



The CIP (Council of International Programs) in Chicago is a non-profit organization that promotes international understanding through training and cross-cultural exchanges. CIP recruits highly qualified individuals and matches them with local and area businesses and nonprofit organizations for work-based training. CIP also designed and organizes training, sponsored by USAID.

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The Joy of "successful completion" - Serbian Delegates with their certificates

Serbian Program a Great Success

Domestic violence is a continuing and serious issue in Serbia. As such, it is no surprise that a group of ten Serbian professionals wanted to improve their understanding of the issue as well as how to prevent it. During their three-week stay (February 16-March 09), they participated in several presentations and roundtable discussions and visited projects at several locations to get "hands-on" experience with their chosen area of focus. Activities regarding domestic violence included a session by the Director of Domestic Violence Court on prevention and intervention of domestic violence held at UIC and an exhibition called Off the Beaten Path, which asked 92 artists to raise awareness for abuse through art

expression. They also attended three sessions for "Action Planning", led by Geno Boneventura, designed to give the delegates an understanding of the steps needed to implement one or two ideas they picked up on their US program. Delegates also visited local courts, women's shelters and the Children's Advocacy Center.

Visit to Milwaukee, WI and Dubuque, IA showed delegates how programs related to domestic violence vary in medium-sized towns rural areas and large cities.

The event was sponsored by the Community Connections Program under the Bureau of Education Growth and Trade (EGAT)/Office of Education of USAID, designed to promote public

diplomacy through the exchange of cultural ideas and values between participants, U.S. families and local community host organizations.

For cultural activities, the delegates took a tour of Chicago, visited the Museum of Science and Industry, Art Institute, Chicago Cultural Center and also spent time with host families where they received even greater exposure to and understanding of the American life and lifestyle.

Using public transportation was a challenge for some at first but found it very convenient as the delegates started to spend more time on their own downtown.



Deputy Commissioner of Domestic Violence, Welsh and Serbian Consul General Nikitovic offer a listening ear to CIP Executive Director at the reception jointly organized by Chicago Sister Cities Program and the Consul General.



Secretary Saddler of DHS, Director Spinks of the Domestic Violence Division and Director Smith of the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence at a roundtable with the delegates.



All 10 Serbian delegates served as panelists at an evening dinner meeting in Milwaukee, coordinated by Terry Perry of the Milwaukee Commission on Domestic Violence that was attended by the Chief Judge, three judges of Domestic Violence Court, the Police Chief, Chief Prosecutor, senior staff of women's prison and from a shelter, administrators and students of Marquette University, and several others.

Promoting Cross-Cultural Understanding: Host Families Share Experience



Serbian delegates and their host families at the final dinner reception.

When hosting delegates from another nation, cultural exchange is often mutually enriching and rewarding. Phillip and Carol Pittman, who hosted two Serbian delegates during their three weeks of domestic violence training, had known nothing of Serbia aside from its war with Russia. As such, the couple expressed surprise at their guests' technological capabilities and ability to network. One guest talked to her 25-year old daughter through

Facebook while the other spoke with her teenage daughters through Skype. Even today, Mr. and Mrs. Pittman exchange e-mails and talk through Skype on a regular basis.

Another host, Karen Migneault, echoed similar sentiments about the Serbians' self-sufficiency, but explained that she learned quite a lot about the social services in Serbia. She also emphasized the relationship the delegates had with her son, saying that because the Serbians had kids of their own, they really enjoyed spending time with him. "Oh, they were great!" she added. She also remarked on how the host family experience helped one of her guests overcome adversity. Anka had felt self-conscious about her English skills, but in reality spoke quite well. Over time, she became more confident in herself and her communication abilities.

When it comes to learning things about international relations, the Pittmans felt they learned more about America's role with other

nations. "[The experience] pointed out that a good American relationship is possible with other countries. Not just being policeman of the world."

Anyone who has ever hosted seems to have had a great time with it. Julia Packard, another host, says, "[The] most rewarding experience [was] making new friends." The Pittmans state, "We enjoyed the entire experience," adding: "It was the first time that we have participated in this program. There is no reason why we won't do it again!" In fact, all three families said that they would do it again!

The Republic of Moldova: Developing the Private Sector



Luncheon meeting IIT

Since independence in 1990, the small Eastern European Republic of Moldova has worked to stimulate its economy through reforms such as privatizing its industry and agriculture. However, even with steady improvement, Moldova is still considered one of the poorest countries in Europe, averaging a mere \$2,842 GDP per capita in 2009.

During the week of March 19 through March 26, five highly motivated and ambitious individuals from Moldova came to the U.S. for training in how to develop their private sector.

Vladimir Agachi, who owns a sunflower

company, said that the only real challenge he faced was the challenge of learning new things.

On March 22, the group went to the Illinois Institute of Technology for an "idea workshop" where they toured the university's unique architecture and planning labs, had roundtable discussion on developing business and the private sector. The discussion involved IIT-sponsored projects such as the donation of 1,000 laptops to children in Haiti; and a program in Uganda called CroptoCup, which, with government funding, works to build communities and strengthen its own economy through coffee.

The point of these examples was to demonstrate how various organizations – educational, international, governmental, and corporate – could work together to put new ideas into practice and accomplish entrepreneurial innovations. Such collaboration and communication is difficult in Moldova because of a national curriculum.

The Moldovans had come as part of the Open World program, which seeks to promote mutual understanding between the two countries' leaders. Out of 140

candidates, only five were chosen. In addition to cultural exchange, the five delegates had objectives to learn about American agro-business. When asked whether the delegates achieved these goals, the facilitator of the program, Olesea Fortuna, who serves as the Director of the American Council in Moldova responded, "I sure hope so." Agro-tourism was one of the foci of the visit to University of Illinois Extension.

One thing all the Moldovans could agree upon was the valuable knowledge they gained about American culture. They all shared positive experiences with host families and expressed gratitude for their hospitality. All of them said that, to one degree or another, their impressions had changed from when they first came here. In that sense, it cannot be denied that the goal of cultural exchange and understanding has indeed been met. The program was funded through a grant from CIPUSA.

Making the World A Better Place: Eunjin Hwang



Hwang with four other CIP participants from Korea

Eunjin Hwang is participating in work-based training in special education, sponsored by CIP at the Maplebrook School in Amenia, NY. After completing her 10-month program she plans to return to her home country, Korea where she hopes to put into practice some of the knowledge and skills she picked up at Maplebrook.

The Maplebrook School is a coeducational boarding and day school that provides good educational opportunities for students with learning differences and Attention Deficit Disorder. The school is devoted not only to

nurturing students' academic, athletic and artistic skills, but also their character development. It strives to impart onto children traits such as trust, honesty, respect, caring, fairness, faith and citizenship.

Ms. Hwang hopes the opportunity she has to learn more about the history, growth and development of America's rehabilitation system will help her to identify and implement ways and strategies to improve the rehabilitation system in Korea. She explains that, due to the lack of programs like CAPS of Maplebrook or PACE of National Louis University, the institutions for people with learning and other disabilities in Korea serve primarily adults while those in America serve people of all ages.

Hwang wants to continue her work in this field upon her return: "I'd like to use my newfound experience for my students," she adds, describing her role as a part-time lecturer back home. "So when I teach students, I will tell them about [American] culture [and the] rehabilitation system."

She would also like to work within the R.I.S.E. (Responsibility Increase Self-Esteem) program of the school, which endeavors to improve students' self-esteem through evaluations of their daily achievements and responsibilities.

Another of Hwang's goals is to improve her English, as her current level of skill has made communication difficult throughout her stay. Even with this challenge, however, she states, "I'm enjoying my time here," and emphasizes that her proximity to her students is especially good for her.

Commenting on the services of Ms. Hwang and the other CIP participant at Maplebrook School, Dr. Roger Fazzino says, "The interns have been a very positive influence on the CAPS program and the proximity they have with our students is helping them improve their English language skills. They have been a wonderful addition to our program."

