

# Iraqi delegation soaks up U.S. life

4-15-05  
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*Government and business leaders wrap up their tour of the metro area as part of Partners for Peace.*

**By Annette Espinoza**  
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The first Americans whom Mohammed Jasiim M.K. Al Rubai laid eyes on were on television and in movies.

Now a council member from the Karada district of Baghdad, Iraq, Al Rubai made his first trip to the United States two weeks ago, with Denver the first U.S. city he has visited.

"We met the American people in their houses, their schools and in their streets," Al Rubai said Thursday.

Al Rubai is one of 18 Iraqis who visited the state. They are Baghdad and provincial council members as well as nonprofit, university and business officials who participated in Partners for Peace, a professional and cultural exchange program sponsored by the Denver Regional Council of Governments.

The idea to bring community leaders from Iraq originated almost a year ago, when former Glendale Mayor and Army reservist Joe Rice served as a lieutenant colonel in Baghdad. He

was assigned to work at the Baghdad City Council.

"You get personally invested," Rice said.

During the delegation's two-week stay, which began April 7, the group observed city council and legislative sessions and visited Arapahoe High School, where students have collected school supplies for Iraqi children.

They went to Metro Waste Water to see sewage facilities, and they took a class at the University of Denver to learn how to set up and run nonprofits.

"We are in need of important institutions," said Nasreen Hayder Kader, a Sunni Kurd councilwoman from the Rashid district of Baghdad.

Other trips included Volunteers of America, where they checked out the Meals on Wheels program, and Mile High United Way.

The group also had dinner with local families and Lt. Gov. Jane Norton on Thursday. Some got to visit a ranch in Summit County and the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs.

"It's amazing — everything here has a story," Kader said.

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