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Monthly Newsletter

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American Culture Week Takes Ashgabat By Storm

From Monday, June 30, through Saturday, July 5, the American Embassy sponsored American Culture Week in honor of U.S. Independence Day. Turkmen national media extensively covered the week's activities, which were very popular and well attended by Ashgabat residents.

A photo exhibit entitled "Turkmen Views of America and American Views of Turkmenistan" was the opening event for Culture Week. Deputy Chief of Mission Robert Tansey opened this unique photo exhibit on June 30, to a crowd of over 150 observers at the National Library of Turkmenistan in Ashgabat. The photos were taken by alumni of U.S. Government-sponsored exchange programs and local Embassy staff showing their impressions of America and by Americans living and working in Turkmenistan showing their views of their host country. The exhibit remained open to the public through July 3.

The Embassy also presented a variety of American-style entertainment opportunities, including an American Movie Festival, a concert in the park, and an amateur production of one of William Shakespeare's most beloved comedies. Six American movies for young and old alike were presented to Turkmen audiences and featured well-known classics such as "The Magnificent Seven" and modern hits such as "Monsters, Inc."



A visitor to the photo exhibit observes Turkmenistan from an American point of view.

The festival was well attended and the Embassy has plans to host more in the future. Shakespeare's "Comedy of Errors" may seem out of place in American Culture Week, but when the opportunity to include this adapted production was presented by U.S. exchange program alumni, the U.S. Embassy couldn't resist. The piece, translated into simple modern English by the Turkmenabat Poetry Club, organized by a group of Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program alumni, aided by Peace Corps volunteers, was wonderfully performed by the students. In order to make the audience feel more connected to the action, the names of the heroes and cities were changed from English to Turkmen. Both performances, on July 2 and 3, were well attended, with the American and British Deputy Chiefs of Mission introducing the performance on opening night.

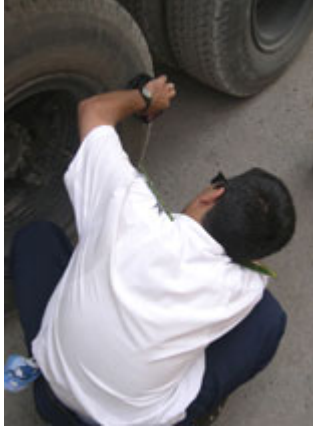


Leader of NGO "Nur" of Dashoguz welayat Jeren Amanova describes their project to Ambassador Kennedy

On Thursday, July 3, the U.S. Embassy organized a concert in cooperation with the Turkmen Ministry of Culture. The two-hour concert featured the National Cultural Center orchestra as well as local jazz and rock bands, and famous Turkmen singers. The performance entertained over 600 music lovers, many of whom joined the show in dance. Held in a newly refurbished (continued on page 4)

U.S. IBIT Program Trains Turkmen Customs and Border Officials

Approximately 25 customs and border officials from different regions of Turkmenistan participated in a U.S. Department of Homeland Security-sponsored International Border Interdiction Training (IBIT) program July 8-11 in Ashgabat to learn state-of-the-art methods for detecting nuclear, chemical and biological weapons components that could be smuggled across borders.



Turkmen customs officer trying to detect a hidden compartment in a truck, using a buster.

The four-day training session was taught by American customs and border patrol officers and included instruction in uncovering hidden compartments in vehicles, identifying false documents and analyzing suspicious behavior, as well as practice using x-ray equipment, fiber-optic scopes and advanced computer technologies.

Participants were from Turkmenistan's out-posts located in areas that border Iran, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and on ports on the Caspian Sea.



Specialist from the U.S. Customs Service Roland Harris conducting the IBIT seminar.

In November 2003, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security plans to organize a follow-up training in the U.S. for 16 customs and border patrol officers of Turkmenistan.

Since 1998, according to the U.S. Customs Service, foreign customs officers trained through this program have made eight significant seizures, including 10 radioactive lead containers concealed in a scrap metal truck traveling from Kazakhstan to Uzbekistan, and 10 grams of highly enriched Uranium-235 concealed in an air compressor in a car traveling from Romania to Bulgaria.

Specialists from Turkmenistan Participate in Regional Study Program

On July 18, Country Director for the Academy for Educational Development Tatyana Galkanova and Program Coordinator of "Winrock International" Merdan Khudaikuliev completed a two-week Vienna Initiative for Central Asia (VICA) study program on "Local and Regional Government" at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna. U.S. Ambassador to the OSCE Stephan Minikes presented Course Certificates to the representatives from Turkmenistan and nine other participants from Central Asia. The curriculum included instruction on federalism and constitutional government, provincial and city government, city planning, economic and tax policies and environmental issues. VICA was initiated by the U.S. Embassy in Vienna in cooperation with the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, the City of Vienna, U.S.-OSCE and the Joint Vienna Institute.



Ambassador Heidemaria Gurer from the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (on the right) and U.S. Ambassador to the OSCE Stephan Minikes presenting a course certificate to Tatyana Galkanova.

Alumni Life in Turkmenistan

New Ugrad Alumni Re-engage in Life in Turkmenistan with American Experience Under Their Belts

Six newly returned alumni of the FSA Undergraduate exchange program participated in a re-entry seminar, organized by the ACCELS office in Ashgabat on July 16. During the seminar, alumni participated in a series of activities designed to alleviate and help overcome reverse culture shock, as well as to tackle other repatriation and reintegration issues. Most alumni experience culture shock upon returning to their home country after a yearlong stay in the United States. Representatives from ACCELS, the Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy and IREX introduced their programs and grant opportunities for alumni. The event provided an opportunity for newly returned alumni to establish closer communication and cooperation with ACCELS Undergraduate Alumni and PAS and IREX Alumni Coordinators. Alumni are looking forward to using the experience and knowledge they acquired in the U.S. to develop their home country.

Alumni Learn to Write Effective Resumes

On July 16, Peace Corps Volunteer Kim Angelon conducted a seminar on resume writing for nine returning FLEX students at the IATP Alumni Resource Center in Ashgabat. During the seminar,

Kim introduced the trainees to resumes in general and why it is important to have an effective one, showing them a good example at www.monster.com. They also downloaded templates of cover letters from the Internet and worked with Kim to modify them for their own purposes. Several participants remarked that they didn't realize before that a resume and cover letter are necessary to get a good job or internship, and were grateful for the information.

Online Marketing Seminar for Alumni

On July 17, Serdar Agayev (RSEP 2000), a trainer working for Pragma Corporation, conducted a seminar entitled "Marketing Online" for six FLEX and FSAU alumni at the IATP Alumni Resource Center in Ashgabat. Serdar introduced them to the basics of marketing and establishing a small business and gave a tour of Pragma Corporation's website at www.casme.net, which contains information on finding products and improving customer service, among other topics. The participants then engaged in a discussion about how to entice customers to buy a product, as well as how not to be fooled by advertisers themselves. Finally, the alumni reviewed national and municipal laws governing small businesses in Ashgabat, in order to acquaint themselves with the practical realities of entrepreneurship in Turkmenistan.

Specialists from Turkmenistan Participate in Regional Study Program



EcoCenter trainers from the Union of Ecological NGOs of Turkmenistan (EcoCenter) Tahir Garipov, Galina Kalagina and Daniil Maykovskiy presented a training entitled "Public Relations for Public Organizations" to representatives

from 22 public organizations of Ashgabat and one representative from the international organization "Counterpart Turkmenistan" June 30 - July 1. The training was sponsored and supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Academy for Educational Development (AED).

The training featured a new approach to Public Relations, different from the common understanding of PR activities in the context of organizational development. New terms such as "publicity capital", "internal PR", and "the synergy effect" were introduced.

Organizations invited to the training have a good reputation and significant work experience. They include the Nature Protection Society of Turkmenistan, National Red Crescent Society, Children's Fund at the Youth Union of Turkmenistan, and NGOs "Keyik Okara", "Watanchy", "Bosfor", and ecological club "Catena".

"USAID is confident that the PR training will help public organizations of Turkmenistan to effectively continue their work and establish and strengthen business contacts," said USAID Country Director in Turkmenistan Bradford Camp in his opening remarks.

The EcoCenter training team created the training, using interactive methods such as brainstorming, modeling, role-plays, case studies, small groups, and group reflection.

"Today's training changed my stereotypes about Public Relations. Now I understand that an accurately maintained PR policy is one of the necessary conditions for development of an organization," said Olga Lukonina of NGO "Yashyl".

"The training taught me to take PR opportunities into consideration while planning my work. This will in turn benefit my organization and raise its publicity capital," concluded Irina Andreeva of "Catena" ecological club.

The training was based on materials presented at the Public Relations Winter School held at the Saint Petersburg University in the beginning of 2003. USAID/AED sponsored Tahir Garipov's participation at the seminar.

Summer Camp Brings English Teachers of Dashoguz Together

The Dashoguz English Teachers' Initiative Group organized the first Summer English Immersion Camp for English teachers in Dashoguz welayat from July 4-13, aided by the American Corner in Dashoguz and Peace Corps volunteers working in the welayat.

The curriculum of the summer camp included not only sessions on English language communicative methodology, but also covered American studies and culture, world geography and history, ecology and environmental studies, and self-education and improvement. The main rule of the camp was "Speak English only," which significantly improved teachers' spoken English abilities. Summer camp activities also included a field trip to the historical site of Kunya-Urgench.

Almost every day, campers had guest speakers, including U.S. Charge d'Affaires Robert Tansey, Ambassador of Great Britain Paul Brummell, and

representatives from Counterpart Turkmenistan, Winrock International and ACCELS. Mr. Tansey visited the camp with his wife Stephanie, son David and daughter Alena, who together conducted a very interesting presentation on protecting the environment. The Tansey family also had dinner with campers and took part in a talent show.

A campfire on the last night was the most memorable event of the camp for many. Teachers had a lot of fun barbequing, singing camp songs and dancing around the campfire.

The camp was the first project organized by the Dashoguz English Teachers' Initiative Group, which was established in March 2003 with the purpose of organizing activities for English teachers of Dashoguz welayat to promote professionalism and exchange experiences.

A Week of Learning and Fun for English Teachers

Twenty-three English teachers from all welayats of Turkmenistan participated in the Fifth English Teachers' Conference held from July 21-28, 2003, in Gokdere (formerly Chuli), a small resort settlement outside of Ashgabat.

Conference activities focused on introducing innovations in teaching methodology. Alumni of the Teaching Excellency Awards (TEA) exchange program, who had gone through a seven-week seminar on English teaching methodology and American Studies in the U.S., conducted workshops on "Teaching English through Movies", "Critical Thinking", and "Writing Skills" among other topics. Participants also had opportunities to share their professional experiences and skills with their counselors. Speakers who visited the conference, including speakers from the international community and Turkmen alumni of U.S. exchange programs,

talked about motivating students, the psychological aspects of teaching, creative teaching, and drug prevention, and held lively discussions with participants. During evening activities, teachers shared songs that their colleagues could use for the celebration of American holidays in their classrooms.

Teachers were encouraged to bring their children to the conference. Young boys and girls participated in special activities, which focused on developing their self-expression and creativity, and fostering their identity through constructive games and crafts. Participants found the conference very useful for their professional development and went back to their hometowns full of energy and enthusiasm to teach English in a new academic year.

American Culture Week Takes Ashgabat By Storm

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amphitheater in one of Ashgabat's many beautiful parks, the concert provided a mix of old and new, classical and modern to the appreciative crowd.

On the 4th of July, "Neutralniy Turkmenistan" newspaper published an article about the United States under the headline "Republic of Sciences." The article, about the development of sciences and the most prominent scientists and scholars throughout American history, was written in response to requests from readers who had seen the American Culture Week Photo Exhibit at the National Library and wanted to know more about the U.S. A picture truly is worth a thousand words!



The "Black Jack" Band performing Eric Clapton's famous song "Tears in Heaven".

Peace Corps Volunteers and Their Local Counterparts Organize Youth Health Camp in Yoloten



Thirty local high school students participated in the Yoloten Health Camp organized by Peace Corps Volunteers and local teachers and doctors from July 21-27. Each day of the camp, the students attended classes that addressed health issues, including infectious diseases such as hepatitis, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS; drug education; first aid skills; heart health; and hygiene. Young boys and girls also studied English, and participated in optional sessions on juggling, cooking, and English songs, and had a field trip to the ruins of the ancient city of Merv.

Four U.S. Peace Corps volunteers aided by local teachers and doctors and non-governmental organizations, put the camp together. A volunteer working in Yoloten etrap, Eugene Liu, directed the camp and taught health classes, together with other health volunteers, Andrea Baeder and Sheryl Wallin, both from Mary welayat. Education Volunteer Jason Assir led English classes. Local health specialists from the Red Crescent Society and the Yoloten Etrap Hospital, as well as teachers from local schools, assisted PCVs to make the camp more

successful. They taught some classes and served as counselors. Zdrav Plus, a health NGO operating throughout Central Asia, provided financial support for the camp. The Yoloten Education Department and the director of School #2 provided necessary facilities to hold the camp.



A camper learns how to do CPR at the Yoloten Health Camp.

Within just a week, campers significantly increased their level of health education, based on the results of their test scores. For almost all boys and girls, the week spent in the camp became the best part of their summer holidays. "If I were the camp director, I would make the camp last two months," said one camper on the last day of the camp.

Visit of USAID Regional Director of the Office of Enterprise and Finance

On July 14, 2003, the Pragma Enterprise Development Project (EDP)/Turkmenistan office hosted its first project meeting with Mary Norris, Regional Director of USAID's Office of Enterprise and Finance (E&F). Accompanying Ms. Norris were Matthew M. Schofield, E&F Program Assistant from Almaty, and Patty McCabe, USAID E&F Project Manager in Ashgabat. The intent of the E&F visit was to update current initiatives of EDP/Turkmenistan, gain further insight as to the complexities of operating the particular USAID initiative in-country, and define possibilities for improvement and growth of the regional initiative in the future.

USAID and Pragma continue to support the development of associations that will serve as avenues for communication, advocacy, lobbying and training within the local professional and business communities. To this end, the EDP project has worked with a local initiative group to develop and register a professional accounting association in Turkmenistan. While visiting the EDP Ashgabat office, Ms. Norris had the opportunity to visit with

"The Association of Accountants and Auditors of Turkmenistan" (AAAT), to discuss an upcoming conference related to their establishment, future registration and strategic vision.

The visit with EDP/Turkmenistan was rounded out by visits to two Turkmen private enterprises in Ashgabat. A meeting was scheduled with "Arkach" bakery, a successful bread and confectionary producer, which serves the entire Ashgabat market. The production manager on duty detailed the history of the enterprise, specifics of production, products and related sales, and tentative vision for the immediate future. They also visited a small business owned and managed by Maya Hydyrova, recipient of a USAID grant to take part in an entrepreneurial and empowerment conference for women in Barcelona. Ms. Hydyrova explained how she started a local business in Turkmenistan, discussed the difficulties she continually faces in this business environment, her product portfolio (including national carpets, crafts and other artisan goods), and business hopes for the future.

First DOTS Seminars in Turkmenistan Conducted by Turkmen Specialists

On July 29-31, Project HOPE's local team of trainers conducted a DOTS seminar for primary health care doctors from various healthcare institutions of Ashgabat. Trainers, from all three DOTS pilot sites of Ashgabat, Turkmenbashi and Mary, successfully passed a course entitled "Training of Trainers for DOTS", which was conducted by a professional team of trainers from

Kazakhstan from June 1-11 in Ashgabat. The newly trained Turkmen DOTS specialists are beginning a series of seminars in Turkmenistan to pass on their knowledge and skills to other primary health care doctors of Turkmenistan.

Kyrgyz Regional Trade Conference an Overwhelming Success

USAID/Pragma EDP continue to promote regional trade and integration through efforts such as the "Development of Regional Trade in the Central Asia Region" conference, held in Kyrgyzstan from June 30 - July 2, 2003. The primary goal of this regional conference was to present an overview of regional commerce as it stands to date, as well as coordinate and facilitate trading activities and opportunities among participant businesses and respective nations. Official representatives taking part in the conference included government ministries, regional businesses and business associations. The conference enabled all such participants to discuss and offer resolutions to trade issues and obstacles linked with regional and country-specific trade development, trade policies, and eventual WTO accession. The conference also allowed for businesses to network with potential clients and/or suppliers in the region.

Turkmenistan was represented at the Kyrgyz conference by Ishanguly Medjudov, Director of local enterprise "Aksa", and Gozel Anamedredova, Director of "Center of Development Crafts in Turkmenistan". Both found the conference an ideal opportunity to learn of reform efforts related to trade and commerce throughout the Central Asian republics; they also utilized this opportunity to link up with partners and markets outside of Turkmenistan. In fact, Mr. Medjudov indicated that "Aksa" signed a memorandum of understanding with a Kyrgyz private business, thus developing a partnership and future export market for "Aksa" products. Both he and Ms. Anamedredova expressed appreciation to USAID and Pragma for the opportunity to attend such "roundtable" discussions related to trade, as well as the opportunity to link with regional partners and markets.

2004 Edmund S. Muskie/Freedom Support Act Graduate Fellowship Program Announcement

2004 Edmund S. Muskie / Freedom Support Act Graduate Fellowship Program

Administered by the American Councils for International Education: ACTR/ACCELS
Funded by the United States Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

The Muskie/FSA Graduate Fellowship Program provides for graduate level studies in business administration, economics, education, environmental management and policy, international affairs, journalism and mass communications, law, library and information science, public administration, public health, and public policy. It is the goal of the Muskie/FSA Program that Fellows, upon their return home, will contribute to the economic and democratic growth of their countries and serve as leaders in the targeted fields of study.

Competition for the fellowship is merit -based and opens to anyone who meets the specific criteria. Partial criteria are listed here.

APPLICANTS MUST:

- Be a citizen and residing in the following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan
- Be under the age of forty (40) at the time of application.
- Hold an undergraduate degree (five- or four-year program) by the time of application.
- Proficient in spoken and written English at the time of application.
- Able to demonstrate professional aptitude and leadership potential in the field of specialization.
- Able to receive and maintain a U.S. J-1 visa.

THE DEADLINE FOR APPLICATION SUBMISSION IS: 17:00, OCTOBER 31, 2003

For more information please, contact American Councils/ACCELS:
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Turkmenbashi: Tel: 2-13-95
Turkmenabat: Tel: 4-40-25

For more information on other U.S. Government-sponsored exchange programs, please visit our website.