

Growing your travel/study program

(photo – Air France, photo – Expo)

Background

The McGill alumni educational travel program is more than 40 years old with tours being organized to Expo in 1967 and traveling to France under the Graduates Society of McGill University banner in 1965. Unfortunately, much of the information we have from the early years of the program is anecdotal as many trips were never recorded on our database.

Over the past several years we have made a concerted effort to enhance our travel program, in number of trips and in number of passengers. We feel very strongly that programs such as educational travel offer our graduates a service that they cannot find anywhere else, and by participating they remain engaged and interested in the university.

(photo – young alumni)

Our research shows that the more alumni can be made to feel they are part of an active and engaged network that is focused on ways to keep people in touch with each other and with the university, the more a spirit of community will grow. The more informed and engaged our graduates are, the more likely they are to respond favourably to fundraising solicitations.

Our research also shows a very strong link between travelers and donations. For example - between 2000 – 2005 we had 848 people (alumni and friends) travel with us

(slide – graph 1)

- Of this 848, 468 are alumni
- 86% of our alumni travelers are donors
- 16% of our non-alumni travelers are donors

During this time, the combined lifetime giving of alumni and friends was \$4,630,715.81

(slide – graph 2)

The total lifetime giving of alumni travelers only is \$3,065,081.76

- So while only 16% of non-alumni travelers donate, they give big, with their total lifetime giving at: \$1,565,634.10
- Of particular note for both groups (alumni and friends) are the giving levels that show up in the statistics: 61% of donor travelers give in the \$500 - \$10,000 range

These are obviously people we want to keep active within the university. They show an interest in our programs and reward our efforts with donations.

Hosts

We have come to realize over the past few years that the role a host plays on an alumni trip is almost as important as the quality of the trip itself. In the past year we have nearly tripled the number of hosts we send on trips and have recently seen the benefits of having staff, faculty and alumni accompany our graduates around the world.

(slide – host numbers)

So what is a host?

Taken from the McGill Host information booklet:

You have been chosen as a **host** because of your special ability and experience in relating to the McGill Alumni Association and our alumni. Your role is to cooperate with the tour company director in routine tasks as needed; however, **ONLY YOU** can operate the "**McGill Spotlight**". If you are a staff member, talk about the McGill Alumni

Association and its operations; if you are a Board Member, talk about what you have learned or enjoyed in your service, about your positions or current issues at McGill; if you are an alumnus or a friend, talk about your affinity to McGill. Each tour host should **know facts** about the McGill Alumni Association and McGill University.

Remember, **as tour host you are the McGill Alumni Association and the McGill University *Good Will Ambassador***. What you do or neglect to do reflects directly on the MAA and the University. We know that you will do the best possible job and we wish you a happy, safe and memorable trip!

Who makes the best host?

(photo – saber)

To me – it will always be the person with the saber and the champagne, but not everyone here will agree.

(2 photos – hosts)

The best hosts are your closest colleagues. You want a host who will make the trip hassle-free, who will troubleshoot for you, eat dinner with the cranky couple, and who will best represent your institution.

(photo – hare Krishna)

you can't have someone who could be inappropriate (in speech or dress), who will actively fundraise or will not treat everyone equally.

(slide)

Development/Alumni colleague
Other McGill staff or faculty
Senior staff member
Volunteer

(2 photos)

The host is the person who figuratively and literally waves the flag. They set up the proper photo and are around to capture ones such as this in Antarctica.

Using a staff host allows you to work closely with your colleagues in other departments and maximizes the benefits of their travel.

(photo – Susan Cape Town)

This photo was taken in Cape Town a few weeks ago. Knowing the group would be at this particular hotel for a few days allowed Susan to work with her colleagues in Regional Branches and arrange an alumni event for Cape Town graduates. It was a small reception – but the connection would never have been made if we weren't in South Africa with the travel program.

(photo – Cape Town 1954)

And in fact, there has been little alumni activity in Cape Town since this particularly lively event in 1954.

The host adds an extra dimension to the trip and strengthens the connection between the graduate and the university. This is what some of our travelers had to say about some recent hosts:

Last year's Journey of the Czars with a staff and volunteer host.

(photo and narration – Honora and Sally)

“Honora Shaughnessy and Sally McDougall were great representatives of McGill University and made our trip very enjoyable. They made us feel welcomed. Thanks again!”

Panama Canal 2007 with volunteer host and faculty host/lecturers

(photos and narration - Panama)

“We had a good number of after-the-lecture interactions throughout the cruise, many leading to extended discussions. We prefaced our combined lecture by remarking on our team-teaching in the McGill School of the Environment, which lead to one alumna saying afterwards that watching us “teach together” had affirmed her commitment to donate to the MSE.”

Tuscany 2006 with combined staff and spouse host:

(photo and narration)

"Great, great trip. Great group of travelers. Our guides were just great. Saw a lot, learned a lot. Susan and Michael (McGill hosts) were just wonderfully helpful."

Holland and Belgium 2007

(photo and narration)

“The cruise was excellent and your representative, Mrs. Cynthia Price, who accompanied us, was perfect for the job. She was always upbeat and enthusiastic and willing to help us in any way possible.”

The most direct and rewarding benefit of the host is the information they bring back to the University. Information that, under normal circumstances, could take years for your research department to discover. And information that often leads to significant gifts to the institution.

(photo – Wendy)

Italian Lakes 2006 : The host was the then Director of the Annual Fund – she received a planned gift from one of her travelers upon their return.

But of particular interest are these two examples:

Galapagos Islands 2007: The host was the Director of Student Aid and International Student Services –

(photo and narration)

“Many of the participants assumed that my role was to be a fundraiser for the University. Although I tried to dispel this notion by telling them of my role to administer donor funds according to their wishes and to ensure a good stewardship of student award funds, I think I actually created more interest than less.”

“(the graduate) would be interested in setting up a scholarship in memory of his late wife. He has asked me for information on award funding levels and to call him for lunch if ever I am in New York. I will need advice on how/if DAUR wants me to proceed with this.”

We did indeed follow up with this piece of information. On a recent trip to New York,

the Executive Director met with this gentleman and secured a \$100,000 donation to scholarships. We would never have known his interest if we hadn't sent a host on this trip. It is also interesting to note that this graduate was a serial alumni traveler – having taken at least 15 trips with us over the years.

And this, regarding a gentleman who traveled extensively with us over for more than 20 years. To Switzerland, Holland, Great Britain, Journey of the Czars, Footsteps of Mozart. And in doing so, spent a great deal of time with one of our favourite hosts, the Director of Planned Giving, who had this to say:

“ . . . there should be some mention of the number of times that Mr. and Mrs. X traveled on the McGill Alumni Trips I feel this is very important as the work that our Alumni Association does through this travel program (and other programs) is critical to graduates and friends becoming much

closer to the University and contributing in the magnitude of the X's. I know in reading back through Mr. X's file, he mentioned on a number of occasions the closeness he felt to the University through these trips and through certain individuals that were working in the Alumni Association who in turn were also hosts on the trips the X's participated in.

I believe that this is a prime example of an individual or individuals who have not been regularly contacted by McGill's fund-raising operation over the many, many years but have had numerous engaging encounters with McGill that have been solely facilitated through our McGill Alumni Association.”

Mr. X died a few months ago, leaving the university \$500,000 in his will.