We first traveled to Ukraine in 1998 on a grant given to the Louisville International Cultural Center (LICC) from the U.S./Ukraine Foundation. Under this U.S. State Department program called “Community Connections,” Louisville was paired with Donetsk, Ukraine. The goal of the program was to give government officials in Donetsk the opportunity to learn about modern city management techniques and economic development. We led a needs assessment team of four people to Donetsk.

Although we had read about the problems command economies had in moving toward a capitalist system, our visit gave us the opportunity to witness firsthand systems that seemed destined to fail because they lacked the support structure necessary for capitalism to thrive. A report we composed after the visit suggested that the city needed significant assistance, and over a four year period the LICC sent several city officials and business people to help Donetsk develop new management approaches.

We are both board members and grant writers with LICC. Since 1994 we have been advisors to visiting government officials, business people, and nongovernmental organization (NGO) professionals who have visited Louisville under numerous State Department programs. We routinely bring our visitors to campus to meet with students, faculty, and administrators. It was in a discussion with students in an economics class that a visitor who owned a bakery in Tula, Russia, first realized she needed to be nice to her customers, or they might switch to her competitors. In discussions in another seminar, a manufacturing manager realized that high employee turnover cost his company money and that training might be a good investment.

The most recent Community Connections groups visiting Louisville were from Sumy, Ukraine, an industrial center of 250,000 people, located 380 kilometers east of Kiev. One was a group of business professionals and the second a group of NGO managers. We conducted economic development training sessions for each group, and we maintained contact with each participant via e-mail when they returned to Sumy. Together with our Sumy partners, we conceived the idea of LICC doing an economic development workshop in Sumy as a follow-up to the work we had begun in Louisville, and we decided to make the program available to past participants and other interested parties. The U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) responded well to this “bottom up” initiative and agreed that such a program could be very valuable.

We made our second trip to Kiev this past summer, from July 24 to August 8, 2004. In August, we met in Kiev with Ben Jones, the executive director of LICC. We were pleased to see the changes in Kiev since our 1998 visit. The route we took from the airport had numerous freshly painted government buildings, rehabilitated housing blocks, and new residential housing.

In Sumy, our economic development workshop audience consisted of past Community Connections participants, Peace Corps Volunteers working with Ukrainian NGOs, small business people, and university professors. Some groups spent 14 hours on the train to get to Sumy for the workshop, which focused on presentation and discussion of the best practices in economic development as identified in a recent book released by the Organization for

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Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

In a U.S. State Department Internet training laboratory in the Sumy State University (SSU) Scientific Library building, we held a chat session on the Internet Access and Training Program (IATP) (www.iatp.org.ua) Web site. For two hours, the three of us discussed economic development with government officials and NGO managers at 30 other IAPT sites located throughout Ukraine.

After returning to Kiev, we held discussions with U.S. embassy officials about our trip. They expressed a wish to send a group of Ukrainian mayors to the Louisville area next spring to discuss economic development.

Since our return to the U.S., we have started several different programs with our Ukrainian friends. LICC’s Global Education Network has paired students from local high schools with high school students in Ukraine as e-mail “pen pals.” James St. Clair (Journalism, IUS) and his students are assisting students at SSU in starting a student newspaper in Sumy. We are working with a Peace Corps Volunteer teaching photography in an orphanage in Sumy to arrange a showing of their photographs on our campus. Additionally, we sent them information about the March 2005 meeting of the Soyuz Symposium hosted by IU to SSU faculty in hopes that one or more might submit papers for presentation.

The State Department calls the programs we work with “citizen diplomacy,” and we like to think of ourselves as two of IU’s ambassadors to the world. We have learned much in our travels and interactions with people of other cultures; the experiences have added another dimension to our lives. We try to create similar opportunities for students, faculty, and community members to experience other cultures.

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responsible for bringing a dramatic adaptation of Gombrowicz’s satirical novel, Ferdydurke, to Bloomington. In April 2003, he was awarded an Amicus Poloniae award from the Polish government, together with Patrick O’Meara, IU’s dean for International Programs. This academic year, Johnston is on sabbatical leave.

“This award to the Polish Studies Center and to Bill Johnston for promoting knowledge of Poland and things Polish is richly deserved,” says Owen V. Johnson, the center’s acting director. “But the award only tells part of the story. For more than a quarter of a century, the center, like the other area studies centers at IU, has been opening up the rest of the world to IU students and faculty as well as the people of the state of Indiana.”

In addition to Warsaw University, IUB has more recently established an academic exchange program with Jagiellonian University in Kraków. IUPUI has also been exploring formal agreements with a number of universities in Poland.

—RMN