



The 2014 Award was presented to Hourvash Pourkian (left) at the WCI International Conference in Hamburg, Germany by Steve Dimmers and Caroline Adair Dimmers, son and daughter of founder Marian Adair.

### *Hourvash Pourkian's Cultural Bridges. . .*

**Ms. Hourvash Pourkian truly embodies WCI's mission of Friendship through Understanding and Understanding through Education and Friendship. She believes in connecting people by breaking barriers and building bridges.**

**Born in Teheran, she migrated to Germany with her family in 1975. After earning a degree in Business Administration in Hamburg, she lived and studied in Boston and London. Back in Hamburg, she worked for a textile company, and a few years later, she started her own clothing company. As one of Hamburg's few successful women entrepreneurs from a migrant background, she became a visible voice in the fight for equality and better opportunities for immigrant women and their children.**

**In 2001, an opportunity arose which became pivotal in Hourvash's life. She became an advisor for the Equal Opportunity program under the leadership of Ole von Beust, later to become the Mayor of Hamburg. As Hourvash's involvement in local politics grew, so did her commitment to issues of integration. A year later, she was appointed to the Integration Council in Hamburg's Senate. Inspired by her political work, she launched the *Kulturbrücke Hamburg e.V.* (Cultural Bridge, Hamburg), a non-profit organization linking different migrant groups to the majority of the Hamburg population.**

**In 2004, Hourvash started hosting a local TV show based on the principles of her organization. The show was named *Kulturbrücke TV* (Cultural Bridge TV). In every show, she "built bridges" between the 180 different nationalities living in Hamburg, discussing their cultural similarities and making the public aware, curious, and interested in the cultural diversity of the communities they lived in. Through the media, Hourvash was able to successfully educate and inform her viewers about the importance of providing more social rights and economic opportunities for immigrants, especially women.**

When the show ended after nine years, Hourvash was more dedicated than ever. She started a social project named *Switch in 4 Tagen um die Welt* (Switch in 4 Days around the World). The project, which involved children and youths ages 8 to 14, involved young people meeting each other for four consecutive days to learn about each other's daily routines. The purpose was to experience and understand each other's customs and traditions, with the hope of eliminating some of the misunderstanding or misconceptions they may have. This program and others that followed became a great success. Eventually, in 2012, Hourvash earned a prestigious award for her social services, presented to her by Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel in person.

In all, Hourvash's vision is simple and straightforward, yet effective. She believes that immigrants should be integrated with equal rights and economic opportunities. One way to achieve equality is by bringing different people together so they can better understand each other. In spite of their differences, all individuals are united by the same aspiration— to live respectful, successful, and peaceful lives. With the growing number of immigrants in the world today, Hourvash's message and mission are more important than ever!