

Attendees:

Board: Ratna Cary, Meredith Farruk, Star Farruque, Juditha Ohlmacher, Melanie Rubenstein, and Lori Walsh.

Other: Deepa Chaturvedi-Swaroop, Betsy Gourlay, Tazima Majumdar, Sharlene Meisner, Anne Morrison, Carolyn Nerhus, and Jean Sack.

Traditionally, the Spring Tea is a final send-off and wrap-up of the year, a last chance to socialize with DAWC members before the summer, and the time to elect the next year's board. This year, the turnout was so low that elections for a new board were impossible. Initiated by the board, a discussion was held regarding the future of the DAWC.

Ø The role of the DAWC was historicized by Jean Sack.

§ In the 1970's there was no Community Liaison Office (CLO) at the US Embassy. The DAWC voluntarily performed many of the functions now covered by the CLO, including: welcoming new Americans, finding housing and jobs, offering local and international tours, keeping a servants registry, in general providing community to all Americans and creating a liaison with the Bangladeshi community.

§ When the CLO was established, it gradually took over many of these functions from the DAWC. Later, and especially recently, the CLO has closed its doors to any but the Embassy families, restricting access to the greater American community.

§ However, the DAWC was able to continue through the efforts of many women while the American community was still small and Dhaka city still had little to offer. The Embassy and the American Club continued to offer friendly support to the DAWC.

Ø Several trends presenting a challenge to the DAWC were discussed:

§ Most women are no longer non-working spouses but have full-time jobs themselves.

§ Many feel they would rather spend precious leisure time with their families than participate in activities which would draw time and energy from them.

§ The Embassy and its community have become very exclusive and inward-looking, and the DAWC feels it lacks support and clear lines of communication with them.

§ The political and security situation over the past 2 years has been disruptive to many DAWC activities.

§ This has also led many Americans to be hesitant to leave the diplomatic zone, and hence not participate in activities around or outside of Dhaka city.

§ Dhaka city (especially Gulshan) has become a much more interesting and dynamic city, offering many new restaurants and leisure activities.

§ The American community has grown so large that it has necessarily splintered into smaller niches: Embassy, American School, NGO workers, C3s, etc., who all have their own events which are often in competition with DAWC activities.

Ø Recent successes and disappointments of the DAWC were discussed:

§ The DAWC has tried to keep up the tradition of adult parties, yet none of these has made money in the past 3 years, and in fact have lost money and used a lot of time and emotional energy from those involved.

- § The largest money-maker, the Winter Bazaar, has become too large to handle without partnership of the BWA, and was not held this year at all due to political instability and lack of participation from members.
 - § Children's parties were in general felt to be the most successful, if not always financially, then certainly image- and community-wise.
 - § Smaller events like the Chocolate and Champagne party were also felt to be successful as social parties, if not financially.
 - § The Night with Jatra fashion show was also felt to be successful, though attendance was low and we ended up losing money on it. Those who attended appreciated the professionalism of even our teen models, the overall organization, décor, menu and the music provided by the DJs and the Folk Band.
- Ø Several women reported that they had come to Bangladesh thinking they could be of service to the Bangladeshi community. Several creative ideas were given, including:
 - § Trips to handicraft makers or sari weavers.
 - § Painting or other service to orphanages.
 - § Smaller trips within or near to Dhaka.
 - Ø Others expressed the wish for more, small social get-togethers, such as:
 - § Monthly Coffee socials (always scheduled for the same day each month).
 - § Shopping trips within Dhaka.
 - § Cultural demonstrations, from sari wearing to music to dance.
 - Ø Board Elections: Juditha pointed out that there not enough women had come forward to be on the board next year. The DAWC was now at a crisis point. She asked for suggestions from the members.
 - § Sharlene Meisner said that in the past, if there was no board in the Spring, the election could be postponed until the Fall Tea. This would allow for many new comers to arrive who might have enthusiasm and energy. This would mean, however, that a skeleton board must remain in place over the summer in order to hold the Fall Tea and Board Elections.
 - § Sharlene offered a motion to postpone the Elections until the Fall. The motion was seconded by Juditha. A vote was taken and the Aye's carried unanimously.
 - Ø Melanie and Lupe discussed issues with the cookbook. Lupe said the old translations were not correct, and the Association of Baptists has translation services which we could use to get a new translation. Lupe suggested doing a "100 Best" instead of all of them.
 - Ø The board sadly agreed that no money could be given to charities as the DAWC had not earned any money this year. Letters must be sent to all the applicants explaining the situation.
 - Ø Juditha agreed to write up notes on the Spring Tea discussion.
 - Ø Betsy Gourlay was thanked for her gracious hosting of the party.

Respectfully Submitted,
 Juditha Ohlmacher
 Secretary