

Gulf Coast Diplomacy

IMPACT REPORT 2019 & 2020



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BRINGING NORTHWEST FLORIDA FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL



Mission

Gulf Coast Diplomacy is a non-partisan, non-profit organization whose mission is to create & encourage collaboration between like-minded community stakeholders who value sharing the central Gulf Coast with the rest of the world by:

- Facilitating professional and personal interaction for international leaders during official visits to the central Gulf Coast
- Enhancing respect and communication through international exchanges and alliances
- Forging cultural, educational, and business relationships with the global community through citizen diplomacy
- Promoting a greater understanding of global affairs in our community through a balance of public events, educational activities, and the International Visitor Leadership Program
- Promoting the central Gulf Coast as an important center of commerce, culture, and tourism



A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

The U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) is implemented in the U.S. by 84 community-based members who are part of the Global Ties U.S. network. We are fortunate to have one of these organizations, Gulf Coast Diplomacy, operating with great success in our own community.

If you are reading this, I am certain you have memories of our international visitors that will endure a lifetime, but have you stopped to think how the IVLP's impact extends beyond the societal influence? The funding the IVLP receives to promote these exchanges is only a small fraction (about .012%) of the entire International Affairs U.S. Federal Budget, but it is important to note the Global Ties U.S. network is able to utilize these funds to make an even bigger financial impact on the U.S. economy. In 2019, the network turned \$5 million in federal funds into \$57 million in revenue, which directly supported local communities. In the same year, the members, volunteers, and staff of Gulf Coast Diplomacy sponsored exchanges for 187 international leaders in Northwest Florida, which in turn contributed a total economic impact to our region of \$455,377!

Not only does our area benefit from intercultural exchange opportunities producing economic benefits through the work of Gulf Coast Diplomacy, but also pre-pandemic, the University of West Florida (UWF) welcomed over 350 international students from 84 countries to its campus each year. The impact of tuition, retail, housing, health insurance, and other spending normally results in an impact of over \$10.7 million to the U.S. economy and supports 60 jobs.

The symbiotic relationship between UWF and Gulf Coast Diplomacy has been long-standing with international visitors engaging with the UWF academic community & UWF students interning at Gulf Coast Diplomacy. UWF is committed to creating an environment where differences and inclusion are valued, divergent points-of-views can be presented in a holistic manner honoring all participants within the communities, and most importantly, preparing students for an increasingly global future. I only anticipate our partnership will continue to grow and flourish as we reinforce our commitment to citizen diplomacy in our region and beyond.

2019 AT A GLANCE

24

Total
Programs

53

Countries
Represented

21

Youth
Diplomats

187

Total International
Exchange
Participants

5

Continents
Represented

284

Total Local
Professionals
Meeting Visitors

203

Professional
Appointments

11

Community
Coffees



A MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In 2008, I sent out 80 invitations to strangers in our community, asking them if they could “imagine the possibilities the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) can bring to Northwest Florida.”

Thirteen years later, I wonder, do you realize how your Gulf Coast Diplomacy interactions affect others? We all appreciate how meeting international visitors shapes their understanding of the country, but how often do you think about your role in bridging the divide between yourself and fellow citizens?

Our non-partisan organization provides a platform for Americans of all backgrounds to converge and discuss issues respectfully. It is a public charity, not only for its educational role but also because of its economic development role in eliminating prejudice and discrimination.

Over the last two years, I have received several telephone calls from members and supporters who touched base after participating in one of our community coffees. Gratitude and surprise are the two biggest emotions expressed as they share their wonder or relief at recognizing the humanity of a fellow American who holds differing beliefs or who has a background dissimilar from their own. That kind of realization is an effect of citizen diplomacy.

One of the organizational challenges I have is growing membership diversity. Most of my work hours are spent on program & administrative work, not outreach. I now see how having membership development on autopilot has led to an awkward situation. Our professional meetings reflect the diversity in our community, but our hospitality & outreach efforts do not. I am calling on members' help to improve this.

Not everyone enjoys international affairs, and people have different interests and hobbies. I get that, but eliminating discrimination does not fall into the category of a hobby, and our work is not just about building bridges to other countries. It is also about making our own community better. I ask you to join me in inviting someone new to the table, because our work is too important not to be shared.

Everyone is welcome to participate in our programs, and I believe we have just begun seeing the possibilities the IVLP can bring to Northwest Florida.

Jenna Melancon

2019 AT A GLANCE

100% of our projects were accompanied by local, trained facilitators

Citizen Diplomats in Northwest Florida

Our citizen diplomats hosted **91** home hospitality meals

19 members of the community joined us for *Great Decisions*



International Visitors

Our international visitors were featured in local media **30** times

100% of our visitors received honorary citizenship with the City of Pensacola

Our top 10 countries by number of participants

- | | | | |
|--------------|---------------|------------|---------------|
| 1 India | 4 Russia | 7 Jordan | 10 Bangladesh |
| 2 Kazakhstan | 5 Afghanistan | 8 Pakistan | |
| 3 Mexico | 6 Tajikistan | 9 China | |



Local Impact

International visitors donated **149** hours in community service at **10** different volunteer activities with five different nonprofits

Visitors made presentations in **10** different classrooms

We announced the **2nd** recipient of Ashley's Study Abroad Scholarship Exchanges contributed close to **\$450K** in FY 2019 to the local economy

PROGRAMMING UPDATE

The vast majority of our work is focused on the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) of the U.S. Department of State. It was temporarily paused in 2020 as the Office of International Visitors reimagined what it would look like in the digital realm. In April 2020, we were part of a virtual exchange pilot for the national network's new model, and in the autumn the Global Ties U.S. network began crafting regular virtual experiences for IVLP participants.

As of May 2021, in-person IVLP exchanges are on hold. In the meantime, we are working with virtual exchanges, and we also now have time to reconnect with exchange alumni through our local initiative, the Small World Café. The Youth Diplomats continue to connect to the world beyond Florida through monthly meetings & through Camp Global, another new initiative spawned in 2020.

Board Members

2019

Chair: Karen Jurkowich
Vice-Chair: Rachel Hendrix
Secretary: Linda Wade
Treasurer: Jeremy Ochoa
John Adams
Salma Ashmawi
Randle Carpenter

Allan Ford
Guy Gascard
Diane Mack
E. Ben Posey
Todd Thomson
Jeannine van Reeth

2020

Chair: Rachel Hendrix
Vice-Chair: Jeremy Ochoa
Secretary: Linda Wade
Treasurer: Todd Thomson
John Adams
Glenn Carey
Carlos Collard
Allan Ford

Guy Gascard
Audrey Martin-Washington
E. Ben Posey
Rashmi Sharma
Julie Tippins Parker
Jeannine van Reeth
Keith Wilkins



IVLP REFLECTION

It all started with the pandemic.

With three in-person exchanges cancelled, and none on the books for the foreseeable future, executive directors in the Global Ties U.S. network began brainstorming on ways to keep their members -- and staff -- engaged. Thus was born the citizen diplomacy map, a project initiated by the Utah Council for Citizen Diplomacy. We joined dozens of other organizations and began gathering stories from around the globe to reflect why **#ExchangesMatter**. Below is one of our submissions. You can explore this collective effort: <http://ow.ly/lqoM50ALToX>

Our programs may currently be digital, but there is nothing virtual about the connections we continue to build together.

“Gulf Coast Diplomacy has been doing a great job with virtual events.”

Pensacola is one of my favorite places I visited in the States. Memories are still remarkably vivid in my mind.

I will always remember the warm hospitality of the Lowe family [in Gulf Breeze] who treated me and two other International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) fellows as part of the family.

When I participated in the IVLP, my prime focus was for first-hand experience how schools and organizations in the U.S. implement media literacy. Gulf Coast Diplomacy held such a workshop, which was something I really looked forward to from the moment I saw it in the program.



During the pandemic, we have had virtual meetings with IVLP fellows and have shared what we are doing to cope during the coronavirus pandemic. Gulf Coast Diplomacy has been doing a great job with virtual events – bringing people together from all over the world.

Fitore Misini is an assistant at American Corner Pristina. She participated in the 21st Century Changemakers International Visitor Leadership Program and came to Pensacola in April 2019. Fitore is our Camp Global collaborator in Kosovo.

OUR PROGRAMS IN 2020



Professional Exchange Facilitation

We work with the congressional Open World Leadership Center exchange and the U.S. Department of State (DoS) to connect local businesses, schools, nonprofits, and elected officials to their counterparts abroad.

The City of Pensacola provides Honorary Citizen of the City of Pensacola certificates to visiting exchange participants, a treasured hospitality gesture.



Youth Development

We take international visitors into local schools to give cultural presentations and to Pensacola State College and the University of West Florida (UWF) to engage students in discussions. We host short-term DoS youth leadership exchanges both in person and virtually to help local teens explore the world year-round through Youth Diplomats and Camp Global.



Hospitality and Outreach

To encourage the concept of citizen diplomacy & to give members time to interact with visitors, we coordinate Small World Cafés, volunteer events, and dinner hospitalities.

In 2020, we began partnering with our counterparts at Global Ties Detroit to bring more opportunities to members in both areas.

PROJECTS

Professional Exchange Facilitation

Youth Development

Hospitality & Outreach

DETAILS

We worked with five in-person exchanges & 14 virtual projects.

Exchange participants visited two schools & UWF. We hosted a DoS in-person youth program, created a virtual summer camp, and worked with 24 Youth Diplomats throughout the year, introducing them to four dozen international youth.

We created a new platform, the Small World Café, to keep members connected & we invited colleagues across the Global Ties U.S. network to collaborate with us.

OUTCOME

We introduced Pensacola to visitors from 60 countries.

Two Youth Diplomats received fully funded virtual exchanges. DoS invited five locals to intern with its #FacesOfExchange campaign. Others participated in online youth exchanges.

We hosted 13 Small World Cafés & collaborated with Global Ties Detroit to offer five more. We co-created "Team Florida" for a World Affairs trivia contest & contributed to a citizen diplomacy story map.

MEMBERS & VOLUNTEERS

We would not be successful without our citizen diplomacy rock stars. That's right. Our office is dependent upon you because mutual exchange is possible only through the efforts of many. Countless professionals explore best practices in their respective fields with our international visitors, and alongside those crucial meetings, our members and volunteers add an element of hospitality. *Ladies & gentlemen, please take a bow.*

Homestay Hosts

Lori Bane
Leigh & Kent DeSantis
Kaytlin Ward & John Dittmar
Marcia Edwards
Vivian Faircloth
Susie & Martin Griffith
Stacey & Sean Guidry
Brandy & Paul Hauwiler
Karen & Mike Jurkowich
Laura Ericson & Stephanie Karous
Belinda Mahon
Beverly & David Mayo
Wendy & Chris McCullar
Jena Melançon
Marcela Oriz & Angel Merced
Lisa & Bob Newell
E. Ben & Magali Posey
Megan & Jerry Pratt
Terry & Bill Preston
Linda Thompson
Julie Tippins Parker
Jeannine van Reeth
Faye & Robert Robinson
Melissa Evans & Shawn Smith
Susan Woolf
Liz & Basil Yelverton



"As a part of [my] IVLP agenda, I had a chance to have home hospitality. I and three other friends were warmly welcomed to Mr. E. Ben and Mrs. Magali Posey's home....Time was too short for us to spend with this loving and caring couple."

Project Facilitators & Office Volunteers

Barbara Albrecht
Norma Fields
Patricia McGraw
Susan Senkarik

Linda Thompson
Julie Tippins Parker
Jeannine van Reeth

Dinner with a Delegate Hosts

Salma Ashmawi
Lynn & Rich Cacace
Suzanne & Randle Carpenter
Terry & Jim Crowe
Leigh & Kent DeSantis
Marcia Edwards
Andrea & Allan Ford
Hilda & Ray Jones
Karen & Mike Jurkowich
Beth & Bruce Hoffman
Julie & Tim Kane
Cookie Kichler
Shelly & Mike Lowe
Diane Mack
Patricia and Gary McGraw
Jena Melançon
Jean Norman
Jeremy Ochoa
Diane Peterson
Megan & Jerry Pratt
Faye & Robert Robinson
Kaberi & Swadesh Samanta
Linda Thompson
Julie Tippins Parker
John Toole
Linda & Bill Wade
Liz & Basil Yelverton
Maysa Yousef

"We were very touched and moved by your kindness and heartwarming welcome."

"[The most enjoyable cultural experience in Pensacola was] the hospitality family. They were amazing, and we had a chance in such a short time to talk about so many things and to get to know better the U.S. and its culture."



SPECIAL THANKS

We have never before had a report covering two years. With March 2020 segueing into the uncertainty of April, our 2019 report remained in draft mode. When we rebranded that spring, we set it aside and focused on the new items at hand — the world of virtual programming, our work-from-home structure, and our summer 2020 office move.

There are so many people to thank. These include Anne E. Grimes, Director, Office of International Visitors, U.S. Department of State, who spoke at our 2020 membership party and Escambia County Commissioner Jeff Bergosh who interviewed her in June at his 45th Coffee with the Commissioner;

Katherine Brown, President & CEO of Global Ties U.S., who spoke at our 2020 Annual Meeting; and Diplomat in Residence Amy Radetsky who met with our Youth Diplomats and then presented at our membership event in 2019. Hundreds of professionals met with visitors. Elected officials at the city, county, and state level shared their expertise. Escambia County provided us with an office, & friends across the nonprofit sector partnered with us to create vibrant programming for our visitors & members.



Sponsors

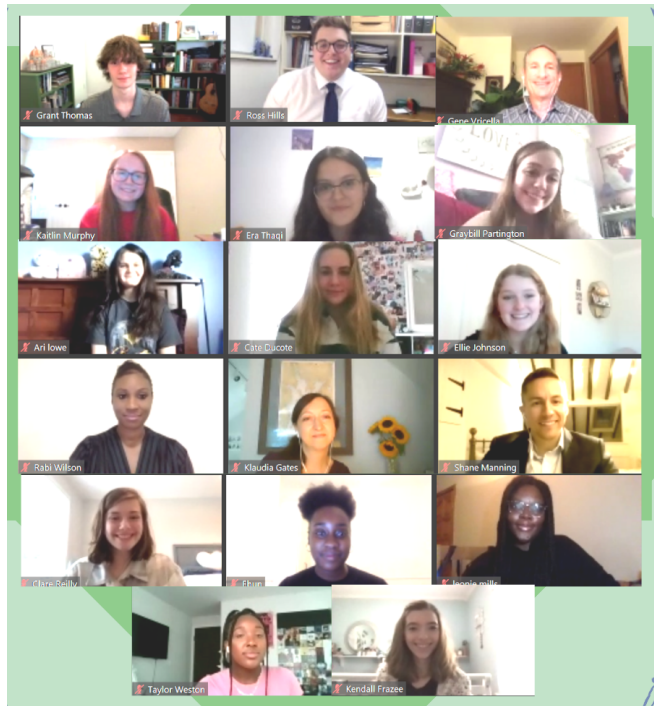
Baptist Healthcare
Carmen's Lunch Bar
City of Pensacola
Clark Partington
Dreamcatcher Shuttle
Escambia County
Finding Peace
Fountain, Shultz & Associates
Guardian Six
Gulf Breeze Sailing
Hilton Pensacola Beach Gulf Front
Jim Thomas International
McMahon & Hadder
Mode Mind Body
Pen Air Federal Credit Union
Seville Quarter
SpringHill Suites
The Fish House
Tower East Group
U.S. Department of State
Visit Pensacola
Vivid Bridge Studios
Wade, Palmer & Shoemaker, P.A.

YOUTH DIPLOMATS

Youth Diplomats is a monthly program, and no two Saturdays are alike. In 2019 & 2020, the group explored everything from wildlife trafficking to the rise of nationalism in Europe. They polished their active listening skills, practiced tolerance with each other when discussing a variety of issues, and grew their confidence in their public speaking abilities.

They volunteered alongside international visitors with Ocean Hour several times. In 2019 they even shoveled oyster shells with International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) fellows at a project with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Diplomatic simulations, some crafted by our staff and others sourced from the National Museum of American Diplomacy, added another layer of fun and excitement to the mix. They improved their negotiation skills, explored resume writing with a human resource professional, and held their first



[Youth Diplomats] has been an amazing experience because it has exposed me to topics that I realized I am super interested in!

DONOVAN KANE, YOUTH DIPLOMAT & LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE MEMBER

leadership committee elections in 2019. In June of that year, four traveled to Washington, D.C., for a series of meetings focused on educational & career opportunities.

Fast forward to the beginning of the pandemic. Many had their first experience with Zoom at our meeting focused on cybersecurity. Two months later, they "traveled" to a Bolivian llama farm via that online technology.

Your membership dues help fuel Youth Diplomats. The hours spent on this local initiative in interacting with IVLP fellows are covered by a grant. The vast majority of Youth Diplomat preparation and program hours, however, are not covered by federal funds. We depend on donations, corporate sponsorship, and program tuition to cover the balance and to help us offer need-based scholarships.

"The [IVLP] has...given me valuable opportunities to experience cultural exchanges while remaining in the U.S."

- Eden, Youth Diplomat alumna

Did you know?

We are having an impact both at home and abroad. In 2020, one of our Youth Diplomats was selected for the Congress-Bundestag Youth Program and another was awarded a spot with the Youth Ambassadors Argentina program. Several participated in The Experiment Digital (TED), a virtual exchange sponsored by the Stevens Initiative. One of our Youth Diplomats was hired by TED to work as a facilitator and another as a peer mentor.

These exchanges give teens the tools they need to succeed in an increasingly connected world. According to Diplomat in Residence Sebron "C.B." Toney, they prepare them for competing effectively "for international careers with State, USAID, Peace Corps, and other U.S. government agencies – increasing the regional diversity of the government domestically and overseas."



In 2020, we created something new. We designed Camp Global in collaboration with American Corner Pristina so teens could explore current events together online. Thirty-two youth from El Salvador, Honduras, Kosovo, Mexico, and the USA participated in this digital initiative. At its end, several asked us to extend it another week. We call that a success!



"From the discussions on the Northern Triangle and racism to the diplomatic simulation, the activities were engaging and enjoyable."

– Lindsay, Camp Global '20



COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHTS



Pensacola MESS Hall

WARNING! Enthusiasm for citizen diplomacy can be addictive. Just ask Dr. Megan Pratt.

What started as a one-time meeting 10 years ago at City Hall evolved into International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) dinners with her family and multiple exchange visitors exploring the Pensacola MESS (Math, Engineering, Science, and Stuff) Hall. It eventually led to the Pratts offering homestays.

According to Megan, the interactions at the MESS Hall with professionals have been mutually beneficial. "It gets us to think about things in a different context. It's almost like having a professional reviewer giving us different ways we can serve our local communities."

When international visitors spend time in her home, she appreciates how it gives new insights into current events because "it helps you picture real people living real lives behind the lines on paper."

As for the next generation of Pratts, one is headed off on a U.S. Department of State exchange program in 2021. Science probably will not back up our statement that citizen diplomacy is addictive, but we feel pretty confident in saying it looks like it is now a Pratt family tradition.



Mary Montcalm

Mary Montcalm has a message about youth exchanges she wants the U.S. Department of State to hear. For several years, this Gulf Breeze High School Spanish teacher has welcomed and integrated short-term teen

exchange participants into her classroom. She has seen how time spent with Central and South American youth give her own students "perspective and more opportunities to find out about other cultures." This matters to Mary because she has seen how these interactions encourage her own students to try harder at language learning.

And that message for the U.S. Department of State? It sums up her feelings and enthusiasm well in three words - "Keep them coming."



INERTIA

Why do exchanges matter? Ask Basil Kuloba, the executive director and co-founder of INERTIA, an educational nonprofit which works with underserved communities.

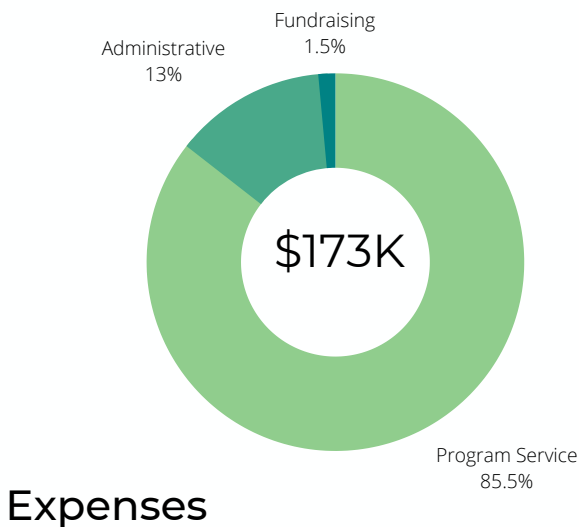
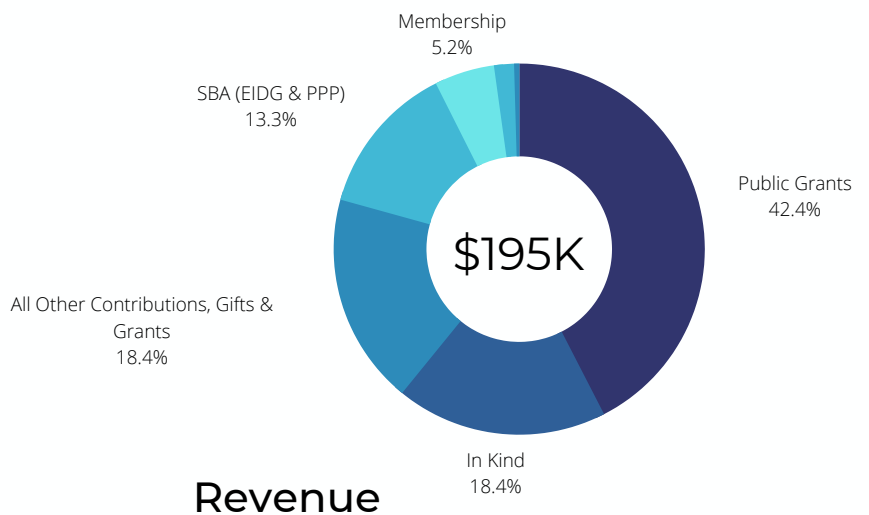
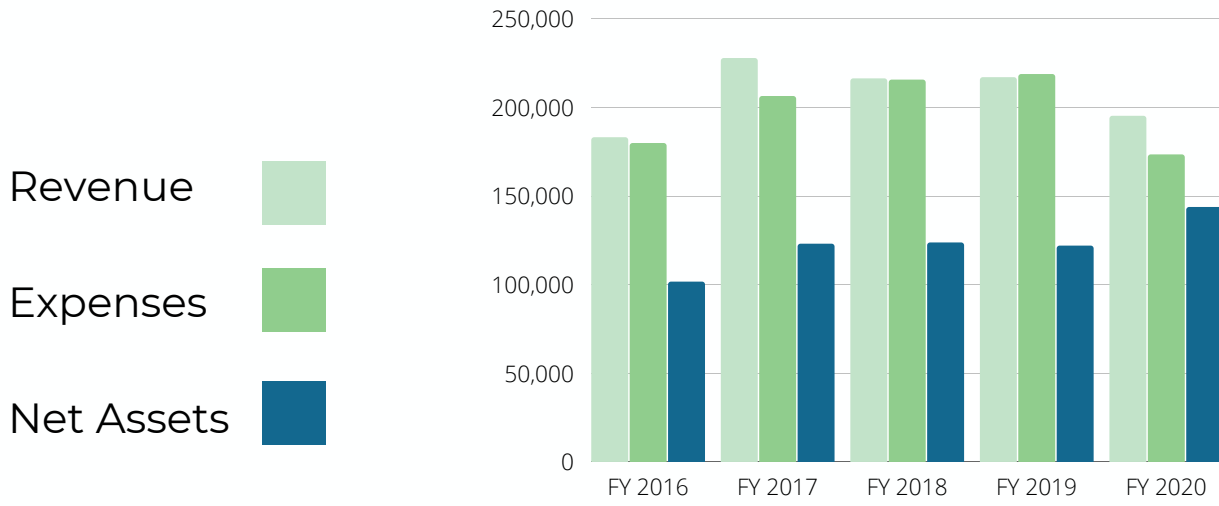
Knowing others around the world are doing similar work brings things into perspective for Basil. "It helps avoid tunnel-vision," while building a great support network.

Basil co-founded INERTIA while an undergrad student at the University of West Florida. He finds interactions with international educators particularly memorable and has connected with several he met through the IVLP. "We follow each other on Instagram and keep each other updated. We also email back and forth."

Cross-pollination of ideas, mutual encouragement, and networking all are outcomes of international exchange. Basil saw the potential of growing his IVLP meetings into lasting connections because he knows how to think big and implement his dreams.

FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

October 1, 2019 - September 30, 2020



85.5%
of expenses go
directly to our
program services



OUR 2021 GOALS

1

Connect Strategically

We conduct alumni outreach annually, and working virtually has given us time to reflect on how best to use alumni information. In 2021, our goal is to collect impact stories and create a catalog featuring alumni on our website. Through this initiative, we hope to illustrate the links created through our programs.

3

Enhance Youth Diplomats

In the past, the international visitors invited to Youth Diplomats were physically in Pensacola. There will always be a place for serendipitous exchange groups to interact with the teens, but with virtual programming, we can strategically utilize Zoom to further learning objectives. We also are now able to include a handful of international teens each month to increase the diversity of viewpoints.

2

Improve Membership Diversity

Our work celebrates diversity & inclusion, and this is reflected in the interlocutors we invite to our professional meetings. We want our membership composition also to mirror our community so we are working on outreach efforts to make this a reality. We want everyone to know they are welcome at Gulf Coast Diplomacy.

4

Focus on Local Connections

We will continue engaging members through social media, newsletters, and the Small World Café and will offer members new online cultural interactions with IVLP participants until in-person programs resume. We will show gratitude to area professionals who engage in exchange through a community spotlight series. We hope in this manner to illustrate how their time spent in exchange matters.

THIS PUBLICATION WAS FUNDED BY THE OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL VISITORS, BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE FULBRIGHT-HAYS ACT OF 1961, AS AMENDED.

We thank you for your continued support in our programs.

Photo Acknowledgements

Thuri Braun
Racine Frank
Bruce Hoffman
Karen Jurkowich
Basil Kuloba
Phillip Makselan
Jena Melançon
Fitore Misini
Mary Montcalm
Jean Norman
Sanya Tyson Wes
Leah Yelverton



150 W Maxwell St
Pensacola, FL 32501
(850) 377-3176
www.gulfcoastdiplomacy.org

#ExchangesMatter



A proud member of Global Ties U.S.