

The CIVIC Citizen

The Council for International Visitors to Iowa Cities

Our Amazing Visitors

In fiscal year 2007-08, CIVIC welcomed 76 international visitors from far flung corners of the world. Countries ranged from the familiar, such as France, Japan, Brazil and Italy, to the more remote and esoteric, such as Moldova, Uzbekistan, Cameroon and Montenegro. Thirty-two nations in all were represented.

Although most visitors came through the auspices of the U.S. State Department, four Moldovans were sponsored by the Open World Leadership Center, a project of the U.S. Congress administered by the Academy for Educational Development.

The Moldovans, all heads of agricultural firms in their own country, were here to study agribusiness. On their first visit to the U.S., Iowa City was their only stop. They spent a week here, housed by CIVIC volunteers.

Other visitors were interested in managing diversity in a multi-ethnic society, in school-community partnerships, in grassroots democracy, in women's issues such as domestic abuse and human slave trafficking, and in national security. There were journalists, both print and electronic, student leaders, educators and scientists.

They came from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Indonesia, Thailand, the United Kingdom, Azerbaijan, Croatia, the Republic of Georgia, Serbia, Uzbekistan, Japan, India, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Pakistan, Poland, Morocco, France, Algeria, Belarus, Brazil, South Korea, China, Cameroon, Armenia, Montenegro, Kuwait, Mexico, Moldova and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

You can see how invaluable our members are in making it all happen. We couldn't do it without you.



Civic President Jean Lloyd Jones (left), Alice Atkinson & Mona Martin enjoy Haitian visitors on an outing to the Quad Cities.

From the President's Desk

The year 2008 was been full of dramatic events: Tom Baldrige's retirement after 21 years as executive director of CIVIC and ICFRC; Jeffery Ford's skillful guidance through the three-month transitional period; Sharon Benzoni's acceptance of the position in April; Marianne Weiss' retirement in July; and the on-going search for her successor.

Through it all, we hosted a near-record number of international visitors.

In our effort to expand CIVIC's offerings, we try to identify key people in eastern Iowa outside the Corridor area who can help with visitors to their communities. One such person is Mona Martin from the Quad Cities. A former state legislator, she has helped with several groups already, and has agreed to serve on the board.

We would like to have more members from surrounding communities. If you know of someone who might be interested, please let us know.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will read of some important steps we've been taking. I especially call your attention to the restructuring and focusing of board assignments, the new meeting calendar to allow for more committee time, and our annual meeting in January. We will hold our annual board retreat in February. At that time, we will provide orientation for new board members and plan the work of the Advancement Committee.

The memorable ice, snow and floods of 2008 may have slowed us down a bit, causing cancellation or postponement of some visitors, but on the whole, CIVIC has come through stronger than ever. We have great plans for the coming year, and we hope you will join us in making them happen!

From Italy to Iowa...



Gayle Royar (center) delights in a factory visit with a group of Italians, who were in Iowa on a program studying Muslim Entrepreneurship. Highlights of their visit included an introduction to CIVIC member Bill Aossey's business, Midamar - a Halal foods distributor, and of the site of Cedar Rapids' historic Mother Mosque.

International Visitors Observe U.S. Elections

On November 7th, nearly one hundred foreign visitors stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Americans in political party offices, in homes and public spaces to watch the returns of the most hotly anticipated election in decades. They were here on a U.S. State Department project called I-VOTE, which brought emerging leaders from 73 countries to the United States to immerse them in local, state and national election processes.

CIVIC hosted two of the Election Fellows: Ms. Rana Abdullah Al-Nibari of Kuwait; and Ms. Rocio Alejandra Rivera Barradas, an analyst in the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs in Mexico.

During their time in Iowa, the Fellows met with elected women leaders and visited the party headquarters of both major political parties. On election day, they observed polling places and joined canvassers in Iowa City and Cedar Rapids to watch the legwork of democracy in action.



A Japanese visitor makes a new friend at a visit to a local school

“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness... Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.”

-Mark Twain

Annual Meeting

Don't miss CIVIC's Annual Meeting. Mark your calendars now for **January 28, 2009**. There will be business to take care of, wonderful food to eat and great people to enjoy.

On the agenda will be a report from the president as well as a roundup of the year's events.

As it is time for board elections, the Nominating Committee is seeking persons who would be interested and willing to serve.

The board meets at 5 p.m. the fourth Wednesday of every other month to set policy, control the budget and finances, and give direction to the staff. Nominees will be announced and voted upon at the annual meeting.

We will also have the opportunity to meet a group of five scholars from **Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Macedonia** who will soon arrive in Iowa City to participate in the Junior Faculty Development Program at the University of Iowa. With specialty areas ranging from psychology to law to linguistics, this is sure to be a dynamic group of young thinkers.

Not least, we will enjoy a “semi-pot luck” of heavy hors d'oeuvres. Pat Kelley, who is in charge of planning the menu, needs **volunteers to help cook and facilitate**. Please call her at 351-4492 if you can assist.

Do be with us from **5:00-7:00 p.m. in 1117 University Capitol Center in the Old Capitol Mall, Wednesday, January 28, 2009**. No RSVP is necessary.

Moldova: a Republic, not an Operetta



Members of the Moldovan delegation, Viorel Lesnic (left) and Roland Galetchi (right) talked with a Kalona farmer (middle) about his affiliation with Kalona Organics, a cooperative marketing firm.

This year CIVIC welcomed an unusual delegation of visitors from Moldova. Sandwiched between Romania and Ukraine deep in Eastern Europe, little-known Moldova emerged as an independent republic following the

collapse of the USSR in 1991. This young country, already a member of the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and the International Monetary Fund, is in the process of seeking entrance to the European Union.

Our four visitors had never been in the U.S. before, let alone in Iowa. Their program was sponsored by the Open World Program, a project of the U.S. Congress, and CIVIC was part of a competitive bidding process to win the opportunity to host a delegation. They stayed for a week with host families while their itinerary included a number of agricultural venues. As entrepreneurs and managers of agricultural operations back home, they had as much information to share with the Iowans with whom they met as

“We had a wonderful time with them,” said Betty Batterman, who with her husband Les served as host to two of the visitors. “They were as cooperative and cordial people as you’d ever want to meet. And they ate anything I cooked for them.” Two years ago Betty had visited a friend in their country, which led to extra interest on both sides. “They really loved it here,” Betty said. “They especially enjoyed the shopping.”

The Moldovans visited Wilson’s Orchard to learn about apple growing techniques in the U.S.; Bob Braverman’s organic farm, Hawkeye Foodservice Distribution to hear about large-scale food distribution; the Iowa Farm Bureau; agriculture professors at Iowa State University and Kirkwood Community College; the Scattergood Farm, to learn about Community Supported Agriculture; and an administrator and a vendor of the popular Iowa City Farmer’s Market. In their crowded agenda, there were also opportunities to attend an American football game and, as Betty said, shop.

Restructuring

In an effort to become more effective and efficient, we have established three major units within the Board:

The **Executive Committee** consists of Jean Lloyd Jones, president; Newman Abuissa, vice-president; Joe Aosse, treasurer; David Tiffany, secretary, and Ken Royar, governance.

The **Programming Committee**, headed by Ken Atkinson, reviews upcoming visitors and brainstorms about how best to accomplish their program goals. Members of this committee are Newman Abuissa, Richard Grimlund, Jean Lloyd-Jones, and David Tiffany.

The **Advancement Committee**, headed by Tricia Knox, is made up of three subcommittees: *Membership, Public Relations and Finance*, chaired by Ramon Lim, Pat Kelley, and Joe Aosse respectively.

Other board and non-board members make up the membership of these subcommittees which welcome volunteers.

Board Schedule

Our annual meeting will continue to take place in January, as our by-laws specify. The Program Committee will meet every fourth Wednesday at 4 pm. Following the Program Committee meetings, the entire board will meet on the fourth Wednesday every other month at 5:00 pm: in January, March, May, July, September, and November. On the alternate months the Advancement Committee will meet at 5:00 pm: in February, April, June, August, October and December.

New Executive Director



Since CIVIC's new executive director came on board last April, many members have had opportunities to meet Sharon Benzoni. For those of you who haven't had the pleasure or haven't learned of Sharon's background, here's a brief introduction.

A December 2007 graduate of the U of I, Sharon filled much of her 5.5 years at the University involved in extra-curricular activities that probably prepared her for the broader world as well as many of her courses did.

With a major in Environmental Science, Sharon is finding a surprisingly good fit at CIVIC. Many of our international visitors come with interests in agriculture, ecology, alternative energy feasibility and development and other environmental issues. As chair of the University Lecture Series, board member of the UI Center for Human Rights, and researcher for its Climate Legacy Initiative, she has had networking opportunities that now provide a broad spectrum of people and departments from which to draw to fit visitors' interests.

In addition to working half time as CIVIC's director,

she also heads CIVIC's partner, the Iowa City Foreign Relations Council. With a deep interest in human rights and world issues, Sharon spent three weeks in India in 2006 studying microfinance.

Sharon is getting to know our organization and says she's really enjoying the people she's met. She admits to finding that there's a lot she hadn't known about Eastern Iowa, such as the vibrant Muslim community in Cedar Rapids and the strength of the Hispanic community in West Liberty. She's learning fast and brings exceptional skills to her jobs.

We welcome Sharon wholeheartedly. Be sure to get acquainted with her at the annual meeting.

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Secretary
David Tiffany

Treasurer
Joe AOssey

Past President
Kenneth Hubel

Members
Ken(dall) Atkinson
Richard Grimlund
Tricia Knox
Ramon Lim
Mona Martin
Pat Kelley
Ken Royar

Ex officio members:
Heidi Vekemans,
Int'l Programs Events
Coordinator

Sharon Benzoni
Executive Director

2008 Financial Report

Actual vs. Budget		
<u>Income</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>
General	13,698.99	20,050.00
Grants	30,640.00	25,050.00
Reimb. & Fees	7,278.61	6,000.00
Total Income	51,617.60	51,100.00
<u>Expenses</u>		
Administration	1,485.07	3,250.00
Committees	3,842.32	6,100.00
Salaries	30,906.89	40,000.00
Service	4,396.06	1,750.00
Total Expense	40,630.34	51,100.00
<u>Profit/(Loss)</u>	10,987.26	--

Year-End Balance Sheet	
Assets*	45,843.58
Liabilities	2,888.71
<u>Equity</u>	42,955.14

*Includes accounts payable

“In an era of bluster and bombs, citizen diplomacy is a builder of bridges.”

**-Madeleine Albright,
Secretary of State, 97-01**

A CIVIC Thank You to Our Members, Supporters and Friends!

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 Edwin and Ethel Barker
 Kathie Belgum
 Dwayne & Joan L-Zug Bourret
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 Harold Williamson
 Thais Winkleblack

Special Thanks to All Our Volunteers Who Make Our Programs So Successful!

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 Betty Akers
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 Timothy Ansley
 Joe & Laila Aossey
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 Ken & Alice Atkinson
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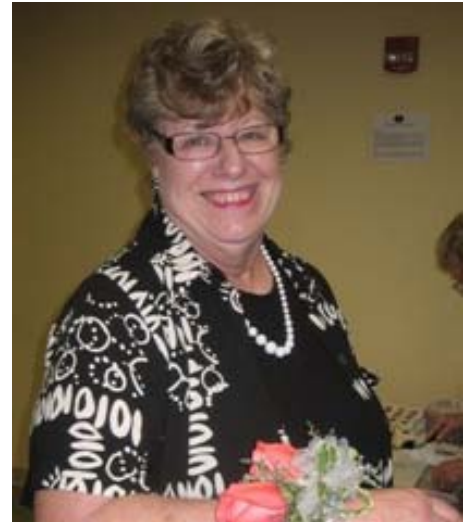


CIVIC owes a big debt of thanks to Jeffery Ford for so ably filling as interim director for several months while the search for our new executive director was carried out.

A Most Generous Gift

We are extremely grateful to former board member Loretta Angerer for her recent donation to CIVIC of stock securities valued at \$1000. This very generous contribution is most welcome.

In this uncertain economy, members will be relieved to know the full value sits safely in a money market fund.



Many thanks and best wishes to Marianne Weiss on her retirement from her dedicated service as our office coordinator!

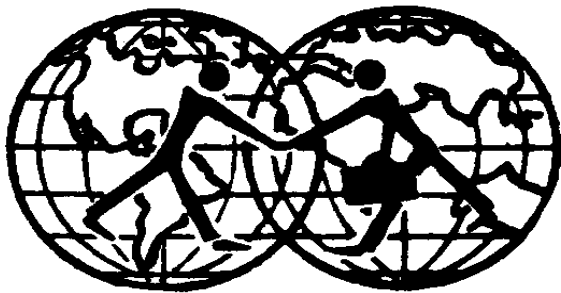
...and a special thanks to CIVIC member **Ann Christenson** for her hard work on this newsletter!

CIVIC

Council for International Visitors to Iowa Cities

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