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## Global visit a highlight for Pensacola Women's Alliance

**Taris Savell**  
BellaMagazine.com

One guest compared the event to a United Nation's gathering of "chattering" women and with good reason.

In attendance were some of Northwest Florida's most successful professional women, plus representatives from several countries.

It was an exciting blend of women who, though foreign to each other, established an immediate bond. The compatibility was a result of a desire to learn what the other knew in the area of business or the proper (meaning Southern) way to eat fried chicken gracefully.

The Pensacola Women's Alliance, an organization of professional and business women striving to make a difference for women in the community, was formed in 1982 by Diane Miller and Isabella Grimes and originally was called Networking. The name change brought an affiliation with The International Alliance for Women and a limited membership of 100, with a few spots currently available.

During the organization's May meeting, the group hosted a group of women from 19 countries invited to the United States under the auspices of the State Department.

Officials outlined objectives for the visit:

- To provide examples of entrepreneurial efforts in the United States, particularly those initiated by women.
- To illustrate the essential role of non-governmental and grassroots organizations in supporting and empowering the development of women-owned businesses.
- To highlight the social, economic, and political factors that influence and encourage the development of private enterprise in the United States.

The visiting women represented countries including Algeria, Armenia, Germany, Hungary, Bangladesh, and Morocco.

"Bless the U.S. Department of State for sending the multi-national group of women to our little city and to our luncheon," said hospitality chair, Katheryn Cowles.

"It was a great pleasure to meet and chat with this group that represented a broad spectrum of positions, from CEO of multi-national countries, entrepreneurs, educators and an internationally recognized fashion designer. A striking group of educated, articulate and totally charming women," said Cowles, who was also responsible for the collage of flags that adorned each of the tables.

The entrepreneurship of the women covered a

wide range of professions.

Awa Conateh from Cape Point, The Republic of Gambia, was a fashion designer, interior designer and event planner. Dressed in an outfit that attracted instant attention, she admitted that the fashion styles, both in clothes and interior design, are greatly influenced by the United States look.

"We love American fashions," Conateh said. Her own, Yaws Creations, would definitely be hit in this country.

There was no question as to her hunger to absorb knowledge, and she was quick to admit that her admiration for American businesswomen was "very sincere. I'm here to learn," she said.

Jena Melancon, executive director of Gulf Coast Citizen Diplomacy Council, which sponsored the Women & Entrepreneurship Tour of Pensacola, had only positive comments from the visiting group.

"A common theme was that the ladies wished their national program had included a longer stay in Pensacola. The lunch with the Pensacola Women's Alliance was a highlight, as was their time at Gulf Power Workforce Escarosa, and the Gulf Coast Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship."

Details: [www.pensacolawomensalliance.org](http://www.pensacolawomensalliance.org).

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