



U.S. Embassy Ashgabat • Quarterly Newsletter • Summer 2008

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Are you a trailblazer?

I hope that you've been watching Turkmen State TV lately or reading *Neutralniy Turkmenistan*. "Why on earth," you might wonder, "would an American diplomat encourage you to follow Turkmen State news media?" In fact, there are several reasons. For one, there's more coverage of the U.S. Embassy, what we're doing, and also about some of our alumni. In fact, between June 1 and mid-July there were no less than 27 accurate and favorable articles or broadcasts about the U.S. Embassy or U.S. programs in state news media. For the same period of time in 2006, there was only one story about the U.S. and that one wasn't accurate. What a difference two years can make! Another reason that it's worth following state news media is that you can see the slowly expanding range of topics and themes, including coverage of this year's



Andrew Paul, PAO, U.S. Embassy Ashgabat

Alumni Reunion and the Fulbright Conference. Hopefully this trend will continue. You might also see the joint production by the embassy and the Ministry of Culture: a TV program for learning English on Yashlyk Channel (Wednesdays at 5:30 pm and Sundays at 11:30 am). And finally, you might

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Alumni Success Story



Oleg Ponyatov, Gastroenterologist, Fulbright Alumnus, 2006 – 2007.

In July of this year, Oleg Ponyatov returned from the

USA with another award – the World Association of Gastroenterologists awarded him the Cook Medical Don Wilson Award.

We also learned that he demonstrated heroism during this trip which was publicized in American newspapers.

One day, while he was surfing, he spotted a drowning girl, around 12-13 years old. Her sister, stranded help-

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Alumni Reunion

From 16-18 May, over seventy alumni of USG sponsored UGRAD, Muskie, FLEX, TASP and JFDP from all regions of Turkmenistan were invited to the Nebitchi Hotel in Ashgabat to participate in the "Reaching Out Through Community" Project. The official part of the alumni reunion was broken into three sections, each involving presentations and discussions on a specific topic. These included "Developing Career

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Are you a trailblazer?

By Andrew B. Paul, PAO, U.S. Embassy Ashgabat
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have seen on TV that our recent Independence Day celebrations for July 4th had a theme celebrating the spirit of the American West. The TV coverage included our Native American cultural performers, the “Red Ryder” cowboy, and U.S. Air Force band which performed together with several Turkmen military musical groups. It was amazing to see U.S. and Turkmen military musicians playing music together and visibly enjoying it.



We chose the Western theme for many reasons. The most important is because the American West represents the spirit of the frontier, of overcoming exciting new challenges. As many of you know, a large part of the U.S. history is the story of exploration and settlement of the West. Two hundred years ago, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark led the first American overland expedition to the Pacific coast and back. Their diaries produced a large body of literature about the West and blazed for others to follow their path. But someone had to be first. Someone had to lead the way and face the challenges for the first time. These were the trailblazers like Lewis and Clark.

This is an exciting time to be an alumni of U.S. Government programs. It is time of reform. We stand at a new frontier in Turkmenistan’s history. This frontier to the future needs trailblazers who will make possible

the development of the entire country in a variety of fields. In the span of a year, we’ve seen unbelievable progress in this country. After all, who could have predicted that an American Air Force band would perform alongside Turkmen military musicians playing Turkmen songs and Frank Sinatra tunes? That’s just one colorful example, but every day brings exciting changes and surprises. You, the trailblazers, are a part of that. People, especially young people, are brimming with a new enthusiasm and optimism for the future. The alumni of our programs are some of the most proactive leaders in

Central Asia. You were selected for exchange programs because of your intelligence, potential, and personal qualities.

You’ve taken the skills you learned abroad and applied them to your own lives back home through community initiative programs and entrepreneurship.

You’ve also distinguished yourselves internationally in diverse fields such as medicine and music. You have won awards in gastroenterology, held international conferences on global ecology, and participated in legal and structural reform in Turkmenistan. You also shared your history and culture with thousands of people and helped your fellow citizens better understand the United States.

So alumni friends, I hope you don’t just take a look at what’s on the state news media, these days. I hope that you also see a role for yourself as a trailblazer. It’s the time of excellent opportunities to work as partners with the government of Turkmenistan and help shape reform and the path to international standards. You are the Lewises and Clarks of modern Turkmenistan.

Alumni Association in Turkmenistan seems to become legal

Cooperation of alumni of US exchange programs became stronger. On the constituent assembly of alumni association held on June 8, 2008, Turkmen alumni decided to create the Alumni Association of Ashgabat city alumni.

In Turkmenistan there are almost 2,000 graduates of US exchange programs. They live in different parts of the country and do great things for the development of our society. In the opinion of Alumni Association founders, alumni could impact reforms in Turkmenistan and contribute to making the country stronger.

This Alumni Association would be very useful for uniting alumni and establishing many common projects in different fields. Now, alumni see the goal in sight. All required papers were submitted to the Ministry of Justice to obtain legal registration; and alumni hope that this time their effort, will be successful.

Founders called the Association “Yelken”, which means “Sail”, hoping that the Association will catch this wind of change to help them go full sail.

Alumni Reunion 2008 in Turkmenistan

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Opportunities”, which was moderated by Sahyt Tachev (TASP alumnus), “Developing Community Services Sector” moderated by Dayanch Hojageldiyev (UGRAD alumnus) and “Development of Education System” moderated by Guncha Komekova, Alumni Coordinator of PAS, American Embassy. Each section lasted half a day and a rotation system was set up that allowed each par-



ticipant to attend every session. The only downside to this approach was that each presenter had to conduct the presentation three times, though this could only serve to improve their presentation skills.

May 17th began with a breakfast for the regional alumni staying at the hotel. Mr. A. Paul, Public Affairs officer of the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy, opened the official part of the Alumni Reunion after introducing the agenda to the participants. Next, Munira Akilova, JFDP alumnae and professor of Khjand Branch of Technological University of Tajikistan shared her experience of international exchange programs and discussed the results and advantages gained from the participation in international exchange programs.

After that, alumni broke into three groups. The first, named the “Career Section”, began with a presentation entitled “Work Search” by Irina Abasova and Wepa Nurnazarov. Since it was the opening presentation of the section, it started with alumni introducing themselves. Here, alumni got to share their work search skills. Since it is often difficult for alumni returning

from abroad to find jobs, this presentation was intended to facilitate the process. At the end of the presentation each participant received a list of international companies and organizations operating in Turkmenistan with contact details .

Next, we had “Interview Tips and Resume Writing” by Irina Tabakova and Anna Titova. In the scope of forty minutes, all major aspects of the topic were discussed. Besides the presenters lecturing, many alumni shared their professional experience in this sphere and helped each other. After a coffee break, the participants had twenty minutes to relax and chat with their fellow alumni. After the break, the “Career Section” continued with a presentation on “Social Entrepreneurship” by Gulnar Toyjanova and Firusa Babayeva. This totally new concept of entrepreneurship for alumni in Turkmenistan was greeted with a lot of interest. The last hour of the sections was intended to have more of a relaxed tone and fun, coming after a series of formal presentations. Thus, the “Career Section” ended up with a “Talk Show”. We wanted to invite an alumnus/alumnae who had a lot of professional experience and something interesting to talk about, so the guest we picked up was Wepa Malikgulyev, FLEX’98, who works as a Press and Public Officer at the British Embassy. The talk show varied greatly in its content and discussion with each group as alumni forming each group varied in age and life experience. It was a very interesting and enjoyable session

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particularly because participants discussed deeper aspects of professional life.

Alumni gathered in the banquet hall for lunch; Afterwards, the groups switched sections and the presentations continued. The “Community Services” section began with a presentation entitled “Community Services Development in The USA and Sharing Experience” by Leyla Atayeva and Diana Charyeva. It was followed by a presentation of “Best Projects in The Community Services Sector” by Sultanova E., Shamuratova En. , Kerimova L. and Nokerova B. The main purpose of the first two presentations was to share and network, discuss the projects done in the past and brainstorm on future projects. This provided the background for discussion during the coffee



tween the disco, swimming pool or just taking a walk outside. At nine o'clock a bus pulled up to the entrance of the hotel and gave all city-dwelling alumni a ride home.

The next morning began with a plenary session where a special guest from USA, Professor and Economics Faculty Dean of Chadron State College of Nebraska Garry White, presented on the topic of “Scholar-ship and Student Exchange Opportunities for Foreign Students”. A big thanks goes out to Guncha Komekova, who put enormous effort into having him as a guest at our Alumni Reunion. As the title of the presentation suggests, Garry White presented the new scholarship program created at the Chadron State College specifically for students from Turkmenistan.



break that followed. After the break, there was a slightly different presentation. Novruzova T.'s “Projects in The Society of Blind and Deaf” was something new for a lot of people. This was followed by some games, led by Mustafaeva A. The group got to know each other better and relax a bit before another serious presentation. The next topic of discussion was “Money vs. Community Services” by Atayeva L. The section came to an end with another round of games by Mustafaeva A. before everyone joined together in the banquet hall for dinner.

The dinner marked the end of the official part on Saturday. Then alumni were free to interact with each other and enjoy their time with fellow alumni at the swimming pool outdoors.

At eight o'clock, Rumiya Kaptsova played the guitar and sang, with the alumni joined in while many alumni joined. The live music was followed with disco music. The alumni could choose be-

The scholarship doesn't cover full tuition fees but gives a discount on the level of a local Nebraska state student. This means a Turkmen student doesn't pay the international student's fee; nor out of state tuition for U.S citizens:he/she has only to pay the same as that of a Nebraska student. The plenary session ended and the alumni once again broke into groups and were led to designated sections. The final section for the first group was the “education section”. Garry White gave the first



Alumni Success Story

International Award Given to Turkmenistan Doctor

(Continued from page 1.)

called out to Oleg. He quickly realized what was happening and dove in to save the girl.

The report was recounted in the local newspaper La Jolla, which publicized the heroic exploit of this Turkmenistan citizen. It seems that a doctor's instinct to save lives never leaves Oleg, even in the water.

As is well known, there are three fatal ailments against which modern medicine has no cure – cancer, diabetes and AIDS. Anyone who could find a panacea, a cure for these ills, is guaranteed a Nobel Prize.

The history of scientific undertaking and in particular medicine is full of those who battle tirelessly against the most dreadful ills, utilizing the scientific methods and all the available tools. One such person lives and works in Ashgabat. This is the Fulbright Alumnus Oleg Ponyatov, gastroenterologist at the

Curiosity, attentiveness, inquisitiveness, and a desire to help people – these are the treatment-and-Consultation Center of Turkmenistan named after Niyazov.



Oleg Ponyatov,
gastroenterologist
Fulbright Alumnus,
2006 – 2007,
receiving the
Cook Medical
Don Wilson

Qualities that set apart a doctor from ordinary medical work. Restoring people to health, our doctor began to notice patterns, common traits among people suffering from esophagus or stomach problems. He began to collect and analyze data from his patients.

He continued his clinical practice on a higher level in Munich, where he was part of an exchange program between Germany and Turkmenistan. His work interested Professor Classen Meinhard at the University of Munich. German doctors are the premier specialists on esophagus and stomach problems.

Oleg traveled to Germany twice to continue his research. Professor Meinhard recommended him to participate in the US Fulbright exchange pro-

gram. Ponyatov studied and worked at the University of San Diego in California throughout 2006-2007. During that period, Oleg joined the World Association of Gastroenterologists. Upon returning home to Ashgabat, he continued his clinical practice. He discussed the results of early detection of esophageal cancer with his Association colleagues in scientific journals. Studying the risk-factor of endocrine sickness, Oleg developed a special table that his colleagues named "Ponyatov-form". For this discovery and for his work in new preventive measures against esophageal cancer, Oleg Ponyatov received the annual World Association of Gastroenterologists Award, shared by him and his Canadian colleague.

The Cook Medical Don

Wilson Award provides advanced fellows or junior faculty with the opportunity to train outside of their home country with a premier GI endoscopist or group to advance their training. The Award was named to honor Don Wilson, who was a strong advocate and supporter of international education and training in GI endoscopy. The Award is supported by a grant from Cook Medical.

In his spare time, Oleg enjoys surfing and diving. In his interview in our newsletter he recounted how he received great joy from swimming in the Pacific Ocean.

(Contributed by Sona-Chuli Kuli)

Ecology that Brings Us Together



“Global Environmental Issues and Ecology Development” was the title of the fourth Fulbright conference in Turkmenistan, which met in Ashgabat at the Ak-Altyn Hotel throughout April 26-27. It was organized by the United States Embassy in Turkmenistan and Fulbright alumni.

“This year, our forum went global. We received guests from the USA who are participants in the Fulbright program, and from the neighboring Central Asian countries of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan,” explained Garahandjar Narlyev, medical doctor and project coordinator for 2006 alumni. “It was nice to see the involvement of our state structures in charge of ecological issues.

The conference was truly impressive. Many important persons gave speeches, including U.K. Ambassador to Turkmenistan Peter Butcher; director of the Information Resource Center at the U.S. Embassy in Turkmenistan Andrew Paul; director Leon Yader from the State University of South Carolina; chairman of the Ministry of Nature Protection, Ogulsona Karyeva; and National Coordinator for the Wildlife Fund Timur Berkeliev.

Having discussed global ecological issues at the plenary meeting, the forum shifted to discussing local problems. First was the impact of economic and technological development on ecology, nature and human welfare. Second, there were the hopes and dreams of the ecological movement. As the participants pointed out, even the dinner break was useful, as it included a presentation of internet resources on global ecological questions in the IRC section of the American Embassy. At the end of the first day, conference participants were given a reception at the U.S. Ambassador’s residence.

No less interesting was the second day of the conference, when participants familiarized themselves with the work of the Fulbright Association in Uzbekistan, presented by its chairwoman Lola Gulyamova from Tashkent. The forum guests hoped that the results of this interaction would prompt the creation of a similar association in their country.

All the materials produced by the fourth Fulbright conference are released in a separate compilation, financed by the Library Fund of the Information Resource Center on the fourth floor of the Ak-Altyn hotel. Those who wish to learn more can familiarize themselves with the texts and transcripts more thoroughly.

The conference Project Coordinator Garahandjar Narlyev suggested announcing the first Saturday of spring as one honoring Mr. Fulbright in an annual conference of program alumni.

(Contributed by Tyazegul Gaipova)



Conference participants’ group photo in front of the Ak Altyn hotel

Alumni Reunion 2008 in Turkmenistan

(continued from Pages 3-4)

presentation on “Creating and maintaining collaboration between foreign students, including student’s exchange programs”. Next was a twenty minute presentation on “Comparative analysis of education systems of Turkmenistan and USA” by Esenamanov G. This was followed by a guest from Tajikistan, Akilova Munira, who presented on “Integrating student loan system in Khjand Branch of Technological University of Tajikistan”. Burmistrova V and Rejepova M shared their experiences from the United States before the coffee break. The section came to an end with four presentations: “The use of innovative technologies in the education system” by Joraev S; “Downsides of using interactive methods in secondary schools” by Muhammedova I; “Characteristics of the Bologna process” by Shallyev Ch. and “Visual English dictionary” by Akatov A. In this section the alumni were very active in dis-

cussing paths for the development of Turkmenistan’s education system.

The official part of the alumni reunion ended and alumni gathered in the banquet hall to have their final lunch, accompanied by a delegation from the U.S. Participants of the Alumni Reunion were free until 4 pm, when another coffee break was served and Andrew Paul gave the closing speech. At 5 pm, those who wished to leave were provided a bus. In addition, the following most active alumni were awarded certificates: Garahanjar Narlyev, Leila Atyeva, Albina Mustfayeva. I appreciate their great help in organizing the event.

In a period of three days, alumni of different ages and programs were reminded what it meant to be an alumni. For many, it was their first reunion and first introduction into alumni culture.

I would like to give a big thank you to the alumni who volun-

teered to present on a topic and put their effort into making the event successful. For the first time in the history of all Alumni events in Turkmenistan this Alumni Reunion was covered by Turkmen TV. The TV program was shown several times on state TV-4 channel and included Alumni interviews about their contributions to reforms in Turkmenistan, presentations of Alumni in different sections, interview of Guncha Komekova alumni coordinator from PAS, US Embassy, and an interview of Munira Akilova, a presenter from Tajikistan. She told about her first visit to Turkmenistan, her impressions, and about Alumni Reunion 2008. From the experience we have gained organizing this reunion, I would say that one way to make the next alumni reunion better is to get every alumnus to participate in the organizing of the program. Rather than having twenty alumni working for the rest, each could work for the benefit of all.

(contributed by Sahyt Tachev)

For the First Time in Turkmenistan—A Musical for Kids

Where do doppelgangers come from? To answer this question, a collective from Turkmenistan’s State Musical-Drama Theatre named after Mahtumguli showed a new production, sponsored by UNICEF in Turkmenistan. It premiered on May 23, coinciding with The International Children’s Day, to which the production was dedicated.

In fact, the form chosen to answer this important question was very unusual – musical. No one had yet performed one here. It was titled “Children and Adults”. The deputy director of the theatre, the well-known director Annageldy Garadjaev, wrote the libretto and

organized the production. In the Mahtumguli theatre he had put on around seven different projects. The unusual nature of this production was not only due to its genre as a musical, but also due to the younger actors working with professional masters of the stage.

To realize the idea of the production, a choir of specialized musical students from Turkmenistan’s national conservatory, the performance group “Nusai”, a state children’s dance ensemble and children actors of this theatre were involved.

The artistic successes are due to the friendship and ties between

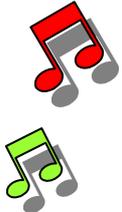
theatre and the musical-drama Magtymguli UNICEF in Turkmenistan.

“The partnership began in 2004, on the eve of the 60th anniversary of this famous international organization,” recounted Gulyalek Soltanova (alumnae of Muskie 2002) a specialist of Turkmenistan’s UNICEF alumni program. “Back then, the theatre prepared a large concert.”

Since then, the artistic collective has been frequently supported by our organization in putting on various events.

Currently, Soltanova is working on a massive, long-term assignment (continued on Page 8)

Music: Violin Solo



Eldar achieved renown this spring by hosting his first ever solo concert in Turkmenistan during the bright and cheerful holiday of Novruz. Music lovers have noted his name and eagerly anticipated future encounters with this young talent. The holiday was sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Turkmenistan, which had awarded a grant for this particular project.

Playing the violin with virtuosity, Eldar loves the compositions of Sergei Rachmaninoff, Nuri Halmamedov and Rejep Allayarov, and at the same time he spends many hours sitting at the computer. He is an education volunteer at the famous exchange program ACCELS in Turkmenistan. It was at this job that I met him at his office, and asked him to answer some questions for "Alumni Boom".

- Normally, when one hears such a performance as yours, immediately asks the question: "Who were your teachers?"

In Ashgabat, I graduated from the Republican Musical School-International (RMS). I entered Turkmenistan's State Conservatory and was taught by Zinaidya Akhmedjanova. To this day I come to visit her and ask

for advice. Later, I heard about the exchange program, learned English and entered West Texas A&M University. Having studied there for two-and-a-half years, I transferred to Oklahoma University; I decided I needed a change of scenery and besides, the education program there was better. As for playing the violin, I wanted to learn from another pedagogue.

- Did it work out?

Of course. I had the good fortune of performing with famous musicians; Pinchas Zucherman and Itzhak Perlman. I also played a solo concert.

- What were your accomplishments during your time studying in the USA?

I won the Concerto Competition twice; once in Texas and the other in Oklahoma. I received a full scholarship to Boston Conservatory. I played concerts with famous musicians. I earned first place at the Plymon H. Competition.

- Aren't you worried that you will waste your musical skills by spending so much time working on the computer?

I don't stop practicing music and play at home every day.

Thank you. We wish success to the talented violinist. For those who didn't get a chance to get an autograph, we ask him to give his signature:



Eldar playing Vivaldi's piece

For the First Time in Turkmenistan—A Musical for Kids

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ment, a country-wide program for kids 2005-2009, which is a program of cooperation between the Government of Turkmenistan and UNICEF to bolster the welfare of kids and protect the rights of children. She directs the regulation of the International Convention of the Rights of Children. In Turkmenistan the program has three components: propagation of literature and information regarding the interests of children, state-

led initiatives, and the development of the potential of the welayat programs to look after the welfare of children. The first two components will be carried out through a centralized approach, with a large-scale strategy worked out to develop the necessary protocols and tools for planning, execution and monitoring to ensure that rights are adhered to and standards are held to a certain level.

Thanks to the third component, public schools throughout the country will be provided

with technical support. The Musical ushered in a week of events dedicated to the International Children's Day in Turkmenistan. Throughout the country there were exhibits, auctions, concerts and gatherings. The week was topped off by the Children's Forum, which was held in Ashgabat, capital of neutral Turkmenistan, from the 31st of May to the 1st of June. Over 150 children from various cities and towns in Turkmenistan participated. (Contributed by Sona Chuli-Kuli)

US Independence Day Concert

On July 6, 2008, the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat, in conjunction with the Ministry of Culture and Broadcasting, organized a concert dedicated to America's Independence Day on July 4th.

This concert was open to the public and filled with students from state universities, alumni of U.S. exchange programs and governmental representatives. The PAS Director of the U.S. Embassy Andrew Paul gave the opening remarks, commenting on the development of American-Turkmen relations in various fields.

The Cowboy Dave Saunders, star

of the popular TV show "Red Ryder", performed rope tricks and took countless photographs with local people.

A student group from Turkmenbashi velayat performed a line dance in traditional country style. A group from Mary danced in cowgirl outfits and performed the song "God Bless America", completed with one of them dressed up as a sparkling Statue of Liberty. The Turkmenabat group performed an complex dance centered on the interaction between Cowboys and Indians, and recited poetry. Finally, a group from Dashoguz also performed a traditional cowboy dance.

The headliner of the performance was the Native American dance troupe, who sang traditional songs and danced to the beat of their exotic instruments. At the end of their performance, they invited all the little kids to come on stage and learn a unique dance that made everyone in the audience smile and clap.

Throughout the show, the U.S. embassy representatives handed out disks and pamphlets on American history and culture. The small booth designed to distribute the materials was frequently swamped with people brimming with curiosity.



English Teachers' Summer Camp 2008 in Turkmenistan

The 8th annual "English Teachers' Summer Camp" started its work in July 21, 2008 in Ashgabat. Thirty teachers of Akhal, Lebap, Mary, Dashoguz and Balkan regions had the opportunity to enrich their professional skills in Teaching English methodology, Computering, Writing, Visual Aids, Strategies of TOEFL Learning, Teaching English through Music and Modern Teaching Technologies guided by ten experienced Turkmen and American prominent educators.

During five days the participants of the camp had intensive and exciting activities in Methodology of Teaching English from 8:30 in the morning till 6 p.m. Every day they started with singing funny songs, couplets, rhymes, jokes and energizing exercises.

Brilliant teachers from the USA and Akhal velayat presented their activities and workshops, supporting local teachers in their hard work, sharing ideas and methods with them: Andrea Shindler and Eric Dwyer, Anna Grehova and Roman Magomedov, Raisa Amirdjanyans and James Johnson, Jim Shields and Anna Djaratova, Tony Jensen and Yekaterina Belobrova.

Every camp's day ended with a Guest Speaker's activity.

Among the guests there was the American Embassy representative Andrew Paul who told the teachers about all last achievements in American - Turkmenistan relations and great changes in culture of two countries; IREX and ACCELS collaborators:

Yelena Kotova, Anna Grehova, Tatyana Minayeva, and Angelina Begjanova.

The working atmosphere of the Conference highly influenced very effectively upon all the teachers and guests, inspiring them to continue making positive bonds of Turkmenistan and American cultures.

The participants of the Conference expressed their special thanks to the organizers of the Teachers Summer camp - 2008 Yekaterina Belobrova and Tony Jensen, IREX and ACCELS stuff, who contributed all their good will, energy and enthusiasm, excellent teaching material, for the Teachers' Camp success!

Without any doubt, upon returning they come back all the teachers will share their new knowledge of teaching English and do their best to implement up-to-date methodology in their classes. Those five days of the camp were a really great time for effective collaborative work and fun for Turkmenistan teachers.
(Contributed by Yelena Kotova)



First day



Computer training



The strongest



Documentary time



TOEFL session



Faina's workshop



Conference organizers

Reception in honor of Women's Month

On March 26th, the Public Affairs Section of the United States Embassy organized a reception in honor of Women's Month at the Nissa Hotel. There, women alumni met with many successful businesswomen, governmental representatives, heads of NGOs and representatives from various other organizations. DCM Silvia Curran gave her opening remarks and officially welcomed all the alumni and guests. PAS Director Andrew Paul commented on the



role of women in Turkmen society. During the reception, staff from the U.S. embassy's Public Affairs Section distributed information about the resources available at the embassy on the history of Women's Month. The alumni also had an opportunity to learn about career development in Turkmenistan. This event was a great opportunity for the alumni of different U.S. exchange programs to network with representatives of local organizations.

Writing Exhibition at American Councils

Contributed by Anna Grehova, IV 01 and CI '03



I have been teaching Writing and Creative Writing Clubs to students at the American Councils for a couple of years. The goals of the clubs were: first, to develop students' creative writing skills by introducing them to famous poets, teaching them various forms of poems and recognizing their talents; second, to publish a journal of students

writing. On June 20, 2008 my students, my colleagues and I organized a Writing Exhibition at American Councils in Ashgabat where we displayed 26 students' poems, stories and art works. Students' invited their friends and parents to share their successes. Prior to the exhibition, an independent committee of English teachers: Lori Durham and Heather Turner from Brunswick Camden County High School, GA, USA decided which students works should be awarded and for what. For example, Sulgun Bekniyazova was given the Best Artistic Craftsmanship Award, Maral Tatova was given a Shel Silversten What If Award, Anastasiya Zaitseva - Best Imaginative Piece Award. Overall we gave 26 awards to students. Below you can see Maral Tatova's poem, What If:

What If

*I was sitting on a bench outside
And thought about many things.
What if I were a star in the sky
Which shines so bright in dark night*

*And lights all Earth
With bright light?
What if people wished something
When stars fall from the sky
Down the deep ocean
For making dreams come true?
What if all people are like these stars--
Realize their dreams at one moment?
What if it is as wonderful
As all life?
I believe we can do it,
Although the star is the symbol of dreams*

Each Writing Club member received the certificate of attendance, medal and gifts which were kindly provided by Lori Durham and Heather Turner.

Moreover, three of my students' works (Maral Tatova, Jennet Hudayberdyeva and Serdar Kakabayev) were published at Aerie International Literary Arts Magazine in June 2008, Big Sky High School, Missoula, Montana, USA. I am currently working on publishing a Writing Journal of my students' works. I hope to publish it by the end of September.

On behalf of all my students, I would like to thank PAS for giving me an alumni grant for organizing the Writing Exhibition and publishing students' writing journal.



Maral and Jennet, young writers

Muskie Reentry Workshop and reception



On April 19th, IREX organized a reentry workshop for recently returned Muskie alumni Dovran Yamatov, Orazdurdy Khezretov, Yelena Butova, Regina Urmanova, Murad Kakadjikov and Ovez Agayev. During the workshop, staff from the U.S. embassy's Public Affairs Section presented information about embassy resources available to alumni, and IREX provided information about the Alumni Small Grants and Project Smile programs. The alumni also had an opportunity to learn about career planning and how to market themselves and leverage their graduate education towards greater career success. This section included information on developing networking skills, advice on revising a resume and tips on informational interviewing. The workshop was followed by a reception at the President Hotel with other program alumni and international organization representatives. The Charge d' Affaires, Ambassador Richard Hoagland, gave opening remarks and officially welcomed the alumni home and into the alumni community.

(contributed by Nilyufar Gylyjova)

Alumni round- table lunch with the senior diplomat from USA



On May 29, Alumni of different programs sponsored by U.S Embassy attended a round-table with Richard Boucher, a special guest from the USA. The event was organized by the Public Affairs Section of the U.S Embassy in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. Alumni from different programs such as FLEX, MUSKIE, FULBRIGHT, and UGRAD participated in the meeting during lunch. The Alumni shared the experiences they gained in the USA. Moreover, alumni and other guests discussed a wide variety of current issues, such as the state of the education system, the country and general community. FLEX alumni also compared the Education system of Turkmenistan and the USA, debating the advantages and disadvantages of each country.

Fun Page *believe it or not*

People Facts: People that are allergic to cats will be able to pet them without sneezing and scratching. Genetically engineered cats will be produced to help people with allergies enjoy their sneeze-free kitties. Allerca, Inc., a biotechnology firm in San Diego, California, says it has bred Hypoallergenic Cats and is now taking orders from customers in the United States.

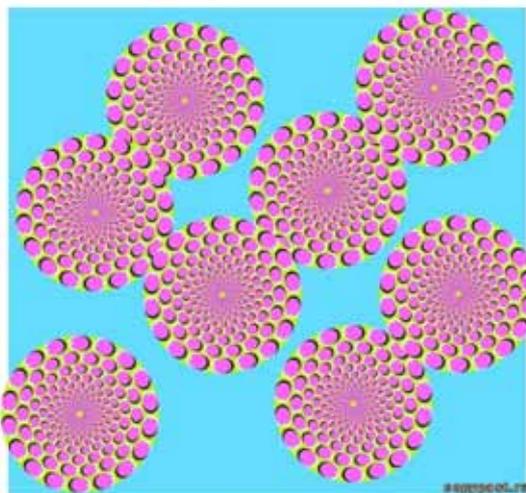
Technology Facts: The East Japan Railway Company (JR-East), as part of research aimed at developing more environmentally friendly train stations, is testing an experimental system that produces electricity as people pass through ticket gates.

World Facts: It is common mistake to say that The Great wall of China is visible from outer space. It is too thin to be noticed from such a great distance. Only two man made structures visible from space are: The Pyramids of Giza and the Hoover Dam.

Internet Facts: Yahoo the complex internet organism has a complicated name. Word \"Yahoo\" is an acronym for \"Yet Another Hierarchical Official Oracle\". It was coined by PhD candidates at Stanford University: David Filo and Jerry Yang.

Science Facts: The closest galaxy to our Milky Way galaxy is Andromeda and even traveling at the speed of light it would take 2 million years to reach it. There are 100 billion galaxies that we can observe. Prediction is that there are many more, but the Hubble Space Telescope couldn't detect them.

Politics: You may believe that the richest person in the world is a certain sheik who controls oil companies. Nah. The top three spots are held by computer, newspaper, and steel industry giants. The top five richest people are: 1. Bill Gates, 2. Warren Buffett, 3. Lakshmi Mittal, 4. Carlos Slim Helu, 5. Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Al Saud



Illusions

“Better to see once than hear one hundred times”, people say. That’s not always true.

Look at the picture on the left for a long time. You’ll see how the circles start moving. Don’t believe your eyes. That’s an optical illusion.