



# United States Mission in Turkmenistan

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## U.S. Food Scholar Explores Turkmen Cuisine and Culture

Dr. Darra Goldstein, a professor of Russian at Williams College in Massachusetts, famous as the Founding Editor of the award-winning culinary magazine "Gastronomica", and a personal friend of Ambassador Laura Kennedy, visited Turkmenistan June 14-19. During her visit, Dr. Goldstein, an expert in food studies, learned about Turkmen culinary traditions by visiting Ashgabat's food markets, observing traditional cooking processes and sampling many Turkmen and other local dishes during traditional family and community celebrations, as well as at local restaurants.

"I like to learn various people's cultures by trying their food, conversing with them at the dinner table," Dr. Goldstein was saying throughout the week, answering people's questions about her strong fondness for food.

Attending a Turkmen wedding ceremony and trying Turkmen "dograma" (pronounced doe-gra-má) was a whole new experience for Dr. Goldstein. Later, she noted, "'Dograma' is a key to understanding the Turkmen people's character. Each carefully broken slice of bread becomes a part of a unique dish with its taste getting better and better as one puts his heartfelt diligence into it."

Dr. Goldstein also learned about other aspects of Turkmen culture by visiting a gallery of Turkmen national costumes, the historical sites of Nisa and Anau, a stud farm with beautiful akhal-teke horses and a large oriental flea-market outside of Ashgabat. She met with other ethnic communities living in Turkmenistan such as Russians, Jews, Kazakhs, and Poles and



Dr. Goldstein with women of the Kazakh community in Anau, where she was invited for a traditional Kazakh meal



Dr. Goldstein conducts a master-class on cooking Russian blini with chefs of the Grand Turkmen Hotel.

and certainly didn't miss the opportunity to try their national cuisines as well.

As an award-winning cookbook author and editor, Dr. Goldstein was interesting company for local journalists and NGO activists at a roundtable held in Ashgabat. She also had a discussion with alumni of U.S. Government-sponsored exchange programs about various topics, including education in the U.S. and Turkmen and American foods.

On the last day of her stay in Ashgabat, the articulate scholar gave a master-class on cooking Russian blini for members of the International Women's Club and U.S. Embassy employees at the Sheraton Grand Turkmen Hotel. But before demonstrating visitors how to actually cook blini, Dr. Goldstein gave a short discourse into the long history of this traditional Russian dish, which originated in the 9th century. She believes that "food we eat, even if it is well prepared, would be meaningless to us, if we don't understand its cultural context."

In addition to her "Gastronomica" magazine, Dr. Goldstein is also famous as a Series Editor for "California Studies in Food and Culture" and Food Editor for "Russian Life" magazine. She is the author of numerous highly regarded academic publications and 10 books, among which are "The Georgian Feast: The Vibrant Culture and Savory Food of the Republic of Georgia", acknowledged by President Eduard Shevardnadze, and the bestseller "A La Russe" about the hospitality and traditional recipes from various Soviet Republics.

## Embassy Aims to Support Turkmenistan

### U.S. Embassy Hosts Reception for Finalists of U.S. Exchange Programs

The Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat held a reception on June 6 in Ashgabat to honor finalists of U.S. Government-sponsored exchange programs. The year 2003 saw the highest number of exchange program finalists since these programs were launched in 1992. About 130 bright young men and women will begin to study and conduct research in the United States during the coming months in various educational and professional institutions. Twenty more Turkmen students will be subsidized to study at the American University in Central Asia located in Kyrgyzstan.

U.S. Ambassador to Turkmenistan Laura E. Kennedy congratulated finalists of exchange programs and personally presented each one of them with flowers. "As a professional diplomat, I think that you have a really challenging job of being diplomats yourselves. You will represent Turkmenistan in America," said Ambassador Kennedy encouraging Turkmen "ambassadors" to the U.S.

At the reception, alumni of the Muskie Graduate, FSA Undergraduate, Teaching Excellence Awards,

Junior Faculty Development, and Contemporary Issues programs talked over the prospects of their academic programs with friends and colleagues. Good music and a relaxed atmosphere incited many guests to dance during the reception. Finalists said they really enjoyed this wonderful celebration of one of the major accomplishments in their life - winning the opportunity to study in the United States of America.



Ambassador Kennedy congratulates Gochmurad Kutlyev, finalist of the Contemporary Issues program.

### U.S. Embassy Presents 40 UAZ jeeps to Turkmen Border Service

At a presentation ceremony on June 25 in Berzengi, a suburb of Ashgabat, the U.S. Embassy in Turkmenistan handed over 40 new jeeps to First Deputy Commander of the State Border Service of Turkmenistan Colonel Annageldi Gummanov. These UAZ jeeps were presented by the Embassy to the State Border Service (SBS) of Turkmenistan as part of the U.S. Government's Export Control and Border Security Program (EXBS). The U.S. Government is providing these new jeeps to the State Border Service of Turkmenistan to increase the effectiveness of the SBS in preventing the illegal movement of people and material related to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) across the border of Turkmenistan. This grant is part of an ongoing U.S. Government program supplying equipment and training to assist in the effectiveness of border security.

The EXBS program constitutes the outermost layer of defense against the use of WMD. Its function is to stop the transit of WMD and related items. This is done by attempting to halt these items in countries as close to the source as possible. EXBS

accomplishes this by providing training and equipment for countries' border security forces. Countries participating in this program benefit by using the equipment and training provided to secure their own borders. Equipment and training to stop the transfer of WMD and related materials can also be used to prevent trafficking in narcotics and smuggling of goods to avoid taxation.



Turkmen soldiers driving UAZ jeeps out of the U.S. Housing Compound after the official handing-over ceremony.

## International Visitors Help Elderly with Employment Opportunities

On June 8, participants of the International Visitors program on Employment Issues Mekan Hydyrov, Aynash Koshchaeva and Ogulnabat Babaeva organized a presentation about their program in the U.S. for members of NGO "Arma", which supports elderly people. Representatives from other non-governmental, private and state organizations attended the presentation as well.

At the meeting, International Visitors revealed a variety of opportunities for elderly people to earn money. Leaders of NGO "Arma" were very glad to



International Visitors talking with members of the "Arma" NGO about their trip to the U.S. and various employment opportunities.

learn about some new possible projects and activities they could undertake to provide jobs for elderly people of Turkmenistan, many of whom are unemployed and facing financial problems.

The three-week-long International Visitors program on Employment Issues in the U.S. included tours to federal government offices dealing with labor issues in Washington, D.C., as well as visits to regional employment organizations and organized labor and vocational college programs in Massachusetts. As part of their program, the International Visitors also learned about employment issues within the context of an agriculture-based economy in Iowa, women's labor issues in New York City and regional business networks, private enterprise incubators, and technical training initiatives in San Diego, California.

Since returning to Turkmenistan from the program in April, the Turkmen employment specialists, all inspired by the many interesting ideas gained in the U.S., have been meeting with various initiative groups and organizations that deal with employment issues, sharing their experiences and insights.

## PCVs and Local Counterparts Learn to Organize Community Projects

Forty-nine Peace Corps Volunteers and their local counterparts from across Turkmenistan gathered in Ashgabat June 9-13 for the Project Design Management Conference. During the weeklong conference, organized by the Peace Corps office in Ashgabat, participants discussed the various aspects of successful design and implementation of educational and health-related community projects.

Volunteers work together with their counterparts, including teachers, curriculum methodologists and doctors to develop these projects aimed at teaching English or promoting healthy lifestyle. Some of the projects include opening resource centers, organizing summer camps for English teachers and students, publication of brochures on various health issues, among other activities. Organizers of the conference emphasized the importance of designing effective and ongoing projects, which could be carried on by local people even after the Peace Corps volunteers leave the country. This can be achieved through developing closer interaction between PCVs and their local partners, as well as by encouraging greater community involvement in the projects.

During the past ten years, the Peace Corps has

carried out a large number of humanitarian projects throughout Turkmenistan, which have contributed to the implementation of social and educational reforms in the country. Peace Corps Volunteers living and working in Turkmenistan also promote better understanding between the two countries' people.



Education Volunteer from Turkmenbashi City, Lance Chimka energetically explains his point of view to fellow volunteers and counterparts during one of the sessions at the Project Design Management Conference.

## Orphan Teenagers Find Jobs Thanks To USAID-sponsored Computer Course

On June 23, 46 orphan teenagers completed a five-month personal computer (PC) training course conducted by "Bilimli Nesil" Youth Educational Center in Ashgabat, sponsored by the START Project, the USAID Regional Training Program administered by the Academy for Educational Development (AED). "Bilimli Nesil" and START organized the training to expand opportunities of graduating orphan high school students for further education and employment.

As a result of the intensive training, students learned to operate and troubleshoot Microsoft Windows operating systems and Microsoft Office software programs, use peripheral computer devices such as printer, scanner and digital camera, browse the Internet and create websites using FrontPage Express and Photoshop software programs. As part of the course, each participant received training materials, containing special instructions on computer service and maintenance. In addition to their daily training sessions, participants were able to use the Center's library, where they conducted research on various educational opportunities.

Three of the students, Anna Abramova, Roman Shubin and Mergen Doliev, were hired by the "RAM" computer company, after a thorough interview, upon completion of the course, mainly due to their efforts

spent mastering self-study materials. The work of Anna, Roman, and Mergen at "RAM" will mostly focus on assembling and repairing computers.

"Thanks to AED and 'Bilimli Nesil' for PC courses. We got great jobs that will give us 'real-world' experience that is so valuable for any person today," they said after finding out they got jobs.

Course organizers are also assisting other training participants in continuing their education and finding jobs.



A high school student learning elements of computer technology during the course

## Students at Summer Camp in Dashoguz Speak Only English

The American Corner in Dashoguz, Peace Corps volunteers and local English teachers organized the first Summer English Immersion Camp for students in Dashoguz welayat from June 23 to July 1. For ten days, 75 students from all over Dashoguz welayat stayed in the dormitory facilities of School # 24 in Dashoguz City, having Peace Corps volunteers and English

teachers as their counselors and some of the 9th-graders as junior counselors.

Speaking "English Only", which was the logo of the camp, campers and counselors shared experiences and ideas, which they brought from their classrooms, made many new friends and, of course, improved their English skills. Having talked to Peace Corps volunteers, who are native English speakers, many students gained more confidence in their English speaking abilities.



High school students during one of the sessions of the Summer Camp

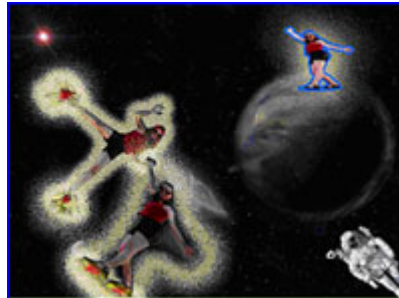
The camp curriculum included conversational English classes, geography and cultural studies, arts and crafts, journalism and creative writing, Turkmen history and culture, and health and disease prevention classes. Organizers of the camp made special emphasis on activities teaching students about international organizations like the United Nations, political, economic and social systems of various countries of the world and international relations in general. In the evenings, students engaged in social activities such as dances, singing songs and playing games.

## IRC Presentation on Congressional Research Service

Information Resource Center (IRC) Assistant Azat Myradov conducted a presentation for resource center specialists and librarians on the Library of Congress' Congressional Research Service (CRS) on June 27th at the National Library of Turkmenistan using the Internet Access Training Program (IATP) public site provided there by the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX). He explained that CRS provides research and support for Congresspersons, Senators and their staffs, and produces reports and issue briefs on a variety of global topics. Participants learned about history of the CRS, its products and where to find these documents online. They were also introduced to advanced search features and strategies to help them locate desired documents.

## Artistic Expression Through Computers in Dashoguz

From June 4 to 24, IATP Access site Administrator Alexander Khan conducted a series of sessions on computer graphics for the public in Dashoguz City. Two different groups formed of eight participants each learned about computer graphics starting from the basics to more advanced features.



"Aliens," an e-card designed by IATP user Anastasiya Botyayeva.

A total of seven seminars were conducted for each group. By the end of the session, all of the participants had learned enough to make their own e-cards, which they sent to

friends and family.

### ***New Location for the American Center***

*Dear All!*

*The American Center is moving to a new location - the World Trade Complex, near the Arch of Neutrality and the National Library, - and will soon be able to continue providing its services for the public.*

*The Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy, American Councils for International Education (ACCELS), the Educational Advising Center (EAC), International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) and Internet Access and Training Program (IATP) will soon open the doors of their new bright offices to you.*

*The new address for the American Center will be:*

***1 Seyidi St., 7th and 8th Floors  
Ashgabat, Turkmenistan 744000***

*Telephone numbers will remain the same:*

*EAC and ACCELS: (993-12) 39 53 28; 39 53 32;  
IREX and IATP: (993-12) 39 53 08;  
PAS: (993-12) 35 00 45.*

*We thank you for your patience while we are still moving and hope to see you in our new location.*

***The staff of the American Center***

### **Attention everyone!!!**

Alumni of the U.S. Government-sponsored programs are organizing:

### **CHARITY BALL CONCERT ART AUCTION**

**August 9, 2003  
Ak Altyn Banquet Hall  
7:00 p.m.**

**DELICIOUS FOOD!!!  
ENTERTAINMENT: PERFORMANCES,  
DANCES AND MUSIC!!! RAFFLE TICKETS!!!  
AND A LOT MORE...**

*in order to raise funds to construct  
a play ground and sport complex  
at the Hospital for Maternity  
and Child Health Care*

Please, come and make your contribution!

**Tickets are available: \$25 per person**

***For more information call the American  
Center at 39 53 32/28 (ask for Eduard)***