

Principal Exchange

By Cathy Tyson

There's a reason Miramonte High School Associate Principal Sharon Bartlett's Spanish is getting better every day. Both she and Principal Silvio Rasmusen of Leonardo da Vinci High School in Rio Cuarto are participants in the Fulbright Fellowship Exchange Program. Rasmusen is here for three weeks shadowing her and doesn't speak much English.

Rasmusen's school in Argentina is on holiday at the moment. Bartlett plans to reverse roles, visiting in July when Miramonte is on summer break.

Since 1946, The Fulbright Program has facilitated exchanges with teachers, administrators, graduate students, and professionals to increase mutual understanding. Sponsored and administered by the U.S. Department of State and the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, this is a unique opportunity for both Bartlett and Rasmusen to learn about each other's culture, schools, and teenage behavior.

Rasmusen is the principal of a private school with 180 students from seventh to twelfth grade in the center of Rio Cuarto, population 150,000, in the Cordoba province, located in the center of Argentina. This is not his first trip to the U.S. He taught at a school in Miami for a month, and has been to Cuba as part of a conference.

The biggest difference between Miramonte and his school is the students stay in the same classroom, while the teachers rotate through six periods each day. There the school day runs from 7:45 in the morning until 1:45 in the afternoon, when the students go home to have lunch and siesta. Usually only the students that have afternoon P.E. or after school sports stay and have lunch at school.

Rasmusen was overwhelmed at a recent Matador football game with the number of students, players, cheerleaders and little cheerleaders in training that happened to be there that night. Halloween was another big surprise; neither it nor Day of the Dead is celebrated in Argentina. He took a number of photos of costumed students and staff.

Overall he was impressed by how orderly and well behaved the students are at Miramonte. Especially at lunch or brunch, when the bell rang, within five minutes all 1,400 students were back in class. In visits to Spanish classes he noted there were lots of questions by the



Sharon Bartlett, Associate Vice Principal Miramonte High School and Principal Silvio Rasmusen of Leonardo da Vinci High School

Photo Andy Scheck

students about Eva Peron and husband President Juan Peron.

While at Glorietta Elementary School, Rasmusen remarked just how different parent involvement is here. In Argentina, families are tightly knit, especially since teens can't get a driver's license until 18, but parents do not help out at school. He saw firsthand the number of parent volunteers in the classroom and serving hot lunch.

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