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Alumni discuss social and economic development

Message From Open World Program Manager Vera DeBuchananne

From the very beginning, youth and youth initiatives have been a primary focus of the Open World Program. Its founders wanted to invite young Russians who were active in politics and in their communities to visit America for the very first time to see how the concept of democracy is realized here. Bringing Russian youth to the United States also had the strong support of the ambassadors of our two countries, the Honorable James Collins and his successor, the Honorable Alexander Vershbow, and His Excellency Yuri Ushakov.

Open World began hosting delegations on a “youth issues” theme in 2002. As the staff member who oversees these exchanges, I have noticed that our cultures differ not only in the approaches toward working with young people but even on how to define youth. In America we consider youth to be those in the 14–21 age range. Once a young person reaches the age of 18 he or she becomes a full-fledged adult with legal responsibilities. In Russia, youth is defined as a young person between the ages of 18 and 35.

When our youth-issues delegates arrive in their host communities, they search for something comparable to what they have at home and discover that in America, schools provide the transition from school to work and government and nongovernmental organizations and businesses provide housing, health care, and recreation for all adults, single or with families, regardless of age. But you need to pay for this and young Americans understand that. The host families offer our guests a program filled with visits to organizations that work with teens, providing them with the knowledge and

skills they will need to function on their own in society.

Youth policy in our countries reflects basic differences in our philosophies. In America adults are expected to rely on themselves (self-help books are very popular here) and generally Americans do not want government to “interfere” in their lives. Historically, the primary role of our government has been to provide us with national security, law and order. In attending the alumni youth conference in Barnaul, Biysk, and Gorny Altai, I learned more about the wishes of local governments to nurture youth and help young families with jobs, housing, and health care. It seemed to me that this is what Russian citizens expect from their government. In America, struggling families can find assistance from the government, but normally they turn to relatives, employers, and friends first in times of need.

The differences in our approaches to social work will be explored in our December alumni conference on NGO development, including the question “How much government do we want in our lives?”

In this issue of the *Bulletin* you will find a variety of youth-related articles. Yekaterina Kungurova reports on her youth-themed trip to Pennsylvania, including her visit to a school founded by candy magnate Milton Hershey. Yuliya Bodnya tells us about the after-school activities she provides to students as an introduction to community service. In the next article, Valeriy Kalashnikov’s students learn that tolerance is a civic duty. Viktoriya Malina shares her Wisconsin impressions with us. Pavel Baranov writes about his “can-do” attitude. *Bulletin* editor and Altai youth conference co-organizer Oksana Silantyeva summarizes that event for us. On Page 8, conference attendees invite you to partner with them.

I hope that you enjoy reading this issue and that these youthful accounts will energize you!

Vera W. DeBuchananne



Attendees at Open World’s Altai youth forum. Vera DeBuchananne is in the second row from the front, second from left.

Destroying the Wall of Stereotypes

Yekaterina Kungurova
 Moscow
 Manager
 Information Center of the Russian Union
 of Journalists
 Open World 2002 (Youth Issues)
 Host Community: Harrisburg, Pa.
 Host Organizations: Friendship Force
 International/Greater Harrisburg
 Friendship Force

We all know that lack of information inevitably leads to the creation of myths that are far removed from reality. This is true for absolutely everything and everybody: neighbors, other culture, foreigners. In short, we judge people and their lifestyles according to our stereotypes, rumors, stories, and media messages.

Russian citizens generally have a negative attitude toward the American lifestyle. Paradoxically, though, many Russians are eager, if not to emigrate to America, then at least to visit it for a short period of time.

Our Open World delegation was hosted by the nongovernmental organization Friendship Force in Harrisburg, Pa. Before my trip I used to think

of the United States of America as many Russians do. But I was very curious to learn whether my opinions about this country were right or wrong. The trip dramatically changed my attitude toward people living in the States.

The first thing I noticed was the politeness, courtesy and kindheartedness of U.S. citizens under any conditions, no matter where it takes place: in the airport, in the street, in families, or in public places. It was embarrassing to realize that we, Russians, don't even treat each other very well.

Americans are really patriotic. They deeply respect their president. It is more a matter of respect for the position, not the actual person.

Not all the citizens approve of the policy of the specific president, but the institution itself is beyond questioning. We differ greatly in this sense, as we try to

change the political structure if the leader of the country does not fit our ideas.

The host families were delighted to meet our group. It was easy for us to establish friendly relations. The families were interested in the personal objectives of the Russian guests and went beyond the program to assist us in achieving

The host families were delighted to meet our group. It was easy for us to establish friendly relations.



Yekaterina Kungurova and host Vicki Inscho

them. In my case, thanks to my host family, I had the opportunity to visit a publishing house and a TV station in Harrisburg. My professional plans are tied to television, and communicating with reporters and editors contributed to my understanding of American television. I formed a new image of American television thanks to tours of CNN and a local TV station.

First of all, journalists write about people. As I was working on creating a TV series on social issues, I was especially interested in social projects. Education and mass media shape public opinion and attitudes and assist in the socialization process. I thought the experience of a Harrisburg-area school founded for orphaned boys interesting from this point of view.

The school established by Milton S. Hershey at the beginning of the 20th century combines a

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OPEN WORLD ALUMNI BULLETIN

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Founded by the U.S. Congress in 1999, the Open World Program has enabled more than 8,000 citizens from all of Russia's 89 regions, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan to see the U.S. democratic process in action and to exchange ideas with their American counterparts, thereby building mutual understanding between Eurasia and the United States. The Open World Program is conducted by the Open World Leadership Center, an independent legislative branch agency, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of State and other U.S. executive and judicial branch agencies.

To sign up for free electronic program bulletins or to be removed from mailout lists, please visit www.openworld.gov. In Russia, the *Bulletin* is mailed to alumni without access to e-mail.

Social Projects and Education

Yuliya Bodnya

Rostov-on-Don, Rostov Region

Director

*Foundation for New Social Technologies
Open World 1999*

Host Community: Hudson, Wisc.

*Host Organization: The United Methodist
Church – Russia Initiative*

Teachers in the United States and England developed the concept of socially active schools, also called community schools, and so it follows that Yuliya Bodnya's Open World experience played an important role in her development of this school model in the Rostov region. Yulia tells us her story:

Socially active schools are a relatively new concept in Russia, having begun in 1997 in Samara [in southern Russia] with the Community Schools pilot project. These schools not only provide students with knowledge, they become centers of cultural and social life within a community, encouraging the development of children who will become valuable members of society.

While teaching English at the Rostov Agricultural Academy, I saw the need for a new approach. I had been engaged in volunteer activities and NGO work, involving youth in the elections process. The concept "Take an active part in life" became my guiding principle. I became head of the Foundation for New Social Technologies. As the organization developed and expanded its mission, new programs with broader social objectives were conceived. Projects for youth gave way to the idea that young people can influence the community. The socially active school movement was under way, and was supported by Iskra (Spark), a nonprofit organization in Voronezh [in southern Russia], and

Russia and the United States have vastly different approaches to social development. On the one hand, I realize how far behind we are, but on the other hand, I can see what direction to take.

the Rostov League of Children and Youth. Children today are overwhelmed by a flood of information, and it is hard for them to process this information by themselves. Additionally, information is often manipulated by the media. Our project strives to train both teachers and parents, as they are key figures in a child's life. Children act in accordance with what they experience within their environment, and socially aware parents and teachers set an important example.

At the present time, four schools participate in [our own socially active school] project. Our criterion for participation was a demonstrated desire to carry out community work. The municipal Department of Education recommended the schools for the project during the selection process. Participating schools displayed social projects at a fair, after which the best were implemented.

It is one thing to be aware of a different level of social development, but it is much more useful to see and experience it yourself. My trip to the United States through the Open World Program was a turning point in my professional career, and greatly contributed to my understanding of how to develop and implement similar initiatives in Russia. I visited schools, retirement homes and other social institutions supported by government, businesses and NGOs.

Russia and the United States have vastly different approaches to social development. On the one hand, I realize how far behind we are, but on the other hand, I can see what direction to take. The first task is to have sustained support of the social sphere by the government and the community. We

Continued from page 2

K-12 institution and elements of a vocational school. The students can choose among a wide range of courses. The children live in family-type homes, i.e., several children of different ages live in one home with houseparents. According to the teachers, the children learn to find a common language with each other, and these skills will help them make their way in society in the future. The school is designed to bring up independent, tolerant, and active young people. I liked this educational approach, as it encourages the development of the children's talents.

What I saw in Pennsylvania made me respect the American after-school system. Youth in the States

are actively involved in the activities of different clubs. A young person can develop his/her creative and intellectual abilities, or acquire professional skills. The main thing is that nobody makes them do it; they choose according to their desires. We saw one of the most interesting examples when we attended classes [of the Cadet Program] of the Civil Air Patrol, where young people learn how to survive and work in extreme situations. It is hard to say how many of them will be pilots, but the young people are sure that the teamwork, decision-making, and professional skills they acquire will be useful for them no matter what career they choose.



Yuliya Bodnya

must make the Rostov region's budget, especially expenditures on social projects, transparent.

So far the regional government has expressed support for social projects, but has indicated it has no funds to cover the cost of such initiatives. However, it is possible for not-for-profit organizations to lobby the regional parliament. My colleagues and I have drafted a bill on cooperation between not-for-profit organizations and the regional government that is currently under consideration.

Money will not suddenly appear. We must convince the government, businesses and communities of the region that it is important to make social investments. Currently, we are trying to change the existing situation in favor of social projects, using effective but unobtrusive methods. For example, we have adopted the American concept of private donations. This was successfully applied in Samara, where children gave out hand-made paper cranes to people donating money to tuberculosis relief. We are going to conduct a similar fund-raiser for the community schools project. Certainly the value of these donations does not compare to the financial aid we receive from international funds; however, the most important thing is to do what you can in the here and now.

For me the trip to the United States was a great chance to learn how many stereotypes I had in my head. They were about everything: youth clubs, journalism and education.

Americans and Russians are different. They are different from the vantage point of the history of the countries' development, values, and priorities. However, as you know, opposite poles of a magnet attract. I think we should use this in order to find mutual understanding and work in collaboration.

Valeriy Kalashnikov
Kaluga, Kaluga Region
Deputy Director of Innovations, Youth Education Leader
Sozvezdiye (Constellation) Child and Youth Center for Creative Development
Open World 2002 (Youth Issues)
Host Community: Little Rock, Ark.
Host Organization: USDA Graduate School International Institute/Arkansas Council for International Visitors

Russia has undergone dramatic change, and before long, today's youth will improve the legal foundation for the changes that have been taking place in Russia since the mid-1980s. However, civic education and training for youth is not a well-developed field in Russia's current education system. The work done at Sozvezdiye, a center for developing youth creativity, is an attempt to address this need.

An experimental municipal school for extracurricular education at Sozvezdiye has created a niche for itself in the city's youth programs. High school students come to the school throughout the year to receive basic training in economics, management, psychology, television journalism and dramatic art. For 14 years, we have been organizing specialized camps that are designed not only to offer recreation, but also to provide additional knowledge and skills. Our goal is to challenge and stimulate children, give them with food for thought, and help them become well prepared for adulthood.

One successful study camp called Trip to the Future explored the social and psychological challenges encountered by young people just starting out on their own. Another popular

camp, devoted to the topic of local government, was called My City. Participants got acquainted with the whole range of issues dealt with by local governments, including economics, social welfare, transportation, and culture. Students were required to design a model city that would address residents' needs.

A new theme this year — 20 Steps Toward Justice and Tolerance — addresses an urgent need in our society. This program examines the definition of tolerance and how it relates to personal freedom, choice, and individuality. The study camp's goal is to provide children with an opportunity to explore and understand the concept of tolerance from various points of view, including ethnic, religious and gender-based perspectives. Tolerance is also considered as a component of justice.

A great strength of the Open World Program is the opportunity it provides to learn about American life both formally and informally. One element that you immediately notice is the rationality and legal forethought behind the American system, which was created to guarantee the political rights and freedoms of each and every citizen.

Camp participants will become acquainted with basic government structures, as well as personal rights and freedoms. On the final day of camp, high school students will participate in the Magic Formula of Tolerance game. Using information and experience acquired during the camp, students will create a formula of tolerance and define this concept's place in public life. This formula is magic, because it brings its owner to a higher level of self-awareness, and helps one communicate with people of different backgrounds.

Many of the ideas implemented during the Justice and Tolerance camp were formulated as a result of my participation in the Open World Program. My experience in the United States provided a strong impetus for my work in Russia.

It was a pleasant surprise for me to learn about the concept of volunteerism in the United States. During my stay in Little Rock, Ark., we were introduced to successful volunteer work with unmanageable teens. Unfortunately, volunteerism is not well developed in Russia. I believe the reason for this is rooted not in economics, but in the absence of tradition. In our camps at Sozvezdiye, we try to start such traditions. Children are encouraged to volunteer for participation in environmental events, as well as free concerts performed at orphanages and residential schools.

A great strength of the Open World Program is the opportunity it provides to learn about American life both formally and informally. One element that you immediately notice is the rationality and legal forethought behind the American system, which was created to guarantee the political rights and freedoms of each and every citizen. We came to respect Americans' patriotism, and their pride in a government that provides every citizen with rights and freedoms. Freedom is understood as responsibility for one's decisions and actions within society. In America, I found a confirmation of my thought, "Where traditions of freedom grow, traditions of responsibility grow, too."

Today, as never before, our young people need to become politically and civically active citizens. I see young people who make their choices freely and responsibly, and who have a strong sense of justice. I am ready to solve any problems with these young people.

We express our sympathy to the families and friends of those who have suffered in acts of terror on Russian soil. It is always sad when we lose a loved one, but under these tragic circumstances we especially and acutely feel our vulnerability, anger, and loss.

Viktoriya Malina
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Omsk State Teachers Training University,
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Open World 2002 (Youth Issues)
Host Community: Marinette, Wisc.
Host Organization: Academy for
Educational Development/University of
Wisconsin – Marinette

What youth issues are most pressing today? To answer this question, do we ask young people for their opinion, or are we content with our own observations? Nothing could be simpler — ask a question, listen to the answer, and accept it as the main directive for addressing an issue. To ask a question and truly listen for the answer should be the primary goal of professionals working with youth.

In my opinion, a serious problem with social assistance for youth in Russia is the irrelevance of the assistance offered. The assistance provided required considerable personnel and financial resources, but few accepted it and it had no significant impact.

In 2003, a sociological survey called “Personal and Social Attitudes of Modern Young People” was conducted in Omsk. The goal of the survey was to identify the problems, goals and values of young Omsk residents. A total of 984 individuals (653 females and 331 males) took part in the survey.

Career and family happiness were the most highly ranked values, fulfilling one’s creative potential and finding one’s place in life came second, and a quality education and university degree ranked third. Thirteen percent of the respondents found it difficult to define their values.

Professionals working with youth were quite surprised by other results of the survey. One discovery was that passivity got in the way of certain participants’ achievement of their goals. The major problem is with people’s management of their free time, which in turn points out difficulties with self-discipline and self-realization. The lack of initiative revealed in the survey results requires special attention, as the respondents include our most educated youth.

Several survey questions were devoted to evaluating existing youth programs. The effectiveness

rating of current approaches will surprise professionals who advocate for a mass approach that equates quality of work with quantity of recipients. Young people indicated that the most effective form of assistance is individual consultation. The second most effective method was identified as educational and practical skills training, with volunteer activities ranked third. In light of these survey results, professionals in this field would be wise to reevaluate the number of conferences and other large group activities planned for the upcoming year.

The survey results were not a complete surprise to psychologists. Many psychologists recognize that young people are most highly motivated by the urge to build close personal relationships, the desire to achieve professional competence and a yearning for public recognition. It is a pity that these aspirations are rarely taken into consideration by the people and organizations responsible for youth programs and projects.

While participating in the Open World Program, I visited the Rainbow House in Marinette, Wisc. It was there that I realized what this needs-oriented approach (work based on a target audience’s specific needs) means.

Based on what I have seen in America and the results of the Omsk survey, I can say with confidence that building an open dialogue between youth and social institutions can lead to more client-oriented forms of assistance that will be both timely and accepted with gratitude.

The Rainbow House is a shelter for victims of domestic violence where victims of violence — both men and women — can receive physical shelter and legal support. Our delegation’s first surprise was that four men who had been abused by their wives were housed at the shelter. We also discovered that the number of clients who receive assistance was small by Russian standards, about 12 families per year. Some families, however, return to the shelter as many as three times annually. A second surprise was the revelation that only one to two people per year receive a full complement of the center’s services, which includes finding a job and a new place of residence.

Frankly, a center like this in Russia would be closed within several months of its opening. A



Viktoriya Malina

social service official would say, “Who needs this? Where is the mass approach toward problem solving?” In Wisconsin, if a social problem exists and there is a means to solve it, the solution is undertaken regardless of the number of recipients.

Perhaps this individualized approach is what we should strive for in Russia. Solve particular problems; provide services when they are needed. We need a real client-oriented approach for social services. Rehabilitation programs should be developed for each particular client, with the recognition that different resources are appropriate in different situations.

The mission of the Rainbow House is not to solve the domestic violence problems of the whole state. The center has been created to help each particular person, each particular family. Its effectiveness cannot be measured and evaluated by the number of recipients. It is difficult to measure the amount of violence that has been prevented by its existence. The mere fact that this service exists partially resolves the problem of family violence.

Based on what I have seen in America and the results of the Omsk survey, I can say with confidence that building an open dialogue between youth and social institutions can lead to more client-oriented forms of assistance that will be both timely and accepted with gratitude.

Create, Work, and Be Proud!

Pavel Baranov
Shuya, Ivanovo Region
*Deputy, Shuya City Duma**
Open World 2001 (Rule of Law)
Host Community: Jonesboro, Ark.
Host Organization: Meridian
International

What motivated a 19-year-old student to run for election to the Shuya City Duma? Frankly speaking, it was boring to study and dull and uninteresting to live. I needed something new and unknown. I felt a tremendous need for self-realization. I wanted to achieve real results in some area of work and attract attention to myself. I had studied political science and had always been interested in politics and public service. That is why people close to me were not surprised by the fact that I chose to campaign for a seat in the City Duma [in 1999].

It was a difficult campaign. I ran against four opponents and beat the most serious contender, from the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, by only seven votes. But it was my electoral district. I have lived there my whole life, and many people there know and respect me. My electoral campaign consisted of two weeks of walking tours around the district distributing my leaflets. I did everything on my own — from beginning to end — which is why I appreciate my election victory very much.

They say that young people have neither the experience nor enough knowledge and networking opportunities to represent others in a representative democracy. I also met with such skeptics. It is OK. But at the same time, the experience of the older generation is not always positive. In some situations, lack of such experience can be a plus. There is a freedom of choice and a lack of stereotypes. Moreover, I believe that when a person wants to work and is politically and socially active, he or she can accumulate experience very quickly.

The Open World Program is clearly associated with the word “first” in my life. It was my first trip abroad — and [I went] straight to the United States. It was my first plane ride — and [I went] straight across the ocean. I can also say that for the first time I saw a program organized with attention to the smallest detail.

The very first thing that comes to my mind when I think about the trip is the kind and careful attention of our host families and organizations. Average Americans know little about Russia and the Russian way of life, but they are open, attentive and easy to talk to. Most Americans are very

positive and strive to achieve their goals in life, depending only on themselves.

I have changed as a result of the trip, although it is difficult to provide a specific example of how. Probably my outlook on the things we do and how we do things changed. No one would ever say that I was a child before the trip, but still I felt that I had matured during those two weeks. It is hard to explain, as these changes are in values, principles, and approaches.

In the United States they have all the bad things we have in Russia, but in Russia we lack a lot of good things that they have in the States. My colleagues often hear this phrase from me now. This fact is not a reason to change where one lives, but rather an incentive to work more actively at one’s workplace and in one’s city.

No one would ever say that I was a child before the trip, but still I felt that I had matured during those two weeks. It is hard to explain, as these changes are in values, principles, and approaches.

Having a business of my own helps me in my work as a deputy. People in business are much more organized and responsible. They count only on themselves and try to be realistic. Besides, they know the value of money and understand that money is not easy to earn. Business enriches people with practical skills in economics. In my case, given that I am a member of the City Duma Economics and Budgeting Committee, these skills are crucial.

Business also gives me independence, which most of my colleagues working in public service lack. A financially independent deputy has the degree of freedom necessary for standing up for fundamental viewpoints on key issues.

Unfortunately, there are not many young people in my constituency. The primary reason is the fact that young people prefer to leave small provincial towns. And demographic forecasts are not very inspiring. I know I will encounter strong opposition, but I think the government does not need a separate youth policy. We need policies focused on citizens of all ages and social groups so that they are able to change the situation for the better.



Pavel Baranov

If you want to change something in your life and in the people around you, you need to be realistic and pragmatic. You can change the situation in Russia and make authorities more professional and responsible only if you are part of the administration. My decision to leave the Yabloko party for the United Russia party was in response to Yabloko’s defeat in the last State Duma elections. I do not divide people into “oppositional democrats” and “government-oriented centrists.” I just want to work, and it is important for me to have more opportunities for helping my constituents and for making my hometown a safer and more respected place.

Civil society and democracy are both very complicated and very simple things. Democracy is, first of all, the creation of law protecting citizens’ interests. Only then will citizens respect the law and be law-abiding. I agree with Americans who say, “My freedom ends where yours begins.” Democracy involves respecting the rights and freedoms of other people. Civil society is a society of free people who respect the law that respects and defends their rights and freedoms.

Russia by all means should occupy its proper place on the world political and economic stage. Russian youth will play a leading role in achieving this goal. We have a lot of talented young men and women, and the future is ours. What this future will look like depends on us. If we exert ourselves, then when we go abroad and meet foreigners, we will be proud to be citizens of a wealthy and self-respecting country. And everything will turn out fine.

****Editor’s footnote: Shuya is about 150 miles east of Moscow. In addition to serving in the Shuya City Duma, Pavel Baranov runs a cafeteria business, a cell phone business, and a small stock brokerage.***

Conferences

Youth – Real-Life Impact

From July 30 to Aug. 2, Open World's Alumni Outreach Program hosted the interregional forum "Youth – Real-Life Impact" in the beautiful mountain setting of Altai Territory and its neighbor, the Altai republic. Thirty-three Open World alumni, most of whom had traveled to the United States on the youth issues theme, converged on this southern Siberian region for two-and-a-half days of discussion, information exchange, and project presentations on youth advocacy. Open World alumna Irina Perova, Deputy Head of the Committee on Youth Affairs of the Altai Kray Administration, was one of the forum's key organizers, and she worked to secure the close cooperation of state, commercial and nongovernmental organizations of Altai Kray and the Altai republic. Perova visited Little Rock, Ark., on the youth issues theme in 2003.

The Altai Forum employed a unique and challenging format. In the interest of providing greater access to alumni in cities outside the regional capital of Barnaul and of fostering greater understanding among forum participants of local conditions in the Altai region, the forum was held in three separate locations — Barnaul, Biysk, and Gorny Altai — on three successive days. This caravan approach involved the logistical challenge of transporting the 52 core conference participants between three cities and two regions, but presented alumni with the opportunity to see firsthand the communities in which many of the youth programs described during the forum are held. The traveling forum was also open to nonalumni interested in the future of young people and attracted the participation of local specialists in each city.

Barnaul

A broad mix of alumni representing local government, the business community and not-for-profit organizations gathered at the forum opening and plenary session in Barnaul on July 30. Alumni Coordinator Vera DeBuchananne of the Open World Leadership Center at the Library of Congress and Open World Program Coordinator Alexander Khilkov of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow greeted participants at the opening ceremonies. Boris Larin, Deputy Chair of the Altai Territory Legislative Assembly, Nikolay Cherepanov, Deputy Mayor of Barnaul, and Gennadiy Malkov, former chair of the Barnaul Rotary Club, spoke of the importance of collaboration on youth policy.

After the opening ceremonies, participants split into three groups for more detailed analysis of how youth programs are financed and run by the government, nonprofit, and private sectors. The topics of these breakout groups were

- Federal Youth Programs
- Civic Education Programs of Youth Advocacy NGOs

■ Business Projects as a Way to Solve Social and Youth Problems

In each section, alumni presented the youth initiatives that they are currently implementing in their regions. Following each presentation, the floor was opened for an interactive question and answer session. The discussions in these breakout groups revealed the numerous initiatives and creative approaches being developed in the many regions of Siberia represented at the forum. The participants had a chance to familiarize themselves with the ideas and experience of colleagues working near and far, solidify their ideas about how youth advocacy should be approached in each of their respective fields, and establish contact with potential partners.

Biysk

The forum continued its work the following day in Biysk, a city 75 miles from Barnaul, where Vera Pron'kina, Chair of the Youth Parliament of Novosibirsk Region, began the second day by sharing her rich experience in forming youth advocacy policy in one of the most populous Siberian regions. She stressed the importance of young people assuming responsibility for the success of such initiatives themselves and having the freedom to arrange their own affairs.

The participants had a chance to hear what young people think of youth parliaments. The acting deputies of youth parliaments in the cities of Novoaltaisk and Aleysk, high school students elected to their positions by their peers, engaged in a debate about the utility of such organizations, with one team asserting their effectiveness in providing young people with experience in the mechanisms of politics and the other claiming that such youth parliaments benefit neither the community nor its participants. While in the official debate the team supporting youth parliaments emerged victorious, the issues arising from this exchange stimulated a heated discussion among the forum participants about the real effectiveness of such youth parliaments. Their lack of any real decision-making power, opponents claimed, results in organizations that little resemble legislative assemblies. In practice they act as any other non-profit organization.

The second half of the day was devoted to drug and HIV/AIDS prevention projects. This topic is one of critical importance for Biysk. By the end of 2003, there were 2,969 HIV-infected individuals registered in Altai Kray, 70 percent of them in Biysk. The main way that HIV is spread is through drug use.

Gorny Altai – Adaru Lodge

The final stop of the traveling forum was in the Altai republic. Nestled in the mountains along the shores of the Katun River, the Adaru complex provided the participants with a beautiful, peaceful environment for the final day of work. The goal of the workshops held on the third day was to encourage the creation of joint projects among

participants from different regions and different sectors of society. The alumni learned how to collaborate, taking into consideration the interests of different parties involved in a project and maximizing common resources.



Youth activists make a presentation at the conference in Adaru

The alumni separated into groups representing government, business, and civil society to identify the expectations they have of each other. The heated discussion proved that there is still little agreement on the responsibilities of each sector, and that there is still a lot to learn about the way to present one's own position and to find compromises.

The Open World Alumni Outreach Program's interregional forum "Youth – Real-Life Impact" provided alumni with an outstanding opportunity to expand their worldview and discover new models of behavior and work. Attendees gained new perspectives and business contacts that can be used to develop more comprehensive and effective programs for youth and the community at large.

Regional Alumni Coordinator Conference

The beginning of the school year coincided with a new stage in the development of the Open World Alumni Outreach Program. Twenty regional alumni coordinators came to the ancient Russian city of Torzhok, in the Tver region, to share their experience and discuss new program directions for 2004–2005. Some regional coordinators who have maintained contact with alumni for several years as regional program nominators shared information about regional alumni clubs and associations' activities; seminars and trainings; and charitable events. Coordinators also discussed hosting American delegations and holding videoconferences with American host organizations and host families. Everyone agreed that the program would support alumni initiatives on information sharing, networking and communicating with U.S. host organizations and host families. It was determined that these initiatives could include helping organize reciprocal visits to Russia and working on collaborative projects.

ABCs of a Young Family – forms spiritual, moral and traditional family values among youth.

Alternative – drug abuse prevention project.

Irkutsk

Yevgeniya Anatolyevna Chubchenko

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Good Deeds Initiative – promotes volunteerism, involving young people in work on important social and civic issues, and develops models for NGO and local government cooperation.

Omsk

Yevgeniy Sergeevich Shcherbakha

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Singer-Songwriter Club Movement for Children – starts clubs and provides facilities for developing children's creativity, organizes festivals, and encourages children and youth to perform their own songs.

Novosibirsk

Sergey Yuryevich Semyonov

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syurich@yandex.ru

Intellectual Games of Siberia – organizes "intellectual games" competitions for three age groups for the Koltsov Cup and the Siberia and Far East Cup. The goal of the competitions is to stimulate creativity and intellectual development among youth.

Novosibirsk

Sergey Yuryevich Semyonov

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syurich@yandex.ru

Socially Active Schools – implements and develops the socially active schools [community schools] model. Schools are viewed as community centers, as centers for partnership among teachers, students, parents and local residents.

The schools create an environment that helps students take part in solving the social problems of their community.

Rostov-on-Don

Yuliya Bodnya

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School of Civic Education – educates youth on the value of a civil society, a multiparty system, a market economy, the observance of civil liberties, and an independent mass media.

Barnaul

Sergey Vladimirovich Andreyev

(3852) 33-41-27

Youth Against Corruption – aims through youth education to help fight corruption in society.

Irkutsk

Aleksey Viktorovich Petrov

(3952) 34-33-25, 25-88-99

SOTA – creates jobs and involves youth in solving social-economic problems through the effective use of local natural, human and ethnographic resources.

Biysk

Viktor Danilov

(3854) 33-84-50

Festa – organizes a festival for creative students, uniting the efforts of NGOs and governmental organizations that support youth creativity. The festival program includes a number of activities at the university, intercollegiate and regional levels.

Barnaul

Natalya Yevsikova

(3852) 61-61-82

Tourism in Undeveloped Regions – involves rural youth in tourism development and teaches young people basic skills of tourism management; workplaces are created, new tourist routes

are developed and tourist facilities are established.

Irkutsk

Marina Vladimirovna Rogova

(3952) 36-83-77, 42-68-20

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Young Sports Stars of Kuzbass – develops and implements strategy for using educational technologies to promote healthy lifestyles.

Kemerovo

Yelena Aleksandrovna Slobodchikova

(3842) 28-91-30

Debate Clubs Network – links community discussion clubs, encouraging information- and resource-sharing. People of different age groups can develop and practice public-speaking skills and discuss and find solutions to vital problems.

Barnaul

Aleksey Vladimirovich Kokorin

debates@sunproject.ru

Helping Hand – offers a rehabilitation program for drug addicts and their families, helps set up support groups, trains Russian professionals on principles and methods used by their British colleagues working with this target group.

Kemerovo

Olga Valentinovna Zamaziy

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Public Law Academy – develops young people's legal knowledge through education and active involvement in volunteer community work. It also organizes campaigns aimed at attracting attention to the issue of juvenile delinquency.

Novoaltaysk

Nadezhda Nikolayevna Vetiorets

(38532) 2-27-24

Dr. James H. Billington, the chair of Open World's board of trustees, meets with Novgorod alumni while visiting Russia in September

