

Retirement of Maggie Nicholson – Fulbright Commission

June 16, 2012

Ambassador Howard Gutman

It is an honor and privilege to be here today with all of you. To be here to share in a day of celebration.

Today is first a celebration of all of you. A celebration of the new Fulbright Director Erica Lutes. A celebration of Patrick Kelley and the wonderful Board of Directors. A celebration of this amazing Alumni Association – we think it is the oldest in Europe and we know it is the most robust.

You are all bridge builders. You have worked and continue to work to link our two wonderful countries together. You have built the bridge with your efforts and your ability.

You have spawned dozens of ambassadors. Indeed, there is no greater ambassador for the Belgian-American relationship than a student who grew up in one country, and brings his or her warmth, culture and background to the other. Who brings so much and gets so much back.

There are no stronger cables in the bridge of our partnership. No more buoyant pontoons on which the bridge shall float than International Educational Exchange programs.

I see the products of your efforts all the time. I see them in Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers, leading business people. As we first get introduced, they say the magic words: "I studied in your country." The link of international student exchange is like a secret handshake or a wink and a nod. It means we share much, that we understand each other, that we can work together. So thanks to all of you.

And today is foremost a celebration of dear Maggie. Maggie is retiring after 30 years of service. But today there is no sorrow. How could we feel any sorrow in celebrating a career of giving; a career that is synonymous with Fulbright.

Thirty years.

It will be difficult to imagine Fulbright without Maggie. It will be difficult to imagine Maggie without Fulbright.

But they each part richer, so much richer for their time together. And thus there is no sadness in the process. You see, the greatest legacy any one of us could have is building tomorrows for generations to come.

Maggie has built those tomorrows. For so many generations to come. And for that, they and we will always be grateful.

Thanks so much and all the best.