



Open World (US Library of Congress) - from Ukraine - June 2013

Our club hosted a delegation of five female government leaders from Ukraine, July 1-9, 2013. The purpose of their visit was to gain first-hand experience with American community life, accountable governance and democratic values. Our club arranged for them to meet with Clearwater and Largo mayors and managers; county commissioners and state representatives; and leaders of community, business and higher education to gain insight into how American government works and how citizens participate.

The delegates' visit was sponsored by the Open World Leadership Center (OWLC), a nonpartisan initiative of the U.S. Congress that builds mutual understanding between leaders of emerging Eurasian countries and their U.S. counterparts. OWLC also arranged for an interpreter and a facilitator to accompany the delegation. The five delegates are all accomplished leaders in Ukraine where they hold responsible positions in small city or village government. For all, it was their visit to the U.S.

Their program schedule during their visit included 32 hours of meetings, tours and discussions designed to expose them to ideas and practices they can adapt for use in their own positions back home. Some of the delegates intend to create ongoing partnerships and continued communication with their American counterparts whom they met during their visit.

The delegates, facilitator and interpreter were home hosted by members of our club living in Largo, Clearwater, and Dunedin; and they met many other Friendship Force members who served as day hosts and attended welcome and farewell parties in their honor. Despite the rain and tropical storm, the Ukrainian delegates were also able to visit the beach and experience typical tourist activities with their new international friends. It was a busy, fun week for all!