

Spotlight



Vice President Joe Biden meets Open World facilitator Sophie Bzishvili, a U.S. Embassy employee in Tbilisi, during his July 22-23 visit to the Georgian capital.

TBILISI, GEORGIA – Open World facilitator **Sophie Bzishvili**, whose “day job” is exchange program coordinator for the U.S. Embassy in Georgia, joined her embassy colleagues in greeting Vice President **Joe Biden** during his July 22-23 trip to Tbilisi, the country’s capital. The meeting with Bzishvili and other members of the U.S. mission took place on day two of the Vice President’s visit, during which he also met with opposition and civil society leaders, addressed the **Georgian Parliament**, and spoke with internally displaced children.

At the embassy, Bzishvili contributes to Open World’s Georgia exchanges by assisting with communications with nominating organizations, candidate vetting sessions, and program development. She has also experienced Open World firsthand, having served as the facilitator for two very productive exchanges to Atlanta, one for university rectors hosted by the **Atlanta-Tbilisi Sister City Committee**, the other for **Georgian Bar Association** leaders hosted by the **Emory University School of Law**.

In the Field

WASHINGTON, DC – Before leaving for their host communities on May 30, a group of Ukrainian delegates headed to Washington’s Dupont Circle area to lay flowers at a monument dedicated to **Taras Shevchenko**, the great Ukrainian poet, artist, and national hero. Born a serf in 1814 in the Russian Empire’s Kiev Governorate, Shevchenko’s gifts as an artist gained him his freedom in 1838; his anticzarist poetry helped land him in a St. Petersburg prison in 1847. He spent the next ten years in penal military service in the Urals and Central Asia, finally receiving a pardon in 1857. Shevchenko’s writings, which he continued to produce throughout his decade of exile and up until his death in 1861, had a profound influence on the development of Ukrainian literature and identity. Washington, DC’s Shevchenko Monument, unveiled by President **Dwight Eisenhower** in 1964, is one of many around

the world. The monument’s inscription cites Shevchenko’s appeal, in one of his poems, for the “new and righteous law” of George Washington.



Making a Difference

IVANOVO, RUSSIA – Open World in May brought a high-level agricultural delegation from Russia’s Ivanovo Region to western North Carolina for an exchange that featured a visit to a milk processing plant, farm tours, and a day trip to South Carolina’s **Clemson University**. In a thank you letter to Open World, **Dmitriy Dmitriyev**, chief of Ivanovo’s agriculture and food production department, wrote that the program “gave our group a chance to see America’s agriculture industry in action, to strengthen American-Russian mutual understanding, and to introduce Russians to economic and agricultural institutions in America.” In a separate letter, all ten delegates, including **Vladimir Vlasov**, the chair of the regional legislature’s economic development committee, said that the program was “VERY informative,” allowing them “to learn more about contemporary practices and the proper approach to conduct agribusiness.” The letter also said that the knowledge they obtained would have taken them years to learn on their own. **National Peace Foundation** and **Friendship Force of Western North Carolina** members organized the visit.