



Summer 2010

# Profile of an HRFA Member Who's Making a Difference

By Kathy A. Megyeri

One of our newest, youngest, best-looking and most talented HRFA members travels regularly between Budapest and Washington, DC. In 2005-2009, he served at the Hungarian Embassy for four years as Political Officer and Press Attaché. In 2006, he was appointed the Embassy's Chief Creative Officer and in this capacity, he developed creative diplomacy. This young diplomat designed a new approach to public diplomacy that integrates popular culture, the entertainment media and the Internet-based new media to promote his native Hungary. He was the Coordinator of Hungarian October, the series of events in Washington, DC commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution in the fall of 2006.

Last summer, he returned to Hungary where he has been working as the Senior U.S. Desk Officer and EU-Americas Coordinator at the Foreign Ministry's Department for the Americas. He has reorganized the Young Diplomats Club of the Ministry and is currently the Club's leader. In Budapest, he has also been teaching European integration to American and European students at the joint program of Pázmány Catholic University and the University of San Francisco.

Zoltán Fehér, 33, holds a Juris Doctor (J.D.) Degree from Hungary's Pázmány Catholic University and two Masters degrees from Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest in American Studies and Political Science. As a Kellner Scholar, Zoltán attended Bard College in New York where he studied International Relations. Zoltán has also authored many publications, has been awarded several scholarships, speaks Hungarian and English fluently and German conversationally. For many years, Zoltán organized youth groups that brought students and young intellectuals together for domestic and foreign policy discussions. As Chairperson of the Central European Student Network, he headed an international umbrella organization of students from seven Central and Eastern European countries in 1999-2000. For three years, Zoltán taught Political Science and International Relations at his alma mater, Eötvös University. He is a talented pianist and studied composition at the Bartók Conservatory of Music in Budapest and often played for his fellow Hungarians in Washington.

What Zoltán brings to HRFA membership is intense organizational capabilities, diplomatic experience, and a youthful vigor and enthusiasm for our goals in promoting the Hungarian culture, language, and heritage. Amidst his busy schedule of booking events and traveling, he took the time to talk with me about why he joined HRFA.



*Zoltán, why did you purchase a policy from HRFA?*

As the Embassy's diplomat for public affairs, I had been in charge of coordinating our outreach to the Hungarian-American community since 2006. HRFA is an important organization of this community, quite active nationally and in the Washington area. HRFA headquarters are in the beloved Kossuth House, which is a wonderful home to great community events. I have had the opportunity to participate at, or co-organize, many of these events myself. Through the collaboration and friendship that I developed with HRFA, and especially with its President Leslie Megyeri, I came to respect and appreciate HRFA and its work. My initial reason for joining HRFA and purchasing a policy was to support this important community organization.

*You are still single so what made you think of purchasing an insurance policy?*

Yes, I am single but I do look forward to having my own family in a few years, and it is important for me to look ahead and start building a foundation for the next chapter in my personal life.



*What advice would you give to others who are considering an HRFA life insurance policy?*

HRFA's policy is reliable, offers many options and is inexpensive. I have recommended to many of my friends that they purchase a policy and become active in the organization. I encourage the new generation of Hungarian-Americans to consider joining HRFA and purchasing a policy.

*Is it important to you that HRFA supports the Hungarian language, culture, and religions of Hungarians in America?*

Absolutely. My membership in HRFA is mostly based on my support for the preservation of the Hungarian culture, language and churches in the United States. I have the highest regard for what the Hungarian community has achieved and what it has contributed to American society.

*Why purchase from a faith-based organization instead of a commercial company?*

Many people are not aware of the noble beginnings of this organization. HRFA was established by Protestant Hungarian immigrant workers who believed in social justice. It is my conviction that religious fraternal organizations like HRFA symbolize and serve the sense of solidarity that should bind us all together.

*How important is it to you that the Kossuth House is located in the Nation's Capital? What impressions do you have when you visit the Home Office and attend its cultural programs?*

Over four years, the Kossuth House became one of my homes in Washington. I spent so many great evenings there with my friends, whether it was HRFA celebrating Hungarian National Day or watching movies with Hungarian-America Foundation members or organizing the Carl Lutz Exhibit with the Hungarian American Coalition. I even spoke to a class of Hungarian language students there two years ago. Of course, the best memory I have about this wonderful gathering place is the fantastic Farewell Reception HRFA hosted for me where my friends from the Hungarian community and from my personal and professional life came together to honor me and my service for U.S.-Hungarian relations. My mother even traveled from Budapest to attend. Thank you to everyone at HRFA for that evening that I will never forget!

*How were you impacted by the fact that HRFA was founded over 100 years ago and that its charter was signed by President Theodore Roosevelt?*

I am proud to be a member of this honorable and legendary organization. I will continue working to build bridges between Hungary and America as well as between Hungary and the Hungarian American community, always including HRFA.

*What do you think of the personnel and quality of service you receive from HRFA's Home Office?*

I am proud to call everyone at the Home Office "my friends." They are not only always professional but also kind and thoughtful. I wish to express my thanks especially to Les, Petra, and Melinda for what they have done for me personally. More importantly, they have always worked toward the best possible relations with the Embassy and with Hungary, and I was happy to partner with them.



Zoltán Fehér and Stephen Colbert

*What do you recommend that HRFA do to increase public awareness of its products?*

I highly commend the personnel for seeing the important value of the organization's website. As a pioneer and active practitioner of e-diplomacy, I cannot stress enough the significance of the new media—the Internet-based tools of communication—in today's social and economic environment. If HRFA wants to reach a new generation of members and make them new policyholders, it should continue to focus and improve its website as a major outreach for public affairs and the Kossuth House is one of their most precious assets. Millions of other community organizations would love to have a headquarters like this.

*You personify the youth and vitality that our organization needs to flourish in the future. How can HRFA appeal to more new, young Hungarians as they arrive here?*

Trying to keep the Kossuth House is just one aspect. HRFA should continue keeping an open door at the Kossuth House for many events and cooperate with an ever-widening array of groups and organizations. This precious home should always serve as a natural meeting place for young and older Hungarians, especially for newcomers who are looking for understanding, support and a healthy social life.



Kathy Megyeri, Zoltan, Gail Scott, HRFA President Les Megyeri at Zoltan's farewell party at the Embassy

*Last summer, you returned to Hungary as your four-year term at the Embassy had ended. What memories did you take home with you? Will you keep in touch with HRFA and the Hungarian-American community?*

Washington has become my second home and so has the Hungarian American community. I have devoted much of my studies and my diplomatic career to strengthening the relations between the United States and Hungary. I am currently working at the U.S. Desk in the Hungarian Foreign Ministry. I have kept in touch with HRFA and the community and hope to come back to visit my friends often, and I hope they will come to see me in Budapest! Professionally, I have worked for the friendship between America and Hungary, and I have also found many personal friends during this fantastic voyage. I'm not sure what the future holds for me, but I know I can promise, with a favorite song in my mind and in my heart, that "friends will be friends." Fraternity and friendship are for life.

## Hungary Mailing List Success Story



A posting on the Hungary Mailing List was my first thought. It would be the best and only way that I could think of to help.

Monsignor was born on September 4, 1926 in Matyó, Ung Megye. He attended gimnázium in Ungvár and began his theology studies. The 1950's brought about many hardships. Priests and fellow students who were studying for the priesthood were ordered to forced labor camps. In 1958, when restrictions were eased, he was able to return and finish his education. Monsignor Kocsis was finally ordained on June 21, 1970 in Pozsony and began his service in Kassa. In 1974, he was assigned to Csécs and served there until his retirement in 2002. The Mass was held in Doboruszka because people from all the surrounding towns benefited from his service and they wanted to thank him. At the conclusion of the Mass, the Pastor Weiser Atilla put a book by the flowers and explained the significance of the book. It was written by Gárdonyi Géza and entitled *Egri Csillagok*.

Eger had a castle, which today is mostly in ruins. This was the place that Dobó István held off the Turkish Army saving Hungary and Hungarian Christianity.

To the members of the Hungary Mailing List, I wrote the last known address of Monsignor István Kocsis: 07901, Matovce.

Very soon after, I received a telephone call from someone in New Jersey. A friend in Michigan had seen my posting on the Hungary Mailing List and called his friend in New Jersey. His words were "Monsignor Kocsis is alive and well." In fact, there were friends from Doboruszka staying with him who knew of the Monsignor.

On a very poignant note, my friend who was looking for her cousin was hit by a car in front of our Church. She had been hospitalized and has been recuperating at home for a long time.

Mrs. Margaret Paull,  
*Branch Manager, 501, 502 and 250*

**A** friend from my St. Michael's Byzantine Catholic Church in Perth Amboy, New Jersey asked for my assistance in trying to locate her first cousin, retired Roman Catholic Monsignor István Kocsis from Slovakia. The family had not heard from him since 2007 when he was hit by a train and was recuperating on crutches. The family would very much like to put some form of closure to his life.