Editor's NEWS

A big thank you to all the kids that entered our cover competition for the Summer issue of the Connecting Worlds. The winning entry for ‘design a cover depicting Summer’ was created by Samuel Koppier from Groningen. Honorable mentions go to Nihal de Groot (age 5) for her Hansel and Gretel gingerbread house and Alex Maagdenberg’s toad.

Also, you may notice that there have been a few changes in this issue. With the ever increasing activities & events to choose from, the monthly calendars have each been given a whole page and renumbered. I hope this makes following what’s going on a lot easier, it certainly saves on the eye strain experienced whilst creating it.

With no particular theme apparent in this issue and as Summer often is, this issue is a smorgasbord of information and people as well as things to do and see.

Whilst Roy Franken Annex tells us about the bi-centenary of Plaza Danza on page 4 Jane Stephen-son tells us about the importance of having a website.

We also have an interview with Canadian, Peter Jagiello (founder of Street Kids International) on page 10.

For those of you looking to get more in touch with yourself and your fellow planet dwellers, why not try a Bodenca workshop? Members of CHN Ltd and really enjoyed themselves.

The Spring meeting of NIKS and Blance Vergura’s the CEO of MC was enthusiastically received by all attending (or page 12).

A regular visitor to the States, Tjaltje Zuidema tells us about Co-op City in New York on page 13.

Local TV celebrity, Bero Hoffman, gives us an insight as to just how interesting Groningen can be if you take a peek into its Historical past, on page 19.

On the artsy side, we feature the Elf Fantasy Fair, (held annually in April) where pointed ears are the accessory of the day. Our featured artist is the talented, Wood Magician, also known as Arjan Romenger.

We all hope that you have a great summer!

Allison Day

Welcome:


Connecting your Business

advertisement rates per quarterly advert

1/8 page (6.25 x 9.25 cm) € 50,00
1/4 page (12.50 x 9.50 cm) € 100,00
1/2 page (25.00 x 9.30 cm) € 200,00
1 page (A4 - 21.00 x 29.70 cm) € 400,00
Back Page (A4) € 500,00

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Under One Roof

Connect International serves the international community in the provinces Groningen, Friesland, Drenthe, and Noord Holland.

Supported by an international staff and Board of Directors, Connect International provides quality relocation services, personal expatriate support, and professional business opportunities.

Connect offers information to help familiarize international residents with the practical and commercial aspects of living in the Northern Netherlands, and organizes events and activities to provide social, cultural, and educational support.
Contents
Connecting Worlds: 2-5, 10, 11
Activities & Events: 6, 7 & 8
Business & Finance: 12-13
Education & Culture: 14, 16-17
Leisure & Travel: 18-19

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Hingstman, Jane Stephenson, Roy Tweeboom.
Plaza Danza

Dancing & Events with a Latin Twist!

In April of this year, Plaza Danza celebrated its second anniversary. Owner Roy Tweebom looks back and ahead.

It all started with a dream, a few years ago. Initially Roy dreamt about creating a place that would focus mainly on dancing, but it gradually developed into a broader concept. Plaza Danza became a multifunctional space, suited for different types of dance classes, parties and (business) meetings. Nowadays, Plaza Danza is well on its way to using its full potential, Roy says.

"People who come here for the first time, are usually surprised as soon as they enter Plaza Danza after having passed through the small alley leading up to it. I can imagine their reaction, because who would expect to walk into a place like this, just a few steps away from the typical Dutch surroundings of the city centre of Groningen. It has a completely different feel to it, a warm Latin touch."

What makes Plaza Danza stand out from the crowd, is definitely its Latin twist. The interior has a warm glow to it, courtesy of the wood elements (such as the impressive staircase and the dance floor) and the comfortable red seats of the lounge area.

Up to now, Plaza Danza has been host to different types of events and is always looking to expand its possibilities. Tweebom illustrates: "We offer dance classes such as salsa, zumba, jive and bachata. Consequently there are a lot of dance parties, but also wedding- bachelor- and graduation parties, cocktail workshops and business meetings, to name but a few activities. People are always welcome to introduce their ideas, to come have a look and to explore the possibilities. Feel free to contact us!"

www.plazadanza.nl

GRONINGSE SCHOOLVERENIGING

The International School is a department (±60 pupils) within a Dutch primary school. We aim to hold the educational needs of multicultural English and non-English speaking pupils between the ages of 4 and 11. The curriculum is British based with an international twist (IFC). Lessons are given by qualified native English speaking teachers. For further contact you can send an email or call Mr T Ingram, Headmaster
Much has been written about the excessive snow and ice of the hard winter of 2010. It seemed at times that January closed down, as one by one sporting events and social gatherings were cancelled. The treacherous travelling conditions forced the Connect Noord Holland Networking Group to postpone their scheduled January meeting. Undaunted, the members were determined to attend the rescheduled meeting which finally took place at a new venue on Saturday 20th February.

The dining room of Anna de Goali’s house was packed with group members. Several of the audience were actively in the process of setting up new websites, or updating their existing websites. A quick poll found that there were many reasons to have a website, from simply advertising a business, to publicising an NGO, to setting up a site providing information and listings of amenities in Noord Holland.

Rachel Dix introduced René van der Waals, a talented software developer and owner of Scap Design www.scapedesign.eu. René bravely faced the room to share his expertise on website development. He was able to cast light on why and how website design has evolved, and the advantages of content management systems such as “Joomla” which enable technically challenged website owners to operate interactive websites once the frames have been set up professionally.

He went on to discuss how to get a domain name, where best to find website hosting companies and how the growth of social networking sites, such as LinkedIn, Hyves, Facebook and Twitter are currently changing the way information is shared over the internet. He also covered ways of generating income from your website, with follow up with demonstrations of different types of websites accessing the Internet with laptops.

Once the general presentation was over, the group related personal pitfalls and successes of their own websites and blogs, whilst relaxing with tea, coffee and excellent cakes provided once again by Anna.

Jane Stephenson
## July 2010

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### Highlights

**CONNECT**

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10:30 - 12:30</td>
<td>@ Coffee United</td>
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<td>Join us for a cup of your favourite warm beverage and a chance to meet up with other internationals! <a href="http://www.coffeeunited.nl">www.coffeeunited.nl</a> (Dutch)</td>
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<td>Ubbo Emmiuszestrasz 94A, Groningen</td>
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**CONNECT HORSE RIDING & ANNUAL BBQ**

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<tr>
<td>Sunday 4 July</td>
<td>14:00 hrs</td>
<td>@ HippoLink Centrum Rosendal, Zuiden</td>
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**CNH**

**Book Club**

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<td>15 July</td>
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**Kids & Coffee**

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<td>2, 16 July</td>
<td>09:00-11:30 hrs</td>
<td>@ Sarah Bakker, Alkmaar</td>
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**CNH Coffee Morning**

- **Page Dimensions:** 595.0x842.0
- **Image:** 90x174 to 507x770
- **Date:** July 2010
- **Events:**
  - Canada Day: 1 July 2010
  - Dr John & the Lower 811: 2 July 2010
  - Tanabata: 3 July 2010
  - CNH Kids & Coffee: 10, 17, 24 July 2010
  - CNH Evening Coffee: 17 July 2010

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**CONNECT Horse Riding & Annual BBQ**

- **Date:** Sunday 4 July
- **Time:** 14:00 hrs
- **Place:** HippoLink Centrum Rosendal, Zuiden
- **Cost:** TBA
- **RSVP:** 26 June
- **Description:** Discover the gorgeous countryside of the Zeijes area in Drentse from the back of a horse or in a huffkar (covered wagon) and finish the day with a country style BBQ

**CNH Story Time**

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**CNH Play Afternoon**

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**CNH Evening Coffee**

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<tr>
<td>9 July 2010</td>
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**CNH Book Club**

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**CNH Kids & Coffee**

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## August 2010

### HIGHLIGHTS:

**CONNECT**
初三 (Groningen, Ereild, Bruga)
- **CONNECT COFFEE MORNING**
  - **Date:** 23 August
  - **Time:** 10.30 - 12.30
  - **Place:** Coffee United, Ubbo Emmishovenstraat 34C, Groningen
  - **Cost:** whatever you choose to eat or drink
- **CNH (Noord Holland)**
  - **CNH BBQ (ADULT)**
    - **Date:** 23 August

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### ACTIVITIES & EVENTS

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<td>Lassus (Christian)</td>
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<td>1944: Anne Frank Captured</td>
<td>1992: Marilyn Monroe Died</td>
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<td>1974: Nixon resigns</td>
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<td>CNN Story Time 10-01-11/00 @ fan website</td>
<td>1990: Skeleton of Tyrannosaurus Rex Discovered</td>
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<td>2017: Hiroshima Day</td>
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<td>Demolition of the Theotokos (Orthodox Christian)</td>
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<td>Burning Spear</td>
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<td>CNN Kids &amp; Coffee 9:00 - 11:30 hrs @ Emma Ruine</td>
<td>Hoornsestraat 6, Nijmegen</td>
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<td>School Vacation School Break</td>
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<td>CNH Play Afternoon 14:00-16:30</td>
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<td>2017: Princess Diana Died</td>
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<td>Beheading of John the Baptist (Christian)</td>
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**Please Check www.connect-inc.org - Not all Events Can be Listed at the Time of Printing**

**CONNECT**
- **Date:** 28 August
- **Time:** 10.00 - 11.30 hrs
- **Place:** Emma Ruine, Hoornsestraat 6, Nijmegen
- **Cost:** see calendar/website

**CNH KIDS & COFFEE**
- **Date:** 6, 20 August
- **Time:** 09.00 - 11.30 hrs
- **Place:** See calendar/website

**CNH STORY TIME**
- **Date:** 11 August
- **Time:** 10.00 - 11.30 hrs
- **Place:** See website

**CNH (Noord Holland)**
- **CNH Play Afternoon**
  - **Date:** 25 August
## Activities & Events

### September 2010

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<td>CONNECT Family Fun Day 14.00 hrs @ Hoornse Plas Groeningen</td>
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<td>CNI Kids &amp; Coffee 9.00 - 11.30 hrs @ Martinus Langeland Winder, Akkrum</td>
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<td>CNI Story Time 10.00-12.00 hrs @ Narelle Hoppe de Loo, Roord Scharuwoude</td>
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<td>EELS Underwater Groningen 20.30 hrs</td>
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### Highlights:
- Please check www.connect-int.org for more information.
- Not all events can be listed at the time of printing.

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### CONNECT
- Groningen, Friesland, Enschede

**CONNECT FAMILY FUN DAYS**
- Date: 5 September
- Time: 14.00 hrs
- Place: Hoornse Plas, Groningen

**CONNECT LADIES NIGHT OUT**
- Date: 15 September
- Time: 10.30-12.30 hrs
- Place: Cinema Pathé, Groningen

**CONNECT COFFEE MORNING**
- Date: 24 September
- Time: 20.00 hrs
- Place: Coffee United, Groningen

**CONNECT**
- Groningen, Friesland, Enschede

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### CNI CAFE PIT-STOP
- Date: 8 September
- Time: 09.30 hrs
- Place: Intermezzo (De Loo)

### CNI BOOK CLUB
- Date: 15 September
- Time: 20.00 hrs
- Place: Julia Nordmame, Heiloo

### CNI NETWORKING MEETING
- Date: 4 September
- Time: 14.00 - 17.00 hrs
- Place: See website

### CNI KIDS & COFFEE
- Date: 3, 17 September
After returning to Amsterdam from Belgium my bags were barely on the ground when my husband, Michel, announced that he was going to watch the time trials of the Giro d’Italia and that I was most welcome to join him. He is a lover of all sports, I am not, but I’m always up for something new. Plus the bragging rights alone were worth a look.

Off we went on a cold, overcast, rainy day. On the way there I expected large crowds of people in a celebratory mood, unfortunately that was not the case. For such a large event I expected more in the realm of promotion and thought the whole city would be dressed out in pink. The people of Amsterdam did not catch the Giro bug. Anyway, as we approached Museumplein, where the prologue started, I began to see people in their pink t-shirts and baseball caps. There were Italians selling souvenirs from vans and a number of stands. My husband was saying that he was very surprised that we were able to find a place at the beginning of the prologue right in the front. He had expected to walk kilometers before finding a spot.

After I had managed to weasel my way to the front, I started to take in the atmosphere. I kid you not, there was a man dressed as a devil. Hubby says he shows up to many of the famous cycling events. Even though I didn’t know any of the participants, I got into the spirit of the event. I have to say I enjoyed watching the cyclists room by in their colorful ensembles. I thought I would only be there a while but I spent the whole afternoon cheering them on. As I mentioned before, I am not into sports. As a favor to Michel, I took hundreds of photos while standing around talking shop with the other photographers after which my fingers and legs were so stiff I could barely move them. Of course, my curiosity was now piqued. I got home and researched the Giro d’Italia. There weren’t that many people watching. There were mostly people on bikes from the nearby buildings. On the upside, I was able to find an excellent spot to watch.
KIDS IN THE CO-OP

Co-op City, The Coop, is a sprawling, densely populated complex of high-rises on 338 acres of former marshland, next to the Bronx River, situated in the Baychester area of the Bronx.

Before developers broke ground for Co-op City in 1964, the site was the site of a short-lived, financially troubled theme park, Freesland U.S.A. This was acclaimed in its time as the world’s largest outdoor family entertainment centre, it lasted from June, 1963 through 1964. In colonial times the British crown deeded the land to Sir Thomas Pet, after who nearby Pelham Manor and Pelham Parkway are named. The main road to Co-op City, Bartow Avenue, is named after John Bartow, winner of a Revolutionary War gristmill on the Bronx.

Co-op City is the largest cooperative housing project in the United States, it consists of 9,725 two towers, as well as 9 town-house clusters. The high-rise buildings range from 24 floors to 33, and many have terraces, some with spectacular views of Long Island Sound and even the financial district in Lower Manhattan. The Co-op complex was built in 1966 under the Limited Profit Housing Law, also known as the Mitchell-Lama program, which finances moderate-income housing. From the very beginning, it attracted residents of diverse race, religion and nationality, for whom homeownership had been a dream before.

Famous Residents

Photo: www.brooklyn.com

WELCOME TO CO-OP CITY

Co-op City has had its problems but today it is home to three shopping centres, each with its own supermarket, dry cleaner, restaurants, shops and community rooms for cultural events and private parties.

Privatization

Of the complex’s 55,000 current residents, more than 8,500 are over 60. About 58% are black, 36% Hispanic and 5% white. The inhabitants may be on the verge of facing unknown challenges: Co-op City’s elected 15-member board of directors, which oversees the Riverbay Management Corporation, contemplates removing the complex from the income guide-

middle schools and a high school, which serve 2,554 students and a planetarium. For all the different religions, 15 houses of worship have opened. There is a 13-screen theatre in Bay Plaza Shopping Centre. There are, however, no bars or theatres in the Co-op City, but Manhattan is easily accessible by regular bus and train (from Pelham Bay Links, or the more expensive express bus. There are six nursery schools and day-care centres, four basketball courts and five baseball diamonds. A running track and the largest park of New York, Pelham Bay Park, only two bus stops away.

For older residents, three centres serve but lunch six days a week and offer social activities.

There are teen’s clubs and playgrounds for smaller children. Even though the layout of the complex gives you a sense of being in the city, children play outside without an adult. In the summer vacations kids go to camp. In fall, they sit at home in front of a screen, either a TV or a computer. In winter, a game, a Make-Bow, unless their aunt from Holland takes them out to the beach.

...Orchard beach, the name sounds like a bucolic island with romance in the air, but the name does not totally live up to expectations. The beach is a man-made bay, no waves, no palm trees, but with a snack bar where funnel cake is sold, fat and just how an American likes it.

Today I am taking my husband's niece out to the beach. For Lisa, the eleven year old it is all about training, black as she already is. Seven-year-old Julia just wants to swim. Dilemma, should I leave Lisa on the crowded beach by herself, this is America after all! Since she does not really look too bothered about it, I take my chance. The seawater is pleasantly cool and refreshing as long as I do not pay any attention to what is floating around me, something similar to a jellyfish, used condoms, toilet paper in decay. Julia dips head down in the water, her fine black hair is turned into swirling pipes immediately, who needs cycling. In the winter, when you can go to Orchard Beach? Lately she has been wearing her hair, it makes her look more mature. Even and already a beauty, with heavy black eyebrows and gorgeous almond shaped eyes, long dense eyebrows and sensitive lips. A mocha tan. I am beautiful," she explains regularly, thriving lines of Mitchell-Lama, as the law provides after a project has existed for at least 20 years, the units can be traded at competitive prices on the open market. It was a consideration about four years ago, but structural problems in the complex's eight garages forced the management to close them all for repairs. With the garages now reopened, the privatization issue is back on the table.

Society, school and sports

A 15-acre educational park includes three elementary schools, two middle schools and a high school, which serve 2,554 students and a planetarium. For all the different religions, 15 houses of worship have opened. There is a 13-screen theatre in Bay Plaza Shopping Centre. There are, however, no bars or theatres in the Co-op City, but Manhattan is easily accessible by regular bus and train (from Pelham Bay Links, or the more expensive express bus. There are six nursery schools and day-care centres, four basketball courts and five baseball diamonds. A running track and the largest park of New York, Pelham Bay Park, only two bus stops away.

Fortunately every room in an American home contains a TV and I do not regard Julia as a child who needs any longer. All I see is a dominant diva who wants to get her own way.

Half an hour later, she blushingly caves into bed with me, with my left hand I tightly slap her right thigh to have her still love her and to do, as if she were my own daughter. Watching a program about elephants, a wild elephant gives birth to a premature calf, the baby elephant passing away after a couple of days. Julia asks me why this happens. I explain to her that the young elephant is premature and not viable. This happens often, even with human babies. Everything that lives, dies eventually. Wise old me again... She rests attentively. "I wish I was sand," she replies reflecting upon my concise master class on life and death. "You wish you were sand!" asks her surprised. "Why can’t I do it?" “Then I wouldn’t die.” Thank God, there still exists a sweet little girl behind the diva.

Tjitske Zuidersaad
Biodanza opens the channels for meeting with others. Creativity here is not about aesthetics, but a deeper form we have been given that we have to channel and use, which can be life changing. As creativity begins to flow you become the central character in your life and you can use it to fulfill your need to create a relationship, a moment or a future. Creativity is how you create and live your life for yourself and others.

Sensuality is inherent in all every aspect of life but rarely acknowledged — in a smile, a gesture, a hand held gently. We have become very good at hiding our sensuality and sensuality, by using a code of safe behaviour, often producing serious conflicts. The exercises give expression to these sensory feelings, allowing this area of life to be gently explored and the capacity for intimacy and sensuality becomes substantially increased.

Transcendence is that moment where you go beyond yourself. It is a step outside your current self and an opening towards increased human potential. The possibility to see further than the moment and "Integration". Sitting in a circle we shared our definitions of integration, which were diverse as the group included a Dutch lady who lived in the UK and is presently re-integrating back into Dutch society, another Dutch friend of Marleen’s was currently living in Canada and had come back to visit, plus those of us who had been in Holland a number of years.

I think we were all surprised at how the afternoon flowed; no one was embarrassed or felt out of place. Everyone was connecting, smiling, happy and enjoying themselves. We were encouraged to move as the music took us, with some guidance from Marleen, who explained how each section was composed.

We began by walking in a circle in the direction of the Earth’s movement, feeling the rhythm of the music and gradually incorporating our own movements and expanding the circle. Following that we worked with a partner, one taking the lead from the other and this continued throughout the dance. During the tribal dance (bringing the group together creating a wonderful atmosphere) we were bound together by the movement of our feet, in a continuous circular motion the circle increased and decreased at intervals, whilst our feet emphasized the rhythm. We played a “full” game, trying to put a hand on someone’s knees, shoulders or hands, depending which was called, joining up as a tight knot in order to place hands in the right places.

Towards the end of the afternoon Marleen began to ask us to focus on ourselves giving us time for reflection. Standing once again in a circle, each person put their hands on the head of the person in front of them. Taking turns and paying attention the hands were moved over the head, neck and back. It was a lovely sensation; one lady behind me had extremely warm hands and produced a very soothing, calming effect as they embraced me.

To finish the afternoon we walked around the room with hands open, some palms up, some palms down. We were giving to and receiving from each other in a most extraordinary way. Being on the receiving end was quite overwhelming, it being more acceptable to give rather than to receive in today’s society, it touched me deeply.

Marleen van Koeversing
www.biodanzametrarleen.nl
Blanca Vergara gave a seminar for the Connect International ladies network LINKS, in Café Lent in Groningen. With a very multicultural international group of 35 ladies, we had amazing evening with Blanca. In a two-hour seminar we learnt how to become the "CEO of Me" again and how to connect to what we really want in life. With her message coming from her heart and based on real life experience, she was able to awaken our souls.

Taking a look at some of the comments left on her website by participants, it was found to be an inspiring, re-energizing and encouraging evening.

Blanca Vergara, better known as the MDA (Moving Beyond Achievement) Diva, is without any doubt a multi cultural, international woman with her Aztec – Spanish – English background and ability to speak three languages. This MDA lady is a woman of many talents. After an MSc degree in Information Systems, her career took off in the American banking business. A career switch in the late 90’s brought her to the Netherlands, where she obtained her MBA from the Rotterdam School of Management. This in turn led to her becoming a partner in a very successful international consulting business, followed by a management position at the European Space Agency (ESA) in Noordwijk.

In 2006 Blanca decided she was ready for a fundamental life change. It was time to say goodbye to the corporate world. She discovered the things that really matter to

unique and precious they are. Staying disconnected from your own power is a disadvantage to society!"

With her business Blanca wants to support the builders of the heart centered economy. Her work is not about new technology, marketing tools or product innovation. Her core business is what comes before that: the inner strategy. In her words, "I help change agents to commit to what they are doing. I help them find their true passion so they can transform their life and that of others. To be able to do so, they learn how to transform their fears into fuel. This is their core challenge and my gift to them".

"Self awareness, being aware of your own power is a very important part in this process, with power comes responsibility..."

Blanca has developed her own methodology to help the change agents who want to use their passion to transform the world and don't know how. For the LINKS seminar, she gave her audience an introduction of the program "Promote Yourself to CEO of Me Inc!". This program is about removing fears and limiting beliefs, identifying true purpose, and transforming dreams into a beyond belief transformational power.

Her latest program, "Stand out from the crowd in the New Economy" is about making the inner connection and translating it into business. This program truly goes in the heart of both business and soul passion (http://becomingmindfullyhapp.com). In this program, Blanca not only shares her business knowledge and expertise, but also her spiritual life experiences. Blanca's vision on this program: "I know from my own experience how I did not allow myself to shine and be unique in the marketplace. It's scary and confusing! Now, I am ready to share this precious method I used to turn around my grey and unshapable customer-clashing ineffective and incorrect business. It's possible to make good money in a decent, professional and ethical way, the key is authenticity and courage."

Get started NOW! If you want to Stand Out from the Crowd in today's challenging business environment, feel free to contact Blanca:

www.blancavergara.com

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Parents and schools should also educate their children about global issues so that they will be aware of what is going on around the world, because many children have the misconception that everyone is leading as wealthy a life as they are," Daiglish added.

Addressing the International Baccalaureate Africa, Europe and Middle East Regional Conference Marrakech 2008 he said: "The best part of my work is being associated with truly remarkable children—spontaneous and ingenious and optimistic girls and boys despite their extreme poverty. Since I arrived in Kathmandu I have had the honor of teaching a weekly class on global issues to Buddhist children from the Tibetan border region. Ten of the students from my class have won scholarships to study overseas, including six girls now studying at universities and high schools in the US, Canada, Norway and Italy. I keep a card from one of them on my desk in Kathmandu: "I am aware of this golden opportunity and I will try to do my best," writes Ms. Davia Dolma, age 17. For children still confined to carpet factories and coal mines, learning to read and write their only ticket out of poverty. For girls and young women, going to school means they will have some control over their own lives, and some independence from their future husbands."

"Street Kids International, an international charity based in Canada and the UK, strives to be the leader in helping youth develop practical business and health knowledge and skills that better their lives."

Tytske Zuiderbaan

You can find courage in the most unlikely places—in a refugee camp, a jail cell, or a classroom full of Tibetan kids struggling with their English grammar lessons. I have the extraordinary privilege of being allowed into the world of destitute children, on their own terms. After twenty years along this path, I know there's no turning back."

Peter Daiglish has no objection to luxury, as money cannot buy happiness, but he does believe that the young in western society is the richest ever and suffers from the rapidly spreading "affluenza". "Life is not all about Nintendo Pay Stations and owning I- Pad's and stuff. Parents have to encourage their children to help others through voluntary organizations and programs such as Teachers Without Borders and Habitat for Humanity..."
Streetlife has changed over the past thirty years. It has become more colourful and dressing behaviour plays an important role in this change. Today we observe more women wearing headscarves and veils in our Western societies. Streetscape has changed as well. On the one hand we come across more girls wearing headscarves, on the other hand, girls reveal more and more skin. In high schools we find girls showing their bare belly buttons and piercings, guys with tattoos, caps and punks has. The sky seems to be the limit! But how tolerant are we really? Do we accept people with a different style of dress, or do we discriminate against them? And what does the choice of a particular style in dressing tell us about that person? What identity comes with the style?

At school in Friesland boys and girls come into the classroom. They all do; some of them keep their coats on. The teacher explains the project Veils and Thongs. Tumba the Friesian centre for international co-operation has developed the project. It is all about global citizenship and equality. To be excluded and discriminated against, how does that feel? Everybody can imagine what it feels like to be shot at sometimes, but what else? The students think that this must be traumatic. What about global citizenship? All of our clothes and shoes are manufactured in low-income countries. That has an effect on our choices, how so? Some students address this issue and are kind of savvy about it. One student has visited a few countries in Africa, out of her own interest. The discussion becomes animated.

They watch a video with veils and headscarves and video clips with a lot of nudity. They talk about how this affects them. It must be terrible to be covered like that, when only your eyes are visible. Why? Is it their own choice? Or does religion prescribe it, or the parents maybe? And about the nudity? ‘Are we really that free when we dress that minimally as women? Are we influenced by fashion or by what is hot or the media and video clips?’ They question themselves and the others and discuss their findings. Then they play a picture game in pairs in which they elaborate on the topics and are asked to formulate an opinion. Some of the boys hold the pictures from the game of women in lingerie or topless up to the window so that their neighbours can join in with the excitement. A scene like this does not happen every day at school.

For more information about the project you can call Vincent van der Veen (projectmanager C05 Groningen) 050 520 71 17.

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Dressed in effish clothes and pointed ears, I was one of seven strange creatures boarding the early train from Groningen to Vleuten just outside of Utrecht. At every stop nearing Utrecht, more and more unusual customers came on board. Curious passengers wanted to know who and what were they, and where were they going?

A Fairy Tale Castle
At Vleuten, all of the unusual passengers stepped out and made their way to the castle, as they do once every year on the third weekend in April, when the Elf Fantasy Fair returns to Kasteel de Haar in Heemstede.

The castle looked as though it came from a fairy tale. We pass through the castle gates and cross the drawbridge. All of us enter a fantasy world of magic, storytelling, crafts, and medieval arts.

The first thing we saw were people walking on water in giant bubbles, it was really more like rolling around and trying to stand up! It looked like as much fun that kids and adults alike lined up to give it a try. On the other side, there was a dragon boat inviting children to come aboard for a ride around the pond and people were sitting on the grass everywhere, enjoying a picnic or soaking up the sun.

Along the paths were stands with items for sale. There was clothing, costumes, bows and arrows, swords, masks, books, jewelry, and a good number of things that were handmade and unique. You could see your avatar for free, and children could make their own rainbow candles.

A Dark Forest, and Darker Arts
The setting is a delight for any fantasy. The castle grounds contain sculptured gardens fit for princesses and knights. There are expansive lawns and a path winding its way to the castle’s very own dark forest of mature trees, with large gnarled roots to perch on to listen to the storytellers or watch a blacksmith at his craft. The fire eaters entertained here and we could check out instruments of torture and view displays of armour and weaponry.

We watched live-action role-playing games (LARP) and exhibits of archery, falconry, music, and dance. We stopped to look at displays of medieval weapons and crafts and tried to shoot with bows and arrows.

Something for Almost Everyone
At the Elf Fantasy Fair, there are more than enough activities to participate in. There are book readings by well-known authors and one rear, Terry Pratchett was there. All day, fantastic characters and creatures recognizable from fiction and fantasy worlds out of movies and books surrounded us.

An Elf Fair on 18 and 19 September, 2010
If you would like to attend an Elf Fantasy Fair, you don’t have to wait until next year! There is an Autumn edition held annually at the Kasteeltuin in Arnhem. This year it falls on 18 and 19 September.

For more information about both the Spring and Autumn editions of Elf Fantasy Fair, you can visit www.elffantasyfair.com. (Also available in English).

Kasteel de Haar
Kasteel de Haar first came into being sometime during the 13th century. It was fully restored a hundred years ago and is nearing the end of another 10-year restoration project.

It is open during the year and there are optional organized tours. You could enjoy a concert in the chapel, a picnic on the grounds, and more. For information, see www.kasteeldehaar.nl (Dutch only).
Finding some studios and their artists isn’t always a breeze, but once I had found a large and obviously empty building that looked like a perfect space to house a furniture designer, I knew I was on the right track. Previously a warehouse for kitchen supplies, the building is now totally empty, except for the presence of four artists who have made personal studios out of the space within it. One of these is Arjan Portengen; also known as ‘De Houtmagiër’ (Wood Magician).

The revolving entrance door to the building had to be unlocked in order to let me in and opened out onto an enormous interior space of concrete floors, high open windows and a motionless escalator to the upper level. As we walked through it towards Arjan’s studio of six years, the abandoned feel of the building, reminded me of the atmosphere in the film ‘Escape from NY’ starring Kurt Russell.

The building is one of a multitude of properties managed by Ad Hoc (www.adhocthebeheer.nl) a nationwide company responsible for vacant buildings. These are rented out for a token monthly payment, until such a time as the property is reused or demolished. The tactic is to prevent vandalism and break-ins, so often prevalent in empty buildings.

Once ensconced on a large sofa with a cup of coffee I asked Arjan what led him to becoming the wood magician and furniture designer. In reply, he said that for him, old furniture has always had more soul than new and many of his pieces have started out life as an object thrown away on the street, by a previous owner. This interest in furniture and bric-a-brac in turn has led him to develop his signature style by creating a new object, by way of a collage of both new and old elements, which at the finish becomes a completely new piece of furniture in its own right. Most of the time he already has an idea in his head to start with and this is translated into a sketch, but as with most sketches, the idea evolves as he works. He couples his interest in furniture with a study, where he trained as a furniture maker for a year and a half, thereby learning the basics of furniture construction, the rest (in his words) came from him and has resulted in what he makes today.

In a lot of his work there lies a conceptual joke, cabinet doors or tables can take on a new form or life of their own. For example the ‘ribben kast’ (rib cupboard), a white skeletal spine-like construction supporting a series of drawers, of varying sizes, at intervals along its length. The skeletal spine symbolizes death and the drawers represent memories. Each drawer is individual and brightly coloured. In this case (which is an exception to his general colour use), it is a reference to the Mexican tradition of taking vibrant colours and their intense relation with the dead, particularly during the annual Day of the Dead celebration.

When asked about influences in his work, he says he has a ‘hand though it is not to be influenced by external influences and if he is, it is not done expressly.

Other than his creative side and the ’kromkes realiseren’ (realising the twinkle of ideas that present themselves), he is a restorer and carpenter able to make and mend traditional doors, cupboards and interiors, which he enjoys. At this moment he is restoring a farm interior and its built-in cupboards, so the creative projects are temporarily on hold.

I ask him if money and support were no object, what would he like to make here in Groningen, to leave his mark? After a bit of thought, Arjan came up with two. The first would be to work on his wood magic on the east wall of the City Hall in a whole room as artwork, with total free licence to do whatever he wanted. The second came just as I was leaving. To build a tram carriage totally out of wood and in his inimitable style and attach it to one of the future trams that Groningen will be getting. I pitch in, that he should work his website address into the side of the tram too for a bit of publicity! With that the revolving door is unlocked again, I step out into bright sunlight, take my leave of Arjan and hop onto my bike in search of some retail therapy at the nearby IKEA.

If you would like to contact Arjan Portengen his details are as follows:

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**Alison Day**
Keep on the Sunny Side

Sunshine is not only good for a ‘sunny disposition’, but it is also the principle source for the natural production of Vitamin D in the body. Vitamin D has long been known to be crucial for healthy bones, but it also is vital for the correct functioning of myriad processes in the human body. However, according to researchers, between 1.5 and 2 billion people worldwide suffer from Vitamin D deficiency, probably because we don’t get enough sun. We either spend too much time indoors or covered up outdoors.

This is a particular problem for people who live in the northern latitudes, and that includes the Netherlands. A recent study showed that it is impossible to make Vitamin D in one’s skin from November through March, no matter how long you stay outside. Furthermore, during the rest of the year (April through October), Vitamin D is produced from sun exposure before 8:00 hrs in the morning or after 17:00 hrs in the evening. While unprotected tanning is not recommended, sensible sun exposure on your arms and legs for about 10-15 minutes, about 3-4 times per week, should be enough to produce enough Vitamin D for the body to use.

But how does the sun produce Vitamin D, and why is it so important? Sunlight penetrates the skin and converts a pro-hormone (7-dehydrocholesterol) in skin to Vitamin D-3, which then enters the bloodstream. After reaching the liver, it is converted to the circulating form of Vitamin D (25-hydroxyvitamin D3), which in turn goes to the kidneys and is converted to the biologically active form of Vitamin D (1,25-dihydroxyvitamin D3). From the kidneys, this active form travels to the small intestine where it interacts with a Vitamin D receptor and stimulates the absorption of calcium into one’s bloodstream. If one is deficient in Vitamin D, one can only absorb 10-15% of the calcium from the diet, whereas one would normally absorb 30-40%.

So, even if one has enough calcium in one’s diet, without Vitamin D, calcium cannot be absorbed for the body to use.

And actually, maintaining a normal level of calcium in one’s blood is the ultimate function of Vitamin D. Low levels of Vitamin D can exacerbate osteoporosis, cause a softening of the bones, and increase the risk of bone fracture. Vitamin D deficiency also increases the risk for autoimmune diseases such as MS, Crohn's disease, rheumatoid arthritis, high blood pressure, diabetes, and various cancers. Specifically, Vitamin D helps the immune system fight infections and diseases such as influenza and reduces the risk of autoimmune diseases; affects vascular smooth muscle so is important in regulating blood pressure and preventing diabetes, heart disease and stroke; regulates insulin production in the pancreas; and affects genes that control cell growth.

To avoid Vitamin D deficiency, it is recommended that adults take a Vitamin D supplement to augment the Vitamin D we do obtain from our diet. Although a glass of Vitamin D-fortified milk contains 100 IU of Vitamin D, adults need to have at least 1000 IU per day to maintain a healthy body. Natural sources of Vitamin D in one’s diet include fatty fishes (canned, salmon, mackerel, sardines, tuna and mew), eggs, and liver. However, the amount of Vitamin D present in a normal 100 g serving of the fish or liver varies from 500 IU to 1500 IU, and a whole egg only contains 20 IU, so it is important to know how much Vitamin D is in the food one eats, if one wants to avoid taking Vitamin D supplements. Curiously, the only vegan source of natural Vitamin D is mushrooms! Mushrooms contain between 50-450 IU of Vitamin D per 100 g. And, if the mushrooms have been exposed to UV light for 5 minutes, the production of Vitamin D is significantly increased and the mushrooms then provide an extremely rich source (up to 45000 IU per 100g) of the vitamin.

So not only humans benefit from the sunshine—century to popular myth, mushrooms do too.

Karen Prowse
This is Beno's Stad

Those of us who don't know Dutch can miss out on some very interesting aspects of living in the Groningen area - its fascinating history. Even Groningers can learn a thing or two. I recently overheard a young stadsdijker (inhabitant) trying to impress a young foreign visitor by telling her the history of the Harbour and then saying he was sorry to admit he didn't know much about it. If only he had watched Beno's Stad on TV.

Beno's Stad

The show is on Thursdays on OGT TV and is in Dutch, but is accessible and understandable because of Beno's presentation and clear descriptions. It is an enjoyable way to become inspired, or hopeful, about learning Dutch. The award-winning show attracts all age groups and ability levels, with a strong youth audience. The show's popularity is obvious: Beno is a local celebrity. As Beno and I walked through the city centre, people who knew him personally or from seeing him on TV regularly greeted him on the way.

Beno Hofman is the man behind the TV show. He brings Groningen history to life, visiting places of interest and telling stories of the people who lived there, as well as indulging in play acting parts along the way.

History in Groningen

Last year, he wrote an article for Kei Magazine, a student publication that reaches 10,000 university students, many of whom are new to Groningen. His article received such an enthusiastic response that he is writing for Kei again this year.

Beno sometimes conducts city tours and gives lectures. The most recent was one about the history of prostitution in Groningen and another about the organs in city churches.

A couple of years ago, Beno was asked to do a public lecture based on local history in well over 300 schools and universities, some of which have been collected and published in book form. He had a number of books published and at the moment is working on another.

This began in 1991, when he reached a point where his interests became a career, so he took the plunge and invested in Beno's Stad. The program won Best Television Program in 2005 for the organization of local broadcasts (GVT). Now there are almost 400 episodes of Beno's Stad and collections are available on DVD. The 40th episode will be aired on 1 July 2010.

A Walk Through the City Centre

Purposefully avoiding obvious landmarks like the Martinikerk, I suggested we visit other places. Walking away from the Feithuis, where we met for coffee, our walk took us through the centre along the Zuidwerk and Tufkensstraat to the Hoge der Aa and along the canal past the Oosterhaven to the Ossenmarkt, passing the Gouw, a bar/restaurant on the Zwanenburg, we discussed the connections of the Royal family in Groningen, which Beno wrote about in the book series, Groningen van de Tijden (Groningen from all times). One connection was that Prince Maurits worked at the Staatdijk, while attending university.

As we passed different buildings, Beno pointed them out and showed me where the first woman doctor, Aletta Jacobs, lived as a student on Tufkensstraat.

The Morale

We talked about city growth and planning during the 17th and 18th centuries and how Groningen is one of the oldest cities in the Netherlands. It is situated above sea level at the end of a great moraine called the Hendruk (Hog's back) that stretches about 70 kilometres from the southeast. The Hendruk is the area between the Morale and the Hendruk is where the Hendruk onwards and ends at a graveyard, the Bolderbeekstraat.

The changing elevations are revealed when the ground level of the city is compared with the level in the canals. This gave rise to the descriptive names Hoog (high) and Lage (low) der Aa, given to the high and low sides of the city along the Aa river approaching the Oosterhaven. Many of the warehouses along the Hoog and Lage der Aa were built on foundations dating from the Middle Ages. There are many breweries located here because of the good water quality of the Aa. We peered into the window of the De Stukkel to see the remnants of a wall from the Middle Ages in the middle of the building, once a brewery called Beers.

About 30 years ago, the businesses that occupied the warehouses moved away from the centre and warehouses abandoned the buildings. They were later converted into homes and it is hard to believe that one of the city's most beautiful areas had ever existed.

Oude Kijk in 't Jatstraat - How a Street Got its Name

Continuing past the hotel on one of the most photographed corners of the city, where the harbourmaster's office used to be, we walked along the Hoogkade and made a stop at Oude Kijk in 't Jatstraat. Beno showed us where the stone sign for Oude Kijk in 't Jatstraat was originally placed looking up the street toward the church. When the city wall was taken down to accommodate the 17th century expansion of the centre, it was relocated to face the Redding canal. "Jat" was the old name for a street.

City Planning in the Golden Age

Groningen's Town Planning during the Golden Age of the 17th century and the city planned and built an extension to the north. Before this time, it was unusual to make a city plan. Elements of planning and construction began in the city's new area and the new city's layout. The rest of the area remained undeveloped for much longer; the new city was from the 19th and 20th century. The development pattern is easy to see today and is even clearer in old maps of the area.

Historic Plaques

On our walk, we encountered one of about 65 historic plaques in the city. Each plaque is numbered and describes the history of the building or street.

Through people like Beno, who live or love their land and have a passion for learning and sharing its stories, newcomers like us can deepen our roots in our homes wherever we may be.

Sources: www.ogtv.nl

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