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U.S. Educational Fair in Ashgabat Draws 1,500 Attendants

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On October 5, 2002, the ACCELS Educational Advising Center in Turkmenistan, in cooperation with the U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat, organized the Fourth Annual Educational Fair at the National Library of Turkmenistan. About 1,500 people from various regions of Turkmenistan came to the fair to explore educational and research opportunities in the U.S. Various organizations including the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Turkmenistan, the American Councils for International Education (ACCELS), the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), the Peace Corps, Ashgabat International School, NGO "ARKA", American University in Central Asia (AUCA) and Kazakhstan Institute of Management and Economics (KIMEP) made presentations and distributed materials about their educational programs.

"I firmly believe that one of the best ways to build better international relationships is to promote international educational exchanges," said U.S. Ambassador to Turkmenistan, Laura E. Kennedy, introducing educational and research opportunities in the U.S. Assistant to the Minister of Education of Turkmenistan, Bayram Bashimov, gave an overview of the educational policy of Turkmenistan and stressed the significant role of U.S. Government-sponsored educational exchanges in Turkmenistan.

Discussions and presentations at the Fair covered a variety of educational topics. People attended sessions on various exchange programs, college study in the U.S., taking the TOEFL test, writing a Statement of Purpose, and other topics.



Ambassador Kennedy is viewing materials available at the Educational Fair along with other attendants



The Fair gathered a record number of attendants.

Representatives of ACCELS, IREX, and the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy answered questions about the exchange programs they administer and provided prospective applicants with necessary information. People also learned about a new educational program, the Educational Network Academy, funded by USAID. The Academy provides training and education in economics and business administration. Representatives from AUCA and KIMEP traveled to Ashgabat to tell Turkmen citizens about educational opportunities at their institutions.

This year, the U.S. Embassy presented a new "English Language Study Development" program, in which the Embassy orders English language study materials from the U.S. and sells them in Turkmenistan at a reduced price. At the Educational Fair, Embassy representatives sold and distributed about 200 books and reference materials on English language teaching and learning. (See p.5 for a partial list of books available).

The Educational Fair provided an excellent opportunity for people interested in the activities of the Peace Corps in Turkmenistan to learn about new Peace Corps volunteers, projects and activities. The director and teachers of the Ashgabat International School provided some useful information about the school's curriculum and extracurricular activities. Representatives of NGO "ARKA" distributed information about the services they provide, language programs and other activities they perform in Ashgabat.

More information about the Fair is available at www.ashgabatfair.tk.

U.S. Ambassador's TV Address on the 11th Anniversary of Turkmenistan's Independence

On October 24, 2002, U.S. Ambassador to Turkmenistan, Laura E. Kennedy made a televised address in Turkmen to the people of Turkmenistan on the eleventh anniversary of Turkmenistan's Independence. The following is the text of the address:

On behalf of President Bush and the American people, I am delighted to convey our congratulations to President Niyazov and the people of Turkmenistan on the anniversary of your independence. For the past eleven years, America has been a stalwart supporter of Turkmenistan's independence and an eager friend to its citizens.

We have followed with great interest your efforts to transform your government, society and economy. Celebrating the best of Turkmenistan's rich history while creating a free and just future in which all citizens can equally share is a crucial task. We have sought to assist efforts to create democratic and free market institutions and to integrate Turkmenistan into the key international and regional organizations that underpin today's global community.

Turkmenistan has shown itself to be a good neighbor to Afghanistan. President Bush has written several times to celebrate our cooperation with Turkmenistan in this area. Like my country, Turkmenistan is seeking to broaden humanitarian aid efforts in Afghanistan to long-term development projects that can also benefit the wider region.

We want to enhance ties between our peoples. The Peace Corps and educational and cultural exchanges are some excellent means to do so. We seek to work with your government, your students and teachers, business men and women, social organizations and others to offer our assistance in developing human rights, democratic and free market institutions, essential for the stability and prosperity of any nation.

Turkmenistan is a country with great potential, blessed with rich natural resources, and, most importantly, with rich human resources. The development of human potential is a top priority for any country. An American president, John F. Kennedy, said: "Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education." Although President Kennedy was speaking about the United States, I believe that his words hold true for Turkmenistan.

I hope that the people of Turkmenistan and of the United States will continue to work together and learn from each another. We wish all the citizens of Turkmenistan success in their efforts to create the better world we all want for our children. Thank you.

U.S. Teachers Visit and Teach in Turkmenistan

Two U.S. finalists of the U.S.-Turkmenistan Teaching Excellency Awards (TEA) program Anne Hoepfer and Judith Littlefox visited Turkmenistan for two weeks in October. The American teachers stayed with local TEA alumni, gave seminars, taught at Turkmen schools, met various people, and found some time to go sightseeing.



During her stay, geography teacher Anne Hoepfer from Iowa conducted several seminars for 30 English teachers, including TEA alumni from Turkmenabat, Dashoguz, Babadayhan, Mary, and Turkmenbashi. Ms.

Hoepfer met with students and teachers of Bashkent Turkish Center and Ashgabat School #42. She was a guest speaker at the ACCELS library, where she made a presentation on her home state of Iowa and talked about activities at her school. TEA alumni of 2002, Karina Israyelyan and Atanazar Akatov living in Ashgabat hosted Ms. Hoepfer for a few days each. Upon returning to Iowa, Ms. Hoepfer plans to give an extensive overview of Turkmenistan to her students as part of her Geography class.



Judith Littlefox is a Principal at Greyhills Academy High School in Tuba City, Arizona. Ms. Littlefox was hosted by Haitjan Kerimova, TEA alumna 2002, in Turkmenabat City and worked with Haitjan at School #2, sharing her

culture and school activities with local students and teachers. She also conducted several seminars with English teachers in Turkmenabat on Critical Thinking. Sharing her impressions of Turkmenistan on the last day of her stay, Ms. Littlefox said, "Young people in Turkmenistan seem to know where they are and where they are going. They know what they want in their lives, which is a very positive sign."

The United States - Turkmenistan Teaching Excellency Awards Exchange Program is designed to recognize and reward Turkmenistan's secondary school teachers of English and American Studies. National winners travel to the U.S. to participate in a seven-week seminar on American Studies. U.S. finalists come to Turkmenistan to teach at Turkmen schools, give seminars and exchange experiences and cultures with Turkmen teachers and students. During the three years since the program started, 15 English teachers from Turkmenistan have been to the U.S., five American teachers have visited Turkmenistan and about 70 Turkmen schools have been equipped with books and computers.

International Visitor Program In Turkmenistan On the Rise

The number of participants in the International Visitor Program from Turkmenistan is rising annually. Just recently, three groups of International Visitors returned from the United States with unforgettable experiences and impressions.

International Visitors Berkeli Atayev, Head of the International Relations, Marketing and Advertisement Department at the State Committee for Sports and Tourism; Ogulsona Annamuradova, Teacher of Tourism at the Turkmen National Institute of Sports and Tourism; Mammetsurdy Mamedov, Chairman of the National Administration for Cultural Preservation, and Dovlet Abdyllyaev, Guide at the Mary Museum of History, visited the U.S. to learn about American experiences in tourism and cultural preservation. They visited numerous universities, government, public and private tourism organizations, and museums in New York, Washington, D.C.; Albuquerque and Santa Fe, New Mexico; Salt Lake City, Utah; Jacksonville, Florida, and Boston, Massachusetts. The International Visitors from Turkmenistan met many interesting people in the U.S., with whom they are eager to maintain contacts.

Five representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of Turkmenistan - Roza Kuzakhmetova, Ayna Bayramova, Galina Kalagina, Sona Karryeva, and Tamila Islamova spent three weeks in the U.S. as International Visitors in an NGO Management program. NGO activists from Turkmenistan learned about developing strategies for partnership with state, private, public, and media sectors, as well as fundraising, teambuilding, encouraging volunteerism, promotions, and media campaigns. "We are sure that we will be able to use everything we have seen and learned in the U.S. for the development of civil society and democracy in Turkmenistan," wrote the NGO activists in their letter of appreciation to U.S. Ambassador Laura Kennedy upon their return.



International Visitors from Turkmenistan with patients at the Women's Rehabilitation Center.

Another International Visitor program involved Turkmen citizens working in the field of drug education. Co-chairperson of NGO "Achyk Gapy", Bahar Annanepesova; Director of the Women's Resource Center at Turkmen State University, Gulistan Yazkulieva; and Chairperson of NGO "Arkadag", Sona Chuli-Kuli had an opportunity to learn America's experience with this serious issue firsthand. They met many counterparts in Washington, D.C.; San Francisco, California; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Jacksonville, Florida and learned about the U.S. government policies on drug control, drug courts and alternative sentencing, youth rehabilitation, treatment and training, and civic activism in drug prevention. According to the International Visitors from Turkmenistan, the highlight of their trip to the U.S. was visiting the Women's Rehabilitation Center in San Victoria, California, which provides comprehensive support services to combat the abuse of alcohol and drugs in the community.

In 2003, 28 citizens of Turkmenistan will travel to the U.S. as part of the International Visitor Program, compared to 13 in 2002 and 12 in 2001.

The International Visitor Program was designed to increase mutual understanding through communication at the personal and professional level. Since 1940, each year more than 4,400 visitors from around the world participate in the program to meet and confer with their professional counterparts in the U.S. Some come for individual programs and others come as part of single-country, regional, or multi-regional group projects. During their programs, which usually last two to four weeks, International Visitors have an opportunity to experience life in the United States firsthand.

IRC CORNER: *Information USA* software

Information USA is an authoritative resource for audiences seeking information about official U.S. policies, American society, culture, and political processes. It provides extensive hyperlinks to the sites and resources that provide a rich spectrum of information about the United States. *Information USA* is maintained by the Office of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. The hybrid nature of this CD allows users to view the material contained therein as well as browse the Internet. An online version of *Information USA* is accessible through the Internet at <http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/>.

This software is freely available at the Information Resource Center. If it interests you, please call or email Azat Myradov, IRC Assistant:
Information Resource Center,
U.S. Embassy Ashgabat,
Tel: 350045 E-mail: irc-ashgabat@iatp.edu.tm
U.S. Embassy - Ashgabat Homepage:
<http://www.usemb-ashgabat.rpo.at>

Anjela Begjanova: U.S. Foreign Service National Employee of the Year for Europe and Eurasia

On September 23, 2002, U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Specialist Anjela Begjanova received the 2002 Foreign Service National of the Year Award in the Benjamin Franklin Room at the Department of State in Washington, D.C. U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell opened the Award Ceremony, in which six U.S. Embassy national employees were recognized as the best in their regions.

Anjela Begjanova from Turkmenistan received the award as the best foreign U.S. Embassy employee in the region of Europe and Eurasia. The honorary plaque Ms. Begjanova received at the ceremony, signed by Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Elizabeth Jones, recognizes her for "sustained, exemplary service to the U.S. Mission in Turkmenistan and specifically for outstanding support of key cultural outreach projects, as well as for courage and commitment in developing Turkmenistan's youth and its civil society."

Along with Ms. Begjanova, nationals from Eritrea, Pakistan, Vietnam, Israel, and Canada were acknowledged as the best U.S. Embassy employees in their regions.

Anjela Begjanova began working at the U.S. Embassy in 1995 and since then, she has played an integral role in managing the Public Affairs Section and its programs. In addition to this year's FSN of the Year award, Ms. Begjanova has received several Superior Performance Awards (January 1997, April and June 1998), the Franklin-Jefferson Award for Public Diplomacy (1998), Special Recognition Awards (July and August 1999), and a Meritorious Honor Award (May 2001).



Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of the Bureau of Human Resources at the Department of State, Ruth Davis (third from left) with the recipients of the award.

"Open Mike" Opens Hearts

On the evening of October 30, 2002, a group of alumni, local teachers, and representatives from the Professional Organization of English Teachers (POET) and the U.S. Embassy gathered at the American Center for the first "Open Mike" night, an event where anyone could pick up the microphone and speak about a topic of interest. It was

agreed that when a person picked up the mike everyone would listen only to him or her. Stephanie Tansey, who has already organized similar projects in one of the American high schools in China, initiated the event and FLEX alumni Ayna Meredova and Hudaynazar Geldiyev facilitated it.

The event gathered about 18 talented people who got a chance to share their poems and creative stories. Participants also played an imaginary sound game. Together they simulated the sound of a strong rain with their hands and feet. There was also a discussion on what the most valuable things in our lives are, during which participants came up with diverse opinions and ideas. The friendly and comfortable atmosphere throughout the evening was conducive to open and lively discussions. And everyone agreed to meet again next month.



FLEX alumnus Sergey Atliyev reading his own poem at Open Mike night.

EcoNGO Union Expands Activities

Members of the EcoCenter of the EcoNGO Union presented the results of their ecological awareness project at a press conference in Ashgabat on October 31, 2002. The project, funded by a grant from the Counterpart Consortium, is aimed at supporting local initiatives through dissemination of information and development of the EcoNGO network in Turkmenistan, which is a union of 48 environmental NGOs working to solve socio-ecological problems and build a better civil society in the country. The EcoCenter was formed in 2000 by the U.S. Embassy Small Grants Program to Support Local Initiatives in order to coordinate joint activities of the EcoNGO Union.

As part of the Counterpart Consortium project, the EcoCenter established a video library in Ashgabat with about 250 films, as well as regional video libraries in Turkmenbashi and Turkmenabat. These libraries contain films on environmental themes, including documentaries, cartoons, and BBC Prime and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) series. The EcoCenter has held a number of roundtables on ecological problems, and citizens' and NGOs' participation in improving the environment. The Center produces print and electronic publications, as well as videos on environmental issues in Turkmenistan.

Nature protection campaigns by the EcoCenter have been very successful. In collaboration with the Ministry of Nature Protection, the Hakimlik of Archabil etrap and ACCELS, the EcoCenter organized a campaign dedicated to Earth Day and

the Year of Mountains in April. Two hundred-and-twenty members of ecological NGOs, alumni of U.S. Government-sponsored exchange programs, and high school students collected four tons of litter in one day, cleaning up mountain areas in Gokdere (Chuli).

"The environmental campaign in April was a great example of the EcoNGO Union's effective cooperation with the Ministry of Nature Protection, the Archabil Hakimlik and alumni of U.S. Government-sponsored exchanges," said Elena Myartseva at the press conference.

It is notable that some NGO members who took part in the campaign were also participants in other U.S. Government-sponsored programs such as the International Visitor Program and the Contemporary Issues Program.

Turkmen Doctors Learn New Approaches To Primary Health Care

During the month of October the USAID/CAR Regional Training Program administered by the Academy for Educational Development, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry of Turkmenistan and the American International Health Association (AIHA), conducted a workshop entitled "Family Medicine Dissemination Workshop for Regions of Turkmenistan". It was a Training of Trainers course designed for 10 physicians and nurses from Lebap Velayat. The training was provided by Ashgabat Family Medicine Training Center with the goal to prepare training teams in Lebap Velayat who would teach family physicians and nurses and disseminate knowledge about new approaches in primary health care.

Training of trainers will improve services to families and communities in various regions of the country. Availability of well-trained professionals will accelerate the pace of reform and improve the utilization of both human and material resources in the health sector.

During the workshop new interactive methods of teaching were used, including role-plays, situational problem solving, intermediate testing, audio and video presentations of teaching programs on developing practical skills, and contemporary methods of patient body testing.



Participants in the seminar at the Ashgabat Family Medicine Training Center.

English Learning Materials for Sale at the American Center

The Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat offers a wide range of English language study materials specially ordered from the United States and available for sale at reasonable prices for citizens of Turkmenistan. Here are some learning materials available for sale at the American Center:

- *About the USA* combines teaching English with many interesting facts about the U.S.;
- *Changing Times, Changing Perspectives* focuses on English grammar (an audiotape is available with the book);
- *Discover America* is a colorful book with many interesting pictures of America (a set of audiotapes is available with the book);
- *Old Favorites for All Ages* is a collection of popular songs in one book with a set of audiotapes;
- *World English* is a comprehensive English teaching series consisting of the Student Book, Teacher's Manual, and Workbook and is available for six different levels with a set of audiotapes for each level;
- *Edgar Allan Poe Stories* with text recorded on audiotapes.

The Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy has many more books for sale with prices in the range of 17,000 manats to 98,000 manats. Audiotapes cost from 22,000 manats up to 209,000 manats depending on the number of tapes in a set.

If you are interested in purchases these English learning materials, please contact Maya Meredova, Cultural Affairs Assistant:

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If you have any comments on the newsletter, please contact us at myalikgulyevvk@state.gov