

The CIVIC Citizen

The Council for International Visitors to Iowa Cities

Paul Reiderman, advisor to Javier Solana, Secretary General of the Council of the European Union (EU), visited Iowa City in September. He spoke at an Iowa City Foreign Relations Council luncheon about EU-US relations, a speech that was very well received. Mr. Reiderman, who has degrees from Oxford University in philosophy, politics and economics was here to discuss international relations with a broad spectrum of Midwesterners. Toward that end he met with people involved in International Programs, visited the Stanley Foundation in Muscatine, conversed with a U. of I. law professor who teaches EU law and bussed to Indianola to listen to Democratic presidential hopefuls. He was also interested in how our media cover foreign affairs and squeezed in visits to *The Gazette* and *Iowa City Press Citizen*. Before his departure he wrote that his visit was, "Thoroughly positive, thanks to the thought and good organization of the program (arranged by Tom Baldrige) and the kindness of everyone involved. My professional appointments were well targeted, in line with my areas of interest. Volunteers were pleasant and very helpful. Lodging was much beyond my expectations in terms of the kindness and hospitality offered in a wonderful and comfortable home". CIVIC volunteers, Deb Galbraith and David Johnsen, were his hosts during his four-day visit.

Our international visitors benefit, of course, from their visits to the Iowa City area. CIVIC members benefit as well. We make new friends, exchange worldviews and learn more about the countries of our visitors. Sometimes the benefit to a CIVIC volunteer is totally unexpected. Such was the case earlier this year when Matthew Steele spent an evening with Zlatko Vojovic, a Montenegrin member of CEMI, a non-governmental organization (NGO) that monitors elections. Zlatko suggested that there was an urgent need to link NGOs worldwide and to link interested individuals to NGOs. In a few months Matt has taken steps to do that. He has assembled an eighteen-member board of directors (including five people involved with CIVIC), written a mission statement and by-laws, developed a web site (ngox.org), and spoken to interested local organizations. Matt has also been encouraged in these efforts by Francisco Torres, a past CIVIC visitor whom he recently hosted. Torres is head of the Pablo Neruda Foundation in Chile where Matt plans to spend the next year.

When we host international visitors there is no telling where the conversation will lead. However, we do know that it almost inevitably leads in a positive direction.

