

Voices from the Regions

We live in a country highly centralized in our capital, Montevideo. That is why we sometimes miss all the rich and interesting things that are being created in all the other regions of our country. Even though we welcome contributions from the regions to all sections, this section has been thought of specially for them. So, if you have done something you would like to share with us please contact us:

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Organising a URUTESOL Convention in Salto

by Linda Bimson

It's the ambition and dream of URUTESOL to have more and more mini Conventions in the interior of the country so as to act, in our small way, against the infamous 'centralismo'. With this in mind, the present board has

asked me if I could write up something to let you all know how Salto URUTESOL went about organising and setting up our mini Convention in August 1998.

It was mid June '98 when we were officially informed that the Convention was to take place 21-22 Aug. My first reaction was to contact a number of members who were heads of departments or directors of the various institutes and schools that taught English in Salto. Then I put up posters wherever I knew there was a member working, informing them of what we had to do and inviting them all to a meeting on the 1st July.

At that meeting every single school/institute with a URUTESOL member was represented. And we started delegating responsibility, sometimes not very democratically - e.g. no one wanted to be treasurer, so we 'appointed' the only man in our midst - he had no option, 10 women to 1 man! We chose to hold our meetings on absolutely neutral territory - CERP. We also decided to hold the Convention at the CERP and make use of the IFD (which is only a block away) if we needed further room. Our second meeting was after the winter holidays, and after that we had weekly meetings until the week of the Convention, they then became daily. Let me point out that these meetings were to the point and did not drag on endlessly. We were all appointed things to do and had to report our progress to the group at the following meeting. Everyone pulled their weight equally.

We were in constant contact with the URUTESOL Board (e-mail, phone & fax), and twice had Laura Motta attend our meetings to help iron out some of our doubts. The Board in Montevideo were obviously in charge of putting together the list of speakers and getting the publishing houses and bookstores to sponsor the event and to bring up material for their stalls.

I'll list a number of the duties we had to carry out:

- Find a suitable name for the Convention. One of our members, who is quite an expert on computers, actually designed the poster!
- Contact the Intendencia to get their sponsorship and see if they could help us in any way (they printed our posters for us, gave us the free use of a theatre, gave us maps and information brochures, etc).
- Go round shops, restaurants and so on, to see if we could convince them to publish an ad in the programme.
- Speak to the heads of CERP and IFD, to ask for the use of their premises, come to an agreement about covering costs of cleaning etc.
- Organising food for the reception, getting prices, etc.
- Find lists of hotels that would be willing to put visitors up at reduced rates and inform visitors about them
- Get restaurants and snack bars in the neighbourhood to give discounts to the people attending the Convention.

- Get together all the material needed for the talks:- TV set, recorders, etc.
- Designate organisers of room minders and find students who would be willing to act as room minders.
- Make name tabs for speakers and for all those attending.
- Organising who would use each room, where the exhibits would be placed, where the coffee breaks would take place.
- Receive and keep careful control of registration and fees.
- And the thousand and one other small details that turned up and were dealt with on the spur of the moment.

All this was not as difficult as it may seem, purely and simply because we were a **TEAM** and worked as such. Our main aim was to prove to that we could organise something we could be proud of. And we did!

What did we learn from all this, beyond the talks themselves? That all our petty quarrels and competition could be put on one side when we work for a common aim and all under the umbrella of URUTESOL.

**LET´S HAVE MORE CONVENTIONS OUTSIDE MONTEVIDEO.
IT´S UP TO YOU TO MAKE THIS POSSIBLE!**