



# “YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS & FAMILY BUSINESSES”

## Testimonies from the 2nd U.S. Mentors Delegation visiting Jordan and UAE from February 24 — March 16, 2011



*Sponsored by the US State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Office of Citizen Exchanges  
Locally organized by Great Lakes Consortium for International Training and Development and Center for Family and Privately-Held Businesses of The College of Business & Innovation of The University of Toledo*



**Martin W Nagy, Leader of the Delegation**  
**Arts Business & NGO Consultant**  
**Executive Director of Arts Council Lake Erie West**

“Personally, I benefited from this professional exchange in many ways. First and foremost is the meeting of such wonderful people and our open exchange of opinions, ideas, values and culture. They were so receptive, caring, non-judgmental and interested to converse about everything from fashion to politics. I learned a lot from them and look forward to continued sharing and collaborations in the future. Secondly, I benefited from learning about the countries’ historical significance and how the people care so deeply about it. Professionally, I benefited from this exchange by seeing so many possibilities for growth and expansion of their and our businesses and the possibilities for partnerships, collaborations and exchanges of goods and services between businesses in Toledo, the Middle East and other parts of the US. Through the use of technology we can make the distance short and the term of relationship enduring.

The most significant confirmation for me was that people in the Middle East are not any different than people in the US or Africa or wherever. I have many Middle Eastern friends here in the US and so seeing native Middle Easterners in their homeland was no surprise. With all the hardship, troubles and warfare we hear about in the Middle East in our news programs, the actual mindset and climate there is different from what is often portrayed in the news. The people are friendly, interested in learning, are patriotic, and have a deep sense of family, tradition and religious values. Only some of them are extremists who wish harm to others. We too have our extremists who are out stealing, raping and killing.”



**Bill Darah**  
**Chairman and CEO of Superior Uniform Sales**

“The benefits I gained from my participation in the Middle East trip are two-fold. First, from my visits to the young entrepreneurs businesses and my stay at the hotels in Amman, Jordan and Abu Dhabi and Dubai, UAE, I saw an attitude about good customer service that should be copied back home. The managers and employees I came in contact with were totally focused on satisfying the needs of their customers. This served as a reminder to me that excellent customer service is practiced all over the world – not only in America. Secondly, the workshops we presented have made me more aware of the importance of good succession planning and an outside Board of Directors for family business. I hope to review our succession plans at Superior and form an outside Board of Directors. One of the highlights of my 20 days in the Middle East was our 2-hour visit at the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi. We listened to 4 different presenters including the U.S. Ambassador – Richard Olson.

I was impressed by all 4 individuals and I feel I have a very good understanding now of the staff members roles and responsibilities, and the work done by our Embassies throughout the world. Mr. Olson is an impressive man – one who we as Americans can be proud of. Since returning home, I told my 19 year old daughter who is majoring in international business at The Ohio State University to look into a career in Foreign Services with the U.S. State Dept.”



*U.S. delegation with Ambassador Richard Olson at the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi*



**Karl A. Parker**  
**President and CEO of Parkers Enterprises Family of Businesses**

“My business’ reputation has been enhanced considerably as a result of this exchange opportunity. It has opened up several new consulting avenues for me as well. Learning more about the US delegates has opened up local opportunity for me. Additionally, I learned so much about business in NW Ohio from my fellow USA delegates.

The visit to the UAE opened up a world of opportunity for me. The potential to collaborate and form partnerships is tremendous. I gained valuable information regarding doing business the Middle East that I will leverage to grow my business globally. Finally, the experience has opened up other doors in the USA as result of my participation as a delegate.”



**Trish Skaff**  
**International Sales Manager, Impact Products; Instructor in Lourdes College**

“The building of relationships between the mentors and mentees was the single most significant achievement of the trip. We learned from each other. They taught us about operating business and living life in their countries and we were able to share our knowledge and experience to help them be successful business owners. It was not only professional relationships that formed but personal friendships that will last a long time. I will continue to remain in touch with many of the YEP members and their families.

The best benefit of a cultural exchange trip is to experience a total immersion into a country’s culture. Our experiences gave us a whole new perspective on the current challenges in many of the Middle Eastern countries. We learned so much about the early civilizations of our world in through visits to many of the historical sites we visited. By contrast in the UAE we learned about the development of a country that was transformed by the discovery of oil. We can now have conversations about these countries and their challenges with a more enlightened viewpoint. Hopefully, as more people participate in these cultural exchanges, relationships between countries will lead to more peace among nations.”



**Tommy Pipatjarasgit**  
**President of Magic Wok Restaurants**

“I made valuable contacts and relationships with the Middle Eastern delegation for future business opportunities. There is no doubt in my mind that the friends I met in the Middle East would go an extra mile for me if I wanted to do business there. From going to the delegates businesses, homes, and meeting their families I learned about the culture, customs, business culture and climate. I also met contacts in the restaurant industry who may be interested in investing in our restaurant concept in the Middle East.

I found that how global business has become. The delegates are doing business all over the world-China, Europe, US, etc. I realized also that there are many business opportunities in the Middle East. Lastly, I felt in their culture there is a unique family business value, which is business is conducted for the family and it seems family is most important.”



**Jim Hartung**  
**Management Consultant and Partner in James A. Poure & Associates**

“Among the factors that foster success in the field of Management Consulting are experience and networking. The International Exchange Opportunity in the Middle East provided an effective forum to enhance each of the afore mentioned factors. Certainly the experience of working closely and interfacing with business persons in the Middle East, gaining a hands-on understanding of the Middle Eastern business culture and gaining understanding the service and support infrastructure available through government and educational resources are factors that enhance the marketing profile and skill-sets of James A. Poure and Associates. The Networking opportunities presented by the mission are of extraordinary value. Colleague Mentors, Mentees, representative of the Universities, Government Agencies, and other local businesses visited during the course of the program expand the network of persons that can lead to future business opportunities.

Discussions surrounding the opportunities for the exporting of Olive Oil to the United States and the spin-off opportunities and potential economic spin-offs and job creation that can occur were particularly stimulating and challenging. Additionally there were multiple opportunities to make contact in areas of market development for American companies.



**Ron Overmyer**  
**Agricultural Business Consultant**

“I appreciated the interaction with a number of family businesses in Jordan and the U.A.E. I was very interested in the thoughts behind the creation of the businesses, the structure of the businesses, the role of family members & employees and the similarities and differences with U.S. business practices. I was very impressed with the poise, business knowledge and articulation ability of a number of the young entrepreneurs from Lebanon, Jordan and the U.A.E. They especially demonstrated these characteristics at the YEP Summits in Jordan and the U.A.E. They seem to have a world view that will help them interact with business people from any part of the world.

It was a fantastic experience. The opportunity to experience some of the business culture and to experience some of the country culture was very enlightening. Our (my wife also went on the trip) friends and relatives expressed concern about our safety when they learned that we were going to Jordan and the U.A.E. Many of us (Americans) have had limited interaction with Middle Eastern people; even in the U.S. Our perception of Middle Eastern people is formed by snippets heard or seen in the media which isn’t often positive. I have developed a better appreciation and respect for the people of Jordan and the U.A.E. I hope that I have the opportunity to continue interactions with people from Lebanon, Jordan and the U.A.E and with any other people in the region.”