



A-SMYLE UPDATES

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American Ambassador Chats With Alumni



Ambassador Munter stands with a group of A-SMYLE Alumni after their hour-long chat.

At the end of March, American Councils held the second Alumni Night. American Ambassador Cameron Munter came to meet and chat with the 27 A-SMYLE alumni in attendance. The alumni came to Belgrade from different parts

of Serbia for this unique opportunity to meet and speak directly with Ambassador Munter. They had an hour-long chat about the alumni's experiences in the US and their current outlook on life back home. The Ambassador was especially interested in the knowledge, skills and valuable experience that alumni brought home from the US and different ways they can

use these experiences back in Serbia. Dijana Mihajlovic (2007) said that after finishing the program she learned how to function and "survive" in different surroundings, cultures and with people of different mentalities and habits. She also stated that now she feels as home both Serbia and United States. All alumni agreed on this point and inferred that knowing both "sides" and being able to live, study and work in different surroundings helps them have a positive and optimistic picture of their future. Boris Beric (2007), Branko Backovic (2007), Marija Draskic (2007) and Katarina Kohen (2007) talked about their experience in the US to journalists who were filming the whole event.

Senada Rujovic Wins World Link Essay Contest

First place in World Link's Melting Pot Essay contest went to Senada Rujovic. She received \$100 cash and a special award certificate. Her essay compared the diversity of birds flying together to people of different races, ethnicities and religions getting along. Senada drew upon her personal experience back home

being from mixed religions and here with her host sister who has downs syndrome. Tijana Evstratiev was awarded second place and given a \$50 cash prize. Tijana wrote about the diversity



that she saw at one high school basketball game and the beauty she saw when looking into the group of spectators from all different backgrounds. Dunja Saric also received an honorable mention. Congratulations to all three!

Cross-Cultural Conference Impacts A-SMYLE Students



The CECF students in Disney World

Four A-SMYLE students attended the Civilizations Exchanges and Cooperation Foundation’s annual “Better Un-

derstanding for a Better World” youth conference in Orlando, FL in January. Bojan Francuz, Dardana Sulejmani, Anita Kurgas and Vladimir Sudimac represented the A-SMYLE program at this three-day conference.

All the A-SMYLE students felt that this was a life changing experience even in such a short period of time. After meeting exchange students from all over the world, of different ethnicities and religions, Bojan Francuz said that “It is great to learn about other cultures and religions from a primary sources, the people who actually live there. I had

made some great friends there, and I still keep in touch with them.” Each student gave a presentation about his/her country to the group and worked together in team-building activities. None of them are going to forget these three days and are counting down the days until the next conference.

“I learned so much about other cultures and tolerance and made friends for a lifetime!”

- Dardana Sulejmani

Milica Mitrovic Experiences Government First-Hand

While spending the last eight months in North Carolina, Milica Mitrovic got inspired to learn more about local government. She applied to be a page for the Governor’s office and was accepted. For a week, Milica worked with the Governor’s office in Raleigh to see the inner workings of the executive branch. She even got to meet Governor Michael Easley. Milica was so inspired by the experience that she

Milica gets a hug from her host

decided to apply again. In May, Milica will go back to Raleigh but this time to have an experience with the legislative



branch. For one week, she will work as a page on the floor of the North Carolina State Senate. Milica credits these opportunities to her coordinator, Lynette Goreman who encouraged her to apply to be a page. As Milica says, “She is the BEST coordinator ever.” Milica’s experience in the state government highlights one of the many ways that A-SMYLE students get involved in their communities.

Ohio A-SMYLEs Sell Subs for Travel



Ksenija Zekic, Darko Markovic, Vladimir Sudimac and Tijana Evstratiev make 446 subs.

Darko Markovic, Vladimir Sudimac, Tijana Evstratiev, and Ksenija Zekic make subs to sell for their DC trip. Feeling the extreme desire to see Washington, DC before leaving the US, World Link A-SMYLE, FLEX and YES students made up their minds to make it happen. The group of nine students came up with the idea to sell sub sandwiches as a fundraiser for their dream trip. All together, the students made 446 sub sandwiches, which they had sold for \$5.00 generating a profit of \$3.50 for each

sandwich which was applied to the cost of the trip. After their successful efforts, the group traveled to Washington, DC with their local coordinator and host families on April 4-6 to visit the White House, the Capitol and museums. While in DC, the students also met with representatives of the State Department who work on all three high school grant programs. Their local coordinator Pam Hamilton said, “The students had a chance to experience the nation’s capitol first hand and see important sites and exhibits that enhanced their American experience.”

Fejdi Lifts Warriors to Two Great Seasons

Filip Fejdi was a great team player this year. As shooting guard for his high school's basketball team, Filip and his team had a 21— 0 season. This great record took them all the way to the State Championships. During the final game, the team suffered a heart breaking loss but



Filip (#2) and his team prepare for the finals.

were still number 2 in all of New Hampshire.

In addition to basketball, Filip also joined the

Nashua High School tennis team. This season, Filip has been completely undefeated in the singles division with a record of 8 — 0. He only started playing tennis one year before he came on the program. What makes Filip the biggest asset to the team is not just his winning forehands but positive attitude towards everyone. <http://www.nashuatelegraph.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080403/SPORTS01/934944598/-1/news20>

Jelena Djokic Launches the "Hand to Hand" Project

Jelena Djokic (2007), together with the Cerebral and Children Palsy Society of Ivanjica, has started working on her small grant project "Hand to Hand" in February. Jelena used the grant to purchase massage machines. Jelena reports, "As soon as the project started, we bought two massager machines, and we started doing massages for kids. Both children and their parents have found them fascinating and very helpful." Jelena also supplied the center with glass paint, which kids

from the center find very amusing to work with. This paint allows children to use it on a table and then to peel off what they paint and stick it to a window. The children loved this activity. Jelena and the volunteers in the Cerebral and Children Palsy Society help children to make different items and decorations. These kinds of activities are important for improving the children's motor skills.



Jelena hangs out after a day of volunteering.

Branko Backovic Selected As New PDO Assistant

After a difficult selection process, American Councils has asked Branko Backovic from Despotovac to be the new PDO Assistant for this year. Branko came on the A-SMYLE program in 2006-07 and was located in Illinois. He was very involved in Jazz Choir in his US high school. Branko was also busy through his basketball team, chemistry tutoring and giving singing lessons to a child who was blind.

Since returning to Serbia, Branko has



been very involved with the Alumni Network and traveled to Kosovo for a youth peace-building trip.

Branko recently found out that he has been admitted to Yale University with a full scholarship! In his application Branko drew upon his experiences in the US and living with his host brother who was

blind. Branko traveled to Kiev in April for training. He will join Hanadi Beganovic, Cassandra Payton and Bethany Qualls during this year's PDOs.

"I want to help future participants appreciate and enjoy the U.S. even more than my A-SMYLE peers and I did, creating a better A-SMYLE generation."
- Branko Backovic



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Alumni Initiate Plans for Global Youth Service Day



Alumni in Prijepolje work with Fractal Director Filip Pavlovic on their plans for GYSD.

This year, American Councils coordinated with Fractal to jump start the Global Youth Service Day Projects. Fractal contacted A-SMYLE alumni and traveled to five cities—Vranje, Nis, Belgrade, Prijepolje, and Novi

Sad. In each city, they gathered A-SMYLE alumni together from the region in order to work on plans for joint Global Youth Service Day projects. Students worked diligently to come up with various plans. Many of them expressed frustration at the roadblocks that they have encountered in Serbia while trying to organize community service. For this reason, Fractal has formed a support team to keep in touch with alumni on a daily basis as they carry out these projects.

Due to the Easter and Labor Day holidays, the alumni will be working on their projects in the beginning of May.

From May 16-17, all the participating alumni will convene in Belgrade for a

large conference in order to share their experiences and lessons learned. Local NGOs, student organizations and press will be invited, and the alumni will author a brochure called, "Tips for Volunteering in Serbia" based on their projects. We are all excited to see the outcome of the alumni's hard work.



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