

THE MORNING CALL

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Visitors get pointers in Dublin

10 Kazakhstanis stop there on state tour to study business growth.

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Of The Morning Call

Kazakhstan farmer Rais Karaibragimov was impressed by a manmade process that accelerates the natural conversion of animal manure to farming soil.

Kairat Sugurbekov was full of questions about the ideas his Dublin counterparts were applying to a local business incubator, which helps young businesses survive and grow during the start-up period, when they are most vulnerable.

Adilzhan Tumatov wanted to give his economics students a vision of the what the free market enterprise model he advocates looks like.

The men are among a group of 10 Kazakhstanis who visited the Dublin Technology Enterprise Center Inc. on Thursday as three-week guests of the U.S. Department of State and the International



Catherine Meredith The Morning Call

ANN KUZNICKI (left), general manager of the Dublin Technology Enterprise Center, leads a group of Kazakhstanis learning ways to develop mid-sized businesses on a tour of the building Thursday.

Visitors Center in Philadelphia.

"I like this place for the same reason I like U.S. businesses — it is very rational and convenient," Tumatov said through an interpreter. "Now I can bring [the students] an eyewitness account of how it works."

The 10 were here to learn

innovative ways to develop small and mid-sized businesses in the Shymkent region of Kazakhstan, a former Soviet Union country that gained independence in December 1991.

To help former Soviet countries strengthen fragile

democracies and ruined economies, the Department of State set up the "Community Corrections Program" in 1994 in the Philadelphia area.

The group is just one of many gatherings of government leaders and nongovernmental organization members from five former Soviet Union countries that have visited the area in the past decade.

"We match them with their professional counterparts in the United States," said Ann Stauffer, vice president of the International Visitors Center. This group is interested in a business incubator, she said.

The visit to the Dublin center was just a brief stop of a three-week trip that includes visiting lawmakers in Harrisburg, state nongovernmental organizations and other businesses that specialize in mid-sized business development.

The five men and five women toured the 350,000-square-foot technology center and retail complex, which was designed in 1995 as a support haven for small and start-up businesses.

The center, which houses 30 tenants, provides a variety of space configurations and pay-as-you-go services for entrepreneurs and boasts that "statistically, starting a business in a business incubator means a higher success rate," said general manager and co-owner Ann Kuznicki.

"We try to make them successful," Kuznicki said. "We are the only property managers who want to see a tenant grow up and move out."

For the visitors, two hours at the center already had the brain churning.

Karaibragimov, who works with fledging farmers in South Kazakhstan, liked what he saw in Primitive Seasons, an arts and crafts shop at the center.

"I was especially impressed with the craft shop I saw in the basement," he said. "I told our business incubator director if our farmers could get a place like that, we could do the same."