

Hosting Corner

NEW ORLEANS- The New Orleans Citizen Diplomacy Council (NOCDC) has provided local hosting for Open World delegations since 2000; 22 groups have enjoyed quality programming and the cultural richness of New Orleans. Host **John Exnicios** has been a major contributor to the success of New Orleans programming. In addition to facilitating NOCDC-administered OW programs, he and his family open their doors to OW delegates as home stay hosts. John has an impressive background: he is an attorney and is a retired colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve. John has been a political consultant for over two decades and spent five years working in the former Soviet Union. He also served eight years on the Republican State Central Committee in Louisiana. Delegates admire John for his sense of humor, his empathy, and his ability to multi-task. Open World applauds John Exnicios, an exceptional host!



John Exnicios, third from left, with a delegation of Ukrainian NGO leaders.

Making a Difference

ALASKA - Anchorage International Rotary Club, a local host working with Open World grantee **Rotary International**, hosted a group of Russian media professionals July 21-Aug. 4, 2007 in part to commemorate the 200th year of Russian-American diplomatic relations. The delegates hailed from Vladivostock and St. Petersburg. The St. Petersburg contingency, colleagues from channel "100-TV", produced an hour-long documentary called "**Looking for Russian Alaska**", which aired during prime time in Nov. and Dec. 2007 in the St. Petersburg metro area. It depicts a strong Russian and American bond that continues to grow. "Looking for Russian Alaska" emphasizes that Alaska is proud of its Russian heritage. The Vladivostock delegates also produced a series of programs about Alaska which aired in Fall 2007. For more information, please contact Maura Shelden at

mshelden@loc.gov.

"Claimed by Russian explorers centuries ago and later sold to the United States, **Alaska has a unique place in Russian and American history**. The relationship between Alaska and the Russian Far East continues to be important because of our cultural ties, shared interests, and close proximity. From our many historic Russian buildings and active Russian Orthodox churches to the Russian names that mark our geographical landscape, Russian settlers have left their impression on Alaska."

~ Senator Ted Stevens



The Russian media group viewed the bill of sale for Alaska at the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

Alumni News

RUSSIA - Yuliya Yakunina, of Irkutsk, a 2005 Economic Development delegate hosted by the Georgia Council for International Visitors in Atlanta, GA actively uses her program experience to improve her community. Open World grantee, **USDA Graduate School International Institute**, administered the U.S. program. OW alumni like Yuliya are able to help their communities using the skills and experiences refined while participating in the program. As an OW alumna, Yuliya organized, along with the Federal Drug Control Agency of Irkutsk oblast, a project called **Freedom from Drugs** which received financial support from the Federal Drug Control Agency of Russia. Yuliya has partnered with Irkutsk's governor and local leadership to initiate other important civic projects, as well.

Board of Trustees Meeting

The Open World Leadership Center Board of Trustees met in Washington, D.C. on Jan. 23. Achievements and strategic plan outcomes for 2007 were reviewed. Topics of discussion included funding issues and plans to recognize U.S. hosts. The trustees voted to create a bi-national Russian/American business advisory board. Staff demonstrated the Center's new online results-tracking and networking systems.