

**PUBLIC DIPLOMACY TODAY:
The Final Issue**

As we announced in the February issue of PUBLIC DIPLOMACY TODAY, this is the final issue.

We believe we can keep our membership informed about PDCA's activities and the currents in public diplomacy via our Weekly Update and other electronic means. We hope you agree.

In this issue, we feature a reminiscence by Alan Kotok, the founding editor of PUBLIC DIPLOMACY TODAY'S predecessors. To paraphrase him: Editors need to meet readers where they read. And if that's in front of a screen or phone rather than a sheet of paper, so be it.

I inherited this job from Alan in 2018. The six years I edited the newsletter were a great opportunity to learn about our colleagues and trends in the practice of public diplomacy. Thanks to everyone who shared their experiences and volunteered to create the stories that we featured in the newsletter.

Special thanks go to the two Member News Editors who focused on the stories about the activities of our members, and especially the life stories reflected in their obituaries: Claude Porsella and Domenick DiPasquale could always be depended on to fashion the stories and meet the deadlines. I'm deeply indebted to them.

Michael Korff
Editor

Excellence in Leadership, Organizational skills, Creative Use of Social Media Honored

By *Domenick DiPasquale*

Innovative work to advance U.S. foreign policy objectives across a variety of critical transnational issues – climate change, disinformation, migration – characterizes the four recipients of PDCA's 2024 awards for achievement in public diplomacy.

In compiling their outstanding records of accomplishment, all four demonstrated excellence in team leadership, advanced organizational skills, creative use of social media, and sustained energy and drive.

The four recipients so honored by PDCA this year are:

- **Wren Elhai**, Spokesperson, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES) at the Department of State
- **Patricia Muñoz**, Strategic Content Specialist, U.S. Consulate General Ciudad Juarez

- **Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy Bratislava**, consisting of four American officers and 10 locally-employed staffers led by Public Affairs Officer Tamara Sternberg-Greller

- **Josh Lustig**, Public Diplomacy Officer for Emerging Voices, U.S. Embassy Seoul



Josh Lustig

"These award winners represent both domestic and foreign employees of the State Department who work creatively and energetically to further U.S. objectives and help foreign au-

diences understand our country," noted Ambassador **Earl Anthony Wayne**, co-chair of the PDCA Awards Committee. "They also reflect the fact that public diplomacy overseas includes both Americans and Locally Employed Staff members who work hard to defend American values and represent the United States."

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Awards to be Featured at June Forum

PDCA

will honor the 2024 recipients of its awards program at a June 3 First Monday Forum at noon ET. The program will take place via Zoom.



Wren Elhai (OES), Patricia Muñoz (in photo, in Ciudad Juarez), the PA Section in Bratislava, and **Josh Lustig** (Seoul) will be featured in the program.

Check the PDCA website to sign up.☞

The mission of the Public Diplomacy Council of America is to encourage excellence and honor achievement in the professional practice, academic study, and advocacy for public diplomacy.

President's Column

A few weeks ago, PDCA reluctantly dropped 130 members from our roster after numerous reminders to renew their membership. All had been in arrears since the beginning of 2023. We know that former members move on, getting distracted by other interests or challenges that life throws at us, but this got us to thinking of the value of our mission, and what that mission means to you, our members. What do you expect from your professional organization?

PDCA members represent many aspects of the vast public diplomacy world. Demographically, we range from rising professionals at the onset of their careers to those of us still with a lot to offer but whose careers are behind us. We are members of the Foreign Service or Civil Service, professionals working in the large private sector network supporting PD, and academics committed to the study of PD. A few of us represent other governments or international organizations. All of us are committed to the idea that international understanding is an essential element in global stability, critical to America's security and standing in the world.

This is a tense time. To quote Shai Held in the New York Times, "Israelis and Palestinians, two utterly traumatized peoples, are so overcome with grief and indignation that they can barely see each other." "Both peoples," Held says, "need to ... hear each other's stories and histories, to listen to and bear witness to each other's suffering."

The Israeli-Gaza conflict may be commanding the spotlight, but it is hardly the only hotspot in the world, hardly the only place where conflict clouds understanding and puts peace out of reach. We can all recite the long list. Every one of these hotspots is a potential threat to the U.S. and all functioning democracies. How do we get them to grasp how destructive is their blinding haze?

Public diplomacy practitioners create connections, both people-to-people and through a vast and growing array of communication tools and means. Our experience over the years has shown how effective these can be. It was a memorable moment when Václav Havel, Czechoslovak president following the Velvet Revolution, visited USIA to thank us for keeping hope alive during the repressive communist era.

And now we are witnessing our adversaries taking advantage of contemporary communication streams to sow discord, rather than generate understanding. A recent letter drafted by PDCA's Advocacy Committee (fondly known as ACE – Advocacy Communication Envoys) states: "In a [recent discussion with PDCA](#), former Secretary of Defense and CIA Director Dr. Robert Gates argued that the U.S. now faces the most dangerous international environment in its history, more dangerous, even, than facing two well-equipped enemies on different continents in World War II. **Secretary Gates noted that, for the first time, we face four capable adversaries – China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea – each equipped with nuclear weapons, with a combined nuclear arsenal larger than our own and the ability and propensity to generate and effectively**

promote false and damaging information about the U.S. and its allies through numerous communication channels, including social media."

There is no shortage of well researched recommendations on how to deal with this threat, most of which call for substantial increases in public diplomacy funding.

This is PDCA's challenge. Fortunately, PDCA has a talented team dedicated to advancing the interests of our profession:

- ✓ We advocate on the Hill and through our communities across the country.

- ✓ We engage our communities on issues related to democracy-building and other foreign policy issues that affect domestic interests.

- ✓ We encourage excellence in public diplomacy through our awards programs, enhanced this year with new awards for senior officers.

- ✓ We sponsor a robust series of speaker programs to enhance our awareness of new developments and keep us current.

- ✓ We publish a weekly bulletin and encourage members to post blogs on our website. This quarterly newsletter you are reading may be our last, but we can count on our creative communication team to create new means of engaging with you.

- ✓ We mentor younger PD practitioners, including programs for entry-level State Department officers, helping them to widen and sustain public diplomacy connections while serving in their initial consular tours.

- ✓ We give Rising Professionals opportunities to participate in our programs and establish relationships they can sustain throughout their careers.

- ✓ We promote the study of public diplomacy through our new Academic Study Committee, providing members from aca-

democratic institutions with opportunities to connect with each other.

- ✓ We maintain a website (www.publicdiplomacy.org/) with a wealth of information on our organization and public diplomacy developments. The members-only section offers tools for us to keep in touch with each other and strengthen our relationships.

- ✓ We provide opportunities to amplify the excellent work of our members, e.g., noting a new publication in the Weekly Update, including a syllabus in the academic section of our website, or simply noting significant achievements in our lives.

And more.

Immediate PDCA Past President Sherry Mueller notes: "One of the reasons I donate regularly to PDCA, even though I am a life member, is because the organization represents the values and focuses on the topics to which my whole career has been dedicated. I do not think of it as transactional: Am I getting a return dollar for dollar? Mostly, I think of it as a way to underscore the importance of public diplomacy and to encourage young people to get into the field, whether in the public or private sectors."

So, I ask, is PDCA working for you? We want to know. We don't want to face another round of dropping members from the rolls. We want to be an association that works for its members and advances the effectiveness of our profession, even in a modest way. Don't hesitate to write us with your ideas and reaction at President@publicdiplomacy.org.

Thank you for your membership. Thank you for believing in the importance of public diplomacy. ❧

Joel Fischman

Future Leaders – A Decade of Volunteer Work on Student Exchanges

By Jon Schaffer

Ten years ago, while in Almaty, Kazakhstan, I found myself in the midst of a unique endeavor: picking up high school students destined for a year-long journey in the United States. As I shuttled them to their new chapter abroad, they bombarded me with questions: “Will I see the Grand Canyon?” or “Can I take dance classes in my host school?” Meanwhile, their parents, gripped with concern, sought assurances about their children’s safety from the specter of gun violence in America.

Thus began my decade-long work as a volunteer with the American Councils for International Education. Retiring from my career with the Department of State, I sought an avenue to channel my skills and curiosity for diverse cultures. The American Councils proved to be the perfect fit. I not only participate in evaluating applications from high school students across 22 European and Eurasian countries for the State Department-funded Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX), but I also engage closely with these students and alumni both in the United States and abroad.

From Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Georgia to Romania, North Macedonia, and, most recently, Azerbaijan, I have met with young people who give me hope that the tremendous challenges our world faces will be met with thoughtful, caring, insightful and proactive youth who will strive to advance their own country’s social and economic infrastructure with the skills and understanding they gained while in the United States.

In this journey, I’ve gained

more than just acquaintances; I’ve amassed a legion of new Facebook friends.

“My FLEX experience showed me how capable I am to make changes in this world,” Azerbaijani alumna Nazrin Guliyeva shared in a recent message to me. “The year I spent in the United States taught me how to manage my life, find out my passion, interest, and skills that I wasn’t aware of and build my career around them.”

For Mahabbat Ahmadli, an-

says, provide details on their homelife and extracurricular activities, and get teacher recommendations. We, as evaluators, review the staff interview reports, essays, activities, and recommendations to help find the very best candidates.

Those successful candidates will then spend the next year living in the homes of Americans and attending high schools throughout our country.

“Exchange programs to the

countries. “They (and we) benefit as individuals, and our country gains young people with a bright future who understand it and think of it as home. That relationship is invaluable.”

It’s no exaggeration to say that FLEX alumni emerge as trailblazers and changemakers, founding nonprofits, launching businesses, and assuming roles as educators, lawyers, and even governmental leaders.

Beyond FLEX, American Councils administers programs like the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program fostering a deeper understanding of American society among high schoolers from countries with significant Muslim populations. The Teachers of Critical Languages Program brings educators from China, Egypt, Morocco, and Taiwan to the United States to teach Mandarin or Arabic in U.S. K-12 schools, while the Critical Language Scholarship program offers American college students summer-long immersive language study-abroad experiences in thirteen languages (from Chinese, Korean, and Arabic to Urdu, Russian, and Turkish) crucial to America’s global engagement.

Choate says that volunteers and the expertise they bring are critical to the evaluation process and very fulfilling for these essential workers who gain “a fascinating window in the world of teens – their aspirations, dreams, and realities.”

For those interested in volunteering for the American Councils for International Education, information is available [here](#).²⁴

Jon Schaffer served as Vice President of PDAA; he was a director in IIP at USIA and State.



The author at a luncheon in Baku, Azerbaijan, with three alumni of the FLEX program who are now university students.

other alumna, her exchange year forms an indelible link in the chain of her life. “I’ve learned to cherish the beauty of serving the world,” she says.

Securing a spot in the FLEX program is no small feat. Currently, only about one in 50 students who apply for a FLEX scholarship is accepted. In most FLEX countries, they must pass English exams, undergo interviews with American Councils staff in-country, and participate in a group activity with other applicants. They will write a series of es-

U.S. have an incredible impact on high school students,” Lisa Choate, president and CEO of American Councils told this author. “An exchange year in the U.S. opens their minds, and they see opportunities that they didn’t know existed. They meet Americans, make life-long friends, and think of those people as a second family.”

Choate says that most alumni stay in touch with their host families and friends for decades, creating intensely personal and deeply felt bonds between communities and

Publishing this newsletter taught me plenty

By Alan Kotok

This issue is the last for **PUBLIC DIPLOMACY TODAY**, at least in its printed form.

While I started this newsletter in 2005, I'm not sad to see it go. As someone with the words "editor" or "publisher"

in his title for more than two decades, I know you need to meet readers where they read. And if that's in front of a screen or phone rather than a sheet of paper, so be it.

I hope the readers of *USIAAAA Today*, then *PDAA Today* (now **PUBLIC DIPLOMACY TODAY**) gained some useful

knowledge or insights from each issue. Because, to be honest, I learned quite a bit about the craft and business of publishing on a limited budget from producing this newsletter four times a year for 13 years.

When USIAAAA presidents **Mike Canning** and **Gene Nojek** asked me to take over the newsletter in 2005, it previously reported news and commentary about public diplomacy as well as USIAAAA's activities. We decided to focus the pub-

lication primarily on the organization, particularly its events and members.

So what have I gained from this experience?

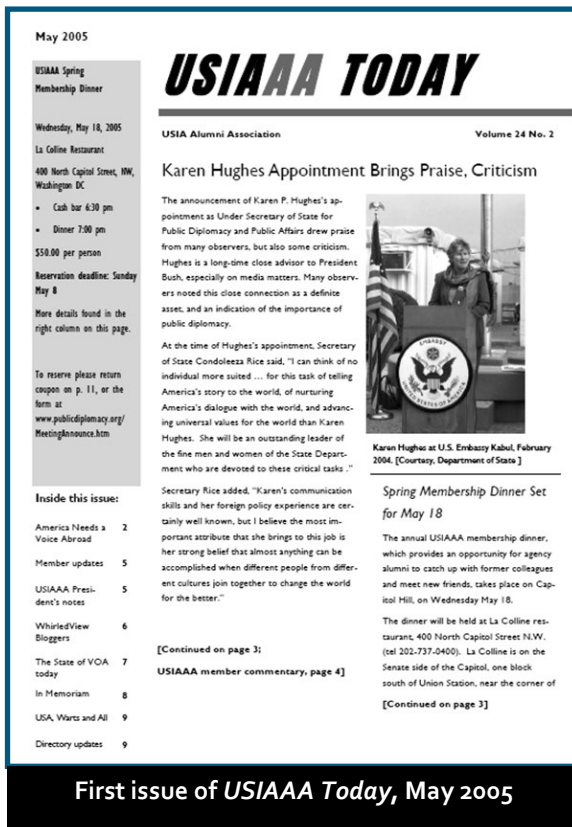
Most important: Publishing is a team effort. That may be a cliché,

but don't believe for a second any one person can produce any publication, electronic or printed. I had the high privilege of working with **Ed Scherr** and **Peg McKay**, total professionals who provided much of

Ed Scherr while I was editor, were the most-read part of the newsletter. And appreciation essays of departed members filled in more details of their lives.

In addition, *USIAAAA/PDAA Today* told how retired public diplomacy professionals pursue the next chapters of their lives. The newsletter featured stories of PD officers becoming artists, writers, educators, and filmmakers, but also clergy, jewelry designers, ski instructors, and grief counselors. What a fascinating and creative group!

I used these lessons in publishing my daily news report on science and business for more than a decade, and since then as photography chair at National Press Club, where I organize the largest photojournalism show in the D.C. area. Where did I learn to put on exhibits? Hang out with public diplomacy pros for any length of time, you're going to learn a lot. **Alan Kotok edited the newsletter from 2005 to 2018. He previously worked at USIA; he was editor/publisher of Science & Enterprise.**



First issue of *USIAAAA Today*, May 2005

the news in a high-quality product each issue. But also, the contributions of USIAAAA's and PDAA's officers and boards over those years was essential to making each issue a reality.

Another lesson: Report on the lives, and that includes deaths, of people in the organization. We learned from reader feedback that obituaries, collected and tightly written by



Editor Alan Kotok, Member News Editor Ed Scherr, and PDAA President Cynthia Efir—May 6, 2018

Advancing US Climate Change, Disinformation, Migration Objectives

(Continued from page 1)

To handle the sprawling public affairs dimension of the COP 28 conference, **Wren Elhai** marshaled a 150-person whole-of-government team that communicated to a worldwide audience U.S. strategy to spur actions limiting global warming and avoiding the worst impacts of climate change.

This multi-dimensional effort included global opinion research and message testing, a consolidated list of journalists covering the conference, centralized press clips, a daily email newsletter that delivered U.S. announcements and calendar events directly to thousands of journalists and civil society observers, a daily delegation press gaggle, and a shared team of photographers and videographers to capture every event.

At the U.S. Consulate General in Ciudad Juarez, **Patricia Muñoz** played a key role devising effective messaging amidst the ongoing migration crisis at the southern border. As the Consulate's senior media advisor and digital marketing strategist, her use of both traditional and digital media to directly counter misinformation to potential migrants, and to offer life-saving information about lawful immigration pathways, impacted U.S. policy and the lives of countless individuals.

Observing that a substantial number of migrants rely on WhatsApp to exchange information both when deciding whether to migrate and while en route, Muñoz launched the State Department's first-ever verified WhatsApp channel, through which timely, accurate information on lawful migration pathways, border security enforcement, and other relevant news is disseminated. The channel has become an effective rapid response tool to counter disinformation from smugglers, criminal organizations, and others who seek to exploit or manipulate migrants.

In 2023 **Embassy Bratislava** marked 30 years of U.S.-Slovak relations with a groundbreaking nationwide showcase of American culture that celebrated the two nations' shared values and history. Equally important, given growing skepticism in Slovakia towards NATO and the liberal democratic model of government, the initiative both countered Russian disinformation and bolstered support for the bilateral relationship and the trans-Atlantic alliance.

To address these challenges, the **embassy public diplomacy team** organized nine 'American Days' throughout the year in various regions, focusing on those with more pronounced anti-Western attitudes. These events showcased U.S. culture

and values by leveraging local partnerships and highlighting U.S. contributions to Slovakia's economic growth and educational opportunities.

While the current generation of South Korean leadership fully understands the importance of a strong relationship with the United States, Embassy Seoul faces the challenge of a generational shift in perceptions and needs to ensure that the successor generation is likewise fully committed to sustaining that alliance in the years ahead. To address this challenge, **Josh Lustig** led a team that created an innovative policy-driven platform to align the next generation of Korean leaders with U.S. national security objectives and elevate these future leaders as vocal supporters.

The American Diplomacy House Academy (ADH Academy) youth network model that Lustig and his team implemented set a new standard for targeted and effective building of influential youth networks. The ADH Academy is a 10-month experience-based learning program that gives university students a hands-on look into the art and practice of diplomacy through foreign policy lectures, diplomacy simulations, community projects, speaking opportunities, and participation in senior leader engage-

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A Few Words about the PDCA Awards

Giving awards is about expressing gratitude for achievements that make a difference. The PDCA Awards program has long been a way of letting those at the cutting edge of public diplomacy know that, even at a distance, their work is recognized and appreciated. This impact is felt at every step of the process, from the nomination, to the selec-

tion of candidates for each region, to the final choice of one in each group.

U.S. public diplomacy takes place throughout the world, including at posts that are dangerous, unhealthy, and hostile. Knowing that people in Washington, including professional colleagues, are aware of and grateful for innovative, effective PD work underway on behalf of

our country lightens the load. The PDCA Awards are force multipliers, powerful and simple ways of saying "thank you" to those who most deserve it.

—**Judith R. Baroody**
Chair, PDAA Awards Committee 2019-
2021

In Memoriam

Ambassador Robert Barry, whose long career often placed him at the center of U.S. Cold War diplomacy, died March 11 at his home in Newton, MA. He was 89. A graduate of Dartmouth University, he served three years in the Navy before joining the Foreign Service in 1962. Barry led the U.S. negotiating team at a 1986 security conference in Stockholm that reached an accord with the Soviet Union on NATO and Warsaw Pact troop inspections, which the United States regarded as important in reducing East-West tensions. During his 33 year career he was ambassador to Bulgaria from 1981 to 1984, and to Indonesia from 1992 to 1995. His domestic assignments included working at the Voice of America twice, leading the USSR division from 1973 to 1974 and later serving as VOA's chief operation officer between 1988 and 1990. In retirement Barry headed the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1998 to 2001.



Jane and Fred Coffey. A Remembrance of Fred Coffey by former PDAA President Robert Chatten is available on the [PDCA website](http://www.pdca.org).

Fred Coffey, a USIA Foreign Service officer, died February 28 in Denton, TX, at age 93. A native of El Paso and a Marine Corps veteran, Coffey earned a B.A. in Economics from the University of Texas-Austin and an M.A. in Economics from Louisiana State University. His overseas assignments with USIA included postings in Brazil, Nicaragua, Thailand, Indonesia,

and Argentina. During rotations back to the United States he directed the Voice of America's Indonesia division and taught courses in diplomacy at the National Defense University. After his 33-year career with USIA, Coffey worked in retirement as an election monitor in 12 nations under the auspices of the Organization of American States and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. He also helped establish the Public Diplomacy Association of America as a successor to the USIA Alumni Association and served as PDAA president.

Eddie Deerfield, a USIA Foreign Service officer, died August 30, 2022, at age 99. During World War II Deerfield served as a B-17 gunner and radio operator, flying 30 combat missions over Europe and surviving a crash into the North Sea, bailing out of a burning aircraft, and a crash landing. Over the course of his USIA career from 1966 to 1988 he held assignments in India, Pakistan, Malawi, Canada, Uganda, and Nigeria. In retirement Deerfield was chairman of the Foreign Service Retirees Association of Florida from 1997 to 1999. In 1996, he was elected president of the 303rd Bomb Group Association and worked as its newsletter editor from 1998 to 2007. He was also editor of the two-volume, 1,300-page anthology, *Hell's Angels Newsletter Silver Anniversary Collection – A World War II Retrospective*, published in 2002, with a third volume in 2007. The books focused on personal narratives of aerial combat on B-17 bombers in the European Theater of Operations during World War II.

Bernard Dowling, a longtime employee of the U.S. Information Agency and State Department, died January 7 at the Falls Run Nursing & Rehabilitation Center in Fredericksburg, VA. He was 85. After military service with the U.S. Army from 1963 to 1967, he embarked on a lengthy career with the federal government. At USIA, Dowling was director of the declassification unit within the Office of the General Consul.

Carl Schultz, a 32-year veteran of USIA, died January 8 at age 84. Following



Jodie Lewinsohn: A remembrance by former PDAA President Michael Schneider is available on the [PDCA website](http://www.pdca.org).

graduation from George Washington University, service in the Marine Corps Reserves, and a short stint at the Department of Labor, Schultz began working at USIA in 1962 with an initial Foreign Service assignment to Colombia. He next served at three posts in Brazil, in Porto Alegre, Brasilia, and Recife. Transitioning in 1975 to the Agency's Washington-based operations, he worked in the Fulbright Office, in the Office of Personnel as a career counselor, and in the Office of the Inspector General as an inspector. After his retirement in 1995, Schultz moved to Harpers Ferry, WV, where he was active in the local chapter of Keep American Beautiful and was on the board of the Jefferson County Public Service District.▀

Obituaries and Remembrances may be submitted to Member News Editor Domenick DiPasquale at editor@publicdiplomacy.org

A reminder that Obituaries and Remembrances are located at <https://www.publicdiplomacy.org/obituaries-and-appreciations.php>

This is the final printed newsletter. We intend to publish Obituaries on a quarterly basis in the PDCA Weekly Update.

America at 250: Engaging Foreign Countries and Allies

By **Judith R. Baroody**

Those of us who remember the festivities and fireworks of the Bicentennial may find it hard to believe that almost 50 years have passed since our celebration of the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. But the 250th anniversary is indeed coming up in July 2026, and public diplomacy will play a major role in the commemoration.

America250 is the official entity charged with planning and orchestrating the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The organization has the goal of “honoring the contributions of individuals who built this country, the innovation that put this country on the map and a man on the moon, and imagining what the next 250 years might look like...” in the words of the Commission’s Chair, former U.S. Treasurer Rosie Rios.

To help with the planning, America250 established six advisory councils. One is America’s International

Partners (AIP), on which I am PDCA’s representative. The others are Arts & Culture, Civics, History, America’s Future, American Innovation, America’s Servicemembers, and America’s Youth.

The focus of AIP, co-chaired by

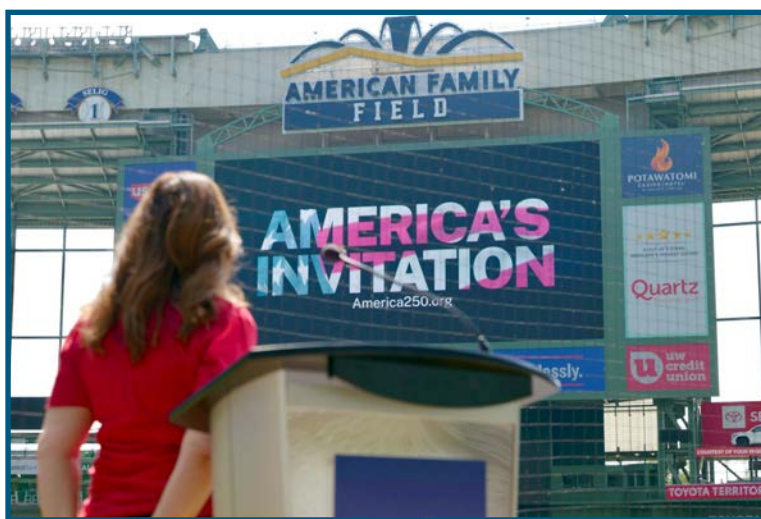
out to foreign governments for political, financial, and military support. AIP hopes to encourage an understanding of the extent to which working with other nations on shared goals is essential to U.S. and global security and prosperity.

America250 is already hard at work planning a monumental commemoration and celebration for every American from sea to shining sea. It kicked off the countdown to 2026 on July 4, 2023, by launching “America’s Invitation”: a call for all Americans to share their stories and reflect on what it means to be American.

I encourage all PDCA members to join in the efforts to commemorate

and celebrate this milestone – starting today. You can share your story by visiting stories.america250.org. I will keep PDCA informed of America250 activities. As July 4, 2026, draws nearer, the intensity of activity will increase.▣

Judith Baroody retired from the Foreign Service; she was a Director of PDAA.



William Courtney, U.S. Ambassador (retired), and Christopher Washington, Provost of Franklin University, is on America250’s engagement efforts covering foreign countries and international allies focused on commemorating the Semiquincentennial.

From its beginning, the U.S. reached

(Continued from page 5)

laborated with Embassy Seoul to host a special youth forum marking the first anniversary of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, with others engaged in raising awareness of the importance of a strong independent press in international reporting.

“The recipients of this year’s awards reflect the importance of America’s public diplomacy activities in the furtherance of our country’s foreign policy objectives. Day in and day out, these diplomats have a real impact on the safety and security of the United States,” according to **Joel Anthony Fischman**, President of PDCA. “We are fortunate to have such an outstanding

group of representatives abroad.”

Since 1993, PDCA and its predecessor organizations have recognized the outstanding work conducted by members of the Foreign Service, Civil Service, Locally Employed Staff (LES), employees of binational centers and American Corners, and EducationUSA advisers. Past recipients of the Award are listed [on our website](#).

PDCA invites its members and friends to make tax-deductible contributions that support the awards program. For more information, contact the Awards Committee at awards@publicdiplomacy.org.▣

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Newsletter E-mail:

editor@publicdiplomacy.org

Other Email addresses:

president@publicdiplomacy.org

members@publicdiplomacy.org

fellow@publicdiplomacy.org

awards@publicdiplomacy.org

treasurer@publicdiplomacy.org

Website:

www.publicdiplomacy.org

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Editor: Michael Korff

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