



INDIAN DELEGATION IN LOUISISANA

Upcoming Visitors and Topics of Study

Africa Regional (12)
Agriculture
September 23 – 27

Multi-Regional Project (15)
International Writers
September 30 – October 4

Multi-Regional Project (7)
Cultural Heritage
October 7–12

W. Hemisphere Regional (12)
Civil Society
October 14-18

Kyrgystan (6)
Law
October 18-25

Multi-Regional Project (17)
Urban Environment
October 18-24

Africa/Near East (10)
Elections
October 30– November 5

We encourage you to view the Visitors Page of our website at www.nocdc.com. If you would like to meet with a particular visitor, please contact the office at 504 /529-1509.

In July, the NOCDC was pleased to host an IVLP delegation from India studying environmental protection. The group was in town for three days.

Delegates included an advocate with the Supreme Court of India, an associate attorney with a private firm, a director of the Wildlife Protection Society of India, the director of an education and protection group, and the mayor of Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation, a city of twelve million.

Aside from environmental concerns, topics addressed included historic preservation and the role of the Federal Emergency Management Association.



(above) Mr. Mihir Kumar Mohanty receiving a key to the City of New Orleans from Dr. Nance, the Manager of Infrastructure and Planning; (left) Shelly Stiaes & the group at Bayou Savage

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Dear NOCDC Members,

I was excited and pleased to see many of you at the Volunteer Thank You Party. I hope you enjoyed the party as much as I enjoyed seeing all of you again. Since then, we have endured endless summer heat and two hurricanes to visit our shores. I hope that you all fared well during these trying times.

This summer our office staff has changed. Jeanne Foster left NOCDC to become the marketing director of Gambit Weekly. We wish her well and thank her for her service to the organization. Ines Sigel has joined our staff as the new program coordinator. Originally from Croatia, Ines has been in New Orleans for the past 10 years and is a graduate of the University of New Orleans. She has also volunteered in our office for several months. Rachel Schillaci, our spring intern and a recent Tulane graduate, is the part-time program officer and Nicole Shida, a Tulane student, has just joined us as an intern for the fall semester.

We have a busy fall ahead and we will be contacting you soon about home hospitality opportunities. Please check your email. In closing, I would like to welcome our new members to our council and thank all of members for their continued support.

Warmest Regards,

Mary E. Dennis, Executive Director

“The International Visitor Program is one of the most effective U.S. Foreign Assistance Programs because it allows the participants to make their own and clear views of the United States and distance themselves from any stereotypes.”

– His Excellency
Abdoulaye Diop,
Ambassador of the
Republic of Mali

2001 IVLP
Alumnus

Interpreter's Report on Russian Group

In May 2008 a group of 12 Russian politicians and activists visited the United States with the International Visitor Leadership Program. The goal of the project was to introduce them to the democratic institutions of the U.S.

We recently received a copy of an interpreter's report:

The visitors' overall impression of the program was positive. All the visitors were very much engaged, they asked detailed questions during our professional meetings and were genuinely interested in the program....

The visitors liked all the cities on our program. Although most of the visitors had sound background knowledge about the United States, they were not aware of the diversity of American government systems, which include elected and

appointed mayors, city councils and city managers. The visitors were very much interested in composition of each particular administration, asking detailed questions about departments, their functions and procedures. They were surprised to find out that in many towns and cities of the United States, for example, the mayor has fewer responsibilities than the mayors of Russian cities, who are responsible for schools, medical facilities, social programs, and much more. Another surprising 'discovery' was the existence of part-time representatives in state legislatures in the US, which phenomenon was almost unheard of in Russia....the program met its stated objectives...it succeeded in acquainting the visitors with all major participants in local government and civil society. They were subjected to a diversity of opinions and ideas and appreciated the unique opportunity the visit offered them.

*As our visitors told us, there had been a lot of coverage of Hurricane Katrina in Russian media. During all our appointments they discussed Katrina and its aftermath. They always asked the question: What happened to you personally during the storm? Our hosts were invariably willing to share their personal recollections....One should especially note **Mr. Anthony Carter** of the Downtown Development District, who gave us a general presentation on the history of urban development in the US....The elected politicians in the group liked talking to **Mr. Walker Hines**, Louisiana State Representative....The group also enjoyed meeting with **Mr. Nathan Rothstein** and **Mr. Kendrick Pullen** of The New Orleans Young Urban Rebuilding Professionals.*

Thank you to everyone who helped make the world just a little smaller by participating in this program.

July and August 2008 Figures

Total Visitors – 70

Total Room Nights – 384

Countries Represented

Afghanistan, Argentina, Armenia, Belize, Bolivia, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Greece, Haiti, Honduras, India, Israel, Kenya, Liberia, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Palestinian Territories, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Senegal, South Africa, Syria, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Venezuela

New Orleans Citizen Diplomacy Council

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Tel: 504 / 529 - 1509

Mary Dennis, Director

Rosemarie Fowler, Senior Program Officer

Jena Melançon, Program Consultant

Rachel Schillaci, Program Officer

Membership Corner

Thanks to our well-publicized annual volunteer party and to the reputation that the New Orleans Citizen Diplomacy Council has for bringing interesting people to Louisiana, the organization welcomed several new members this summer including:

Mary Beth Arceneaux, Fernand Dionne, Jane Glade, Louis Glade, Kimberly Hatcher, Willard Hatcher, Mary E. Lambert, Ian Larkins, Anya Lincoln, Denis Petrov, Helene M. Thian, Marilyn M. Wolf

Also rejoining the NOCDC are **Lizbeth Philip Vetter** and **Bernard Keith Vetter**.

The NCIV has announced its annual photography contest. Photos and videos should show participants from the International Visitor Leadership Program interacting with their American counterparts and experiencing some aspect of American culture. Winning entries will be displayed at the 2009 National Meeting. To find an entry form and to read contest rules to: www.nciv.org.

September 1, 2008 via email

Dear colleagues.

Last days on TV inform hurricane Gustav comes nearer to America. We in 2007 in November were in New Orleans. Now people from this city and from state of Louisiana are evacuated. Every day we pray to the god, that all has bypassed well and hurricane has not caused the big damage America and Americans. We love America and Americans and we wish their most good our wishes. We always recollect America and Americans with love and good impressions.

Sincerely,

Dr. Gulzar Mustafayeva

"People who come to the United States to study, like myself, are the link between the U.S. and other cultures—and, in the end, educational exchange is the ultimate solution to global terrorism."

— *Mohammad al Kubleel*

Fulbright Fellow, Syria to the United States

NOCDC Board Members

President, Walter Wolf III Attorney, Entergy Corp.	Heather Farnsworth Community Activist
Vice President, Neal Morris Owner, Redmellon Restoration & Development	Dominick Gannon Community Activist
Secretary, Mary I. Hicks University of New Orleans	Marianna Rubino Attorney & Consultant
Treasurer, John Hopper City Park	Elizabeth Williams Attorney & Consultant (Immediate Past President)

Thank You to Our Corporate Sponsors

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Professional Resources – Thank you to our professional resources & to their colleagues for meeting with our visitors in July and August of 2008.

Alliance for Affordable Energy — Karen Wimpelberg

Associated Press — Brian Schwaner

Bayou Sauvage — Shelley Stiaes, Pon Dixon

Baptist Community Ministries — Hanna Sterling

Baptist Crossroads Foundation — Andrew Crosby, Jared Pryer

Belle Reve — Vicki Weeks

Boh Brothers Construction — Barry Esquivel

Byrd Energy — Wade Byrd

Carnaval Latino — Romi Gonzales, Ernesto Schweickhardt

Critical Infrastructure Protection — Lou Reese

Children’s Hospital (FACES) — Barbara Brown

Downtown Development District — Anthony Carter

Federal Emergency Management Agency — Nick Knowles

French Quarter Festivals, Inc. (FQFI) — Marci Schramm

Federal Bureau of Investigation — Will Hatcher

Global Green — Linda Morgano

Gulf Coast High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area — Tony Soto, William Renton, Donald Petty, Patrick Warner

Gulf Coast Restoration Network — Aaron Wiles

Henry Consulting, LLC — Troy Henry

Historic District Landmarks Commission — Elliot Perkins

Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies — Dr. Denese Shervington

John Exnicios — Attorney and Political Consultant

Judicial Campaign Oversight Committee — Harry Hardin III

Kirk Menard — Retired from Shell Oil Company

Levees.Org — Sandi Rosenthal

Louisiana Dept. of Natural Resources — Chris Knotts, Dr. Charles Killebrew

Louisiana Dept. of Transportation and Development — Brandan Rush

Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries — Randy Pausina, Lt. Colonel Jeff Mayne

Louisiana Office of Public Health — Glenn Cambre

Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board — Darrel Rivere

Louisiana State Police — Robert Mire

LSU Agricultural Center — Rusty Gaudé, Mark Schexnayder

Louisiana Transportation Research Center — Harold Paul, Jan Grenfell, Joubert Harris, Chad Winchester

Loyola University — Dr. Robert Thomas

Mary Queen of Vietnam Church — Farther Nguyen Vien

Mayor’s Office of Emergency Preparedness — Jeremy Sneed

Mayor’s Office of Environmental Affairs — Nathan Champagne

Mayor’s Office of Homeland Security — Robert Williams, Tim Thomasson

Mayor’s Office of Recovery Management — Dr. Earthea Nance,

Metropolitan Crime Commission — Anthony Radosti

New Orleans City Public Works — Robert Mendoza

New Orleans Museum of Art — Marney Robinson

New Orleans Police Department—Lynn Fletcher, Captain Gary Gremillion

New Orleans Sierra Club — Darryl Malek-Wiley

NO/AIDS Task Force — Enrique Moresco

Preservation Resource Center — Pam Bryan, Patricia Gay

Rebuilding Together — John Svarka

St. Bernard Parish City Council — Polly Boudreaux, Elizabeth McDougall

St. Mary’s Dominican High School for Girls — Mary Burckell

The Green Project — Laura Paul

The South Louisiana Submerged Road Program — Bryan Jones

Trinity Episcopal Church — Matt Holt

Tulane Shakespeare Festival — Ron Gural

Tulane University — Agnieszka Nance, Amanda Buberger

Tulane University, Homeland Studies — Professors Keith Amacker, Lou Reese, Jonathan Walsh

University of New Orleans — Dr. Ting Wang

US Attorney Eastern District LA — Juan Masini, Mark Miller, Sal Perricone

US Coast Guard, Sector NOLA — Mr. James Nolan

YaYa Inc. — Megg Lamb

Hospitality – Thank you to all who provided transportation or welcomed visitors with home hospitality and sight seeing in July and August of 2008.

Jacqueline Simon and **Gail Broussard** hosted a visitor from Haiti and a visitor from Nigeria for dinner.

John Exnicios hosted five visitors from the Ukraine for a barbeque at his home and gave them a tour of the city.

Professor Weilie Zhou hosted a visitor from China for dinner.

Dr. and Mrs. Stuart Bamforth hosted a visitor from the United Kingdom for dinner.

Darrel Rivere hosted a visitor from the United Kingdom for a tour and boat excursion in Pierre Part, Louisiana.

Jacqueline Simon hosted eight mayors from Haiti for dinner.

A Chance Encounter in Odessa: A Tale of Citizen Diplomacy

In July 2008, a group of five Ukrainians on an International Visitor Leadership Program arrived in New Orleans. While all delegations are memorable, this one was especially noteworthy as its interpreter, Peter Voitsekhovskiy, played a role in helping reestablish New Orleans as a suitable destination in the minds of national decision-makers in the months following the reopening of the NOCDC.

Today, Peter is a researcher with the Center for the Study of Post-Communist Societies at the University of Maryland, occasionally taking assignments as an interpreter; but sixteen years ago he was living in Ukraine, contemplating a move to Russia. He had just returned to Odessa from a stint as a guest lecturer at Bates College in Maine when he heard that there would be a public symposium on democratic governance held in the city. Curious, he decided to attend.

Unbeknownst to Peter and to the seminar's organizers, the interpreters hired for the event had decided to quit in

unison moments before the first speaker was to address the crowd. What had started as a whim for Peter quickly developed into something more as his English-speaking ability was immediately recognized by John Exnicios, an event organizer and future member of the NOCDC. Peter-the-audience-member became Peter-the-event-interpreter within five minutes of his arrival, and John credits him with saving the costly endeavor from complete disaster.

Peter successfully interpreted for the three day seminar and some time soon after decided not to move to Russia. He remained in Ukraine and was hired by the event organizers as their field operator in Odessa with John as his supervisor.

Peter's interest in America grew, and in 1994 he was admitted to the graduate school of government at the University of Kansas. This eventually led to his Ph.D. work in government and politics at the University of Maryland. John, in the meantime, had returned to his native New Orleans and in 1996 joined the NOCDC, then known at the Council

for International Visitors of Greater New Orleans. Although he and Peter were no longer work colleagues, they maintained occasional contact.

Fast forward to eleven months after Hurricane Katrina. New Orleans was still reeling and the NOCDC was desperate to convince Washington, D.C., that it could safely handle international delegates. The Open World Program of the U.S. Library of Congress was willing to give the organization a try on condition that the NOCDC procure a local Ukrainian translator for its group. As the office knew no one who could fit the requirements of the program, John swung into action. He contacted Peter in Maryland who then interpreted for the group, helping solidify the NOCDC's reputation in Washington, D.C., as an office that had successfully recovered from the storm.

The Ukrainians that Peter accompanied in July 2008 studied *Municipal Energy Efficiency*, a program prepared by his old friend John who has since retired from NOCDC volunteer work.

"The cultural flavor of New Orleans," Peter writes, "is not to be found anywhere else" and he is pleased to see that two years after his initial post-Katrina trip, the NOCDC is fully back on the itinerary for international exchanges.

The repercussions of Peter's decision to attend the American-hosted seminar and the consequences of John's overture of a work opportunity set off a chain of events which eventually affected others beyond those at the symposium. It may have been fate or it may have been mere coincidence, but what happened in Odessa in 1992 contributed, in a round-about way, to the post-Katrina success of the NOCDC.

Citizen diplomacy thrives on the organized projects coordinated from the offices of National Programming Agencies in Washington, D.C., but it blossoms under the influence of informal meetings and chance encounters. The connection between Peter and John shows just how the seeds of citizen diplomacy can bare fruit...on both ends of the handshake.