

WIDENER Magazine

Hospitality Dean and Alum Visit Russia to Teach Tourism



Russian Government official Anna Solovyov with Beyerle, Nancy Gilboy, president of the International Visitor's Council of Phila., and Hadgis outside Nizhny Novgorod's Kremlin.

In order to help the fledgling city of Nizhny Novgorod build a tourism foundation, School of Hospitality Management Dean Nicholas Hadgis and Widener alum Mark Beyerle '82 traveled to Russia in the summer of 2003. They met with city officials and hospitality professionals to explore how the city can establish a tourism market to boost its economy.

The tour was part of the International Business Council of Philadelphia Programs and supported by the U.S. State Department to build stronger international relations and better business ties with Philadelphia. It was a follow-up trip to the previous April, when Hadgis delivered a presentation on tourism development to a group of visiting Nizhny Novgorod officials.

"It's important to help cities with their economic development," said Hadgis. "The sooner a country's economy is sound and operating on its own, the more stable that country becomes."

The third-largest city in Russia, Nizhny Novgorod is now known as a test site for democratic reform and free market initiatives after being a "closed city" of not allowing Western visitors for 45 years. Tourism will help the city supplement its new economic structure.

"What's really fascinating is that they are going from a city where tourists and visitors aren't allowed," said Hadgis, "to 'how are we going to get people to visit us?' Many cities like Nizhny Novgorod are in the strategic planning stages of tourism development, so we advise and evaluate their plans and offer suggestions on how to better use their resources."

This is the third such trip Hadgis and Beyerle have made. They previously traveled to L'viv, Ukraine, and Kazan, Tatarstan, to help with those cities' economic development. Beyerle, the former tourism and sales manager at the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau, appreciates traveling to other countries to assist them in their tourism endeavors, and he realizes it is special to travel with someone who was so integral in his own educational and professional development.

"I always thought it was interesting that I was Nick's student 20 years ago," Beyerle said, "and now we're partners in these economic and tourism development missions."