



## SPECIAL ISSUE – JACKSONVILLE, FL HOST RECOGNITION AND RULE OF LAW DELEGATION

Florida has hosted 725 Open World participants, making it one of the most-visited states under the program, and Jacksonville is the state's most-visited Open World host community. In late April, Senior U.S. District Judge **Harvey E. Schlesinger** of Jacksonville and **Sondie Frus**, executive director of **GlobalJax**, a Jacksonville nonprofit, paired up to cohost their fifth Open World judicial delegation from Tatarstan, Russia. During the exchange, Executive Director John O'Keefe held a host recognition ceremony honoring Judge Schlesinger, Frus, and six of Frus's volunteers who have made exceptional contributions to the success of GlobalJax's many Open World hostings: **Lois Becker, Tom Brennan, Dorothy Dobbs, Felix Frayman, John Frus, and Vladimir Lozovsky**. Below are an article on Frus and photos from the April judicial exchange and host recognition ceremony.



GlobalJax executive director and Open World local host coordinator **Sondie Frus** (second from left) practices her own "kitchen diplomacy" in Jacksonville with the April rule of law delegation from Tatarstan.

**JACKSONVILLE, FL** – Local host coordinator **Sondie Frus** earned a much-deserved certificate of recognition from the Center on April 22. The award was made during a host recognition ceremony held in conjunction with a welcoming reception for the five Russian judges whom she was cohosting with Judge **Harvey E. Schlesinger**.

Frus is the longtime executive director of GlobalJax, a nonprofit dedicated to making Jacksonville more vibrant, inclusive, and international—words that describe Frus's own work for Open World. Since 2001, she has hosted 17 delegations from Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan on themes ranging from rule of law to public health. Frus says that she begins a dialogue with her prospective delegates early on to ensure that her program responds to their professional interests. "We always strive to include an expert in the field in making the decisions about the professional programming," she adds. While the

professional side of her agendas is quite substantive, the cultural side can be very lively. "Our measure of a great evening is that we end up dancing and/or singing," she says. One popular feature of her agendas is a group dinner showcasing recipes from the delegation's home country; the menu is chosen by the delegates, and they, their host families, and other attendees join in preparing and sharing the meal (see photo).

Frus describes these host families as "warm, caring people who love to engage in conversations and really listen to their guests." She also finds that home hosting helps dispel movie-generated stereotypes about Americans, including the idea that "everyone in the United States lives in a fancy house."

Asked to describe her early work with Open World, Frus recalls, "I made my first request for an Open World meeting in our community on the Friday after 9/11, and the person I contacted simply said 'Yes.' Because of 9/11, there was—and still is—a sense of urgency that we open doors and provide authentic experiences for leaders from around the world."



Judge **Harvey E. Schlesinger** looks at the certificate of recognition presented to him by Executive Director **O'Keefe**.



Judge **Schlesinger** and delegate **Chulpan Muzipova** after a meeting. Judge **Schlesinger's** cap was given to him by the delegates.



The Russians visit a computer lab at the Florida Coastal School of Law library to learn about LexisNexis.



**Tom Brennan** with Executive Director **O'Keefe** after being recognized as a valuable Open World home host.