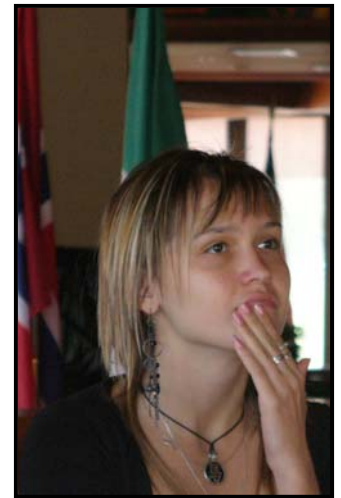




Civilizations Exchange & Cooperation Foundation

2007 Better Understanding for a Better World Youth Leadership and Interfaith Conference February 7-11, 2007

*If the youth of each nation are the hope of its fruitful future,
then the future of the world's civilization is soon to rest on the hands of our youth.*



PARTICIPANTS

Twenty four (24) countries were represented by participants from U.S. high schools, as well as the International Exchange students, who are already in the USA through the State Department's YES, FLEX, CBYX and ASMYLE Programs.

AFGHANISTAN

AZERBAIJAN

EGYPT

GEORGIA

GERMANY

GHANA

HOLLAND

INDIA

INDONESIA

IRAQ

JORDAN

KAZAKHSTAN

LEBANON

MALAYSIA

MOROCCO

OMAN

PAKISTAN

PHILIPPINES

RUSSIA

SAUDI ARABIA

UNITED STATES

UKRAINE

UZBEKISTAN

YEMEN

GOALS AND OUTCOME OF CONFERENCE

This conference was developed with the following objectives in mind:

- to help overcome ignorance among youth about each other by facilitating mutual understanding and appreciation between students from diverse regional, economic, social, religious and ethnic backgrounds
- to provide a platform for exchanging views and perspectives in face-to-face dialogues
- to facilitate mutual understanding and appreciation of each other's culture and religious background
- to learn about and discuss the practice of religion in a pluralistic society and the benefits of co-existing in a tolerant and mutually respectful manner
- to forge ties of friendship between American students and others from around the world
- to help the participants learn about and realize their leadership qualities and potential
- to waken the students to the possibilities of this global market and discuss good business practices

The overall outcome of the conference was very positive:

Given the fact that we had a very diverse group of participants from many cultures, nationalities and backgrounds, they enthusiastically worked together and constructively discussed issues raised during the various components of the conference. Just as last year, the students embraced one another as if they were each leaving their friends. They knew that this rare experience, invaluable lessons regarding respect and tolerance for others and the heartfelt memories, which they take with them, would be difficult to describe to the members of their communities back home. One of the students stated that **“no matter how much she will try to describe the impact of this conference on her and her perspectives about human life, her family may never really understand.”**

Many of the participants returned home with views and experiences to share with their communities, which were far different from those with which they arrived. The importance of entering into dialogue with people, who seem different from you, believe in something that you know little about or live somewhere else, is critical when striving to achieve understanding, cooperation and peace. This lesson applies to local communities, countries, continents and, in deed, the entire world.

The participants of this conference learned so much from listening and having opportunities to speak and raise questions during the dialogues, seminars, workshops and experiential programs, which touched upon issues ranging from culture, religion, leadership, and business practices to situations facing the youth of today. Perhaps they benefited in a more personal way by sharing rooms with students from other counties and having sheer fun and enjoyment during their free-time spent in the Walt Disney World Theme Parks. In spite of the minor differences among them, they found the amount of similarities amazing and reassuring at the same time.

Following the visits to a mosque, synagogue and church, we incorporated a panel discussion into the interfaith component of the conference this year and it was one of the highlights of the conference. The intellectual curiosity of the participants was refreshing and thrilled the panelists.

Throughout the various components of the conference (Diversity and Cultural Understanding, Interfaith, Leadership Styles and Business Approaches, stereotypes were eradicated, an education about other countries, cultures & their people was embraced, deep philosophical issues were raised and a “truly better understanding and appreciation” for one another was achieved.

Look out world! There is a new generation ready to become responsible “Global Citizens” with dreams, aspirations, a new vision of what can be, and the potential to positively affect humanity!

SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

Wednesday, February 7, 2007

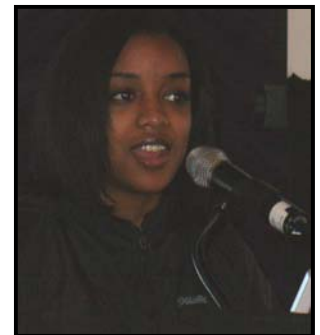
The pizza social and ice-breaking games helped students to relax, get to know one another and have a great time, while participating in a variety of games.



Thursday, February 8, 2007

The main conference day at the Odyssey Pavilion included:

1. Speech by **Mrs. Dee Aronson**, Director of the FLEX Program in the Youth Programs Division of the Office of Citizen Exchanges in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State
2. Presentations were given by students from **Indonesia, Germany, United States and India** describing various aspects of their lives as teenagers in their respective countries such as the people, living conditions, educational systems, history and the societal, cultural and religious practices.



United States



Indonesia



Germany



India

3. Main Address **“The World Today: The Family of Adam and Eve”**; elaborating on the need for **“Crossing the Divide,”** while developing an atmosphere of belonging, as well as cultural understanding and sensitivity, which leads to successful business interactions by **Imam Mohamad Bashar Arafat.**



4. A discussion of **“The Reality of Our World Today: How Ignorance and Stereotypes Cause Conflict and Failure”** – students were called on to express their thoughts on a variety of issues. This session was lead by **Imam Darryl Wainwright.**



5. Break out sessions and group discussions identifying problems facing the youth of today; ideas or activities for better cooperation on a personal, local and global level; opportunities and activities in which the youth need to be actively involved



Friday, February 9, 2007

Visiting Religious Communities of the Abrahamic Faiths

- **Mr. Bassem Cha'aban**, Operations Director of the Islamic Society of Central Florida, Masjid Ar Rahman
- **Imam Abdul Rahman Sykes**, Director of the Center for Peace
- **Rabbi David Kay**, Rabbi of Ohev Shalom Synagogue
- **Rev. Talia Raymond**, Reverend of the First United Church of Christ in Winter Park

The leaders of these communities shared their respective practices, similarities and differences with one another, as well as their experiences living in a pluralistic society.

Islamic Society of Central Florida, Masjid Ar Rahman:

Mr. Bassem Cha'aban spoke to the participants about the practices and traditions of Islam, as well as commonalities and differences with other faith traditions.



Center for Peace:

Imam Abdul Rahman Sykes briefly mentioned some of the misconceptions about Islam and touches upon the interfaith activities in which the Center for Peace is involved.



Congregation Ohev Shalom

Rabbi David Kay shared the teachings of Judaism with the students and gave them an opportunity to take pictures of the Torah.



First United Church of Christ in Winter Park

Rev. Talia Raymond, who blended in nicely with the students, discussed her church's perspectives on what it is to be a Christian and some of their activities and goals, which encouraged the students to ask many questions.



Lunch and Juma'ah Service at the Park

The Friday sermon was given by **Imam Darryl Wainwright** and the prayer was led by **Imam Mohamad Bashar Arafat** following lunch in a local park.



Panel Discussion conducted at Rollins College followed the Interfaith Visits:



The students were amazed as they reflected on the activities during the conference and how much they had learned in just 3 days. Despite their differences, they felt like one body with a united goal and high hopes for the future.

Saturday, February 10, 2007

Leadership and Cultural Programs offered in the Walt Disney World Epcot Park

- **Millennium Cultures:**
 - Objective: Discover, explore, and learn to recognize how the various aspects of culture are impacted by changes in technology, commerce, communication, and people.
- **Leadership Excellence:**
 - Objective: Understand approaches to leadership and learn how to apply them to personal goals and leadership styles.



Our students were broken into four groups for these activities. Each group had a Disney staff facilitator and at least one of our chaperones to accompany each of the four groups

Millennium Cultures Program

Spaceship Earth takes you through time to discover different methods of communication that has been used and the changes that have taken place in various parts of the world.

Non-verbal communication is an international method of conveying your feelings. Can you guess what she is feeling?



Visit Club Cool and sample products from around the world – we all have different tastes and backgrounds. What did you think of the different flavors from Germany, Italy, China, Japan, etc...?



Welcome to Disney's World Showcase! Eleven (11) countries are represented.
Which of them are familiar to you?



Do you know how cultures come together and the different phases?



Assimilation



Accommodation



Cultural Displacement

Let's Work Together to Create a World that is Whole!



Where are you from and where are you now? What traits make up culture? Architecture, Food, Dress, Language, Traditions, etc... [We are all interconnected!](#)



"The level of interaction between so many cultures was amazing!"

Leadership Excellence Program

There are 4 integral parts of leadership and business. Which one is the most important?

1. Financial/Business Results
2. Customer/Guest Satisfaction
3. Employee/Cast Excellence
4. Communication

Role Playing

Customer Service from a well-educated employee vs. from an employee, who has not received proper training



The Disney Experiential Programs had come to an end and it was time to return to the hotel to prepare for the banquet this evening.

Better Understanding for a Better World Banquet

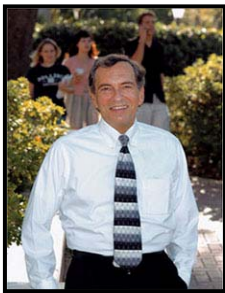
Walt Disney World's Odyssey Pavillion

Saturday, February 10, 2007

The Potential for Youth in a Globalized World

The banquet began with a lovely flute selection by **Mikheil Matcharadze**, an exchange student, which set the tone of the event, followed by a "Custom Tastes of the World" Buffet Dinner.

The highlight of the evening was an impassioned speech given by **Dr. Lewis Duncan**, President of Rollins College, which delighted and inspired all in attendance. Dr. Duncan is known for his supportive stance both personally and professionally for programs emphasizing diversity and cultural understanding. The students sought out his opinion on issues through their many insightful questions.

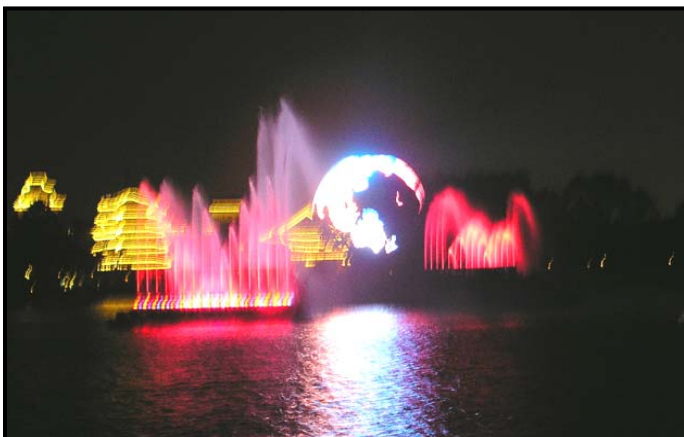


Dr. Duncan, the 14th president of Rollins College and former dean and professor of the Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth College, and also previously provost and senior vice president for academic affairs at the University of Tulsa, received his bachelor's degree in physics and mathematics and his master's and doctorate in space physics from Rice University in Houston. As a National Science Foundation post-doctoral fellow, he conducted research at the National Astronomy and Ionosphere Center in Puerto Rico. He subsequently joined the Los Alamos National Laboratory as a research scientist, and later became a section head in the Division of Earth and Space Sciences.

As stated by Dr. Duncan at the end of the Q & A session, "I did not expect the youth to be so open, energetic, diverse, and aware of what is happening around the world."

The Certificate Ceremony and Closing Remarks were performed by Imam M. Bashar Arafat, President and Founder of CECF. He brought the banquet to an end with his heartfelt words of appreciation for the efforts and support of everyone, who helped to make this conference a success.

- This joy-filled evening concluded with a viewing of the **Illuminations: Reflections of Earth**, nightly laser light and firework show.



Sunday, February 11, 2007

- Brief discussion and thoughts about “What the World Expects from Us”
- Reflection on and reaction to the entire conference, including discussion of the following topics: 1) The Wisdom Behind Religious Differences, 2) Prosperity through Cultural & Religious Diversity, and 3) The American Experience, as well as wrap up activities



One Last Picture.....

Appreciation and gratitude was expressed in a variety of ways for the open hearts and open minds of the participants. The success of this conference was largely due to their willingness to share their thoughts and opinions during the activities and listen respectfully to others.

FOLLOW UP AFTER THE CONFERENCE

Students were encouraged to maintain contact with at least one other person not from their country and also make a presentation in their schools or communities on the issues discussed during the conference

SUMMARY OF STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

“This experience not only introduced us to new cultures, but also taught us to respect them!”

CO-SPONSOR

Islamic Society of Central Florida - Center For Peace

PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

Congregation Ohev Shalom
First Congregational Church of Winter Park
Ar Rahman Mosque / Center for Peace
Rollins College

SPECIAL APPRECIATION

U.S. Department of State

&

The Grantee Organizations of the YES, FLEX, CBYX and ASMYLE
International Exchange Student Programs