

NEWSLETTER ... February 2009

Oklahoma City International Visitors Council

Editor – Kay Bickham
Website: www.ivcokc.org



Quote of the week

January 20, 2009:

"Know that America is a friend of each nation and every man, woman and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity, and that we are ready to lead once more."

-- Barack Obama, US President,
in inaugural address.

NEXT IVC MEETING THURSDAY, Feb. 5, 2009

11:00 – 12:30
Ann Lacy Bldg.
Oklahoma City University
Corner of N.W. 24 & Blackwelder
2501 N. Blackwelder
Call 341-3169
for information

Welcome Tweet Coleman

Tweet will be our special speaker at the next IVC meeting. In addition to sharing her experiences in 2008 in the Far East including China and Thailand, Tweet will share an interactive session International Etiquette and Protocol. Much of her information will come from her experience with the *Protocol & Diplomacy International Protocol Officers Association*.

Tweet Coleman serves as the International Flight Standards Program Manager at the FAA Academy, in OKC. In this position, she is the principal representative and coordinator for the regulatory standards training courses presented to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) countries. Dr. Coleman conducted flight standards assessments and management training for many foreign countries: Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria, Indonesia, South Korea, and China.

Thank you for inviting me to speak at the IVC meeting, Feb 5, 2009. I always enjoy visiting with friends who have an interest in helping the international community.

Happy New Year to our Chinese Friends -- January 28

Calendar

March 27 at 6:30 pm. Visions of Cultural Leaders and Miss Indian Oklahoma City Pageant at Destiny Christian Center 3801 SE 29th St. Del City.

OCU Film Institute: Sundays at 2:00 (free)

February 8 – Petree Recital Hall – from Romania
“4 Months, 3 Weeks, and 2 Days”

February 22 – from Spain “The Spirit of the Beehive”

March 8 – from Italy “Golden Door”

Friendship Force

Exchange opportunities for 2009....

February 6-8 – SW Regional Conference in Dallas

March 15-29 – Outbound to Cali and Bogota, Columbia

April 23-27 – Inbound from St. Louis, MO

June 4-11 – Inbound from Australia

September - Outbound to Shelby, NC

Sister Cities

Oklahoma City is now a Sister City with Ulyanovsk, Russia. In November 2008, Mayor Mick Cornett accompanied 4 OKC Sister City Board Members to Russia for the official signing of agreement papers.

The next undertaking for the local group is a Eastern European Festival in the Spring (March) at St. Luke's Methodist Church. St. Luke's along with OCU established the original relationship with Ulyanovsk a decade ago. For more information, contact

Melissa.M.Graffigna@FAA.gov

FFA reports

Training is down 40%. Countries represented in January were Malaysia, Brazil, Iceland, and Nigeria.

Can you help?

We have received a request for a Finnish speaker to help with some interpretations.

Did you know?

February is Black History Month and March is Women's History Month.

Public diplomacy begins with you

By Sherry L. Mueller

To revive America's image in the world, we all must be citizen diplomats.

WASHINGTON - President-elect Obama's intent to help "reboot" America's image in the world is most welcome. But as the US retools its efforts to reach out beyond governments to foreign audiences, not all is what it seems.

In recent years, there has been an avalanche of academic studies, government reports, and think tank analyses that offer various "fixes" for US public diplomacy. In November, it made the Government Accountability Office's list of 13 urgent issues. Despite unprecedented attention, however, myths prevail:

Myth 1: *The main goal of US public diplomacy is to improve America's image in the world.* That, and countering anti-Americanism are certainly part of it. But the overarching goal is to build a web of human relationships that provides a context for traditional diplomacy – and outcomes commensurate with long-term US interests.

Myth 2: *Everyone needs to get on the same page.* A [communications](#) strategy is important. But reciprocity is at the heart of truly successful public diplomacy. We must listen as much as we transmit messages. A brass plaque reading "Telling America's Story" adorned the building housing the US Information Agency until its oft-lamented demise in 1999. Perhaps it should have read, "Telling America's Story Is Done Best by Good Listeners."

Myth 3: *Public diplomacy is the government's job.* Undeniably, there are appropriate and indispensable roles for government. But unless we accept the fact that each American has a role to play in putting Uncle Sam's best foot forward, we underutilize our best resource. As "The Ugly American" (a provocative and instructive novel published 50 years ago) put it, "Average Americans, in their natural state ... are the best ambassadors a country can have."

We must do more to encourage individuals to embrace their roles as citizen diplomats, to accept their part in helping to shape foreign relations "one handshake at a time."

A film on the life of Elvis Presley showed him in his Army uniform, having just arrived in Germany, saying, "What we do here will reflect on America and our way of life." Clearly, Elvis grasped the concept that every American who interacts with foreigners – whether a business executive, nonprofit leader, tourist, student, athlete, or rock star – has an obligation to consider how his actions reflect on our country.

Public diplomacy architects need to recognize the credibility private-sector partners bring to diplomacy efforts such as the State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program. Members of the National Council for International Visitors plan the professional appointments, cultural activities, and home visits for distinguished leaders chosen by US embassies to participate in short-term programs. These members of parliament, journalists, and others influencing decisions that affect US interests learn the most about who we are and what we value from their experiences in cities around the country.

Myth 4: *The audiences we reach out to are exclusively overseas.*

The Institute of International Education reported that during the 2007-08 academic year there were 624,000 international students enrolled in colleges and universities throughout the US, and an additional 106,000 international scholars here. Moorhead Kennedy, one of the American diplomats held hostage in Iran in 1979-80, wrote a book titled "The Ayatollah in the Cathedral" in which he made an observation that is still true:

"We have in the foreign student community in this country something that could be a terrible time bomb or a tremendous source of international understanding – both in what they come to know about us and in what American students learn from them. We are training a generation of leaders, and it is terribly important that our foreign students form a part of the community of the universities where they are studying, for their sake, but even more for our own."

We have to increase active dialogue with foreign nationals in our own country.

Myth 5: *US public diplomacy is "broken."*

In fact, many programs are extremely successful – but woefully underfunded. While public diplomacy depends on active engagement by citizens, not just government agencies, it is a necessary government expenditure. By increasing funding for these programs and supporting the public-private partnerships that have engaged so many Americans as volunteer citizen diplomats, we will reap tremendous benefits for generations to come.

Sherry Mueller is president of the nonprofit National Council for International Visitors.

