

LOOKING BACK | MAYOR'S OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

# Director hopes to grow city's global networking

By ANN MARIE SHAMBAUGH  
ashambaugh@neighborsgo.com

One of the last things former Mayor Gary Slagel did before retiring from office was create the Mayor's Office of International Business, which he announced at his state of the city address in January.



Michael Skelton

Six months later, the office and other planned international initiatives took a huge step forward when the Richardson Economic Development Partnership hired Michael Skelton as the director of the Mayor's Office of International Business.

Since starting the job, Skelton has been busy creating programs and infrastructure to help make it easy for international companies to open a facility in Richardson.

He's assembled an ambassadors program of local business leaders who travel abroad to promote the city and set up a concierge program to provide resources for international companies who do busi-



Photo submitted by MICHAEL SKELTON

**Michael Skelton** (back row right) watches as Richardson mayor Bob Townsend presents an Honorary Citizen for a Day certificate to Zhang Qinghong, magistrate of Changsha County in China. The magistrate headed a delegation of six governmental and business leaders that visited UT Dallas and Richardson City Hall on Nov. 14.

ness in Richardson.

"Getting all this infrastructure in place right now is a critical part of being a proactive program," Skelton said.

The new director is also lining up resources for Richardson-based businesses that wish to expand globally. He expects to

offer several programs through a revamped website, [telecomcorridor.com](http://telecomcorridor.com) under the "International" tab.

Skelton said he hasn't seen any new international business move to Richardson during his tenure, although he has been in discussions with companies from Germa-

ny, China and France. A couple foreign-owned companies have returned to Richardson in recent months, he said, such as Ericsson.

The International Business Advisory Council, a group of 12 people with international business knowledge and connections, is helping Skelton pursue the city's goals of business growth.

He expects the council to grow as Richardson's impact is felt in new corners of the globe.

Skelton, a longtime member of the Metroplex Technology Business Council, said he's greatly enjoyed his time in Richardson, a city he believes has the correct infrastructure, educational systems and technology companies to continue to draw international business.

"There's never enough hours in the day, but I think we're making progress," he said. "... We're on the right track. It's just a matter of getting a few successes under our belt."

*Ann Marie Shambaugh is editor of the Richardson/Lake Highlands/Far North Dallas edition of neighborsgo.*