



HOSTING CORNER

CINCINNATI, OH – Host **Marilyn Braun** recently returned from a week in Cincinnati’s Ukrainian sister city of Kharkiv, where she caught up with alumni of her past Open World exchanges and worked on some exciting spin-off activities described below. Braun hosts accountable-governance and NGO-development exchanges for Open World through the all-volunteer **Cincinnati-Kharkiv sister-city organization**, which she has been involved with since its founding in 1989. “I don’t have an ounce of Ukrainian blood,” she says, “but so many of my Ukrainian guests have become like family to me.”

Braun not only has decades of experience working on exchange programs, but she has also served the Cincinnati suburb of Wyoming as a city councilor and as a member of several city boards and commissions. She makes good use of her background in local government and community service when planning her Open World programs. Highlights of past exchanges have included a session on transparency with Cincinnati’s public information officer, a discussion with Wyoming’s city manager on how to involve citizen volunteers in local governance, and a site visit to Cincinnati’s largest homeless shelter to study its operations and help serve meals.

One stop always on the agenda is the Cincinnati Police Department. “The Ukrainians see how the police relate to the community with friendliness and fairness, work with youth, help the homeless, and give the media access to their records—as well as fight crime,” Braun explains.

When interacting with her delegates, what impresses Braun most is their desire to bring about change—which the Open World visit reinforces. “They see that democracy prevails in the governance of the communities they visit here,” she reports, adding that delegates are inspired by how suburbs and even small towns outside Cincinnati have effective city councils and city managers, and not just an all-powerful mayor, as is often found in small towns in Ukraine. In fact, one alumnus, a professor of public administration, just proposed launching an independently funded, two-way exchange to enable mayors from towns outside Kharkiv and their counterparts in towns outside Cincinnati to job shadow each other. Braun and the head of the Cincinnati-Kharkiv sister-city organization, **Alan Brown**, joined in planning for this follow-on project while in Kharkiv last month, and the first such delegation is tentatively scheduled to arrive in Cincinnati later this fall.



Open World host Marilyn Braun (right) with a delegate in Cincinnati in 2009.

Braun also spent part of her trip helping plan next steps for an ongoing Greater Cincinnati–Kharkiv student exchange born of a 2009 Open World visit she hosted. For two years now, students from both cities have taken turns doing social service projects together in each other’s community. A 2009 delegate’s special request to meet with an American teen provided the spark: Braun arranged for the entire delegation to meet with a group of Wyoming high schoolers involved in community service, and the student exchange evolved from that session. In addition to helping develop volunteerism in Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second-largest city, the student exchanges have “changed lives of young people, both in Cincinnati and in Kharkiv, beyond belief,” Braun says.

CENTER NEWS

In February 2011, the **Open World Board of Trustees** decided to give renewed emphasis to hosting delegates who came of age after the Soviet Union dissolved—the annual goal will be 30 percent under age 30. As a complementary initiative, the Center, in its [2012 Grant Guidelines](#), is giving priority to proposals that involve American young-professional organizations in providing professional, networking, and cultural programming to Open World delegations. Examples of such organizations include collegiate young-alumni associations and young-adult branches of charitable organizations and business groups.

As part of its young-professionals nominating strategy, Open World is identifying nominating organizations and creating a multinational Young Professional Advisory Committee. Recruitment of this younger cohort of emerging leaders will kick off after the 2012 grant decisions are made in October. The Center looks forward to working with grantees and local hosts on collaborating with organizations geared toward American young professionals.