

A Message from Former Program Administrator Aletta Waterhouse*

I retired on October 31 after 35 years in government and nonprofit service. Throughout my professional life, I have always felt lucky to work for organizations with missions that I believed in, and my time with the Open World Program was a wonderful close to my career. Although I will continue to consult for Open World under a part-time contract, I want to take this opportunity to thank you—our hosts and grantees—for your support over the last nine years.

I often tell anyone who asks about Open World that the best part of the program—the keystone of its success—is its network of dedicated and loyal American hosts. You accomplished the seemingly impossible back in 1999 by hosting more than 2,000 Russians in three months, and have continued to come through for Open World, even in the wake of hurricanes and floods, and personal illness and loss. After nine years with the program, I am still surprised by the number of people throughout the United States who are willing to open their homes for eight days to non-English-speaking strangers. But you do much more than that: you demonstrate to our delegates the strong ethic of volunteerism and giving that is a foundation of our community life. And experiencing your openness and generosity is what so many of our alumni report as being the best part of their Open World visit. Because of your efforts, the friends, family, and professional colleagues of our guests have a positive view of America. That makes a huge difference.

Some of my memories from the program's early days have poignancy in today's world—Russian veterans of the Soviet-Afghan War sharing experiences with Vietnam veterans; those of us of the Cold War generation finally having an opportunity to replace old feelings of fear with new ties of friendship. But while I obviously have been impressed and sometimes amazed by the Open World delegates I have met through the years, many of my best memories come from my interactions with you, and especially from my site visits, when I experienced your generosity firsthand. One favorite memory is from a site visit I made to Nevada in mid-November several years ago. During an early Thanksgiving dinner, the Rotarian host had everyone around the table speak of whom and what they were thankful for, and later an American host judge performed a Hopi dance for the delighted Russian guests.

At this Thanksgiving time, I am especially grateful for the support, patience, and understanding you have shown me throughout my years with Open World. And in a time of change for all of us, I have full faith that the leadership of John O'Keefe, the dedication of the excellent Open World staff, and your commitment will keep Open World the vibrant exchange program it is today.

The Open World legacy for me will be the friends I have in every part of the country. I will keep in contact and hope you will, too.

* Aletta was detailed from the Library of Congress to the Russian Leadership Program in the summers of 1999 and 2000 and was appointed Program Administrator for the Open World Leadership Center in 2001. She served twice as Interim Executive Director of the Center.



Aletta Waterhouse (center) receives the Superior Honor Award from Chairman Billington (left) for her service to Open World. Director O'Keefe is at right.

In the Field

Former Open World Leadership Center Executive Director **Richard Miles**, U.S. Ambassador (Retired), has been asked by the State Department to serve as Charge of the U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, until a permanent ambassador can be nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Ambassador Miles's assignment in Turkmenistan begins this month. All of us at the Center feel fortunate to have Ambassador Miles at the helm of the U.S. Embassy in the Open World Program's newest participating country, and we wish him the best of luck in his new posting.