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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Contrary to all the 'fears' towards the end of 1999, we sailed smoothly into the Year 2000 - and as with everyone else, our Society records are all still intact with no bugs! I hope you all enjoyed your Christmas breaks and / or summer holidays. Moving into February, things are back to "normal" now, children have returned to school - and, of course, it's the month for Annual Club Picnics. A lot of work goes into organising these events, so I'd like to encourage everyone to support them by attending - taking along family and friends - for an enjoyable day.

Recently, we received a letter, through the Embassy, about summer camps being organised by the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad. I really encourage anyone with young children to consider such an opportunity. Obviously there are costs involved, however, where necessary, a fund is available towards both camp fees and even travel costs to Switzerland. The following article is a condensed version of the letter written by David von Steiger, the Director of the FYSA, describing the camps and activities. Further information, and application form, can be found on their internet site, www.aso.ch, or feel free to contact me (details on page two). Best regards to everyone, Beatrice.

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad - Summer Camps 2000 for Swiss Children Abroad aged 7 - 14 years

Journey through Switzerland, 26 June - 8 July; Begnins / VD 8 - 22 July;
Steffisburg / BE 15 - 29 July; Trey / VD 15 - 29 July; Lungern / OW 22 July - 5 August;
Achseten / BE 5 - 19 August; Stäfa / ZH 5 - 19 August; Einsiedeln / SZ 12 - 26 August

The seven to eight annual summer camps last 14 days. They are open to all children residing in a foreign country who have Swiss Citizenship, or whose mother is Swiss and registered at a Swiss diplomatic post, and are aged between seven and 14 years (born 1985/86 - 1992, or 1983 - 87 for the journey through Switzerland). About ten spaces are reserved for young 'local' Swiss to promote genuine encounters with Swiss children of various backgrounds. The children should be reasonably independent and enjoy camp life, as they are far from their home and parents, and at first amongst strangers, for two or three weeks. Parents are responsible for the round-trip travel arrangements, but advice is available, and the children will be met on arrival in Switzerland.

The holiday camps are simple, well-equipped houses. The children will be in rooms with two to six beds, will eat together with the camp family, and are expected to help with daily tasks, such as dishes, etc. And the staff: every camp team consists of seven to ten people of various ages (min. 18), gender, and knowledge of languages. Most of these helpers live in Switzerland and either study or teach, and take part in camp during their own holidays. Each team is led by an experienced leader.

The camps offer the children much fun, games and sports, a cosy and family-like camp life, interesting visits and some knowledge about Swiss geography, history and actualities. They are the perfect opportunity to make new friends with children of the same age from a completely different part of the world, and with Swiss camp staff - contacts which often last longer than the two weeks of camps and go beyond all border lines of the world. During the camps, the children will visit and look at many of Switzerland's sights and do some easy hikes. The attractions include cities, countryside, mountains, gorges, caves, lakes, rivers, castles, fortresses, museums, etc. Transport will include train, ship, cablecar, on foot, etc... There will also be days to 'stay home'. Then the main activities will include playing games, sport, arts and crafts, swimming and much more. There will be opportunities for getting to know and experiencing Switzerland and its inhabitants. Time will be spent on Swiss languages, songs, cooking recipes, and typical games and sports. There will be plenty of time to pursue leisure activities, and make friends from all over the world.

The Swiss tour covers 20 lakes crossing the length and breadth of Switzerland, including travel by train, cycle tours, hiking, walking - plenty of sight-seeing - even a canoe trip - maybe some sailing and surfing - and of course swimming and games.

The Foundation's most important desire is that no Swiss child living abroad should be denied this camping opportunity for financial reasons. A reduction in camp fees can be applied for, and in special cases assistance can be given for the journey to Switzerland. There are no additional 'hidden' costs to those stated below and children should only be given a small amount of spending money.

Costs: Swiss Tour - SFr. 1,000, Summer camps - SFr. 750. (the various camps cater for different age groups)

Registration: Firstly, be sure that your child really does want to go to the camp. Applications to register must be received no later than **15th March**. In principle, applications are processed in order of receipt. Priority is given to children who have not attended another 2000 camp, and the number from any country is limited to one quarter per camp.

The Foundation now looks forward to the company of the many children from all corners of the world who will be travelling to camp in Switzerland next summer. *(no children from New Zealand have ever attended - Beatrice)*

CAN YOU HELP US?

We are currently considering running a competition to actively include our younger members - the children - in the Swiss Society and are looking for both sponsorship or donations for prizes. Ideas would also be welcome!

If you are able to assist us in any way, please contact Beatrice.

ANNUAL SUBS FOR 1999

Only a few more subs from Society members remain outstanding. Please - your immediate payment would be gratefully appreciated!!

GÜNSTIGE FERIEN UNTERKUNFT

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William Tells you more:

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