

International Visitors Council

On any given day, Nancy Gilboi might be fielding a phone call from an official from Korea, hosting a meeting for museum curators from Venezuela, or organizing a mentor program for Philadelphia exporters. As president of the International Visitors Council (IVC), Ms. Gilboi and her staff are the front-line contacts for hundreds of emerging leaders in business, arts, government and academia from around the globe who visit as guests of the U.S. State Department. That's why when the WTCGP created an Affiliate Membership level for non-profit organizations, IVC was the first to join.

The benefits of affiliate membership are tailor-made to support the activities of organizations such as IVC. Access and linkage to WTCGP's website, discounted membership rates to WTCGP events, listing in the WTCGP directory, exhibit space during International Week and access to the World Trade Centers Association's on-line resources are just a few of the advantages.

Founded in 1954 to prevent future wars, IVC is now one of the region's most active international business organizations. Its tag-line, "Make friends. Make contacts. Make peace." shows its merger of business and international relations. Ms. Gilboi's 8-member staff manages two State Department programs, the Sister Cities Program and a federal exporting program. IVC also works in partnership with the City Commerce Department's Philadelphia Trade Office to provide export assistance to local

companies with the goal of creating jobs in Philadelphia.

While most IVC programs are focused on the workplace, Ms. Gilboi firmly believes in the power of networking. IVC's "First Wednesday" networking

receptions have become popular monthly events.

"We have a steady stream of international business people and civic leaders coming to the region, so

we created a monthly event where they meet and socialize with Philadelphia-area executives in a friendly, informal setting," said Ms. Gilboi. Other connections are made through IVC's mentorship program.

IVC competes with 97 other Councils across the United States to attract the delegations, and the thousands of hotel nights and millions of federal and foreign dollars they leave in our region. In 2002 IVC assisted more than 350 delegations and arranged more than 4,000 appointments with area businesses, government officials, and academic and cultural leaders.

"When all is said and done, it comes down to people and relationships and IVC's expertise is matching people and creating the right environment," said Ms. Gilboi. "Consultants have left First Wednesdays with contracts. A local company recently signed a \$60,000 consulting agreement, and another received \$1 million in venture capital, all thanks to IVC introductions. It's those connections between people that make things happen." ■

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Make peace.