



## Seattle Business Women Reach Out to Baltic Colleagues

**F**or two weeks this fall, a group of women business leaders from the Baltics saw the best Seattle has to offer ... from its corporate headquarters to academic halls to local living rooms, as well as the beautiful environs. As guests of the Women's Business Exchange, the 17 leaders from Estonia and Lithuania had such a wide range of adventures, they were hard-pressed to name their most memorable experience.

Was it flinging fish at Pike Place Market at dawn, getting the inside scoop on the Starbucks success story, shopping at Costco, shaking hands with Bill Gates, or just getting to know more about each other's homeland?

"The program was amazing. We saw so many things. It undoubtedly will impact our business and personal life," said Inga Smirnoviene, who works for a public relations firm in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Across Cultures is the name of the program that was the brainchild of WBE's president, Christina Bruning.

Dynamic and indefatigable, Bruning was selected as one of the 21 leaders for the 21st century by Women's eNews for her empowerment of women locally and globally.

This business and cultural exchange among business leaders from the Baltic States and Seattle originated last year to enhance the leadership potential of enterprising executives, managers and entrepreneurs from Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia. The forum was a collaboration with Katrin Sulg, representative of Young Business and Professional Women Association (BPW), Tallinn, Estonia. It was funded, in part, by a grant from the U.S. Department of State and by the Kazickas Family Foundation, the Estonian Business School Executive Training Center and Omnitel, a Lithuanian cellular phone company.

Bruning organized a dizzying schedule of events to focus on four critical areas: human rights, access to information, economic equity and cultural experience. Participants had business

experience in a variety of fields, including retail, information technology, financial services, management, consulting and public relations, and each participant was partnered in Seattle with a mentor that fit her particular business endeavor.

Each day was filled with meetings, site visits and entertainment. The group met with Bruce Nordstrom, toured Boeing, had a briefing with the Small Business Administration, visited the Microsoft Museum, and listened to a panel discussion about world-wide sexual trafficking, followed by a documentary, "The Day My God Died," on the child sex trade from Nepal to India.

The delegation also visited the Dale Chihuly Glass Studio ("We could not believe that glass had so many looks!"), toured Benaroya Hall, Sound Bridge and The Experience Music Project. At the Salmon Hatchery in Issaquah, they were impressed not only with the story of the fish, but also with the notion that volunteers undertook much of the work.

At night, they toured Pioneer Square, watched wide-eyed the antics of the cast at Teatro ZinZanni, took in the breath-taking view of downtown at night from a boat, and delighted in a nine-course meal at The Herbfarm.

Seattle's ties to the Baltic run deep with nearly a thousand residents who claim Baltic heritage and the only Baltic Studies program in the U.S. at the University of Washington. Several of the Across Cultures events were hosted by local Baltic groups and helped bring understanding between those groups. The Lithuanian and Estonian women who came to Seattle also found that the Across Cultures program helped them learn more about each other's native country.

"We became good friends with the Lithuanian women and hope the best for further cooperation," said Pille Ruul,

who works for a training and consulting firm in Saku, Estonia. "Think of it... we needed to go to Seattle to know more about our Baltic neighbors!"

"The distance between countries, nations and individuals disappeared at least for a moment. It brought a great inspiration: I can do more, we can do more. It put me already into action - I am making difference!" added Aida Zigmantaviciene, the CEO of a garment manufacturing firm that is one of the largest woman-led employers in Lithuania.

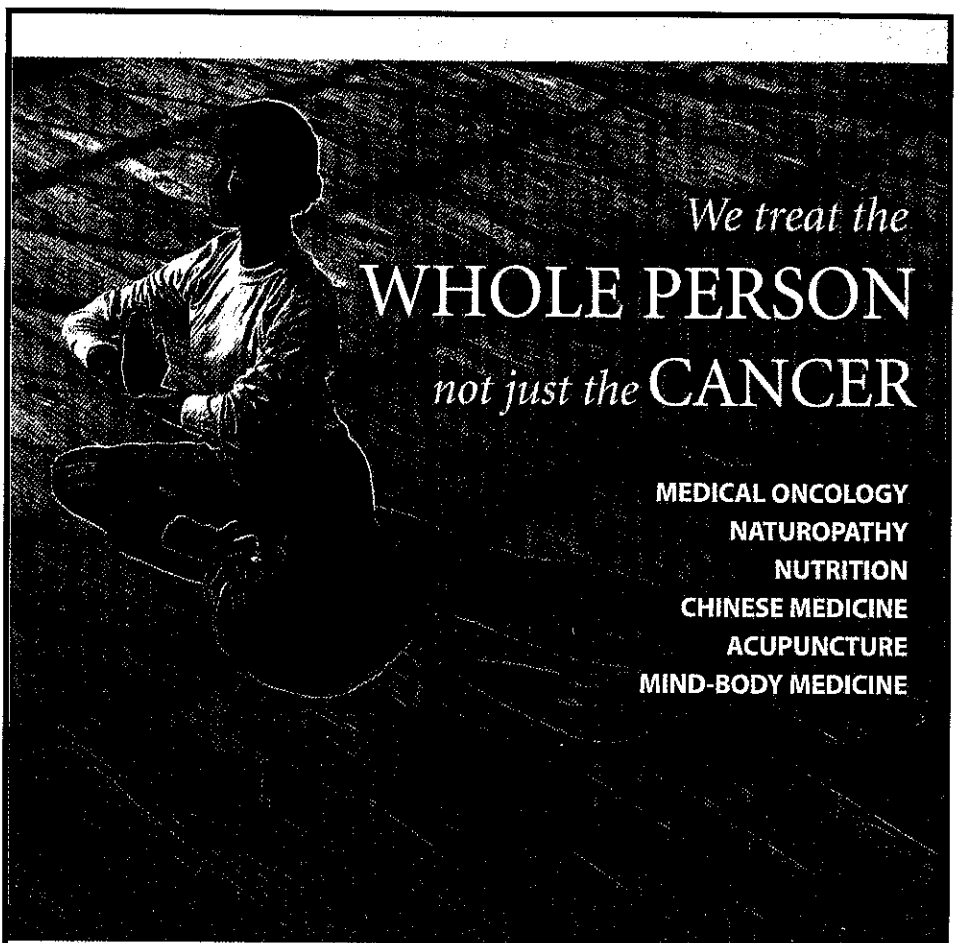
Bruning is planning to expand Across Cultures with a trip to the Baltics for American businesswomen in 2005. For more information, visit [www.across-cultures.org](http://www.across-cultures.org).

## RxHelp for Washington's Low-Income Residents

**L**ocal and statewide health organizations and agencies hail a new statewide prescription drug clearinghouse, RxHelp for Washington, which helps Washington residents gain easier access to free and discounted prescription drugs.

The innovative program will help thousands in the state of Washington who need assistance paying for prescription drugs. More than 1,800 different medications are available for free or at greatly reduced prices for qualified applicants, and the clearinghouse is designed to help link people to the programs that provide prescription drugs.

Washington residents can visit [www.rxhelpforwa.org](http://www.rxhelpforwa.org) or call 1-877-923-6779 to find out about the wide



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