“The more we collaborate locally, the more we achieve globally.”

—U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken in an address to Global Ties U.S. Members
Look for the Plane

Look for the plane to find ways you can join us in our mission to connect people around the globe, from right here in KC.
Global Ties KC is a non-profit organization that has been working in the Midwest for over 65 years, connecting everyday citizens to global leaders and rising stars, who are making an impact across the globe, on topics ranging from transparency in government, to human rights, and climate change.

We are the US Department of State’s go-to partner in Kansas and Western Missouri to implement professional exchange experiences, including the International Visitor Leadership Program, youth development exchanges and professional fellowship programs.

We are a pipeline of future talent, driven by the belief that ALL students and ALL community members deserve a place at the international table and the space to connect with the world.

237 Visitors Hosted in 2022

63 Visitor Countries in 2022

82 Youth Diplomats Empowered in 2022
Board of Directors

PG Matulka
Global Ties KC Board President
SS&C Technologies, Head of Marketing

Kendall Seal
Global Ties KC Board Vice President
Fisher Law, Senior Litigation Associate

Darin Challacombe
Global Ties KC Board Secretary
Manager, Training and Development, ScanSTAT Technologies

Laura Hales
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USDA, Economist

Sujal Shah
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Chris Cribb
Realty One Head of Brokerage, Executive Team Leader

Hai Chen
Product Strategist, Barkley

Shabina Kavimandan
Project Manager, Kansas State University

Martin Rivarola
Assistant Director of Transportation, Mid-America Regional Council

Stephanie Greenwood
Media Relations, Cerner

Shelley McThomas
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KC Chamber of Commerce, Director Public Policy

KC Staff

Courtney Brooks
President & CEO

Sarah Martin
Manager, Special Programs

Lara Tenbarge
Program Coordinator

Justin Keehler
Program Associate

Rose Priebe
Youth Diplomats Education Fellow

Niyati Sethi
Program Associate

Martina Pascuzzo
Digital Media Fellow

Alex Freeman
Intern

Raj Velakaturi
Intern
Letter from the President & CEO

To our partners across the community,

I, like you, have friends across the world who are dealing with a myriad of issues that weigh heavily on my heart. Information fatigue, and choice paralysis are real. Floods and natural disasters, war in Ukraine, economic turmoil, government corruption, and a question of democracy at home and abroad.

I am here today, to share some beautiful news. You don’t have to be the person who solves all of these issues. Because there are millions of humans across the world who are specialized and focused in addressing these challenges.

You know where you can help? You can ‘help the helpers’ and through your involvement in Global Ties KC, you can empower and support key leaders across the world who are working in these areas!

Where does your heart pull you? Is it towards supporting a high school student in their journey to discover their own dreams? Do you love being a host and showing your love through cooking and food? Do you enjoy the chance to share your professional expertise and to collaborate with others working in the same field?

Global Ties KC needs you to share your talents, in all of these ways. The pages of this year’s annual report are a celebration of the work of 2022, but also an opportunity to support our programs in the years ahead. I hope you’ll feel inspired by what you read to learn about something new, reconnect with a friend from across the world, or welcome new friends into your home.

Year after year, we strive to connect you to these conversations, building personal relationships between the heartland and the world. Thank you for continuing to show up, and we can’t wait to spend time with you in the months ahead!

Globally Yours,

Courtney Brooks
2022 Focus Topics

- Journalism
- Women’s Rights
- Entrepreneurship
- Student Empowerment
- Civic Activism
- Healthcare
In 2022
We Welcomed...
Professional Exchanges
For 80 years, the IVLP has been a cornerstone of Department of State programming, connecting current and future leaders from around the world to their US partners, and building connections that influence US relationships for decades into the future.

More than 500 IVLP alumni have gone on to serve as Chiefs of State or Heads of Government. Handpicked by American embassies around the world, these international visitors come to the United States to meet and confer with their professional counterparts and to gain and appreciate the ethnic, cultural, political, and socio-economic diversity of the U.S. They are here to find innovative solutions to global industry issues and make connections both professionally and personally that will last a lifetime.

The International Visitor Leadership Program brings thousands of visitors to the United States every year on various program topics, related to their professional expertise. Global Ties KC provides programming for a large pool of themes that showcase the innovative individuals and organizations that make up our community.
As the world changes and explores different ways to stay connected, our IVLP groups have been a hybrid of virtual and in-person projects. 2022 programs have included:

- Rule of Law and the U.S. Judicial System
- ERM for Journalists- Research and Investigation
- Sustainable Lending and Infrastructure Financing Practices
- New and Traditional American Media in the Digital Age
- International Women of Courage
- Global Health Challenges and Security
- Women in Business
- Educational Technology
- Empowering Roma Women
- Science and Technological Entrepreneurship
- Cooperation on Infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific
- Women and Entrepreneurship II
- NGO Management

Global Ties KC is THE International Visitor Leadership Program implementing organization in Kansas and the Western half of Missouri. We have been coordinating this program for over 65 years, bringing future leaders to our communities.

Thank you to our national partners who help make IVLP happen:
Indonesia
Science and Tech Entrepreneurship

Our visitors from Indonesia experienced firsthand how Kansas State University serves as the pillar of the Manhattan community. Through meetings with the K-State Foundation, K-State Innovation Partners, and members of the university’s leadership team, visitors from Universitas Tanjungpura saw how K-State serves as a catalyst for innovation and economic development. As a result of these meetings, Universitas Tanjungpura and K-State University are working on developing an exchange program for Indonesian students.

Brazil
International Women of Courage

This program has honored women who demonstrate exceptional courage, strength, and leadership. Simone Sibilio do Nascimento was recognized for her lifetime of service as a prosecutor in Rio de Janeiro, combatting organized crime and protecting victims. She is one of Brazil’s most prominent prosecutors, a former civil police delegate, and Captain of the Military Police. Simone’s time in Kansas City with Global Ties KC included meetings and conversations with KCMO Prosecutor Jean Peters Baker, KCMO Police Board Commissioner Cathy Dean, United States Circuit Judge of the US Court of Appeals Duane Benton, and Nicole Fisher, founder and owner of Fisher Law LLC.

Get Involved!
Professional Partners

You have the opportunity to open the doors of your office, to meet with participants as a professional partner. For in-person programs, we bring visitors straight to you! Our partners walk away with innovative solutions to industry problems and connections with industry leaders in different countries.
Moldova

Empowering Roma Women

A common trait of many Global Ties KC programs is the chance to welcome changemakers and activists. Our visitors from Moldova were one such group: individuals who have dedicated their lives to navigating resources and challenges to empowering the Roma population in their communities. To accomplish this, they met with United WE, OneKC for Women, Justice Project, and the Health Forward Foundation to learn about the importance of representation in government, creating employment networks, and advocating via policy advocacy and grantmaking endeavors.

Indo-Pacific Region

Cooperation on Infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific

We welcomed 11 visitors from 11 distinct countries within the Indo-Pacific region to Kansas City to explore agricultural, construction, transportation, and city planning topic areas. While here, they met with representatives from Black & Veatch, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, KC Area Development Council, Mid America Regional Council, and the Agricultural Business Council of Kansas City. Visitors walked away with long lasting professional connections with KC representatives and even talks of future collaboration between their companies!

Get Involved!

Home Hospitality

Dinners in the homes of local American hosts are an excellent way to exercise everyday diplomacy and serve as an ambassador for our city. Nothing sets the table for mutual understanding better than sharing a meal with citizens of the world. They create opportunities for more one-on-one conversation and a deeper appreciation for the commonalities of life.
Open World has been forging lasting positive relationships between emerging and established leaders in the former Soviet Union and their American counterparts since 1999. Participants have a range of diverse backgrounds, and they come to the U.S. with the purpose of gaining a better understanding of American democracy and the rule of law in the U.S.

Armenia

Education and Accountability in the Digital Age

Online education is a critical conversation world-wide, not just in the United States. In October, a group of five educators from Armenia in Kansas City to explore new ways of integrating technology into classrooms and providing quality online education to rural Armenian students. This group met with schools, local nonprofits tackling digital equity issues, universities, and the Missouri Department of Education while in Kansas City, contributing to their capacity to enhance accessibly education in their country.
Romania

Mental Health and Community Organizing for Educators

As Ukrainians leave their home communities, some are ending up in nearby countries such as Romania. In response to this migration, Global Ties KC welcomed a group of educators from Romania focused on integrating Ukrainian refugees into their schools. They met with school districts, refugee resettlement agencies, and local government agencies to explore social and educational programs that can better serve the needs of all. Many of the participants have stayed connected to the resources they met with and have even planned virtual workshops with local resources for their local communities.

Ukraine

Regional Life Science Clusters

Public health is an issue that needs consistent monitoring and innovation, especially in times of crisis. Kansas City was home to a group of Ukrainian visitors for one week, as they learned about improving pharmaceutical research and distribution across Ukraine through meetings with local businesses and organizations.
Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative

This is the fifth in-person iteration of YLAI in Kansas City since 2016, all facilitated by Global Ties KC, which continues to prove its propensity to foster business collaboration between Kansas City and the world. Over the course of one month, a cohort of entrepreneurs from Latin America and the Caribbean engraigned themselves in Kansas City. They attended your networking meetings, ran around the shuttlecock at the Nelson, cheered over cocktails at Tom’s Town, contributed to their fellowship host organizations, and signed business agreements with Missouri businesses.

The U.S. Department of State’s YLAI Fellowship Program empowers emerging entrepreneurs from the Western Hemisphere to enable the full economic potential of the region’s citizens. YLAI promotes U.S. business models, increases trade, encourages job creation, and builds lasting and sustainable networks of young entrepreneurs and business and social leaders across Latin America, the Caribbean, Canada, and the United States.

12 Fellows in 2022
4 Weeks in 2022
10 Local Companies in 2022
Thank you to all the 2022 Placements:

- Block Knowledge
- Broadmoor Bistro
- Brookside Farmers Market
- Fashion Tech KC
- Museum at Prairie Fire
- Lifted Logic
- Pennez
- Rose Brooks Center
- WaterOne
Youth Exchanges
In April 2022, Global Ties KC coordinated a third iteration of the Community Connections Program, “Enterprising Youth Improving Their Communities” virtual program to foster entrepreneurship in Belarusian youth. Innovation, open-market commerce, and community action have never been more important in Belarus, making this program critical to creating a generation of changemakers throughout the former Soviet Union.

During the three-week program, program participants were led on a journey by Michael Farmer from Blue Valley CAPS. Farmer is the entrepreneurial instructor, who crafted a personalized design thinking project, in which participants created a fully formed business idea by the conclusion of the program. The final program day was a successful session full of group presentations of their ideas, who showed amazing aptitude for business and community impact.

To be prepared for project presentations, participants explored business marketing, branding, pitching, ideation, and financial planning. They met with local entrepreneurs and instructors, including Adam Fischer from Lifted Logic, instructors from Blue Valley CAPS, Ilya Tabakh from Black & Veatch, and even additional entrepreneurs.
Community Connections is a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) program intended to support post-Soviet countries’ transitions to more democratic and free market-oriented societies. Belarusian professionals travel to the United States for three weeks, live with an American family, and engage in a tailored program featuring a combination of professional and cultural events.

Students in 2022: 30
Sessions in 2022: 6
Hours in 2022: 13
Business Ideas in 2022: 5

Get Involved!

Become a Homestay Host

Becoming a host family is a chance to welcome visitors from all around the world and make long lasting connections! You can either host students or professionals.

When you host an exchange student in your home, you immerse your family in cultural learning while creating a lifelong friend and family member. We facilitate multiple youth programs per year that ask for a 1–3 week hosting commitment. If you have an extra bed and open heart, this is your chance to make global connections, introduce your family to different cultures and influence foreign affairs.
American Leadership Exchange (ALEX)

The ALEX program hosts university students on a fully funded U.S. Department of State program. Participants explored themes of leadership, professional development, entrepreneurship and career fields such as psycholinguistics, medicine, entrepreneurship, and law. Students also got to experience American homes. Students are walking away full of innovative ideas to become successful entrepreneurs and leaders within their communities!

Saudi Arabia and Lebanon

Eight participants from Saudi Arabia and Lebanon explored the themes of leadership, American politics, history, and volunteerism. They volunteered at Harvesters and Westside CAN, completed the Truman Library White House Decision Center simulation and experienced the Brown v Board National Historic Site. The students also toured Overland Park, Kansas and met Mayor Curt Skoog!

Serbia and Bulgaria

Our 5 participants focused on professional development and volunteerism as they went through a public speaking workshop with Toastmasters International along with a Building your brand and Elevator Pitch workshops. They also did a cultural exchange with middle school students at Providence Arts School (local arts non-profit), met entrepreneurs at One Million Cups, and college students and professors at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Students also impacted the community by volunteering with Bridging the Gap and Nourish KC.

Moldova and Lithuania

Our 6 participants attended workshops for Global Entrepreneurship Week—our participants are interested in entrepreneurship, some already with businesses—and heard from partners like Thelma’s Kitchen. They participated in culture sharing at the Blue Valley CAPS program and with participants in our Youth Diplomats Institute. Participants explored Lenaxa, engaging in conversation with Mayor Mike Boehm, and toured the University of Kansas (KU) and conferred with professors and students from the Center for Russian, European, and Eurasian Studies (CREES) department.
Youth Ambassadors of Argentina and Chile

From August 18-27, 2022, Global Ties KC hosted 13 students and 2 adult mentors from Argentina and Chile through the Youth Ambassador Program for Argentina and Chile. While in Kansas City, the group meaningfully engaged with their American peers, had site visits to explore their multiculturalism subtheme, participated in action planning workshops and cultural activities, visited the capitol of Kansas, attended a full day of high school classes, served the local community through volunteering, tie-dyed shirts to attend the Ethnic Enrichment Festival, and so much more.

Five local Kansas City Peer Mentors participated throughout the program. Participants attended a full day at local high schools, where they were paired one-to-one with an American student during the school day to act as a leader and guide. They were all provided the opportunity to share about their cultures to a group of American students.

Additionally, Lukas Pitman, a KC-area high school student who was a YA Argentina and Chile outbound participant in summer 2022, joined the program as a Peer Mentor. Lukas spent a lot of his time with the group throughout their visit, building relationships that will last a lifetime.

“These were the best days of my life. I love the Heartland and enjoyed every activity. I leave Kansas City as a wiser person then I was when I came.”

– Santiago
The Pan-African Youth Leadership Program (PAYLP) is funded by the US Department of State and engages up to 150 youth participants throughout Africa in a three-week intensive leadership program each year. This youth exchange is designed to promote high-quality leadership, civic responsibility and civic engagement through entrepreneurship among future leaders. The program presents the principles of democracy and civil society as practiced in the United States and provides participants with training that allows them to develop their leadership and civic engagement skills. Also included in the PAYLP design is a series of workshops on social entrepreneurship and two weeks of living with American host families.

Global Ties KC virtually welcomed two program cohorts through PAYLP in 2022. In each program, student participants and adult mentors gleaned insight into American culture and effective methods in creating sustainable community change. At the conclusion of their program, they conducted country group presentations on a community project they can implement that addresses a societal issue.

Additionally, we engaged local American youth in the program through the inclusion of digital chat exchange groups, allowing for informal cultural communication between peers. Discussions ranged from their favorite foods to how they want to solve the most pressing issues in their communities.
"Before my exchange program, I was studying at a professional Medical High School in my hometown, as I always thought I would pursue a career in health care. While at Shawnee Mission North West, I attended a class called interior design which ignited my passion. I got my undergrad in Interior Architecture and Furniture Design; I’m finishing my Masters now as I work at an architecture firm in Kosovo. I’m currently also finishing my third exchange in Poland and travel often for work; my U.S. exchange led me to become a global citizen.

– Lorita Rama, KYEP Participant"

"The Pan African Youth Leadership Program was a life-changer for me. The program inspired me to open my mind to a myriad of opportunities to challenge myself, learn, grow as a leader, and solve the needs of my society. PAYLP also significantly honed my critical thinking and problem-solving skills through the various workshops, seminars, and activities I indulged in during the program. I am better because of it.

– Michael, 2018 Kansas City PAYLP Participant from Nigeria"

"My experiences in the Youth Ambassadors Program to Argentina and Chile will stay with me for the rest of my life. I lived with a host family for the first time, vastly improved my confidence in speaking Spanish, and made lifelong friends from every corner of the United States. When Argentine and Chilean students came to KC last August for the inbound YA Program, I was joined them for their time here, forming even more lasting friendships. The Youth Ambassadors Program both abroad and at home have forever changed my life.

– Lukas Pitman, YAAC Participant"
YOUTH DIPLOMATS INSTITUTE

MOCK INTERVIEWS

- Practice your communication and interview skills
- Gain insight into new industries and careers
- Gain a new networking point of contact for future opportunities

Step 1: Conduct research on your area and a general idea of what you are interested in exploring
- Attend the industry-specific workshop next month

Step 2: Write a mock interview script

Step 3: Practice your responses and refine your skills

Can be completed at any point during the 9-month program is not required.
Youth Diplomats
The Youth Diplomats Institute is a 9-month real world learning opportunity for Kansas and Missouri high school students to develop skills in public affairs and diplomacy.

Through monthly workshops participants interact with their peers, network, develop professional skills, and directly engage in cultural learning.

In September 2022, we welcomed 37 new participants to the Youth Diplomat Institute from 20 different high schools across Missouri and Kansas – from Bland, MO to Lawrence, KS.

Global Ties KC has successfully completed three years of the homegrown Youth Diplomats Institute, graduating students from five different cohorts, and welcoming in both a virtual and an in-person cohort for the 2022-2023 year. The Youth Diplomat Institute has quickly become a pillar to the organization.

The Youth Diplomats Institute has successfully graduated over 75 students. These participants are some of the best and brightest that our community has to offer in regards to future talent. Global Ties KC listens, therefore Global Ties KC instituted the Youth Diplomat Advisory Council in August 2022, bringing together 13 Youth Diplomat alumni who are invested in making the program better. The council is run very similar to a Board of Directors, in order to provide some professional experiences and prepare them for community work in their careers. All topics and activities are fully decided-on by students. They elected an Executive Board in October 2022, and the President is Andrew Shelton, a student from Lamar, MO, which has a population of 4,000.
August 2022 Washington D.C. Leadership Excursion

Global Ties KC funded the travel to Washington DC for nine Youth Diplomat to experience our nation’s capital through site visits, networking, and cultural learning. These students were selected based on a rigorous application process, resulting in an enthusiastic and engaged group of students who have never been to Washington DC before.

During the trip, participants had the opportunity to see key national institutions, including the US Capitol, the Library of Congress, and historical monuments. Additionally, we were hosted at the International Student House, sponsored by Anthony Shop of Social Driver. Students had the opportunity to meet and network with young local professionals with ties to Kansas and Missouri. While that dinner was the professional highlight of the trip, the true highlight was the relationships that were formed between the students and the everlasting connection they now have with Global Ties KC.
The Midwest as an International Hub
Art Auction Event in Support of Ukraine Relief Efforts

Hundreds of leaders from Ukraine have spent time in Midwest homes and offices over the years, and it was clear after the invasion of Ukraine that they had made a lasting impact on the Kansas City Community. That is why Global Ties KC partnered with a network of community volunteers to organize an art auction benefitting Kyiv Rotary Refugee Initiative, a Rotary partner delivering food, water, and medicine to citizens in the Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Kharkiv regions of northeastern Ukraine.

The theme of the auction was “Sunflowers for Ukraine,” a nod to Ukraine’s national flower and a symbol of Ukrainian identity, and every piece had sunflowers as a central element. We had 61 wonderful artists donate 105 pieces to be auctioned off, and we came away from the night having raised $10,000 dollars to support the citizens of Ukraine.

We cannot thank the community enough for supporting this effort. A special thanks to Holly Schenk who had the initial idea to organize this event and worked with all the artists to make this vision a reality. Over 130 people bid on art or donated money directly. We would also like to thank the individuals and organizations that made this event possible: Holly and Paul Schenk, Barbara Dolci, Judy Lanes, Cliff’s Taphouse, Boulevard, Price Chopper, Rotary, the City of Prairie Village, and Stand with Ukraine KC.

Check out some of the Art from local KC Artists:

Maria Mignogna
Holly Ann Schenk
Wanda Taylor, “And Nightingale Their Vigil Keep”
The World in Our Community + DiverseKC

Looking for ways to engage with the international community in Kansas City? Looking to get your hands on a recipe for Iraqi Quzi? We know the answer is yes to both!

That is why we converted our popular DiverseKC newsletter series to a full-fledged website.

Here you can learn more about the diverse cultures present in Kansas City and learn how to interact with the international community present in the heartland.

The site is full of great recipes, music, art, and more available for the community, and with your help we want to keep expanding. DiverseKC is a labor of love from the Global Ties KC team, but submissions from the community are what will continue to provide informative and entertaining content.

Visit the website at this address: www.diversekc.org. While you are there submit a blog, share information on your culture, and be a part of the tapestry that is Kansas City:

DiverseKC.org
How Can I Participate in DiverseKC?

**Contribute** country-related updates, personal stories, photos, expertise, and any relevant information.

**Share** the DiverseKC project on your platforms and with everyone you know!

**Invite** people, organizations, and businesses to contribute and collaborate!

And use our interactive map to learn more about our work and connections around the world!
We would like to thank the partners that made this year a success. These organizations have met with international visitors, taken on international fellows, and represented Kansas City well on the international stage.

Ad Astra
Agricultural Business Council of Kansas City
American Jazz Museum
BioNexus KC
Biosecurity Research Institute
Black & Veatch
Block Knowledge
Blue Valley Center for Advanced Professional Studies
Board of Police Commissioners
Bridging the Gap
Broadmoor Bistro
Brookside Farmer’s Market
Brown vs. Board of Education National Historic Site
Bulk Solids Innovation Center
Center of Excellence for Emerging and Zoonotic Animal Diseases
Cerner
Congressional staffer for Senator Roger Marshall
Corpus Christi Catholic School
Creative Emajinations

Della Lamb
El Centro
Equality House
Fashion Tech KC
Firebrand Collective
Fisher Law
Food Equality Initiative
Girl Scouts of NE Kansas and NW Missouri
Green Acres Urban Farm and Research Project
Harvest Public Media
Harvesters Food Bank
Health Forward Foundation
Heart to Heart International
InnovateHER
Investigative Reporters and Editors
Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council
Jackson County CASA
Jackson County Court
Jackson County Prosecutors Office

Jewish Vocational Services
Johnson County Community College
Justice Project KC
Kansas City Area Development Council
Kansas City Kansas Public Schools
Kansas City Medical Society
Kansas Department of Agriculture
Kansas State Senator Chris Steineger
Kauffman Foundation
KC for Refugees
KC Stem Alliance
KC Water
KCPS International Welcome Center
K-State – Olathe Campus
K-State English Language Program
K-State Foundation
K-State Innovation Partners
LEAD Innovation Studio
Lenexa Fire Station #1