



Ambassador Stephen Low and his wife admire the rendering of the flag-lined walkway that will lead visitors into the U.S. Diplomacy Center.

Coming Attraction

NEW CENTER WILL TELL THE STORY OF U.S. DIPLOMACY /// **BY PRISCILLA R. LINN**

Imagine a family of tourists visiting the Department of State to explore exhibits and engage in activities focused on the history, practice and challenges of U.S. diplomacy. This scenario will be a reality within the not-too-distant future. To show how, the U.S. Diplomacy Center, is exhibiting a preview of its new home.

The preview exhibit is in the newly renovated second-floor gallery overlooking the 21st Street lobby of Main State.

The new center will be on the first floor of the Harry S Truman Building's northeast corner and financed partly by donations. It will help visitors better understand the role of diplomacy in the 21st century. It also aims to attract talented individuals to diplomatic

careers and cultivate stronger American support for diplomacy.

The center's director, Stephen Estrada, said the center "will bring diplomacy to life and reveal its importance to every citizen it touches. Paying tribute to our diplomats, illuminating U.S. diplomatic history, preparing the next generation of leaders and diplomats—these are the goals."

The Collection

The U.S. Diplomacy Center's collections play an essential role in telling American diplomacy's story. The collection was once just a few lone pieces sitting in a filing cabinet. Today, its 2,500 artifacts fill a 1,500-square-foot storage space and offer a unique learning

experience. Viewing a piece of the Berlin Wall or the blindfold worn by an American hostage in Iran while hearing from the diplomats who experienced these historic events will give visitors a new understanding of diplomacy.

Kathryn Speckart, the center's collections manager, said the center has developed three traveling exhibits since 2002. One, "After 9/11: Messages from the World and Images of Ground Zero", toured eight sites across the country and, she said, "communicated heartfelt sentiments left at U.S. missions worldwide after the attacks."

Another exhibition, "Celebrating the 225th Anniversary of the Great Seal of the United States: Past, Present and Future", recently opened at Harriton House, the Pennsylvania



U.S. Diplomacy Center Curator Priscilla Linn shows the center's director, Stephen Estrada, a part of the exhibit previewing the center's design.

home of Charles Thomson, the designer of the Great Seal. "This exhibit allows us to talk about how the Seal embodies national ideals—independence, strength and unity," said Program Coordinator April Cleary.

Diplomatic Simulations

The U.S. Diplomacy Center, which already creates education programs, is becoming a virtual as well as physical center for learning about diplomacy. Lauren Judith Krizner, the center's education officer, said one of its most important projects is conducting diplomatic simulations with high school and college students. For a role-playing exercise on the Darfur crisis, students represented the governments and organizations involved. After studying background information, they engaged in discussions and tried to find a compromise to bring peace.

"The students are often amazed how hard it is to reach a diplomatic solution," she said.

In February, the Carnegie Corporation of New York awarded the center a \$25,000 grant to support its third annual George C. Marshall Conference on diplomacy, which attracted 250 students and teachers.

The center, through the use of digital technology and Internet delivery systems, will expand its outreach to teachers and students. The center's Web site, <http://diplomacy.state.gov>, introduces visitors to the significant collections, exhibitions and education programs.

Ambassador Stephen Low, Senator Charles "Mac" Mathias and a group of retired diplomats formed the nonprofit Foreign Affairs Museum Council when the center was launched in 2000, and have since raised an initial \$1.25 million in private funds for the first stage of the new center's development. Now, as public awareness of the importance of diplomacy and demand for international education programs grow, the center is launching the next phase of its campaign to raise \$50 million for construction and endowment. The U.S. Diplomacy Center has been actively recruiting volunteer leaders for its capital campaign with the help of former Secretaries of State Henry A. Kissinger, Madeleine K. Albright and James A. Baker III, ambassadors and others.

Preview Under Way

The preview exhibit at the 21st Street entrance features an image of the proposed Allée of Flags along 21st Street, N.W., leading visitors to the center's glass atrium entrance, where they will pass through airport-type security. From there, guides will whisk them behind the scenes of diplomacy through an area called "America Engaged: Around the World with U.S. Diplomacy." There, interactive stations around a giant map will bring to life current events and the work of U.S. diplomats worldwide.

Next, visitors will enter a hall entitled "Diplomacy in Action: a Guide to Diplomatic

History," where exhibitions will recreate the dialogues, challenges and successes of diplomacy and pay tribute to those who played a central role in U.S. diplomacy. Diplomats, either virtually or in person, will recount their experiences, and visitors will explore simulated versions of U.S. embassies, consulates and residences. Visitors will learn the importance of diplomacy to American security and prosperity, how the Bureau of Consular Affairs helps Americans overseas and what life is like for diplomats and their families.

"Advancing Diplomacy: Connecting to the Future," the area housing the center's education institute, will provide classrooms and space for new programs. Using technology, the center's educational materials and programs will bring visitors and thousands of students around the world virtually face-to-face to learn the inner workings of diplomacy.

Building on its accomplishments of the past eight years, the U.S. Diplomacy Center is developing a virtual and actual gathering place for diplomacy education with new exhibits and engaging education programs. Soon the center will become the destination in Washington where diplomacy education thrives. ■

The author is curator of the U.S. Diplomacy Center.