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Dublin Technology Enterprise Center hosts professionals from Kazakhstan

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It was an exchange of cultures and ideas.

A group of 10 businessmen and women from Kazakhstan visited the Dublin Technology Enterprise Center to learn about the small business incubator as part of their three-week visit to America. They were guests of the U.S. Department of State and the International Visitors Center in Philadelphia and had previously stayed for three days in center city Philadelphia and then with American families. The tour included visits to the Cherry Hill Chamber of Commerce, Harrisburg and several organizations focused on business development.

"Competition is a very commonly used concept here," said Khadicha Aбыsheva through an interpreter. "What came as a surprise to me was how friendly and amicable everyone is. That relationships are possible alongside competition."

From a country of over 16 million citizens, the Republic of

Kazakhstan, a former Soviet Union country that claimed its independence in 1991, the professionals were given presentations on three of the 30 businesses that make up the TEC center. They were very intrigued by an all-plastic walker that was easier and more comfortable to use and impressed after a presentation about using a large manufactured machine to convert manure into compost soil.

"This would be helpful for us because we use a lot of fertilizers," said Rais Karaibragimov, a director in a farmers support fund.

The TEC center is home to a variety of businesses, ranging from the manufacturing of airplane brakes to making ice cream. Tenants typically sign one-year leases to rent the spaces and pay for fax, copy machine and phone answering services on an as-needed basis.

"We believe in austere facilities," said Ann Kuznicki, the center's director. Kuznicki's own business, ATB Enterprises, offers bookkeeping, clerical and order-taking services to starting busi-

nesses and entrepreneurs.

More than 50 percent of new businesses in America are started by women, Kuznicki told the group. She explained how starting a business in an environment such as the TEC center is cost-efficient and helpful because there are others facing the same obstacles across the hall.

"We help our neighbors because there is good karma with that," said Det Ansinn, who owns a business that builds computer applications for companies in the building.

The building was a former pants factory in the 1920s and became the TEC center in 1995. Kairat Sugurbekov, the director of a business incubator in the Shymkent Region of Kazakhstan, said the Dublin facility "has a novel mission."

Borough Manager Paul Williams, who gave a talk on the role of municipal government, was presented with a "Tahia," a skull cap-like hat, which is a symbol of power in the country south of Russia. He proudly wore the hat throughout the tour.



News-Herald photo - BILL CARROLL

Ann Kuznicki, director of the Dublin Technology Enterprise Center, left, gives visitors from Kazakhstan a tour of the facility that contains 30 entrepreneurial businesses. Russian interpreters translated the tour and various presentations through earpieces.