2020 International Visitor Leadership Program exchange with a delegation from Kazakhstan and The Viola Project about music.

Bringing the world to Chicago and Chicago to the world.
301 VIRTUALLY WELCOMED EXCHANGE VISITORS
2020 was a challenging year for us all. With shuttered doors, vacant airports, and everyone at a physical distance, the global pandemic brought us all a new normal. At WorldChicago, we had to reimagine how we accomplish our mission of citizen diplomacy. Our work, centered on a handshake and the sharing of our homes, businesses, and city, needed a new approach. We quickly realized that physically distancing does not eliminate our social connection. It brings us closer. One of the most important ways that we were able to connect was through our computers. We utilized platforms that allowed us to take our important programming online, where we were able to travel and connect at the speed of an internet connection.

Through our pivot we were able to:
- Virtually welcome 301 exchange visitors;
- Implement 40 exchange programs, and;
- Virtually bring people from more than 71 different countries to Chicago.

We know that going forward we will continue to reimagine our new normal, and embrace all forms of communication. We believe in our mission, our board and staff, and most importantly, YOU. We honor the invaluable role that you have played in supporting WorldChicago’s work of building bridges throughout the world, and we look forward to continue connecting, engaging, impacting, and creating a more peaceful world through citizen diplomacy.

Sincerely,

Peggy Parfenoff

PEGGY PARFENOFF
PRESIDENT
WORLDCHICAGO

Peggy has been leading WorldChicago since 2001, meeting emerging leaders - young and old - from all over the world and sharing our amazing City of Chicago with them. Throughout her 19-year tenure she has:

- Received the Global Ties U.S. Decade of Leadership Award;
- Led the pivot from in-person to virtual programming;
- Helped to engage hundreds of youth leaders in Chicago including more than 90 in 2019;
- Aided in bringing more than 600 international visitors to Chicago annually, and;
- Generated countless opportunities for global exchange that bring the world to Chicago and Chicago to the world.

Visit the WorldChicago website at www.worldchicago.org to learn more about our current programming and how to get involved.
BRINGING THE WORLD TO CHICAGO AND CHICAGO TO THE WORLD
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Dear Friends of WorldChicago,

As we began 2020, little did we know the changes and challenges we would face as a global community. The mission of our organization - to bring together individuals from around the world to learn from one another in the interests of promoting citizen diplomacy - had overnight met its greatest challenge. The challenge was how to continue our programs and activities in the midst of a global pandemic, one that has now gone on longer than most of us could ever have imagined.

I’m very proud of our staff, board members, and volunteers who have not only met this challenge, but have exceeded our expectations since mid-March of 2020. Our staff have found innovative ways to continue almost all of our program activities in a virtual format. While our international visitors cannot physically be in Chicago, our staff have continued to develop meaningful professional visits for them online. We look forward to the day when our visitors will be able to join us in Chicago and when we will be able to include home hospitality and home stays, not to mention cultural and social events, as an integral part of their visits to Chicago.

Hopefully, by this coming fall, if not the winter of 2022, most of our programming will include bringing our international visitors to Chicago. Meanwhile, we continue to navigate through somewhat uncharted waters. Thankfully, modern technology has allowed us to vastly expand what we are able to do. Our work continues to allow us to connect with others around the world and to share our experiences and professional knowledge, as well as our common humanity in the face of the pandemic.

I have been a volunteer with WorldChicago since 1986 and I am extremely proud of how WorldChicago has grown since its creation in 1952. We are now one of the leading international visitor organizations in the country. Over the years, we have greatly expanded our programming and community outreach. Our database of the individuals and institutions we work with in the greater Chicago metropolitan area is an extensive one. We could not do what we do without them and their support and enthusiasm for citizen diplomacy.

Thank you all for your ongoing commitment to WorldChicago and for your support of our programs and activities. The alumni of our programs are a testament to how important it is to meet one another on a personal level and to reinforce the idea that we share so much more in common than in what might divide us. We are grateful for the role you play in assisting us to consistently offer high-quality programs.

We look forward to seeing you at one or more of our upcoming virtual events. Do visit our website at www.worldchicago.org to learn more about the array of programs we host and how you can be involved. We are committed now more than ever to citizen diplomacy and the key role it plays in the conduct of our country’s foreign policy.

With best wishes for a brighter future,

Virginia Russell
Chair, Board of Directors
WorldChicago
Citizen diplomacy is the belief that everyday people can bring countries and cultures together, contribute to peace and stability to the world, and connect us all as a global community.

At WorldChicago, through professional and personal exchanges and youth programming, we work each day to build those bridges from Chicago to the rest of the world and bring together everyday people that are an integral part of international diplomacy.

Though it may seem that 2020 has created boundaries and barriers to connection, the world is seeing an interconnectivity that it has never seen before. Individuals from around the world are sharing their ideas, their cultures, and their commonalities of challenges and triumphs.

Key programs that are administered by WorldChicago have not fallen victim to the pandemic, but have found a way to pivot and expand our reach and impact. This is the power of citizen diplomacy.

The people of Chicago and those around the world may have lost the ability to connect physically, but they have not lost the ability to connect socially.

We are all contributors to a global community and each of us is empowered to make a positive impact on the world. The connections and knowledge we share are what makes us all citizen diplomat, working to make the world a better place.
WHO WE ARE

Professional Exchanges

Working with the U.S. Department of State, WorldChicago is a partner on the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP), which brings foreign leaders to the United States for short-term professional exchanges on topics ranging from women’s empowerment to global entrepreneurship and countering violent extremism. These exchange programs are transformative experiences that positively shape participants’ views of the U.S. and lead to positive change and impact in their home countries.

Professional Fellowships

Through partnership with the U.S. Department of State’s Professional Fellows Program, WorldChicago connects emerging leaders with government offices, public policy-oriented NGOs, private companies, and university departments for short-term, intensive fellowships designed to broaden their professional expertise.

Youth Diplomats/Youth Leadership

WorldChicago is a local coordinator for U.S. Department of State Youth Leadership Programs for international high school students and adult mentors. These short trips programs inspire cross-cultural dialogue, build respect and mutual understanding, and boost civic engagement among young Americans and their international peers. Locally, the Youth Diplomats Program that offers hands-on workshops, skills training sessions, volunteer activities, and cultural events for Chicago high school students.

EXCHANGE PROGRAMS IMPLEMENTED BY WORLDCHICAGO IN 2020

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The WorldChicago Youth Diplomats Program is a nine-month experiential learning opportunity to empower teens to be active global citizens. A series of monthly workshops and seminars bring students from all over the Chicagoland area together.

We nurture these emerging leaders to learn what inspires, motivates, and drives them to be global citizens and we give them the tools and knowledge to make that possible.

WorldChicago is a local coordinator for the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs’ Youth Leadership Program for international high school students and adult mentors.

These short, yet dynamic programs, inspire cross-cultural dialogue, build respect and mutual understanding, and boost civic engagement among young Americans and their international peers.
In 2020, WorldChicago completed its Youth Diplomat Social Venture Virtual Exchange Program, supported by the Stevens Initiative at the Aspen Institute. Through this virtual exchange, over thirty high school students from Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and the United States connected virtually, participated in cultural exchange, and shared their passion for making a positive impact in their communities.

Focusing on social entrepreneurship and innovation, this exchange program introduced students to best practices in social entrepreneurship and encouraged them to design projects related to their interests and experiences.

Together, they brainstormed ideas related to issues that have been driving social movements around the world, such as unequal access to education, gender inequity, and racism. They then formed groups to develop projects relevant to their chosen topic.

To put these ideas into tangible terms, the youths also connected with entrepreneurs and social changemakers in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, and the U.S. to better understand how social enterprises are implemented in practice. They met with Souad Kadi from the Amal Women’s Training Center in Morocco, who shared her work to empower disadvantaged women by running a self-sustaining restaurant as a job training center. The students learned about the organization’s mission, the unique challenges it faces, and the creative ideas Souad and her team have come up with to address these challenges.

More importantly, the students learned that they are able to impact the world and help to create partnerships and collaborations that can make a difference.

“Being from Morocco, even though I am also in North Africa, I know very little about Tunisia and Egypt. Being able to have these cultural dialogues really expanded my horizon. It also made it easier for us to work as a team, as we learned more about each other and realize how much we share in common, despite coming from very different places,” said Sara, a sophomore in high school from Morocco. “I don’t know what path I am going to take yet, but this program 100% opened my eyes to career options that I never considered before. I am so excited to explore all these different possibilities.”

For Dalal, a junior in high school from the United States, this virtual exchange allowed her to connect her own family background to her personal interests. Growing up in the U.S. with Arab and Kurdish immigrant parents from the Middle East, Dalal really appreciated the opportunity to interact with youths who were also from the Middle East. Coming into the program, Dalal knew that she was interested in international relations and wanted to go into politics. “This program solidified my love for interacting with people from different backgrounds. It also showed me that even though we come from such different backgrounds, none of that should be a barrier for sharing ideas and collaboration. Rather than viewing our difference as a weakness or obstacle, it is a strength that enriches us all!”

For Fatma, who recently graduated from high school in Tunisia, the program was especially rewarding because it allowed her to learn about social entrepreneurship, something she has been interested in for a long time, while also connecting with youths from different countries at the same time. In high school, Fatma spent a lot of time working with nonprofit organizations and knew that she wanted to improve the health and education resources in her country. Participating in the program encouraged her to continue this passion. Now, she wants to create a platform to make education and healthcare more accessible for more people in Morocco.
Building lasting, sustainable partnerships with mid-level professionals in Chicago and around the world.

The Professional Fellows Program is a two-way exchange program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. It is designed to build partnerships between emerging leaders from foreign countries and the United States. Participants are placed in four-week fellowships in nonprofit organizations and government offices across Chicago. Representatives from Chicago host organizations later travel overseas to implement a joint project with their Fellows. Young professionals gain practical experience and exposure to best practices in the U.S. while providing assistance and consultation at their host organizations.

In 2020, WorldChicago took our Professional Fellows Program virtual and connected with our 31 Fellows via the internet. These amazing Fellows from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Slovenia are learning from Chicago-area experts, participating in panel discussions, and networking with their U.S. counterparts.

It is our hope to bring these Fellows to Chicago in the Fall of 2021.

The Professional Fellows Program is sponsored by the US Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. WorldChicago hosts fellows from Central Europe, Southeast Europe, and South America.
PROFESSIONAL FELLOW SPOTLIGHT: MARIJA DIMOVSKA

WorldChicago is proud to attract and support some of the brightest budding entrepreneurs and professionals in Central Europe, like Marija Dimovska.

Marija is a Project Manager at Startup Macedonia, a platform that helps entrepreneurs and startups thrive in her region by providing events, programs, and opportunities for collaboration. Her passion for entrepreneurship is not surprising. Daughter of a former English professor and a PeaceCorp member, Marija is a lifelong lover of learning, and she believes that most, if not all entrepreneurs, have the same passion. “Start-ups have an agile mindset,” says Marija. “They are solution-driven and will work tirelessly to find and LEARN the best way to solve a problem.”

Marija is a part of WorldChicago’s 2020 Tech Innovation & Entrepreneurship Professional Fellows super cohort of 31 emerging leaders from the Central Europe region. She is a shining example of how the Professional Fellows Program can help us engage with our interconnected world in a meaningful and impactful way.

LOCAL WORK WITH A GLOBAL IMPACT

Professional Fellows don’t just make a difference, they make a positive change in the world. Tanja Dzido participated in WorldChicago’s Fall 2019 Professional Fellows cohort. Tanja, from Croatia, had relocated to London shortly after returning from her fellowship experience. She writes about her experience in a blog post:

“After my Fellowship in Chicago I flew back to Croatia, spent some time with my family, took some quiet time and realized, I can do this. Now it’s the perfect time. I’m going to London. It’s now or never. And so I did. I booked my ticket for January 15th and decided to go for my dreams. Chicago was a successful trial, now it’s time for my dream life in London! But I loved my life in Croatia. As I’ve established a successful business, built really good network and found my passion, I didn’t want to lose that. I just wanted to become better version of myself so I can serve my community better. So I’ve decided to move to London and come to Croatia one week per month to manage my business.

But life had different plans. Or coronavirus did. Just as I was setting up my business in London, rented office space and got my first clients, London went into lockdown. The entire Europe and world did. Everything stopped and so did my flights back to Croatia. My newfound clients started pulling out of the contracts and I was left emptyhanded. Luckily, my business in Croatia stayed stable but I had to manage everything from a 1000 miles distance. It wasn’t easy but I’ve realized panic and negativity won’t help me find solution, only good networking will and a lot of Zoom calls.”

WorldChicago is an affiliate of Global Ties U.S., a nonprofit membership association with more than 50 years of leadership in citizen diplomacy that works with more than 90 community partner members and the U.S. Department of State Citizen Diplomacy programs.
International Visitor Leadership Program

IVLP connects current and emerging foreign leaders with their U.S. counterparts through short-term programs.

The International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) is the U.S. Department of State’s premier professional exchange program. Through short-term visits to the United States, current and emerging foreign leaders in a variety of fields experience this country firsthand and cultivate lasting relationships with their U.S. counterparts. Professional meetings reflect the participants’ professional interests and support the foreign policy goals of the United States.

Local Work, Global Impact

In 2020, WorldChicago hosted a virtual discussion on human rights in Burundi featuring U.S Department of State’s International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) alum Evariste Ndikumna. Evariste is a leader in the Batwa Community and is the founder and legal representative of ASSEJEBA - Association Espoir pour les Jeunes Batwa (Hope for Batwa Youth). He became one of the few Batwa to earn a university degree and went on to serve two terms in Burundi’s National Assembly. The Batwa are a minority that make up approximately one percent of Burundi’s population, with many of its members living in poverty on the edge of a society dominated by Hutus and Tutsis.

Evariste shared with us some of the human rights violations that the Batwa suffer in Burundi. He talked about the challenges that human rights defenders face such as intimidation, threats, refusal of cooperation from authorities, and lack of means. After working with organizations that advocate and serve the rights of the Batwa people and seeing their objectives change once they received the funding, Evariste decided to create ASSEJEBA, a new organization created by Batwa for Batwa.

Evariste participated in an International Visitor Leadership Program in 2019 focused on human and civil rights. He had the opportunity to meet with colleagues across the United States and learn more about their work, as well as share his work and exchange best practices. When asked about his experience in Chicago he said “Every moment I spent in Chicago was very enjoyable and helped me learn a lot about human rights, housing rights, migrant and refugee rights and how to investigate human right violations, etc.” He was surprised that, “I was so amazed to know that the United States is the only country in the world that has not ratified the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, which means that the USA is the only country that considers children as adults.”

231

Number of Virtual Visitors to Chicago through WorldChicago’s IVLP Program
Travelling at the speed of a wireless connection.

One of the first virtual International Leadership Visitor Programs (IVLPs) that we were able to coordinate took place in September 2020 with a group from Kazakhstan. This virtual exchange focused on theatre and social justice, where the group would learn how Chicago-based organizations incorporate social justice issues into the arts and theatre. One of the organizations that met with our international visitors was the Viola Project, an organization that focuses on celebrating play and performance in young people while creating a foundation for young women to stand up, advocate for themselves and demand inclusion: inclusion in the classroom, in the workspace, in the world and on the stage. Not only did the representatives talk about the work the Viola Project has done, but they also included interactive activities about being mindful of our surroundings and how to use our environments to express emotions, whether in person or virtually. The discussion and activities that took place provided a unique experience that not only the participants can incorporate into their work with the arts, but also those moderating the meeting can use. It taught all of us that no matter the work you do, there are mechanisms to be inclusive and practice awareness.

The International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) is the longest-running program for WorldChicago. In 2020, we virtually welcomed more than 226 visitors from more than 50 countries around the world.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED IN IVLP?
To learn more about hosting an IVLP delegation at your office for a meeting or in your home for a dinner, please email ivlp@worldchicago.org.

Local nonprofit, Public Narrative, meets with a delegation from Kazakhstan.

The Viola Project meets with the delegation from Kazakhstan about music.

Judges from Kenya meets with the American Bar Association in Chicago.

Love After Hate, a Chicago based nonprofit, meets with a delegation from Saudi Arabia.

The International Leadership Visitor Program is sponsored by the US Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, administered by WorldChicago.
Money contributed to the local Chicago economy from WorldChicago’s work.

$2.5 MIL
Economic Impact

WorldChicago was able to bring on 3 new staff members to our team.

40
The number of virtual exchanges held by WorldChicago in 2020.

Number of virtual visitors WorldChicago hosted in 2020.

301

WorldChicago by the numbers.

Number of Youth Diplomats WorldChicago worked with during 2020.

34

Number of countries that participated in WorldChicago programs in 2020.

71
WorldChicago hosted a discussion on the history of racial inequity in the United States with the Global Strategist Association, an organization dedicated to increasing global engagement among the African Diaspora and making the global affairs field more inclusive. The event drew more than 40 attendees from around the world.

The discussion featured WBGX media personality Maze Jackson who leads a daily show to discuss social topics, and Terrell Jermaine Starr, the founder of Black Diplomats, a foreign affairs podcast that tells stories from a Black perspective. It was moderated by Appreccia Faulkner, the Founder and CEO of GSA. The panelists provided the international guests with a background history of the structural racism that sparked the Black Lives Matter protests throughout the U.S. and discussed what the international community could do to dismantle structural racism. Jackson encouraged the attendees to reflect on their economic choices and shop at local Black businesses. He also provided resources for educating oneself and others on structural racism and how to be anti-racist. Starr emphasized how structural racism is “a global, international conglomerate” that requires a collective, international effort to dismantle.

The event was a valuable opportunity for WorldChicago to engage with our international community on the issue of racial justice and to reflect on how we can be more inclusive in our work to address structural racism both in the U.S. and around the world.

As a non-profit dedicated to citizen diplomacy and the bringing together of all people, WorldChicago has seen how we need to continue to serve as a catalyst for understanding and change in order to help right social injustice.

READ WORLDCHICAGO’S EQUITY POLICY
Visit www.worldchicago.org to read our Equity Policy that helps to guide the organization in creating and maintaining an equitable workplace and programming.
Here is a list of the countries that WorldChicago has been able to “bring” to Chicago in 2020.

Afghanistan
Albania
Argentina
Aruba
Australia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Belgium
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Brazil
Brunei
Burkina Faso
Cabo Verde
Cameroon
Canada
Chad
Chile
Colombia
Cote d’Ivoire
Croatia
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Dominican Republic
Egypt
Estonia
Finland
Gabon
Germany
Ghana
Guinea
Haiti
Honduras
Hungary
Iceland
India
Indonesia
Jordan
Kazakhstan
Kenya
Lebanon
Liberia
Lithuania
Mali
Mexico
Montenegro
Morocco
Nicaragua
Nigeria
North Macedonia
Pakistan
Palestinian Territories
Paraguay
Paraguay
Peru
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russia
Saudi Arabia
Senegal
Singapore
Slovakia
Slovenia
South Africa
Spain
Sri Lanka
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Uganda
Ukraine
United Arab Emirates
United Kingdom
Venezuela
PLACES AROUND THE GLOBE THAT WORLDCHICAGO HAS “BEEN” IN 2020
Gloria Rosemarin  
Jeffery Rubenstein  
Virginia Russell  
Donna Sadlicki  
Guillermo Madriz Salas  
John Salvino  
Kunal Sen  
Tatyana Sergeyeva  
Margaret Sheridan  
Kalman Shiner  
Patti Silverman  
B. Keith Simerson  
Deepti Singh  
Amazon Smile  
Lori Ann Souder  
Stephen Spigel  
Brian Starr  
Barbara Stone  
Marilyn Susman  
Dimitar Tchalakov  
Alan Tecktel  
Lisa Tironi  
Paula Tironi  
Franco Turrinelli  
Louis P. Vitullo  
Jo Ellen Weiss  
Rebecca Wellisch  
Fred A. Wellisch  
Todd Wells  
Wendy Williams  
Mark Wilson  
Chloe Yoo  
Daniel Ziegler  
AmazonSmiles  
Julian Grace Foundation  
IMC Charitable Foundation
## Professional Resources

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Young Professionals Group

WorldChicago’s Young Professionals Group, is a collective of dynamic future global leaders and rising young business and civic leaders driven by a shared belief in WorldChicago’s mission of citizen diplomacy, a desire to work in and/or know more about international relations and diplomacy, and a desire to create a more connected world.

Homestay Host & Dinner Hospitality Host

WorldChicago homestay hosts open their homes to our international adult and youth visitors for short-term homestays ranging from one week to one month. As a homestay host you take on a special role as a cultural ambassador, with a unique opportunity to share our U.S. culture and at the same time learn about another part of the world.

Professional Resource

WorldChicago partners with professionals and experts in the business, civic, and non-profit sectors to provide opportunities to share their knowledge and skills with emerging leaders from around the world participating in professional exchanges or professional fellowships. These exchanges can last from a few days to a few weeks.

To learn more about these opportunities, please visit www.worldchicago.org or email info@worldchicago.org.

Donate

As a one-time or monthly donor to WorldChicago, you are able to make a difference in the lives of others. Your support allows us to continue to bring emerging leaders from over 130 countries annually to Chicago, helps emerging leaders experience the United States business culture, provides access to our experts across key sectors such as government, energy, law and entrepreneurship, and most importantly, supports WorldChicago’s work to help overcome misperceptions about our country and our world. With your help, we can build a more peaceful and prosperous planet.

You can donate today by visiting www.worldchicago.org/donate or text the code “WORLDCHICAGO” to 44-321.

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www.worldchicago.org