



# A-SMYLE UPDATES

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## 2008 Alumni Return Home and...

**American Councils for International Education**

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### Special points of interest:

- \* Read about alumni teaching Serbia about volunteerism
- \* Count the number of Presidential Service Award winners
- \* Apply to be an alumni coordinator
- \* Answer Branko Backovic's call to alumni



**Kristina Koprivica and Danijela Stajic prepare their bags for the airport.**

There were tears of joy, tears of sadness, excited yells and lots of hugs going on in Dulles Airport on June 12 and 25. A-SMYLE students met one another in the airport for

the first time since their arrival 10 months earlier. This time they were all speaking perfect English though.

It was an emotional meeting for the students who had all experienced so much in the U.S. and had so many stories to share. While everyone was jumping up and down as each new friend appeared at the gate, there was a sadness that per-

vaded the joyous atmosphere—the thought of leaving those friends and family in the USA. Students were certain that they would meet with their American loved ones again in the near future. Many host families and siblings had plans to fly overseas to visit in the near future; however, not seeing them on a daily basis was a strange thought.

Once the students arrived to the Belgrade and Podgorica airports, that sadness was replaced with extreme elation when they found themselves in the arms of their families and friends from home. First thing to do, eat cevapi!

## ...2009 Alumni Begin Their Journey.

While the 2008 alumni were flying home and sad at leaving the US, the 2009 alumni were just beginning their experience. At the end of June and July, the three-day PDO sessions commenced. As expected, everyone was excited and apprehensive about what this year would bring. Alumni from previous years were there to take questions. New friendships were born during these sessions and

the talent show highlighted some unique traits within this 2009 group, namely playing music on water glasses and bending body parts in a all different ways. The students had a wonderful time, with many saying it was the best time of their lives.

We can't wait to meet you all in August!



**Students listen attentively at the PDO.**

## Alumni Spearhead Volunteerism in Serbia



Alumni in Belgrade gather volunteers together to clean up Big War Island.

For Global Youth Service Day 2008, A-SMYLE alumni decided to promote volunteerism in Serbia not by talking but by doing. In early April, Fractal

NGO met with alumni in 5 different cities—Belgrade, Novi Sad, Nis, Vranje and Prijepolje—in order to jumpstart brainstorming sessions. Each alumni group developed plans for community actions to undertake during the week after GYSD. Many wonderful projects were conceived and students did their best to carry out their plans.

Although there were many challenges that arose and hesitancy by community members to support volunteerism, the students initiated projects for teaching English in schools, making science fun and promoting it to students, researching student/teacher relationships in schools, organizing

religious tolerance discussions, cleaning up Big War Island in Belgrade, and linking schools in Serbia and Kosovo to increase understanding.

In early May, all students gathered in Belgrade to share their experiences and held a press conference to highlight their volunteer actions to the greater public. Students learned valuable skills about public speaking and communicating to the press. While everyone agreed that initiating volunteer activities in Serbia was extremely challenging, all the alumni came to Belgrade with great ideas that worked for them. It was one small step for A-SMYLE and one giant step for volunteerism in Serbia.

## CIEE Students Say Farewell to the USA in DC

This year, CIEE students were able to wrap up their USA experience with a farewell tour in Washington, DC. On June 12 and June 24, students flew into the capital city and got ready for a full day of tourism.

Their day began with a personalized walking tour of the Capitol building. Congressional offices of Jim Jordan (Ohio) and John Kline (Minnesota) graciously sponsored these tours for CIEE students. After that, students

rode the DC metro to the White House and walked along the National Mall. The students were impressed by the Lincoln and Vietnam Memorials the most. Once all the walking was done, everyone was ready for dinner and bed.

The following morning, students worked on re-entry exercises, preparing themselves for reverse culture shock upon returning home. It was a wonderful way to say good-bye to all.



CIEE students share one last hug in the USA

## Eighteen Presidential Service Award Winners!!!

Kristina Seat  
Gloria Novovic  
Ivana Malenica  
Aleksandra Bosnjak  
Sandra Gmitrovic  
Jovana Osmajic

This year, the number of A-SMYLE students receiving the Presidential Service Award more than

doubled. Eighteen students dedicated themselves tirelessly to complete 100 or more hours of community service, which is a major increase from the 7

Gordana Pesic  
Dunja Saric  
Ljupka Sibinovic  
Boris Stoilkov  
Tara Djelic  
Snezana Djuric

students last year.

The Presidential Service Award was introduced by President Bush in 2002

in order to encourage all to make time to help their communities. All recipients of the award receive a personalized certificate, a congratulatory letter

Tijana Evstratiev  
Tanja Milosevic  
Vladimir Sudimac  
Nemanja Trifunovic  
Zoja Lekovic  
Dusan Ilic

from the President, and a lapel pin.

As one of the A-SMYLE program

goals is volunteerism and civic participation, we are extremely proud of these 18 students for their accomplishments.

## Alumni Join New Reality TV Show

Reality TV has hit Serbia and a new show is starting that will feature five A - S M Y L E alumni. Cooperativa TV, a new project initiated by a group of NGOs including Fractal, AED, and Partes Produc-



Cooperativa TV trains students in non-violent communication.

tion, is a reality TV show competition. Participants were first trained in non-violent communication before the TV show began.

Ethnically mixed teams of Serbian and Kosovar youth will work together on various tasks. The TV show will be

structured similar to the TV show *The Apprentice*. Teams will compete against one another in this fun challenge. There are 12 participants and 5 are from A-SMYLE. The lucky participants are: **Mila Janjic, Vajda Zita, Danilo Milovanovic, Igor Zaltojev and Sara Mustafa**

The shooting for this completely new kind of reality show began on July 18 in Montenegro. The show will air in October on B92 TV station. Be on the look out for our soon to be celebrity alumni.

## Two Job Positions Open for Alumni Coordinators

Keep your eyes peeled for job openings for two new alumni coordinators. Our office is on the look out for one student in Podgorica and one student in Belgrade. Each coordinator will be responsible for developing ideas and organizing alumni events in his/her country. Duties include:

- Writing monthly reports on alumni activities to be submitted to the DC office;
- Providing coordination and encouragement to alumni as they plan and execute alumni activi-

ties;

- Working with alumni to develop proposals and budgets for alumni projects;
- Organizing monthly meetings;
- Developing the annual activities calendar;
- Updating the online A-SMYLE alumni database on an ongoing

basis;

- Reporting alumni news for posting on the ACIE web site;
- Actively gathering information about alumni successes for the monthly report;

All alumni coordinators must be able to devote 10-15 hours per week to the program. In addition, both coordinators must be able to attend the alumni conference in Moscow in September. More information coming soon in August!

**Alumni Coordinators needed for Serbia and Montenegro. Start thinking if this is something for you.**

## Bojana Rakic Wins \$200 for her A-SMYLE Essay

This year A-SMYLE held a program-wide essay contest asking students to answer the question, "How can I use my A-SMYLE experience to benefit my country when I return home?" More than 20 students responded, but the most impressive essay was by Bojana Rakic.

She focused on her volunteer experience at the local animal shelter and the rich diversity and opportunities in American schools. Bojana took part in school plays here and would love to start a drama club back home with

other students. In addition, Bojana wants others to realize that their view of Americans is something distorted and that politics are different than the people: "[Americans] have given me support, respect, understanding and love, which is what I want Serbian people to see and acknowledge. This way I hope to



Bojana volunteering at the animal shelter.

spread peace and understanding and stop on hatred that brings us nothing good."

Runners up were Aleksandra Radojevic, Nikola Mladenovic, Ivana Corovic, Snezana Djuric, and

Gloria Novovic.

## To: A-SMYLE Alumni, by Branko Backovic



Dear A-SMYLE friends,

Congratulations! We have completed our second year of A-SMYLE Alumni activities. Our group just grew bigger as the third generation of A-SMYLE participants returned from the United States in the past month. With around two hundred A-SMYLE Program Alumni in both Serbia and Montenegro, we now represent a serious group that can truly make changes and positively impact the society we live in. Also during the last year, many of us were trained in seminars, workshops and many participated in various projects organized by NGO Fractal, which furthered our knowledge, leadership skills and represented excellent meeting and hanging out opportunities as many of us very well know.

I would like to stress that although the strength in numbers is very important to our group, it is also crucial that all of us take time to work on the program goals and participate in group A-SMYLE activities. The experiences we had during the time we spent in the U.S. can fully be used only by working as a well organized and coordinated group. We have a lot of potential, and I am extremely optimistic about the future impact our group is going to have in transforming our society in a truly democratic and European one. But, this extremely hard task cannot be accomplished by a few. I am afraid that we had forgotten that we had been given a chance of a lifetime not long ago, with a pledge that we will serve as "agents of change" upon our arrival. Well, that time is now.

There are both extremely positive political and strategic grounds at this moment in our country that go hand

in hand with what we wish to achieve. Volunteerism, civic liberties, freedom of speech and media, democracy... All of these values are about to fully thrive in our society and we have the obligation to introduce our society to these values by conducting projects in our communities and by coordinating with other Alumni, nationwide. For those less optimistic, who say that our country and society are not going to change, I suggest the following: Do your best, participate, join activities organized by other Alumni, and soon you will be surprised by the endless possibilities which you can use to better life here. The least we can do to show thankfulness for the opportunity that has been given to us through the A-SMYLE Program is to try our best to help our country on her hard path through transition and EU Integrations. Although we are all only high school or college students, we can do much only by participating in or organizing our own projects that can benefit our communities a lot.

The purpose of my letter is to encourage the people that had done a lot during this past year to continue doing so, even better and efficient in the time to come. Also for the people who have not done as much, to get activated again and start giving their ideas to the entire group. And finally, for the people that did very little or nothing at all during this last year, to evaluate again why have they been sent to spend a year in the U.S. and to understand that they are of great need to both the group and our country.

Also, although I am leaving Serbia myself shortly, I will still coordinate and try to organize projects and stay in touch with all the happenings in our group. I also hope that I can be a good resource center to the group since I will be studying in the U.S. Nevertheless, all of my energy and passion is devoted to strengthening our Alumni group and helping our society and country.

I hope everyone realizes that we have both the intellectual and strategic potential to help the people around us, and that it is our moral responsibility to do so. I hope that in the future months our group will start getting stronger and much more organized and that the majority of people will be active in the A-SMYLE Alumni made projects. I promise there will be projects soon that require maximum group effort in order to acquire the wanted effect and impact.

Best,

Branko Backovic

A-SMYLE Alumni 2006/2007

Yale University, Class of 2012



To find out more about alumni activities or to let us know about what you have been doing since returning from the US, contact or visit us at:

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## Vladimir and Katarina are Distinguished Leaders



Katarina teaches students during IEW.

In late May, A-SMYLE announced the winners of its first-ever Distinguished Leader award. Vladimir Sudimac and Katarina Djordjevic were selected as the two students who not only completed the five leadership activities but went above and beyond these requirements by getting involved at schools, in their communities, and by being positive representatives of the

program. Katarina's and Vladimir's involvement and enthusiasm for the program were evident throughout the year and were each awarded \$300 Amazon gift certificates. We asked local coordinators for support letters and received outstanding nominations for many students, so the choice was difficult; however, Katarina and Vladimir outshined the rest.

Katarina made an indelible impression on her host community in Illinois by volunteering most of her time with the Girl Scout troop and giving a hand whenever it was needed. Kaca's coordinator states that the true beauty of Katarina's leadership is that, "[She] is the kind of young woman who does so much for others without sounding a trumpet about it."

Vladimir impressed his coordinator and community in Ohio throughout the year by volunteering at many events and

winning awards for everything that he joined. Vlada completed 140 hours of community service. In addition, he save his coordinator's father's life when he had an attack and Vlada was there to do heart massages until the paramedics arrived. His coordinator states, "For that I will always be grateful to him. He is dearly loved by all and will be greatly missed."



Vladimir (right) stands with Harold Shirk, the man whose life he saved in Ohio.