

Denver clubs, Open World host Russian health delegation

By Ryan Hyland

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A delegation of 30 ardent Russian doctors and health care professionals were in Denver, Colorado, USA, on 12-21 April participating in the Open World Program to examine health fairs with the expectation of implementing the same type of exhibitions back home.

The Rotary Club of Denver and five other clubs from District 5450 (Colorado, USA) hosted the delegates, in partnership with 9Health Fair, Colorado's largest volunteer-driven nonprofit health fair program, during a weeklong crash course on reviving Russia's fallen health care system. The Denver Rotary clubs used a grant awarded by the Open World Leadership Center to administer the week's program.



Rotary clubs in Denver, Colorado, USA, and Open World Program hosted a delegation of 30 Russian health care professionals on 12-21 April. Delegates observed several health fairs, and spoke to city, state, and national politicians and business leaders on ways to improve health care in Russia. *Photo by Hardy Klahold.*

Delegates observed several 9Health fairs in and around Denver. The fairs are volunteer-driven and offer free and low-cost health screenings and education. While Russia offers high-quality health care, there is little of it to go around. Health fairs can bring a sustainable and effective alternative to bridge the health care gap in struggling communities.

“The strategic and global effort will assist in addressing a major need in Russia to restore their failing health care system,” says Irina Bulkley-Hopkins, director of the Denver Rotary club and Open World host coordinator. “Through Open World, Rotary International has always facilitated a better understanding between Russia and the U.S.”

Established by the U.S. Congress in 1999, the [Open World Leadership Center at the Library of Congress](#) is intended to enhance cooperation between United States and the countries of Eurasia and the Baltic States. To achieve this, Open World develops a network of leaders who travel to the U.S. to

experience and learn about democracy, accountable government, and a free-market system.

“More than a hundred successful health fairs were already conducted in Russia over the last few years by Rotarians, and they are determined to continue building on this success,” says Grant Wilkins, past RI director and a Denver club member.

The delegates, selected with the help of Rotarians in Russia, met with national, state, and city leaders throughout the week, exchanging information and ideas about the two countries' health care systems.

U.S. Ambassador John O'Keefe, who is the executive director of Open World, toured the health fairs last Thursday and recognized Rotary's effort.

“I want to give all the Rotarians the entire [Open World] organization's appreciation for making this program possible,” said O'Keefe during a luncheon at the Denver Athletic Club. “The power of Rotary is showing its positive influence in Russia.”

James Goddard, president and CEO of [9Health Fair](#) and a Denver Rotarian, says his organization's health fairs and Rotary's volunteerism provide an excellent model for the Russian delegates to work from and apply. “Hopefully, the delegates have gained a perspective on the variety of types of fairs that could occur and some of the logistics it takes to put on a fair. Rotary can be the catalyst to help get health fairs going in Russia for many, many years to come.”

2 Comments:

At 8:51AM on 5 May 2008, **Ken Lane** wrote:

This Canadian Rotarian had the pleasure of visiting Club 31 last week in Denver when that club was honoring the "at risk" kids they have supported through the education system, with 44 set to graduate. The guest speaker is one of the "Little Rock Nine" who had to be escorted by the 101st Airborne into school each day when the high school was first being de-segregated in the late 1950's. Great meeting, great guest speaker! Proud to be in Rotary.

At 8:55AM on 5 May 2008, **Vasudevan. N.** wrote:

My hearty Congradulations to all the Rotary Clubs of Denvor., U S A. for having hosted a deligation of 30 Russian health care professionals, during 12-21 April 2008. I wish to see many more health fairs under Rotary flag.