

**For Immediate Release**  
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### **Honorary Consulate of Lithuania Opens in Vermont**

Kerry Secrest of Brattleboro, Vermont has been appointed Honorary Consul of the Republic of Lithuania to the State of Vermont. "I am honored to be appointed to this position," said Secrest. "Lithuania has always been a big part of my life, and I am looking forward to helping serve as a bridge between these two parts of the world that I love."

His Excellency Zygimantas Pavilionis, Ambassador of Lithuania to the United States, and Vaidotas Asmonas, Attaché for Agriculture and Commerce, are coming to Brattleboro for the opening of the Honorary Consulate on June 6<sup>th</sup>. They look forward to building relationships and learning more about Vermont during the events of the Strolling of the Heifers, Brattleboro's popular celebration of local agriculture. "Ms. Secrest is a dynamic individual with a lot of energy and enthusiasm for Lithuania and Vermont. We are thrilled she has accepted this appointment. We look forward to deepening bilateral cooperation of the United States and Lithuania in the areas of economic, cultural, educational and scientific affairs."

Lithuania is a growing and promising market for American business in many areas, including agriculture. As a member of the European Union and NATO, the country has a stable political environment, strong ties with the United States, and a modern economy with a well-educated workforce.

"The Lithuanian officials I've been speaking with are very interested in Vermont's local food movement and socially responsible businesses, where Vermont is really at the forefront. That's why we chose to have the opening of the Consulate coincide with the Strolling of the Heifers weekend and the Slow Living Summit," said Secrest.

Through her company, Watershed Coaching, Kerry works as a leadership coach for individuals and organizations, focusing on executive coaching, leadership training, team coaching and women's leadership. She recently lectured on leadership development at the Baltic Management Institute, a premier executive education institution in Eastern Europe. "I am fortunate to know a lot of people in Lithuania in a number of sectors, and hope to be able to leverage those relationship to facilitate economic and cultural opportunities for both Lithuania and Vermont."

Lithuania, northeast of Poland on the Baltic Sea, has a population of 3 million in a largely rural country of lakes and forest about the size of Vermont. "Lithuania is situated at the geographic center of Europe. It could serve as a great connection to Europe for Vermont exports, and a gateway in particular to Eastern Europe for Vermont businesses. And because it's a small country, it can be easier to access the right people to get things done quickly."

Secrest hopes to build connections in the arts as well. She says, "We're looking at holding an art show at the Brattleboro Museum Art Center featuring Lithuanian graphic artist Joana Plikionyte- Bruziene. I also hope to present films such as "The Other Dream Team," an inspirational documentary of the 1992 Lithuania national basketball team and their journey from communism to the Summer Olympics in Barcelona. It was a favorite at the Sundance Film Festival in 2012."

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Kerry is a fourth-generation Lithuanian-American who grew up with some of the cultural traditions from the country. Every summer she traveled from her home in Connecticut to be a camper and later a counselor at Camp Neringa in Marlboro, Vermont, a camp founded in the 1960s to preserve the Lithuanian heritage and culture through the period of Soviet occupation that started after World War II.

Her first trip to Lithuania was during college, when she traveled there briefly on an international student exchange. After graduating from Villanova University in 1991, she lived for two years in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, learning the language and teaching English at Vilnius University and the Lithuanian Teachers Institute. "I was also a regular on the biggest radio show in the country, where I would do a short daily piece reading the news in English."

"It was an exciting time to be in the country," said Secret. "When I arrived, it was occupied by the Soviets, and I remember the tanks going down the streets. People united around the independence movement, and I was there when Lithuania got independence and the crowds were toppling the Lenin statues. When I left in 1993, the Soviets had pulled out, and the country was independent for the first time since 1940."

Upon her return to the United States, Kerry joined the new Lithuanian Embassy in Washington, D.C. as the Advisor for Educational and Cultural Affairs. When she left four years later to obtain a graduate degree at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, the President of Lithuania granted her citizenship in appreciation of her contributions to the country. After working several years in Washington, D.C. for the American Red Cross, she moved to Brattleboro in 2003 with her family.

For more information contact Kerry Secret, Honorary Consul, at (802) 451-0842.

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