

**Remarks for Ambassador, Koalicja Prezesów presentation at Żeromski High School**

Dzień dobry! Dziękuję pani Justynie. Dziękuję pani dyrektor za zaproszenie. Jestem też wdzięczny Akademii Rozwoju Filantropii w Polsce za zorganizowanie Koalicji Prezesów. I przede wszystkim dziękuję uczniom [*indicate students who gave presentation*] za doskonałą prezentację na temat doświadczeń zdobytych w Stanach Zjednoczonych. Ogromnie się cieszę, że tak bardzo skorzystaliście z wyjazdu do Ameryki.

[Hello, everyone. Pani Justyna, thank you for the introduction. I'd also like to thank Director Anna Szczepanska-Filipp for hosting me today, and the Akademia Rozwoju Filantropii w Polsce for organizing the Koalicja Prezesów. I'd also like to thank you [indicate students who gave presentation] for your excellent presentation about your experience in the United States. I'm happy to hear that you learned so much and that you got so much out of your experience in America.]

It doesn't surprise me at all that you had the opportunity to get involved in extra-curricular activities and volunteerism. In the United States, volunteering is just something we do, it's in our blood. Anyone want to guess how many Americans volunteer per year? More than sixty million. And does anyone want to guess how many hours they volunteer? More than eight billion. That's a big number.

At the Embassy here in Poland, we try to keep that volunteer spirit going. Next month I'll be heading down to southern Poland for Earth Day, where I'll be joining the mayor of Zakopane for a volunteer project to clean up trails in Tatras National Park. We've had diplomats speak about volunteerism and organize volunteer projects throughout Poland.

Last summer, a U.S. naval ship stopped in Gdynia, where the sailors volunteered with local students to refurbish a building for Gdynia's Social Assistance Center. Last fall, we sent a diplomat down to Lublin to talk to students and NGOs at a conference organized by the Polish-American Freedom Foundation and the Foundation for the Development of Volunteerism. And this winter we sent a diplomat to a high school in Chełm for a celebration to commemorate the Peace Corps.

And of course you've probably heard about the Peace Corps, which was in Poland in the 1990s. During those years, more than 900 Americans came to volunteer in Poland; more than 400,000 Poles benefited from their work, especially English-language classes. In that high school in Chełm, for example, three Americans taught English there in the 1990s.

And even though it's been more than a decade since Peace Corps left Poland, its effect on that school and that community was so strong, that they still remember it to this day.

Hard to find a better example of combining education and volunteerism than the Peace Corps in Poland. But I do have examples of my own from back in my student days.

It's all part of the bigger tradition of volunteerism as an American value. And I'm happy to say that this tradition not only lives on – as some of you say with your own eyes in the United States – it's changing, adapting, and innovating. That's where the Koalicja Prezesów and corporate social responsibility comes in.

It's really a simple idea. Businesses and companies can make the world a better place while making money at the same time. Just ten years ago, lots of people in the business community in the United States thought this idea was a joke. "Businesses exist to make money, and that's it!" they said. But thanks to the work of many American businessmen and activists, this is an idea that almost all major companies take seriously now.

The Embassy certainly takes this idea seriously, and we're doing what we can to promote it here in Poland. Last year, for example, we helped bring Paul Herman to Poland, who is a businessman himself and an expert in corporate social responsibility. He's developed a whole system – with hard numbers, and real financial data – that shows how businesses can make money and improve society at the same time.

During his time in Poland, he spoke to CEOs and businessmen in Warsaw, Krakow, and Zakopane, sharing the simple idea that companies can do good things and good business at the same time.

It's the exact same idea that groups like Koalicja Prezesów are trying to support here in Poland, and I'm proud to be a part of those efforts.

Of course, I don't lead a company myself. But coming from the United States, where volunteerism really is a way of life and where many of the pioneers of corporate social responsibility call home, I was excited at the opportunity to join the Prezesi. And I'm just as excited to hear from you. So whether it's a question about volunteerism or extra-curricular activities or something else entirely, I'd be happy to answer.

Czy są jakieś pytania? /Are there any questions?

Zachęcam wszystkich do wolontariatu! /[I encourage all of you to  
volunteer.]