



# Delegation for Friendship Among Women

## Delegation Background

A single idea, embraced and energized by others, carries the potential to change relationships, events and lives. The Delegation for Friendship Among Women thrives today because of the desire of one woman, then others, to understand and communicate about the conditions of, and solutions by, women throughout the world. For nearly 50 years, women from across the United States have advanced the original idea by actively exploring the lives and work of women on six continents, sharing ideas, and offering each other insights and information.

The Delegation's purpose is the promotion of friendship and understanding among women leaders, broadly defined. We are a non-political, non-governmental organization and are committed to cultural appreciation, friendship and peaceful coexistence. Those involved in the Delegation experience are enriched by exploring our differences and our similarities as cultures and individuals.

Since its inception, Delegation participants have visited and talked with women leaders at universities, government, schools, orphanages, hospitals, factories, home projects, farms, new housing developments, businesses, banks, impoverished neighborhoods, homes for the aged and the homeless, district courts, national museums, arts institutions, environmental organizations, and historical sites. Throughout these visits the Delegation receives and shares information on projects and women from other countries that could be helpful to those involved in the work.

The Delegation is distinguished by the diversity of its members, who represent every region of the United States and whose backgrounds include academia, business, healthcare, arts, law, and volunteerism. It is an autonomous, self-funded group that receives briefing and information from the United States Department of State. Delegates have met with women in Albania, American Samoa, Argentina, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Chile, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Guatemala, Hungary, Indonesia, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Java, Kuwait, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, New Zealand, North Korea, Oman, The People's Republic of China, Peru, Poland, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Singapore, South Korea, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Syria, Taiwan, Thailand, Tonga, Venezuela, Vietnam, Yemen and Yugoslavia. Delegates have also participated in international women's conferences. The information and experiences of the Delegates are communicated to civic organizations, study groups, media and other non-profit organizations.

Among the many women in leadership that the Delegation for Friendship Among Women has been privileged to meet are: Valentina Tershkove, the first Russian woman in space; First Lady Jehan Sadat of Egypt; First Lady Suzanne Mubarek of Egypt; First Lady Barbara Bush of the United States; First Lady Patricia Nixon of the United States; Prime Minister Golda Meir of Israel; Princess Ashraf of Iran; First Lady Hafiz al Assad of Syria; Empress Farah Diba of Iran; Her Highness Shaykha Fatima of the United Arab Emirates; Mother Teresa of India; Prime Minister Indira Gandhi of India; Princess Ashi Wangchuck of Bhutan; Princess Badial Al Saud of Kuwait; Mariela Castro of Cuba; Mrs. Oyungerel Tsendendamba, advisor to the Prime Minister of Mongolia; and the First lady of Mongolia, Bolormaa Khajidsuren.

In addition to the dozens of meetings held and friendly communications established, the Delegation occasionally has been able to provide forms of special support: books for village schools in Egypt, sewing machines to village women in India; sponsoring two girls from Albania to finish their educations in the United States; sponsoring a physician from the People's Republic of China to pursue a cardiac surgery specialization in the United States; helping with a project to record music of the hill people of Vietnam; directing an exchange of women from Egypt and from South Africa to come to the United States to examine projects of interest; starting a bank for women in Samoa; hosting visits of women from Bhutan, Egypt and South Africa; exchanging books and information in specific subject areas in many countries.

The initial idea for the Delegation has evolved and grows within the members today. A tribute of thanks goes to the founders and early participants who built an idea into a successful program for others to follow: Margaret McNamara, whose 1963 trip to Japan with her national cabinet member husband produced the idea; Bernice Behrens, whose professional work in hosting international groups for the State of California furthered the idea by creating the first trips to Russia and Eastern Europe; and by the 1965 establishment of the non-profit organization through the efforts of national and state leaders Elly Peterson, Rhoda Lund, Lenora March, Mary Pomeroy and others. The Delegation has benefited from the generous work of many distinguished chairs and thoughtful members, all with breadth and depth of interests that have marked the work of the organization in communicating with and linking women in friendship around the world.