



The CIVIC Citizen

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Hospitality is common language for visitors, hosts

When Dave came home from a CIVIC Board meeting and told me about the upcoming visit of five English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers from the Republic of Georgia, I was thrilled. As a retired English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, I wanted to share our wonderful resources with international visitors and give them a taste of local ESL teaching.



All the visitors marveled at the friendly atmosphere among the women, and wondered if they might be able to set up a similar organization in the Republic of Georgia

On the first morning, Ken and Gayle Royar and I each took a careful to the International Women's Club English classes at the Mennonite Church. The visitors rotated from class to class. Becky Sato, the ESL coordinator, welcomed them warmly. Marina Chalauri helped out in my class of intermediate English learners as we talked about tornadoes and learned how to interpret TV and radio weather advisories. All the visitors marveled at the cooperative and friendly atmosphere among the women, and wondered if they might be able to set up a similar organization

in the Republic of Georgia.

Thursday afternoon, Alyce Toloui, ESL Instructor at Kirkwood Community College, and Anna Mary Mueller, former ESL Coordinator in the Iowa City Community School District met with the Georgian teachers and translators to discuss ESL services in Iowa City. The conversation ranged over refugees, law, special education, assistive devices, and Internet access in Iowa and in the Republic of Georgia. We learned the Republic of Georgia does not have the kind of wi-fi access that we often take for granted in the U.S. Their schools are not yet completely wired, although some headway is being made. Computer access in internet cafes can be pricey. We also



learned that special education services, while

improving, are not as wide-ranging as here.

Later that day, the teachers met with Joan Vandenberg from the Iowa City Community School District. The following morning, the teachers traveled to Cedar Rapids to visit the Washington High School ESL class of Jacqueline Bunnell, my former student teacher. Our visitors were full of questions about high school entrance requirements, curriculum, and immigration rules and enforcement. They were amazed that undocumented immigrant children attend school with no fear of being arrested at school. We explained that schools are not allowed to ask about a student's immigration status.

Friday afternoon included a visit to Iowa City West High School. They met with Molly Abraham, assistant principal who, as a former special education teacher, was able to answer many questions about classes for students with special needs. My colleague and friend Theresa Juhl,

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Upcoming visitors:

- **July:** Climate Change and Renewable Energy (Multi-Regional Program)
- **July:** Peace and Security (Philippines)
- **July:** Combating HIV/AIDS (South Africa)
- **September:** Women and the Law (Africa Regional Program)
- **September:** Higher Education (Moldova)
- **September:** U.S. Foreign Policy (Pakistan)
- **September:** U.S. Foreign Policy (Multi-Regional Program)

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What our visitors say

“I’d like to have such people (CIVIC volunteers) a lot in the world. They were just welcoming, warm, and attentive.”

“The overall experience was not only positive but productive as well as very enjoyable. We got acquainted with the sightseeings of the City and also learnt a lot.”

“We had a chance to ‘peep’ in the Americans’ ordinary life (during home hospitality)..”

“I would like to come back some time and stay a bit longer.”

Hanging out on the walls of the Cosmos Club

Last week, I had breakfast at the Cosmos Club, which, according to Wallace Stegner, serves as “the closest thing to a social headquarters for Washington’s intellectual elite.” An entire wall features photos of the Club’s Nobel Prize winners, and another members whose faces appear on stamps.

If you had told me a year ago, as I was grappling with my first delegations, board meetings and financial reports, that I’d be dining with the country’s intellectual elite in one year’s time, I would have



laughed. But there I found myself, enjoying a steaming waffle and talking about Iowa’s role in promoting grassroots citizen diplomacy with Sherry Mueller, president of the National Council for International Visitors (NCIV), which sponsored my trip as part of its Network DC program.

I told her about our Midwestern hospitality, about the dedication, enthusiasm and charm of our members and volunteers, about fascinating things I’ve learned about our community in the past year. As we talked about CIVIC’s upcoming 25th Anniversary, I

felt more deeply than ever the importance of our work. We connect people in the most fundamental ways, building bridges of respect and understanding essential to solving the complex problems that face us in the 21st Century.

So it’s no surprise to me that the national network of citizen diplomats—of which you are all a part—was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2001. And it will be no surprise if someday, deservedly, the names of Iowa’s citizen diplomats are found on the walls of the Cosmos Club.

— Sharon Benzoni,
Executive Director

Venezuelan official learns about disaster management

Survivors of last year’s historic floods offered a unique perspective to a Venezuelan official who visited Eastern Iowa in April. Mr. Herman Jose Bracho Leal, Director of Civil Protection and Administration of Disasters in Venezuela learned how cities devastated by natural disasters pick up the pieces and start over.

Mr. Bracho spoke with emergency management special-

ists, government officials and key players in a number of area communities. Meeting with officials in Palo, a community north of Cedar Rapids that was completely evacuated during the flood, Mr. Bracho saw how a small community approaches mitigation and smart recovery.

In Cedar Rapids, Mr. Bracho met with small business owner Gary Ficken about his

organization focused on disaster recovery for small business. Mr. Bracho also visited the local offices of Americorps Vista to learn how volunteers aided clean-up. While he was in Iowa, he also visited with officials in Des Moines to discuss the comprehensive efforts of the state government and the role that it plays in local recovery efforts.

— Kristina McLaughlin

ESL teachers share their experiences with Georgians

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French teacher at West, arranged a visiting schedule for them, but I learned that they were so enamored of Erin Johnson’s ESL classes that they stayed in her room the whole afternoon, impressed by Ms. Johnson’s calm classroom atmosphere and knowledgeable answers to their curriculum questions.

Theresa joined us for dinner

at our house. Since it was Good Friday on the Georgian calendar, we had a mixture of Lenten dietary requirements. Later, Theresa showed the teachers her online school tools (without sharing confidential info, of course.) The teachers took notes and hoped the Republic of Georgia would eventually have such tools available.

The evening came to an end –

later than we had planned, but much too soon – and we all exchanged gifts and kissed and hugged good-bye.

Still later, returning a pair of glasses left behind by one of the teachers gave us one more chance to thank our visitors for their visit to our country and our home.

— Denise Tiffany,
CIVIC Member

CIVIC goes to Washington for NCIV annual meeting

Four of us traveled to Washington, D.C., in February for the National Council of International Visitors (NCIV) annual convention. For Executive Director Sharon Benzoni it was her first national meeting (after an earlier regional meeting) and an opportunity to make contacts and establish personal relationships so important for bringing international visitors to Iowa City.

For emeritus director Tom Baldrige it was a chance to visit once again with many friends from around the country and to pass on to the rest of us his knowledge and experience. For Board President Jean Lloyd-Jones it was another opportunity to learn more about how CIVIC connects with the national organization and our nearby sister

organizations. For me, it was a real eye opener about an organization that I am just beginning to understand.

While the usual plenary speakers and breakout sessions were informative, what I found most helpful was being able to talk with others during the breaks. I was surprised to learn the local drivers and meeting hosts we provide for our visitors are the exception rather than the rule around the nation. It is one of many reasons why our international visitors rate so highly their experiences with us.

NCIV provided funds for the hotel, most meals and transportation for Sharon and Tom. CIVIC picked up the registration expenses for Sharon and Tom. For Jean and me these

were small relative to the experience and all the extras: Sen. Grassley's impressive office, having a good conversation with Rep. Loebsack, the State Department reception with its elegant decor, a Congressional breakfast, an evening reception at the Indonesian Embassy in a historical mansion, and much more.

With a Saturday night layover for lower fares, Jean and I got down to the national mall, took in the traditional view of the White House and even bought some Obama T-shirts for our young grandchildren. With CIVIC's help let's hope that their enthusiasm and innocence will mature into an understanding of the better world that we all strive for.

— Richard Grimlund

CIVIC helps welcome new cohort of JFDP scholars

Five scholars from Eastern Europe recently departed Iowa City after spending the spring semester here as part of the Junior Faculty Development Program (JFDP).

CIVIC annually helps the JFDP scholars as their initial support and contact, from meeting them at the airport to helping them with some of the basic adjustments to life in the United States, including opening bank accounts and finding apartments and furniture.

This 2009 scholar cohort, their home countries, and their fields of study, included Ms. Meri Avetisyan, Armenia, Psychology; Mr. Zvonimir Jelinic, Croatia, International Law; Ms. Rozita Petrinska,

Macedonia, Library and Information Science; Ms. Marijana Sivric, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Linguistics; and Mr. Niyaz Yagubov, Azerbaijan, International Affairs.

The JFDP program is part of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State. It is a non-degree, professional development program that provides promising junior university faculty with the opportunity to expand knowledge and expertise in their respective academic fields, gather new educational perspectives, academic materials and resources, and forge relationships between the University of Iowa and their home universities in order to sup-

port ongoing contact and collaboration.

International Programs provides administrative and logistical support for the JFDP fellows, including access to a workspace, computer and library resources, and undergraduate and graduate courses within each fellows' academic discipline.

JFDP fellows also work closely with faculty mentors from the appropriate academic departments at Iowa to develop their scholarship in their fields of study, gather new academic materials and resources, and enlighten the UI faculty and students on education and life in their home countries.

— Julia LaBua

What our visitors say

“(Home hospitality) made Iowa City really unforgettable!”

“The people we met and talked to were very open. They shared their experience to us and answered all the questions we had.”

“Thanks a lot to everybody who took part in these arrangements. I appreciate your time and efforts made for us.”

“Every single appointment was productive and exactly related to the topics I was interested in.”



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*CIVIC:
Building Respect
and Understanding,
One Handshake at a Time*

Welcome to CIVIC's new board members!

McKinze Cook

McKinze is a small town girl at heart but has called Iowa City home for seven years. In May of 2006, McKinze graduated from the University of Iowa with degrees in Anthropology and American Studies. She serves as the Director of Member Services at the Iowa City Area Chamber of Commerce, working with a variety of local businesses to promote economic development.

In her free time, McKinze



enjoys live music, strolling Iowa City's farmers market and spending time with her partner Sean and their two cats, Winston and Lola. This is her first term on the CIVIC Board of Directors.

Damon Terrill

Damon is Senior Vice President & General Counsel for International Legal and Regulatory Affairs at Integrated DNA Technologies (IDT) in



Coralville. He also serves as Managing Director of IDT's European operating subsidiary in Belgium.

Damon has extensive international legal experience through his work with the government and the State Department. He has taught European Union Law, public international law, and international affairs at George Mason University School of Law, George Washington University, and at SIS.

SAVE THE DATE! SEPTEMBER 10, 2009
ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL WRITING PROGRAM DINNER
CELEBRATING A NEW CHAPTER IN IOWA CITY'S LITERARY HISTORY