



## **Illinois REALTORS® Show that Cross-Cultural Business Savvy Matters—June 2013**

As industries across the board are ‘going global,’ the Illinois Association of REALTORS® (IAR) knows that real estate is no different. IAR doesn’t just recognize such trends, it helps its members stay ahead of them.

For the past four years, the 41,000-member association has been using \$5,000 Diversity Grants from the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® to help host a series of Multicultural Summits, equipping its members with an introduction to doing business in the global market, as well as a better understanding of cultural diversity, and serving international clients within their own local markets.

Sharon Gorrell, IAR’s Housing Policy Advisor, explains that the Multicultural Summit series came about when the association was looking for a way to link the efforts of two separate committees addressing cultural diversity and international development. “We realized that by focusing on different areas of the globe, we could serve members who were looking to operate in foreign markets, as well as those who wanted to expand business in their own communities by reaching out to an international and ethnic clientele.”

In 2010, IAR’s first Multicultural Summit was all about Latin America, in partnership with the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals (NAHREP); the second focused on Asia, with the participation of the Asian Real Estate Association of America (AREAA); and last year’s conference treated issues in Russia and Europe.

On April 26 of this year, IAR hosted the final summit in the series, this one featuring South Africa and the Caribbean. Julius Cartwright, President of the National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREP), the nation’s oldest minority trade group, gave the keynote speech, “Global is the New Local.” In it he emphasized that today’s real estate professionals would have to work beyond their own ethnicities in order to remain relevant.

The second keynote presentation was by Mary Carmen Madrid-Crost, an attorney who discussed legal requirements for foreign investors in U.S. real estate markets. They were followed by presentations by three dedicated IAR members, each with expertise in the overseas area of focus: Maria Davies on investing in real estate in Grenada; Christine Klein, who lives in Jamaica, on the real estate industry there; and Ahmed Badat, a native of South Africa. Donnadelliah Maluleke, Economic Counsel for South Africa’s Midwest Consulate in Chicago, delivered an insightful presentation on her country’s economic growth. The half-day program in Oakbrook, Illinois, outside Chicago, was followed by a networking reception.

At this point, IAR has nearly covered the globe with its series of summits, each one featuring different speakers and format and each with a unique focus. Given that the events were stand-alone yet tangential to each other, some members came year after year with average attendance of over a hundred professionals, including commercial and residential. “We have some really international-minded members, who came to each summit,” says Gorrell, “While some are interested in doing business abroad most



members want to understand and equip themselves to cater to the different cultures that are doing business right here in Illinois.”

Gorrell says the international summits also have sparked member interest in serving on the association’s Business Diversity Committee and in being a part of discussions about cultural awareness in the real estate industry.

IAR is already brainstorming ways to maintain its multicultural momentum, in partnership with NAR. “What we’re showing our members,” says Gorrell, “is that cross-cultural business savvy *matters*, and our association has the ability and wherewithal to develop their resources.”

*For more information about the Multicultural Summits produced by the Illinois Association of REALTORS<sup>®</sup>, contact IAR Housing Policy Advisor Sharon Gorrell at [sgorrell@iar.org](mailto:sgorrell@iar.org) or 630.399.5330.*



Illinois REALTORS<sup>®</sup> who participated in the latest summit, pause for a photo:  
Fernanda Perl – of Arlington Heights, born in Brazil and moved to the U.S. in 1991; Anthony Cvek -- of DeKalb and serves on DeKalb County Board; Christopher Mitchell - of O'Fallon and serves as 2013 Illinois YPN Chair; Marki Lemons-Ryhal – an NAR trainer and speaker on social media and distressed property sales; and Sarah Ware – who serves on the Chicago Association’s Board of Directors.