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GARY WARREN/Monitor

COMPELLING POINT Sig Hecker, renowned scientist and former Los Alamos National Laboratory director, makes a compelling point to Open World Program participants visiting from Russia during a presentation at the Bradbury Museum Friday morning. From left: Yelena Petrova, Sig Hecker, Irina Shcherbinina (standing), Yeva Aleksanina, Olga Udalova and Vera Martynenko.

Russians ladies give and get much

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Four young women slated as future leaders in Russia spent the week in Los Alamos exchanging experiences, expertise and ideas with host families and representatives from area organizations.

Irina Shcherbinina, facilitator for the group is from St. Petersburg - which she enjoys calling the cultural capital of Russia to which program participant Olga Udalova from Moscow enjoys responding

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"no Irina, Moscow is the capital of Russia."

"We spent two days in Washington, D.C., to understand big city life then came to Los Alamos to see with our own eyes how social service works in a small community," Shcherbinina said. "We liked the Family YMCA facility where adults and children can spend quality time together."

One of the ideas the Russian delegates shared with their American counterparts was to ask children to do research on certain topics so they come to realize how important they are and how they can make a difference to others rather than just hang out, Shcherbinina said.

Udalova is director of a kindergarten in Moscow and said she was impressed with the openness of almost every one she met here and that as a result, she understands that Russians and Americans are practically the same.

"We face the same problems, however, Russia finds itself in the early stages of solving these problems and that's why this experience exchange is very useful," Udalova said. "I'll take back home many new ideas including how to more efficiently use playground space and will implement this idea at my school."

Yeva Aleksanina lives near the Los Alamos Sister City of Sarov in Levzhenskiy, Mordovia. She is a student at Ogarev State University majoring in foreign languages and is a coordinator of Charity Associations.

She expressed gratitude to renowned scientist and former Los Alamos National Laboratory director Sig Hecker for meeting with the delegates. "I am very pleased that the man with the world famous name-Dr. Sig Hecker managed to find time to talk to Russian delegates and answer our questions," Aleksanina said.

After meeting with the del-

egates at the Bradbury Museum on Friday, Hecker expressed some of his impressions.

"I was struck by their dedication to youth and education and the fact that they were so pleased to learn from our environment," Hecker said. "My talk on nuclear issues opened their eyes to a different world. One of them said that these subjects aren't talked about openly in Russia and she now understands how important it is to have cooperation between our countries."

The Open World Program/American Councils for International Education sponsored the delegation's trip to America, and the Los Alamos-Sarov Sister Cities Initiative sponsored their Los Alamos visit.

After visiting Los Alamos High School, Aleksanina expressed her enthusiasm about students with disabilities and special needs studying side-by-side with other students. "Thus, they are fully included in the life of the democratic society," Aleksanina said.

"I also was very much impressed with the work of the Juvenile Justice Advisory Board and their work with delinquency issues," she said. "It is obvious that they do their best to make young offenders first get into prevention programs rather than send him or her straight to jail."

Vera Martynenko is from Voronezh Oblast, an area near the Ukraine. She is director of the Voronezh Regional Community Children's Organization. "The organization I deal with in Russia offers students leadership and development programs as part of extra curricular activities," Martynenko said. "But in the United States, I found out that these same programs are conducted during classes. Los Alamos High School students are taught life skills, which will

be useful for them as adults, which include teamwork, conflict management, and tolerance. The theory we teach our Russian students outside of school-the Americans learn during their classes. It is this experience that I'm taking back home and I hope to cooperate and mutually benefit from this exchange with the Americans in the future."

Yelena Petrova lives near St. Petersburg in Novogorod Oblast.

"This trip was informative in at least three ways," Petrova said. "First of all, the work experience we witnessed here, secondly, the knowledge that we shared with our American counterparts, and third, the 'world of another country and its people'. Speaking about myself, the most essential ideas I learned and will certainly implement in my organization are as follows-it is not enough to teach teenagers life skills in theory, but it's necessary to make them practice those skills in real life. The second idea is outreach activities dealing with HIV/AIDS prevention measures, which we learned about in detail at the Southwest C.A.R.E. Center in Santa Fe."

Petrova is program coordinator of an HIV/AIDS prevention program for the Russian Red Cross Society.

Among the many activities experienced by the delegates, they participated in workshops at UNM-LA and The Family Council and visited Ortega Weavers in Chimayo and the San Juan Pueblo.

Lawry Mann is the chair and program coordinator for the Los Alamos-Sarov Sister Cities Initiative and has been bringing Russian groups to Los Alamos for several years.

"Russia has very poor and very rich people and no middle class to speak of," Mann said. "Our visitors noticed the United Way thermometer in front of the post office and I explained what it meant and

about the many people who give in our community and in our country to help others. They were amazed at the philanthropy of our people."

The Open World Leadership Center manages the Open World Program and is an independent federal agency located at the Library of Congress.

Open World builds understanding between the United States and the Russian Federation by enabling a new generation of Russian leaders to experience American democratic and free enterprise practices firsthand and to exchange views with their American counterparts.

The program has given more than 8,800 current and future Russian decision makers an in-depth introduction to American political and civic life.

"Taking young leaders from Russia and bringing them here is such a good idea-it will take a generation or two to realize the significant results," Mann said. "This program is building so much good will and understanding between our countries."

Another thing that Mann said has come out of the program is the network that has developed in Russia between the many program participants.

"These participants come from all over Russia and have never met before," Mann said. "As a result of spending a week together in this program they form relationships that they take back with them."

At 4 a.m. today the visitors said goodbye to their host families including Tim and Carol Neal, Barbara Roybal, Jody Howell, and Alice and Lawry Mann before heading down the hill to begin their long journey home.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Alice Mann contributed to this article.

FUNDS Commissioner takes care of trust land