

# Looking to a vibrant future

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**TWG President (2000-2005)**

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When I was first elected president of The Washington Group four years ago, I quickly came to the conclusion that if TWG was to continue to grow and prosper as an organization for all Ukrainian-American professionals, it had to meet its members' ever-changing expectations as well as attempt to satisfy, as best it could, their varied needs and requirements. Let me quickly add that this is not a simple task. TWG's present membership represents a very broad spectrum of Ukrainian-American professionals that includes university students, successful professionals in varied fields, as well as senior citizens. I also concluded that if TWG was to be successful as an organization, it needed to support, cooperate and interact with other Ukrainian-American organizations. Finally, if TWG's membership was truly to be open to all individuals, regardless of their political leanings or religious persuasion, it needed to avoid partisan politics. In my opinion, TWG has been extremely successful on all counts.

Most of TWG's events can be broadly categorized as either political, educational, cultural or social. Each year, The Washington Group Cultural Fund, under the able leadership of its Director Laryssa Courtney, sponsors and presents world class artists, musicians, singers and performing arts groups. The Washington Group also raises funds for worthwhile and deserving charities. Recently, The Washington Group's Cultural Fund and the Embassy of Ukraine, in cooperation with other Ukrainian-American organizations in the Washington area, organized and presented "Because Life is Beautiful," a reception and benefit fashion show at the Ukrainian Embassy featuring Ukrainian fashion designers from Kyiv and Lviv. The event was very successful, and all the proceeds were donated to a breast cancer awareness project in Ukraine. The Washington Group has also set up a Fellowship Fund which sponsors and funds a student internship

program each year at the Ukrainian Embassy as well as at other major Ukrainian organizations.

There is no question, however, that the “crown jewel” of all TWG’s activities and events is the traditional TWG Leadership Conference. These conferences are usually three-day events that are both intellectually stimulating and at the same time socially enjoyable. They usually commence with a formal reception at the Ukrainian Embassy, followed by panel discussions and presentations, a formal banquet and dance, and a cultural program. The themes of the two most recent conferences were “Ukraine: Integrating into the Global Community” and “Ukraine – Focus on the Future”. Some of the distinguished guests and participants at the conferences, just to name a few, included former U.S. Ambassador William Green Miller, U.S. Ambassador Carlos Pascual, former Foreign Minister of Ukraine Borys Tarasyuk, Ambassador Kostyantyn Gryshchenko (presently the foreign minister of Ukraine), as well as ambassadors to the U.S. from Bulgaria, the Slovak Republic, and Hungary. Participating also in the conferences were noted scholars and professors from renowned academic institutions, prominent experts in various fields, including representatives of both the Ukrainian and United States governments, and officials from international organizations.

I am very proud of the fact that TWG is highly regarded by others and enjoys an excellent reputation as one of the largest and most successful Ukrainian- American professional organizations. Recently, Dr. Osyp Moroz, in an article in Hromada, a Meest publication, (No. 12, 25 March 2004) discussed how the Ukrainian community could better unite and organize itself, suggested that the Ukrainian organizations look to The Washington Group as a model.

This year is a very special year for The Washington Group. TWG is holding a Leadership Conference to celebrate the 20th anniversary of its founding. At the conference, we will take a nostalgic retro look at TWG’s long and interesting 20-year history and at the various personalities that helped shape its history. The Embassy of Ukraine will join in the celebration by hosting our Friday evening reception.

As for the future, I firmly believe that The Washington Group will continue to attract dedicated and talented Ukrainian-American professionals to its

ranks and, as a result, continue to be one of the most active, vibrant and highly regarded Ukrainian organizations in the United States.