

# GLOBAL TIES KC: A YEAR OF DIPLOMACY IN THE HEARTLAND

ANNUAL REPORT  
2023

GLOBALTIES > KC





# OUR MISSION

TO DEVELOP SUSTAINABLE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS  
AND CONNECT PEOPLE THROUGH PERSONALIZED DIPLOMACY.

GLOBALTIES>KC

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Dear Global Ties KC Friends,

After almost 70 years of facilitating exchanges between KC and the world, the impact of Global Ties KC continues to grow. Both in the year-to-year programs (in 2023, we welcomed 493 current and future global leaders to the heartland) and in the long-term changes that happen when people from divergent backgrounds connect on a person-to-person level.

Global Ties KC is committed to cultivating robust global connections, fostering understanding, and nurturing ties between peoples around the world, with the understanding that peace is built one handshake at a time. We are in the business of humanizing foreign affairs. We create lived experiences and personal connections, bringing people from diverse cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives together to learn, share and collaborate for the greater good. Through our programs, individuals are given the chance to converse with diverse people, connect as human beings, and build relationships that have the potential to foster future peace. Our work means more now than ever before.

Global crises like food insecurity, supply chain disruption, global health, conflict, and a rapidly changing climate will continue to impact our day-to-day lives in the years and decades to come. What happens overseas affects our daily lives at home. By convening global changemakers working in each of these areas, we are at the front lines of these issues.

We express our deepest gratitude for your unwavering support in our mission to bridge cultures and build lasting connections. Together, we have not only enriched the lives of individuals but also contributed to a more interconnected and compassionate world. As we look to the future, we remain committed to facing global challenges head-on, armed with the belief that genuine human connections can be the catalyst for positive change.

Thank you for your continued support!

*Courtney Brooks*

Courtney Brooks  
President & CEO, Global Ties KC

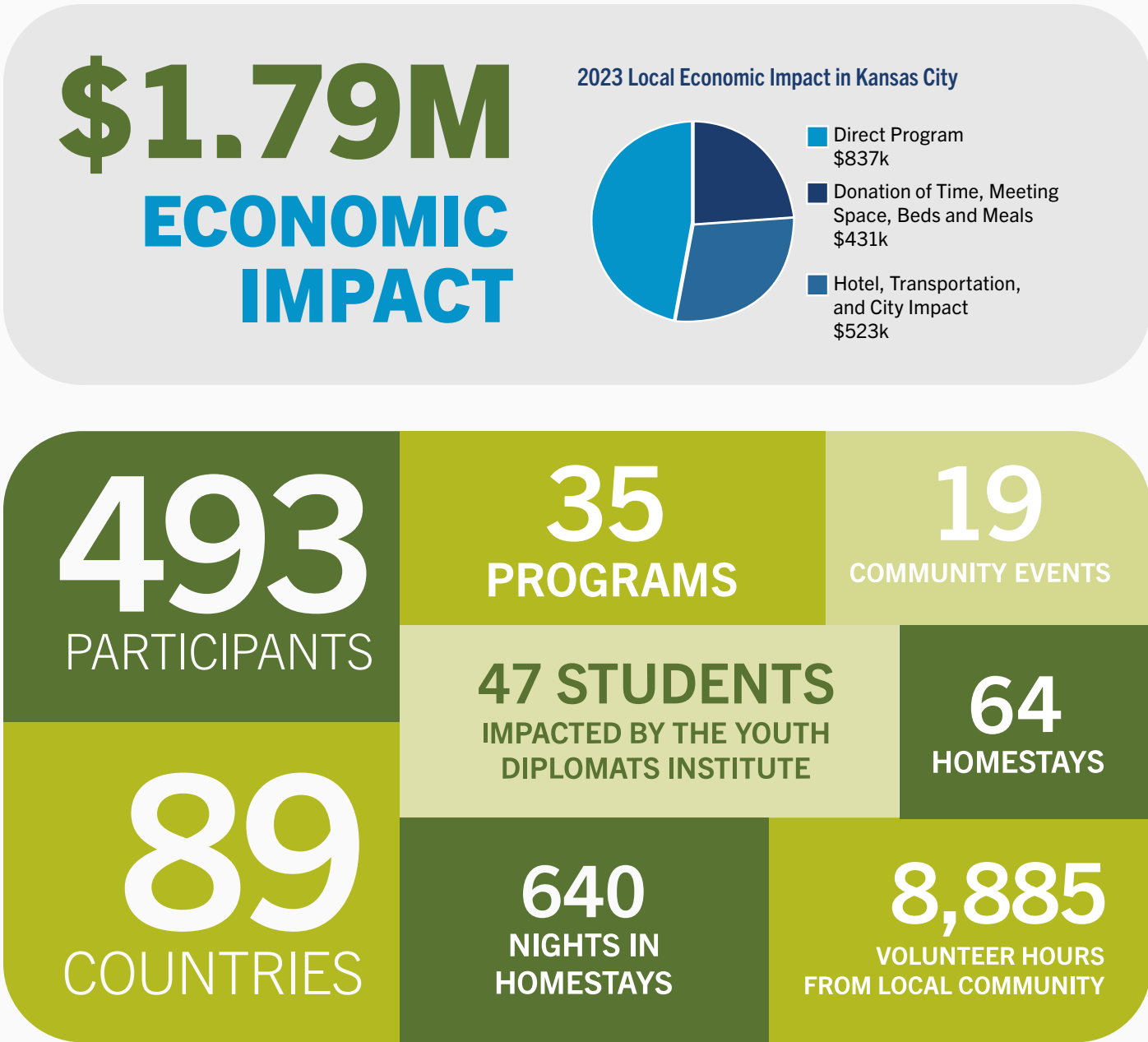
“**Together, we have not only enriched the lives of individuals but also contributed to a more interconnected and compassionate world.**”

## ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

Global Ties KC is a nonprofit organization that has been working in the Midwest for almost 70 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, and human rights to climate change.

We are the U.S. 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.

### 2023 BY THE NUMBERS



# 2023 PROGRAMS & IMPACT

SKILL-BUILDING  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
WOMEN'S RIGHTS  
COMBATING GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION  
STEM  
EDUCATION  
JOURNALISM  
VIOLENCE PREVENTION  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
YOUTH  
DEVELOPMENT

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF

### GLOBAL TIES KC – 2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Kendall Seal, Board Chair**  
The Center for the Rights of Abused Children

**Shabina Kavimandan, Vice-Chair**  
Kansas State University

**Stephanie Greenwood, Secretary**  
Oracle

**Sujal Shah, Treasurer**  
BioTech Consultant

**PJ Matulka**  
Kofax

**Hai Chen**  
Product Strategist

**Martin Rivarola**  
Mid-America Regional Council

**Shelley McThomas**  
Retired, KC Election Board

**Carter Quirk**  
H&R Block

**Ariel Griffin**  
Children International

**Kelsey McLellan**  
Chamber HR Solutions

**Terri S. Turner**  
TST Business Strategies, LLC

### GLOBAL TIES KC – 2023 STAFF

**Courtney Brooks**  
President & CEO

**Sarah Lowderman**  
Program Director

**Justin Keehler**  
Program Associate

**Niyati Sethi**  
Program Associate

**Matt Roy**  
STEM Program Manager

**Martina Pascuzzo**  
Marketing Coordinator

**Ella Sedlock**  
Youth Diplomats Education Fellow

**Alex Freeman**  
Communications Specialist

**Ana Pendergast**  
Program Coordinator

**Lukas Pitman**  
Intern & CDAF Grant Recipient

**Mae Dingley**  
Intern

**Tatum Smith**  
Intern

**Leila Hao**  
Intern

**Thomas Tempest**  
Intern

# 2023 IMPACT MAP

Afghanistan  
Albania  
Algeria  
Antigua & Barbuda  
Argentina  
Armenia  
Australia  
Azerbaijan  
Bahrain  
Bangladesh  
Belarus  
Belize  
Bolivia  
Brazil  
Burundi  
Cambodia  
Chad  
Chile  
China  
Costa Rica  
Ivory Coast  
Croatia  
Czech Republic  
Democratic Republic  
of the Congo

Dominica  
Dominican Republic  
Ecuador  
Egypt  
El Salvador  
France  
Germany  
Ghana  
Guatemala  
Guinea  
Guyana  
India  
Indonesia  
Iraq  
Israel

Italy  
Jamaica  
Jordan  
Kazakhstan  
Kenya  
Kuwait  
Lebanon  
Libya  
Malawi  
Malaysia

Mali  
Mexico  
Moldova  
Morocco  
Nepal  
Nicaragua  
Niger  
Nigeria  
Palestinian Territories  
Pakistan

Panama  
Paraguay  
Peru  
Philippines  
Poland  
Republic of the Congo  
Romania  
Rwanda  
Saudi Arabia  
Senegal

Serbia  
Slovakia  
South Africa  
Spain  
Sri Lanka  
Suriname  
Taiwan  
Tanzania  
Thailand  
The Bahamas

Togo  
Trinidad and Tobago  
Tunisia  
Türkiye\*  
Uganda  
United Kingdom  
Uruguay  
Venezuela  
Vietnam  
Zimbabwe



\*The U.N. has agreed to register Türkiye as the country's official name.

Image: Freepik





## INTERNATIONAL VISITOR LEADERSHIP PROGRAM (IVLP)



Global leaders participate in IVLP's NGO Management program, exploring innovative strategies in U.S. nonprofits. Pictured at the Multicultural Business Coalition happy hour.

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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 leaders in a variety of fields experience this country firsthand and cultivate lasting relationships with their American counterparts. The IVLP is designed to build mutual understanding between the U.S. and other countries through carefully designed visits that reflect the participants' professional interests and support U.S. foreign policy goals.



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, 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 come to find innovative solutions to global issues and make connections both professionally and personally that will last a lifetime.

# 23

PROGRAMS

# 201

VISITORS

# 135

MEETINGS  
ATTENDED



From top to bottom, left to right: tax professionals from Pakistan, rule of law professionals from around the world pictured at Diocese of St. Joseph, global FDI professionals in a meeting with Kansas Department of Commerce, and economic development professionals at the Kansas State Capitol.

### IVLP NATIONAL PARTNERS



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 almost 70 years, bringing future leaders to our communities.



IVLP IMPACT STORIES

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN OF COURAGE

TÜRKIYE  AFGHANISTAN 

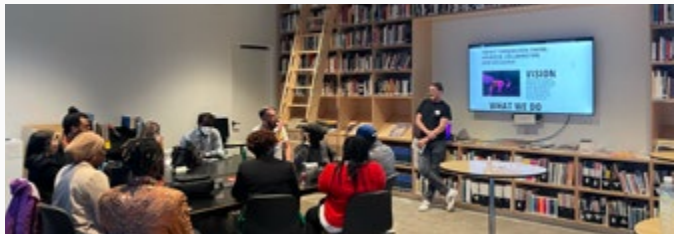
For 15 years, the International Women of Courage program has honored women who demonstrate exceptional courage, strength, and leadership, often at great personal risk and sacrifice. Dr. Zakira Hekmat is a displaced person from Ghazni Province, Afghanistan where she secretly completed high school under the Taliban’s first period of control. She continued her education and became a doctor in Türkiye. From a one-room office, she founded the Afghan Refugee Solidarity Association in Türkiye in 2014, where she has since worked tirelessly to advocate for the rights of all refugees and women. Dr. Hekmat’s time in Kansas City with Global Ties KC included conversations with local refugee organizations like Jewish Vocational Services, Della Lamb, Welcoming KC, Topeka United, United WE, KC for Refugees, and also speaking at a luncheon hosted by Rotary Club of Kansas City, Kansas.



Dr. Zakira Hekmat, Afghan advocate, honored for her courage at the KCK Rotary Luncheon.



Global Ties KC hosts Senegalese officials exploring KC’s art scene.



Senegalese visitors engage with KC’s Charlotte Street Foundation.

GROWING MUSIC AND FILM AND INDUSTRIES

SENEGAL 

During the same weekend as the Super Bowl, Global Ties KC had the opportunity to host a unique program which hosted ministry of art and culture officials from Senegal. Senegalese visitors got to meet with local artists, foundations, and art advocacy organizations like Mid-America Art Alliance, Arts KC, Sike Style, Kansas City Artists Council, and Charlotte Street Foundation. And with the Chiefs win in KC that weekend, visitors also got the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to celebrate with the city at the Super Bowl Parade!

IVLP IMPACT STORIES

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION MANAGEMENT II

ALGERIA  ARMENIA  COSTA RICA  MEXICO  MOROCCO  NIGERIA  SAUDI ARABIA 

In November 2023, seven executives of youth-focused NGO arrived in Kansas City to exchange information and ideas with local leaders in the nonprofit sector. Many of their NGO’s focus on providing technology or English skills for youth, seeing both as marketable skills to avoid the cycle of poverty and violence. While in Kansas City the group met with Guadalupe Centers, the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, the Boys and Girls Club, Summit Technology Academy, Science City, and Missouri 4-H.



Boys and Girls Club collaboration: Global leaders strategize youth empowerment.



Greater KC Community Foundation hosts global executives shaping youth-focused NGOs.



Youth NGO leaders connect with Science City for empowerment insights.



Visitors enjoy dinner in a local home.



Visitors enjoying Science City after dialogue on innovation in education.



## IVLP IMPACT STORIES

### SUPPORTING INCREASE IN DOMESTIC RESOURCES MOBILIZATION BY IMPROVING TAX COLLECTION

PAKISTAN 🇵🇰

The U.S. Department of State invited ten members of the Internal Revenue Service to be a part of an International Visitor Leadership Program, virtually, in 2021. The program was so necessary that the same participants were invited in-person to KC in October 2023, where Global Ties KC welcomed the group to explore how Pakistan can enhance their taxation system through federal intervention and potential private partnerships.



Returning Pakistani IRS members strengthen international connections for tax system improvement.

[CLICK HERE TO READ  
THE FULL STORY](#)



Exploring rural development in Kansas City, Kazakh leaders visit Vibrant Health.



Visitors pictured here with, Trisha Purdon, director of the Kansas Office for Rural Prosperity



Kazakhstan leaders explore Tuttle Farms.

### RURAL DEVELOPMENT

KAZAKHSTAN 🇰🇷

With one of the lowest population densities in the world, Kazakhstan has a very high percentage of rural communities. From August 22-26 a group of eight Kazakh leaders visited Kansas City to explore a wide variety of issues related to rural development. While in Kansas City they visited Vibrant Health, the Mid-America Regional Council, Tuttle Farms, the Kansas Office of Rural Prosperity, the Tonganoxie City Manager's Office, and Tonganoxie High School. The leaders included government officials, agriculture officials, National Park directors, and corporate leaders.



Kansas City hosts Kazakh leaders exploring American machinery, rural issues and partnerships. Visitor posing on a tractor at Tuttle farms.

## IVLP IMPACT STORIES

### EDWARD R. MURROW PROGRAM FOR JOURNALISTS: RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATION

ARGENTINA 🇦🇷 BOLIVIA 🇧🇴 CHILE 🇨🇱 COSTA RICA 🇨🇷 EL SALVADOR 🇸🇻 GUATEMALA 🇬🇹 MEXICO 🇲🇽 NICARAGUA 🇳🇮 PARAGUAY 🇵🇷 URUGUAY 🇺🇾 VENEZUELA 🇻🇪

The Edward R. Murrow program for journalists examines the essential role of independent media in fostering and protecting freedom of expression and democracy. From March 23- 28, a group of thirteen print, media, and radio journalists visited Kansas City on a program diving deep into two local news stories. First, the Pulitzer winning KC Star whistleblower case "Secret Kansas", and second getting the opportunity to meet with local KCUR journalist Peggy Lowe to talk about her ongoing work on the "Unbound" case study focused on ex-KCK police officer.



Visitors being featured speakers at the Global Ties KC Cultural Connection Hour.



Journalists from the Edward R. Murrow program delve into the heart of Kansas City's news landscape, dissecting the Pulitzer-winning "Secret Kansas" whistleblower case at the KC Star office.



Visitors taking a tour of the KCUR Radio Station to get an insider feel on day-to-day in radio journalism and in-depth discussions on the powerful intersection of journalism and democracy.

[EXPLORE MORE IVLP  
PROGRAM STORIES ON  
OUR WEBSITE](#)



## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Community Connections is a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) program intended to support post-Soviet countries as they transition to more democratic and free market-oriented societies. Since 2019, Community Connections has shifted to virtual meetings, and continues to impact hundreds of professionals and youth by enhancing their professional capacity. As one of the few organizations selected nationally each year to implement these integral developmental programs, Global Ties KC is a steadfast, valued partner to USAID.

### 2023 TOPICS:

**Advocacy and Intervention: Supporting Domestic Violence Survivors with Disabilities**

**Global Trends in Mid-Career Coaching**

**21st Century Skills for Belarusian Youth**

### IMPACT & OUTCOMES

Being flexible in one's career is critical in Belarusian society due to the uncertainty they live with. In a time where travel is restricted, the Community Connection Virtual Program provides the necessary connection for the professionals living in Belarus who are craving opportunities for personal and professional development, which they currently may not have access to in their communities.

71  
PARTICIPANTS

18  
SESSIONS

36  
HOURS

23  
SPEAKERS

## OPEN WORLD

Since 1999, the Open World program has been instrumental in forging lasting positive relationships between emerging and established leaders in the former Soviet Union and their American counterparts. Program participants have a range of diverse backgrounds, and 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. This is people-to-people exchange at its best.

### CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

MOLDOVA 🇲🇩 - FEBRUARY 3-11, 2023



The small country of Moldova, situated between Ukraine and Romania, has been a notable arena for ideological contentions between the West and Russia long before the flames of war flared in Ukraine in 2022. However, the pressure on Moldova has only increased, and on February 10, 2023, during the Kansas City Open World Program, the pro-EU government collapsed amidst mounting crises. The collapse showed exactly why the connections between the United States and Moldova are paramount.

From February 3-11, Global Ties KC had the opportunity to host a group of six Moldovan business leaders to exchange ideas on creating a thriving, socially responsible private sector. While in Kansas City, these leaders met with private companies to discuss their Corporate Social Responsibility programs, with nonprofits to discuss how they can support the private sector, and with political leaders to discuss the role of government in corporate social responsibility. The Moldovan leaders left Kansas City full of hope, connections, and ideas to implement in their businesses and society back home.





## YOUNG LEADERS OF THE AMERICAS INITIATIVE

In 2023, Global Ties KC facilitated the Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (YLA) for 12 fellows from 10 different countries across Latin America. These fellows were placed with host organizations to learn from and collaborate with the Kansas City commercial ecosystem, strengthening Kansas City's ties to global business leaders. The fellows lived in Kansas City for a month, immersing themselves in Kansas City life, and exploring Kansas City staples such as barbecue, the Nelson-Atkins, and Kansas City jazz.

As a follow-up to the YLA program in Kansas City, three host organizations will have the opportunity to travel to their fellows' home countries in 2024 to continue and build upon their connections. This year, hosts will be traveling to Costa Rica, Panama, and El Salvador.

**12** FELLOWS  
**4** WEEKS IN KANSAS CITY  
**12** LOCAL COMPANIES CONNECTED



Global Ties KC has facilitated the Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative in Kansas City since its launch in 2015. The U.S. Department of State's YLA Fellowship Program empowers emerging entrepreneurs from the Western Hemisphere to enable the full economic potential of its citizens. YLA 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.

### FELLOWSHIP PLACEMENTS



[CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL STORY](#)



From left to right: YLA fellows and their hosts at the networking hour at Unbound. Fellows showing their KC spirit and enjoying a KC Royals game!

## NAVIGATING GLOBAL CHALLENGES IN MENTAL HEALTH

Jamie is a Scottish human rights activist and licensed therapist. His work with young people in foster care has led to policy-changing campaigns and a program of direct engagement with the First Minister of Scotland. Jamie was even awarded a British Empire Medal from Her Majesty the Queen. In September 2023, he returned to the U.S. to continue exploring how he might use his dual capacity as a therapist and community builder to foster more safe gathering spaces around his work.

Global Ties KC coordinated a professional program for Jamie focused on conversations around youth education, mental health access, and peacebuilding. In his meetings with organizations like KC G.I.F.T and Reconciliation Services, he took a deep dive into topics like redlining and equitable access to resources.



Global activist and therapist Jamie Kinlochan champions mental health equity through international exchange, policy advocacy, and community building. Jamie enjoying a tour of the Boys Grow Farm to learn about their work with inner-city youth.

## HEARTLAND ALUMNI NETWORK

### HEARTLAND ALUMNI NETWORK

Lukas Pitman, an alumnus of the Department of State exchange program "Youth Ambassadors" and Global Ties KC Youth Diplomat received a competitive grant from the U.S. Department of State's Citizen Diplomacy Action Fund (CDAF) to create the Heartland Alumni Network, a space for U.S. Department of State exchange alumni in the Heartland (Kansas and Missouri) to connect and network with each other. This initiative is the first of its kind in the

Midwest. CDAF was launched in 2019 to empower U.S. alumni of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs to support their communities through public service projects and address key foreign policy goals.

The [Heartland Alumni Network](#) seeks to create a dynamic and innovative space for Exchange Alumni in Kansas and Missouri to connect with fellow alumni, collaborate on important community issues, and engage in storytelling. If you are an U.S. Department of State exchange alumni and are interested in connecting, please join the network!

[CLICK HERE TO JOIN THE NETWORK](#)

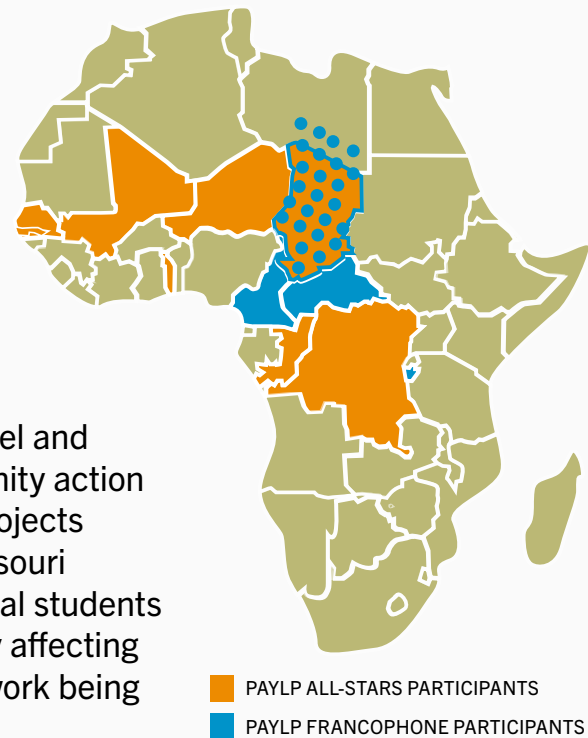


## PAN-AFRICA YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Each year, this dynamic youth leadership program engages 150 high school students and adult mentors from more than 38 countries in Africa. Global Ties KC was selected to host two Pan-Africa Youth Leadership Program (PAYLP) cohorts in 2023. PAYLP is designed to provide secondary school youth (ages 15-18) and adult educators the opportunity to explore priority policy themes such as civic education, climate resiliency, conflict resolution, economic development, entrepreneurship, respect for diversity, women's empowerment, and youth leadership development.

### PAYLP ALL-STARS FEBRUARY 2023

The first cohort was a special "All-Stars" program for successful PAYLP alumni including 15 young adults from eight different countries: Togo, Gambia, Chad, Niger, Mali, Senegal, the DRC, and Congo Brazzaville. Participants stayed in a downtown hotel and spent time creating impactful community action projects. They then presented their projects in a pitch competition, held at the Missouri Innovation Campus, which allowed local students to understand the key issues currently affecting Africa, and to hear about the critical work being done to affect change.



### PAYLP FRANCOPHONE JULY 2023

The second PAYLP cohort was a youth program for 14 students and three adult mentors from Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, and Chad. The participants met with local nonprofits and even had the opportunity to participate in a city scavenger hunt with their French peers who were in town on a French Youth Ambassadors Program. Students also planned and presented their community action projects addressing youth access to technology, food insecurity, and recycling. Lastly, the students were able to experience authentic American culture and hospitality by staying with local hosts.

[CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL STORY](#)





## YOUTH AMBASSADORS FROM ARGENTINA AND CHILE

### PARTNER: LEE'S SUMMIT SCHOOL DISTRICT MARCH 19-29, 2023

Global Ties KC has worked with the Lee's Summit School District connecting them to the Youth Ambassadors program for more than a decade. This year Global Ties KC brought another 13 international students and two adult mentors, where each participant lived with host families in the greater Lee's Summit area. In strategic partnership with the Lee's Summit School District, this program reaffirmed the strong relationship between Global Ties KC and our school partners, and, in a similar vein, the host families made authentic relationships with their visitors.



Youth groups from Argentina and Chile at Lee's Summit School District after a day full of activities.

Both the incoming students and their mentors benefited from the experiences and events that allowed them to interact with their American peers in exciting and productive ways. Having high-school-aged host siblings and visiting the local school were both invaluable experiences for all involved. These experiences galvanized the program participants and local students to engage and interact with their international counterparts and to create a true cross-cultural exchange.

13  
STUDENTS

#### Two volunteer activities

With Harvesters Food Bank and Synergy Services.

#### Visits to the Brown vs. Board of Education National Historic Site Hillcrest Transitional Housing, LivZero, volunteer organizations, and United Topeka

All provided context and insight into multiculturalism in Kansas City and the United States. These meetings and sessions varied; activities included tours, meetings, individual walk-throughs, hands-on training, and other unique experiences.

2  
ADULT MENTORS

#### Many meaningful interactions with local youth and residents

Youth Ambassadors visited a local high school for two full days of classes. During that time, they gave cultural presentations on their home countries to a large group of American students.

#### Mentor-specific opportunities

This included one-on-one meetings with teachers during the school visits.

## AMERICAN LEADERSHIP EXCHANGE UKRAINE

Building upon the success of the prior three cohorts from 2022, Global Ties KC welcomed a new cohort of college students. From October 26 to November 2, 2023, [Global Ties KC welcomed 10 Ukrainian college students](#), between 19 and 20 years old, on the American Leadership Exchange Program (ALEX) sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and American Councils on International Education. These young adults undertook a 3-week leadership building program, including time in Warsaw, Washington D.C., and Kansas City.

**"I believe in person-to-person diplomacy and its importance. I believe in people representing the values of their country as they move around the world."**  
— Sofya Shchypakina

During the day, students participated in intensive programming in pursuit of professional development, leadership skill building, and cultural enrichment. Participants engaged with the community in multiple ways, including a coffee social hour, meeting with the Mayor of Prairie Village, and meeting with local Congressional staffers.

### WATCH A RECAP OF THEIR EXPERIENCE



**"Thank you for supporting Ukraine, sharing our stories, and spreading information about our community."**  
— Anastasiya (Nastya) Rayina



**"It has been two years since the war. A lot of people get tired of the news cycle but it is still very valuable to us to see communities supporting us and welcoming us with open arms."**  
— Kateryna Shablyko





## YOUTH AMBASSADORS FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE FROM FRANCE

Global Ties KC was exclusively selected to fully coordinate the Youth Ambassadors Program for Community Service, designated by the U.S. Embassy in Paris. Working collaboratively with the partners in Paris, France, Global Ties KC coordinated all aspects of the program to create a hands-on experience.

The tour and volunteering with Operation Breakthrough provided a hands-on opportunity for participants to serve a local organization doing imperative work for the underserved population. Students were able to learn about what the organization does and meet with staff, then see the impact the organization is making through getting together a graduation ceremony for a third-grade class, many of whom would not be receiving a stable education and wrap-around care without the organization.

Students participated in a photo scavenger hunt with high school students from Africa and Kansas City, who were in Kansas City on a U.S. Department of State funded Pan-African Youth Leadership Program. This cross-cultural hands-on activity encouraged bonding, community learning, and teambuilding in an interactive activity. They were able to explore the community and engage with their international peers in a multicultural setting.

Youth Ambassadors engaged in a second activity with the Pan African Youth Leadership Program to participate in the White House Decision Center, which is a simulation conducted by the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library. Each student is provided a Presidential Advisory position and must then come together to make a decision on a real global crisis that occurred during Truman's Presidency. Students enjoyed the hands-on learning and engagement of the activity, while using their collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

[CLICK HERE TO READ  
THE FULL STORY](#)





# GLOBAL ROBOTICS EXCHANGE



Screenshot of one of the live webinar sessions of the Global Robotics Exchange featuring participants from Morocco, Libya, and the U.S..

The Global Robotics Exchange\* is a STEM-focused virtual exchange program that is funded by The Stevens Initiative: a U.S. Department of State grant aimed at investing in young people in the U.S. and Middle East and North African region through virtual exchange programs.

**164** ALUMNI **3** COUNTRIES

“I found this experience very positive, I am very happy to be part of the Global Robotics Exchange. And it was very interesting to see other students that are experiencing the same challenges that we are experiencing.”  
— Douaa Fadoua (Participant, Morocco)

“Thank you everyone for your great effort. It was a really good experience. I feel more confident.”  
— Fatima Ez Zahrae Arouaw (Participant, Morocco)

Week 4 Technical exchange around programming languages and celebration!



\*Global Robotics Exchange is implemented by Global Ties KC and is supported by the J. Christopher Stevens Virtual Exchange Initiative (JCSVEI). JCSVEI is a U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs program administered by the Aspen Institute.

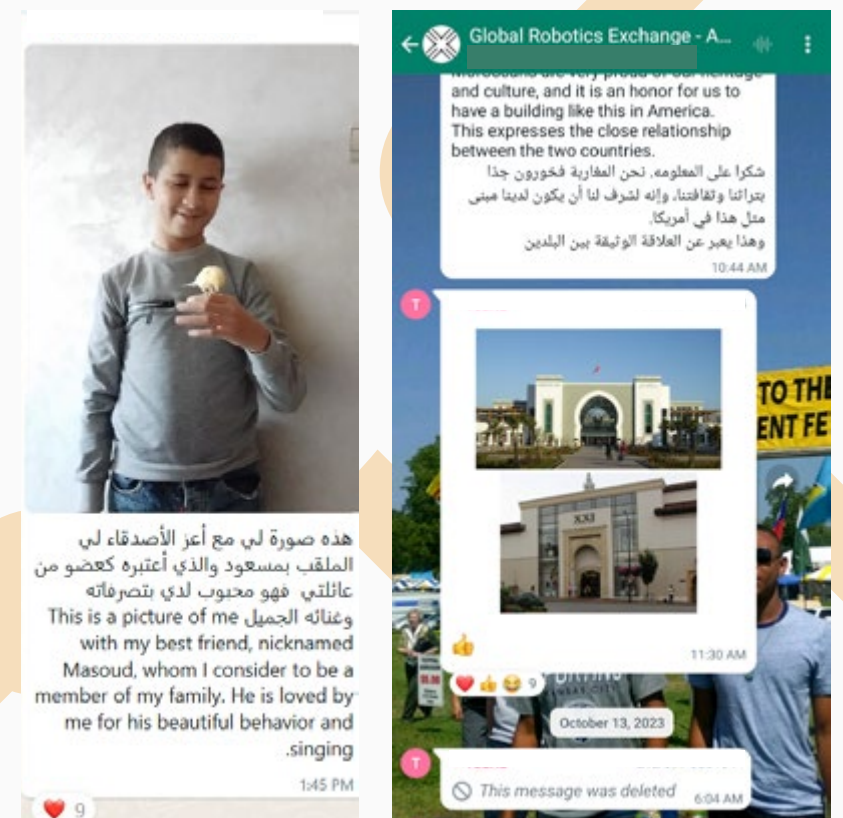
In October of 2023, Global Ties KC administered the program to the first of four semi-annual cohorts. The program consisted of four concurrent live webinar-style sessions where FIRST robotics teams from the U.S., Morocco, and Libya participated in discussions relating to their professional development, technical topics about robotics, and intercultural exchange.

<b>Week 1</b>	Program Introduction and Agility Work Profiler
<b>Week 2</b>	Drivetrains and career confidence
<b>Week 3</b>	Sensors and career exploration
<b>Week 4</b>	Programming languages and celebration!

This program was truly a collaborative effort, with The DeBruce Foundation, Lybotics, KC STEM Alliance, and Robots & More each contributing speakers for the program. In total, more than 200 students from the U.S., Morocco, and Libya participated in the program for at least one session, with 164 reaching alumni status by participating in at least three out of four of the sessions.

[CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL STORY](#)

Students participated in asynchronous activities during the program, including introducing themselves in a WhatsApp group to get to know their international peers.



## GLOBAL TIES KC PROGRAM PARTNERS





# HEARTLAND YOUTH DIPLOMATS

PWRD BY GLOBAL TIES KC



Youth Diplomats Alumni from the in-person cohort. After attending monthly sessions on personal development, leadership, community involvement and professional development among others they received their graduation certificates.

## WHAT IS IT

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.

## THE FIFTH COHORT

In September 2022, Global Ties KC 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 four 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 of the organization.

## ALUMNI EVERYWHERE

The Youth Diplomats Institute has successfully graduated more than 75 students. These participants are some of the best and brightest that our community has to offer. In August 2022, Global Ties KC instituted the Youth Diplomat Advisory Council, bringing together 13 Youth Diplomat alumni who are invested in making the program even better. Global Ties KC is excited to listen to the advisory council to find what ways the institute can improve.



Celebrating four successful years of the Youth Diplomats Institute where students get to meet international visitors, local leaders, hone skills, and create community impact.

37  
STUDENTS

21  
HIGH SCHOOLS

5  
COUNTIES

2  
STATES

### JANUARY

Cultural Roundtable with Government Officials from the Middle East & North Africa at Mid-America Regional Council

### FEBRUARY

Speed Mentoring with Local Professionals at Union Station

### APRIL

Public Speaking Workshop & Leadership Styles Activity at Plexpod

### MAY

Student Capstone Presentations at Union Station. Global Ties KC Heartland Pop-up Fundraiser

### JUNE

Travel: Chicago Leadership Excursion

### AUGUST

Travel: Washington DC Leadership Excursion

### SEPTEMBER

U.S. Department of State Foreign Service Officer Career Talk at Plexpod

### OCTOBER

Cultural Simulation & Global Jeopardy at UMKC College for Humanities and Social Sciences. Fall Party with Ukrainian High School Students.

### NOVEMBER

Career Talk with the United State Global Leadership Coalition & Cultural Exchange with the International Visitor Leadership Program at Polsinelli Law Firm

### DECEMBER

Diplomacy Simulation: Refugee Migration Crisis, from the National Museum for American Diplomacy



# WASHINGTON DC LEADERSHIP EXCURSION

JULY 16-20, 2023 | 5 STUDENTS

Five Kansas and Missouri high school students had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to travel to Washington D.C. fully sponsored for 5 days to join the Youth Ambassadors Program for Community Service, fully implemented by Global Ties KC.

Students enjoyed exploring the nation's capital city with necessary time in touring major museums and monuments, but also spent time volunteering with local civic organizations and meeting with Washington D.C. non-governmental organizational leaders to discuss social services and issue facing the beltway.

- Volunteering activity with Bread for the City, providing access to groceries for those who need it in Washington D.C.
- Panel featuring four local leaders to discuss the spirit of volunteerism in the United States and insight into how non-governmental organizations function in the U.S. through the use of donated time and resources.
- Leadership Styles Workshop to aid students in understanding their strengths in a group setting to help them work better with others.
- A guided tour of Washington DC with Capitol Communications Group, emphasizing American institutions and federalism.
- A tour and visit to the African American Culture and History Museum



From top to bottom, left to right: students outside the U.S. Capitol; students setting goals for the week; students posing outside the White House.

Participants had the opportunity to see major sights, including the Capitol Building, Martin Luther King Jr Memorial, Albert Einstein Memorial, World War I Memorial, and White House.

# CHICAGO LEADERSHIP EXCURSION

JUNE 8-11, 2023 | 9 STUDENTS

In partnership with WorldChicago, Global Ties KC coordinated a Youth Diplomat Exchange, where 9 local high school students traveled to Chicago, Illinois to meet with their Chicagonian counterparts. This fully sponsored opportunity provided key leadership development opportunities and cultural exploration.



- A Youth Diplomat city sharing session, allowing each group of Youth Diplomats to share about their culture and community.
- An interactive communication styles workshop with local community leader and activist.
- Visit to the Chicago Blues Festival and Art Museum.
- A walking mural tour featuring local Hispanic artists, depicting community culture and history through visual arts, then enjoying local cuisine.

“My favorite excursion on the Chicago trip was either the Chicago Arts Institute or interacting with the students at WorldChicago. I got to experience the museum with Martina who knew a lot about all of the art, and made friends at WorldChicago that I’m still in touch with today!

— Thomas Tempest

FOLLOW OUR SOCIAL MEDIA TO SEE MORE



## DIPLOMACY BEGINS HERE GLOBAL TIES U.S. REGIONAL SUMMIT

“Seventy-eight years ago, a small-town farmer from rural Missouri became President of the United States, at one of the most critical moments in world history. Just eight years later, during the same season as the Harry S Truman Presidential Library was under construction, the groundwork was being laid for a tiny citizen diplomacy-focused nonprofit in Kansas City, which has grown to the organization that Global Ties KC is today.

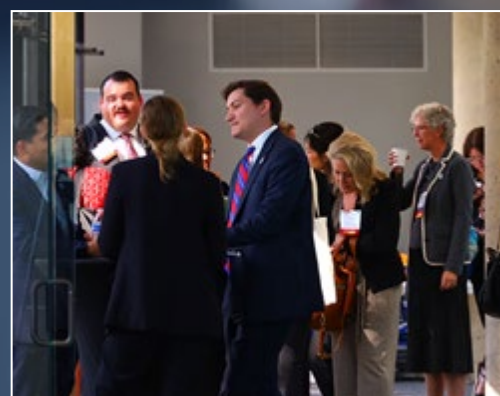
**Over the past seven decades, we have welcomed thousands and thousands of international visitors into Kansas and Missouri, connecting experts in a variety of fields to their local counterparts, and building global relationships, one handshake at a time.**

Through shared meals, farm tours, strolls through art galleries, museum visits, and thousands of professional meetings each year, the **more than four hundred international visitors we bring to KC annually** have the opportunity to meet ‘average’ people in the heart of America. **So yes, we’re being very literal when we say “diplomacy begins here.” Here at this Summit. Here in the Heartland. Here at home.**

— Courtney Brooks  
President & CEO, Global Ties KC



Amy Storrow, Director of the Office of International Visitors at Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) speaking to high school students about international career opportunities.



Our peers from across the Global Ties network spent the day networking and exchanging best practices to enhance citizen diplomacy throughout the United States during the Global Ties KC’s Diplomacy Begins Here Summit.

## SUMMIT

The 2023 Global Ties KC Diplomacy Begins Here Summit brought together diverse audiences to engage on the historical and current relevance international affairs plays in the Heartland. Our speakers outlined how the region engages in international trade vital to the global economy, how rural communities affect international affairs, and how anyone can engage in diplomacy right here in the Heartland.

On September 21-22, Global Ties KC hosted a Diplomacy Begins Here Summit in Kansas City.

Held semi-annually in Global Ties U.S. cities across the country, the Diplomacy Begins Here Summit brings together leaders in business, government, and nonprofit organizations to forge new connections with local communities around exchange programming.

The day concluded with closing remarks from Daniel Ricchetti, the Deputy Special Representative for City and State Diplomacy. In his role, Daniel works with municipal leaders such as mayors, governors, and other local officials to strengthen local government engagement on the international stage.

READ A FULL RECAP  
OF THE SUMMIT

“Every citizen can play a role in creating enduring relationships abroad by engaging communities beyond our borders.”

— Daniel Ricchetti, the Deputy Special Representative for City and State Diplomacy

### Special thanks to our speakers for the Diplomacy Begins Here Summit:

Mark Adams, Education Director, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library

Courtney Brooks, President & CEO, Global Ties KC

Jim Erickson, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Economic Development Corporation of Kansas City, MO

Drew Felling, Vice President, International Trade, Commerce Bank

Zane Francescato, Central Outreach Manager, U.S. Global Leadership Coalition

Karen Hiller, Councilwoman, Topeka, KS

Kevin Holland, Vice President, Lockton

Melissa Miller, Director, World Trade Center-Kansas City

Chris Miner, Managing Director for Professional & Cultural Exchanges, Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State

Trisha Purdon, Director, Office of Rural Prosperity, Kansas Department of Commerce

Daniel Orange, Program Officer, Office of International Visitors, U.S. Department of State

Daniel Ricchetti, Deputy Special Representative for City & State Diplomacy, U.S. Department of State

Chris Steineger, Former State Senator, KS

Amy Storrow, Director, Office of International Visitors, U.S. Department of State

Eileen Weir, Former Mayor, Independence, MO

Matt Ziegenhorn, Global Ties KC Host



## DIPLOMACY BEGINS HERE

### GLOBAL TIES LEARNING LAB



### LEARNING LAB: BUILDING CITIZEN DIPLOMACY FROM THE MIDWEST

The final day of the Diplomacy Begins Here Summit was devoted to professional development for those in the Global Ties network. Dr. DeAngela Burns-Wallace, the CEO of the Kauffman Foundation, set the tone for the day and provided an inspirational opening keynote on the intersection of international work and the Kauffman Foundation. Her message to the network was to follow Kauffman's lead, and to "be uncommon", a sentiment that set the tone for the day and will serve to inspire the Global Ties network for years to come.

The day continued with heartfelt conversations around alumni engagement, local advocacy, and wrapped up with discussions about organizational strategy. The Learning Lab left participants with new ideas for implementing programs, but also with a feeling of hope and inspiration for the future of the work of vital citizen diplomacy.

In addition to shining a light on the legacy of the Heartland's role in international exchange, the Diplomacy Begins Here Summit was bookended by a welcome activities, and a learning lab, for guests from out of town. Global Ties KC is part of a network of more than 80 nonprofit organizations from across the United States, who all work on the International Visitor Leadership Program. We were invited to host one of two 2023 Summits, to convene IVLP implementing organizations from coast to coast, to talk through best practices in international exchange.

On September 20, the Summit began with a strong welcome with a Resource Tour and the

Heartland Welcome Dinner. The Welcome day highlighted key major business sectors in Kansas City, but then moved attendees to a historically underinvested part of Kansas City, the jazz district and location of our Welcome Dinner.

The final day, September 22, the Learning Lab brought together the Global Ties U.S. network for debriefing and professional development, aiming to strengthen the network. The Learning Lab was held at the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation Conference Center, once again intentionally highlighting strong network allies and complimenting the daily objective of relationship building.

[READ A FULL RECAP  
OF THE LEARNING LAB](#)

#### Sessions included:

Kansas City Resource Tour with Kansas City Area Development Council and 2000 Vine  
American Jazz Museum Guided Tour  
Heartland Barbecue Welcome Dinner  
Fireside Chat with Ewing Marion, Kauffman Foundation CEO  
Where's Your There and Learning to Define It for Strategic and Personal Impact  
Stories Demonstrating Impact: Happenings in Alumni Engagement  
IVLP Programming Ecosystem: The View from My Office  
Creative Programming Through Facilitated Discussions: Opportunities in IVLP  
Securing the Future: Strategies and Key Elements of Advocacy



# EVENTS

- CULTURAL CONNECTION HOUR, MOROCCAN WOMEN IN STEAM
- STATE OF THE ORGANIZATION
- CULTURAL CONNECTION HOUR, MOLDOVAN CORPORATE LEADERS
- CULTURAL CONNECTION HOUR, EDWARD R. MURROW JOURNALISM- U.S. FOREIGN POLICY FROM THE NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
- PAN-AFRICAN YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM ALL-STAR ALUMNI
- ANNUAL CELEBRATION
- CULTURAL CONNECTION HOUR, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROFESSIONALS
- HEARTLAND WELCOME DINNER
- DIPLOMACY BEGINS HERE SUMMIT
- CASUAL COFFEE CONVOS WITH UKRAINIAN COLLEGE STUDENTS
- CULTURAL CONNECTION HOUR, NGO LEADERS

FEB

MAR

APR

MAY

JUN

SEP

OCT

NOV

- INTERNATIONAL WOMEN OF COURAGE LUNCHEON
- CULTURAL CONNECTION HOUR, LATIN AMERICAN JOURNALISTS
- CULTURAL CONNECTION HOUR, VIETNAMESE LEGAL ENGLISH TEACHING PROFESSIONALS

CULTURAL CONNECTION HOUR, ITALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

CULTURAL CONNECTION HOUR, FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT PROFESSIONALS

19  
TOTAL EVENTS

549  
TOTAL ATTENDEES

# COMMUNITY IMPACT

## MICHAEL FARMER VISIT TO TBILISI, GEORGIA 🇬🇪

Kansas City sent a local to the Community Connections Program Reunion in Tbilisi, Georgia through a Global Ties KC program. Community Connections is a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) program which has tangibly impacted thousands of Belarusians through tailored intensive professional development exchange programs. In the pursuit of continued impact, the Community Connections Program conducts a reunion to harness energy and work to create intense change in the country of Belarus.



Michael Farmer, Entrepreneurship Instructor, empowers Belarusian students in Georgia with AI insights at Community Connections Program Reunion.

“Working with the group of Belarusian while in Tbilisi, Georgia was incredibly inspiring.”  
— Micahel Farmer

Michael Farmer, Entrepreneurship Instructor at Blue Valley CAPS, was a featured keynote speaker in the country of Georgia during the conference to discuss the integration of artificial intelligence in life and work. This is in follow-up to his facilitation of three virtual entrepreneurship-based programs for Belarusian high school students.



Board of directors and community members enjoy themselves at the Heartland Pop Up annual celebration.



# THANK YOU TO OUR 2023 HOSTS

Tom and Julie Prudden  
Shari Wilson and Chris Steineger  
James and Marti Wilson  
Yvonne and Bill Hales  
Ann and Jim Greene  
Bernard Brown  
Rachel Ibok  
Shabina and Suren Kavimandan  
Paul-Francois Polidori and Andrew Koch  
Ken and Cheryl Davis  
Sharon Johnson and Bob Dona  
Lara and Cory Tenbarger  
Marti Moore and Jak Kinsey  
Jennifer Dye  
Kelly and Gonzalo Arias  
Paul Temme and Loring Leifer

Joan and Mai Ho  
Roger Heinrich and Lisa Deangelo  
Kaleigh and Justin Bearce  
Martin and Leslee Rivarola  
Kai and Susanne Ringenson  
Kit and Linda Wagar  
Holly and Paul Schenk  
Ally and Eric Roberson  
Nicholas and Sarah Boehnlein  
Ketra and Rodney Kirk  
Sheri Morris  
Tia Pasnick  
Chad and Mishelle Pauley  
Jess and Drew Solomon  
Judy and Sabina Shifrin  
Megan and Matt Maassel

Jane Lampo and Howard Welsch  
Erin and Michael Calloway  
Rick and DeeAnn Behrens  
Courtney and Bret Ivy  
Kim Chamberlin  
Linda and Dan Cosgrove  
Mikhala Lantz-Simmons and Mohammad Rasoulipour  
Alison and Shawn Long  
Terence and Arlette McIlff  
Tianna McIlff and Mason Patten  
Chad and Kira Montuori  
Vanessa Vaughn-West and Jim West  
Debbie Vesel  
Jim and Marti Wilson  
Liz and Michael Zeller  
David and Suzannah Smith  
Jason Camis  
Courtney and Ben Brooks  
Mylinda and Gil Scott  
Karen Dickinson

103 MEALS  
SHARED

640 NIGHTS IN  
HOMESTAYS

# THANK YOU TO OUR 2023 PARTNERS

2000 Vine  
A Turning Point KC  
Academie Lafayette  
Agricultural Business Council  
American Civil Liberties Union of Kansas  
American Jazz Museum  
American Public Square  
Arnold Development Group  
Arts KC  
Associates in Dispute Resolution  
Avenues of Life  
Barkley  
Bayer  
BioNexus KC  
Black & Veatch  
BNIM  
Boulevard Brewing  
Boys and Girls Club of Greater Kansas City  
Boys Grow  
Bridging the Gap  
Broadmoor Bistro  
Cafe Cà Phê  
Center for Conflict Resolution  
Channel 4 WDAF-TV  
Charlotte Street Foundation  
Chicken N Pickle  
Children's Mercy: Division of Infectious Diseases  
City of Lee's Summit  
City of Lenexa  
Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department, City of KCMO  
Climate+Energy Project  
Commerce Bank  
Conscious Capitalism  
Crescent Peace Society  
Della Lamb  
Domestic Violence Victim Assistance Program  
Douglas County Courthouse  
Emanuel Ngomsi  
Ethnic Enrichment Commission  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
First Tech Challenge  
Girl Scouts of NE Kansas and NW Missouri

Greater Kansas City Community Foundation  
Greater Kansas City Foreign Trade Zone  
Guadalupe Centers  
Harry S. Truman Presidential Library  
Harvesters  
Health Forward Foundation  
Heartland Conservation Alliance  
Hillcrest Transitional Housing  
Hispanic Economic Development Corporation  
Hope House  
Jackson County CASA  
Jackson County Prosecutor's Office  
Jacob's Well  
James Toon  
Jewish Vocational Services  
Judge Mary Sheffield  
Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops  
Kansas City Area Development Council  
Kansas City Artists Coalition  
Kansas City Auditor's Office  
Kansas City International Airport  
Kansas City Police Department  
Kansas City Star  
Kansas City, Kansas DA's Office  
Kansas Coalition for Open Government  
Kansas Department of Children and Families  
Kansas Department of Commerce  
Kansas Department of Commerce, Office of Rural prosperity  
Kansas Department of Commerce, International Division  
Kansas Reflector  
Kansas State Department of Animal Science and Industry  
Kansas State Food Safety and Security Program  
Kauffman FastTrac  
KC Black Owned  
KC Care Health Clinic  
KC Center for Inclusion  
KC Community Gardens  
KC Farm School  
KC Film Commission



KC for Refugees  
KC G.I.F.T.  
KC Sourcelink  
KC Stem Alliance  
KC Teacher Residency  
KC Urban Advantage  
KC Wineworks  
KCPS International Welcome Center  
KCUR-FM Radio  
KU Center of Research and Learning  
KU Med Center + JayDoc Free Clinic  
KU Medical Center  
KU School of Pharmacy  
LaunchKC Social Venture Studio  
Lawrence High School  
Lee’s Summit Fire Department  
Lee’s Summit Police Department  
LGBT Affirming Therapist Guild  
LivZero  
Lockton  
Lybotics  
Mid-America Arts Alliance  
Mid-America Regional Council  
Missouri 4-H  
Missouri Department of Conservation  
MOCSA  
National Science Foundation  
Negro Leagues Baseball Museum  
New Roots for Refugees  
Nurture KC  
Office of Sharice Davids  
One Million Cups  
Operation Breakthrough  
Oracle Center  
Overland Park Police Department  
Prairie Sky Counseling Center  
Procurement Services Division  
Re.Use.Full  
Refugee and Immigrant Services & Empowerment  
Respect of Life Office of the Catholic Diocese of Kansas City  
Robots & More  
Sandy Woodson  
Seaboard Foods  
Science City

Shatto Milk Company  
Sike Style Industries  
SnapIT Solutions  
Summit Technology Academy  
Sunflower House  
Swope Health  
Synergy Services  
Teach For America Kansas City  
The Center for the Rights of Abused Children  
The DeBruce Foundation  
Thelma’s Kitchen  
Toastmasters  
Tonganoxie City Manager’s Office  
Tonganoxie High School  
Topeka United  
Tucker Leadership Lab  
Tuttle Farms  
U.S. Attorney’s Office  
U.S. Commercial Service  
UMKC School of Humanities and Social Sciences  
UMKC Applied Language Institute  
UMKC Department of Communication and Journalism  
UMKC Innovation Studio  
Unbound  
United WE  
University Health  
University of Kansas Applied English Center  
University of Kansas School of Journalism  
University of Missouri College of Education  
Urban Hikes KC  
U.S. Commercial Service  
Vibrant Health  
Vivent Health  
VMLY&R  
Washburn University School of Law  
WeCode KC  
Welcoming KC  
White House Decision Center  
World Trade Center  
Wyandotte County DA’s Office  
Youth Diplomats Institute  
Youth Resiliency Center

IN MEMORIAM



TRUDY NEPSTAD



DICK BERKLEY



ROSS MARINE

In 2023, we lost a number of important members of the Global Ties KC family. Trudy Nepstad welcomed hundreds of international guests into her home, introduced them to a diverse array of her friends from across KC, and put together dinner parties that showcased the very best of the United States. Mayor Dick Berkley was awarded the John C. Dodds III Citizen Diplomacy Award for his longstanding dedication to international relations and citizen diplomacy. Long after his term as mayor of Kansas City, he was still a regular at Global Ties KC receptions. Ross Marine served many years on the Global Ties KC’s board, including time as president, and was an exemplary leader and contributor.

For all those we lost, on behalf of the Global Ties KC team and network, our hearts go out to their families and the individuals they touched from all around the world.



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