating the house easily kept me occupied for the first six weeks but now I am beginning to get itchy feet. I was planning for a long time to take part as a volunteer with a research expedition and the timing now is perfect.

So two weeks ago I booked a ticket for Brazil and tomorrow I am off to find the Amazonian turtle. Although I am an environmentalist I don't know much about the Amazon. During my time in University in Groningen the furthest I went for expedition was Zuidlaardermeer which was on walking distance. I did once spend a month in Brazil and the Amazon but that was seven years ago as a tourist. Now it is time for me to dive into the environmental problems. Around the corner is an excellent bookshop so now I am reading about Indians and gold diggers, ecology and anthropology, river and rainforest, dams and turtles. I am off for a new adventure! ●

In this section one of our readers writes about his or her transfer to another country. Please share your experiences and send us an email (sinead@gobal-connection.info)



## BACKPAGES

### Work and Studying



In this section we ask an expert to share his insights with our readers. Peter Kranenburg is the director of C&G Career

Services, an agency that provides expat partners with career advice. Here he tells how Hanneke brought in her first assignment as a freelancer in Latin America.

### Freelancing in Latin America

Latin America is becoming an ever more popular destination for expatriates. In our practice we see many more expat partners eager to set up work for themselves in the larger countries in the region. The main obstacles are the meager amount of holidays offered by local employers and the fact that working parttime is unheard of there. A good alternative is then to freelance and control your own time and go on holiday whenever you like.

Hanneke was posted overseas this year and after settling in she wanted to pursue a career as a freelance shop-interior designer. She realised that the chain stores she wished to target all operated chiefly in the local market. Success seemed to depend on the speed with which you could build up a network of potential clients. Hanneke, however, discovered that the competition was cut-throat and that the chain stores' budgets were very limited due to the economic recession. Through a contact who worked at an importing company for a French perfume brand, she was allowed to participate (as a volunteer) in designing a number of counters in two large department stores. Subsequently, this importer has hired her to research suitable glass displays for his perfume bottles at the airport. This is not much in the line of paid work but it is a beginning.