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U.S. Speakers Share Their Professional Knowledge and Experience with Turkmen Citizens

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Prof. Flanagan's "Sounds of the World" Touch the Hearts and Minds of the Turkmen People

Poetess, author and professor from Davidson College, North Carolina, Brenda Flanagan, visited Ashgabat February 26 - March 1, 2003, as part of the U.S. Department of State Speaker program to mark Black History Month. In her whirlwind visit to the capital city of Turkmenistan, Dr. Flanagan influenced over 400 local citizens by giving seminars, participating in roundtable discussions, visiting with students and even performed some of her works during each event.



Brenda Flanagan and young visitors of the American Center engaged in a lively discussion

Dr. Flanagan met with local journalists, intellectuals, the staff of the National Library of Turkmenistan, teachers and students of higher educational institutions and secondary schools, members of educational NGOs, alumni of the U.S. Government-sponsored exchange programs, and regular visitors to the American Center. Her lively and engaging style opened doors to discussions of African-American literature, Turkmen poetry, the principles of equality and humanity, and the importance of women in the development of society. Dr. Flanagan artistically performed some

famous works by prominent African American poets and read some of her own stories as well.

Each of her sessions evoked a warm and open atmosphere as if she and the participants had known each other for a long time. "I have felt warm and comfortable, the same way I feel when I am with my family," said Dr. Flanagan before departing from Ashgabat.

Regional English Language Officer Visits Ashgabat to Promote English Teaching Activities



Ms. Harshbarger conducting one of her seminars in Ashgabat

Regional English Language Officer, Lisa Harshbarger, spent four eventful days in Ashgabat from February 4-8, 2003, reviewing the U.S. Embassy's English language support programs and participating in conferences and workshops for local English teachers. The highlight of her trip was a conference on classroom management and cooperative learning with English teachers of higher educational institutions and secondary schools from Ashgabat and the regions. Ms. Harshbarger conducted a workshop for English teachers and students of higher educational institutions at Azadi World Languages Institute, as well as a separate workshop for secondary school (continued on page 3)

President Bush Addresses the Nation on Loss of Space Shuttle Columbia

A terrible disaster befell the space shuttle Columbia on February 1, 2003, as it broke up over Texas while descending for a landing at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida following a 16-day flight. The following is the transcript of President Bush's message to the nation on the loss of the Space Shuttle Columbia and its seven astronauts made later during that day:



President Bush makes a televised address to the nation on the Space Shuttle crash February 1. (AP/WWP)

"My fellow Americans, this day has brought terrible news and great sadness to our country. At 9:00 a.m. this morning, Mission Control in Houston lost contact with our Space Shuttle Columbia. A short time later, debris was seen falling from the skies above Texas.

The Columbia is lost; there are no survivors.

"On board was a crew of seven: Colonel Rick Husband; Lt. Colonel Michael Anderson; Commander Laurel Clark; Captain David Brown; Commander William McCool; Dr. Kalpana Chawla; and Ilan Ramon, a Colonel in the Israeli Air Force. These men and women assumed great risk in the service to all humanity.

"In an age when space flight has come to seem almost routine, it is easy to overlook the dangers of travel by rocket, and the difficulties of navigating the fierce outer atmosphere of the Earth. These astronauts knew the dangers, and they faced them

willingly, knowing they had a high and noble purpose in life. Because of their courage and daring and idealism, we will miss them all the more.

"All Americans today are thinking, as well, of the families of these men and women who have been given this sudden shock and grief. You're not alone. Our entire nation grieves with you. And those you loved will always have the respect and gratitude of this country.

"The cause in which they died will continue. Mankind is led into the darkness beyond our world by the inspiration of discovery and the longing to understand. Our journey into space will go on.

"In the skies today we saw destruction and tragedy. Yet farther than we can see there is comfort and hope. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, "Lift your eyes and look to the heavens. Who created all these? He who brings out the starry hosts one by one and calls them each by name. Because of His great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing."

"The same Creator who names the stars also knows the names of the seven souls we mourn today. The crew of the shuttle Columbia did not return safely to Earth; yet we can pray that all are safely home.

"May God bless the grieving families, and may God continue to bless America."

Cochran Program Alumni Reunite in Ashgabat

The Cochran alumni reunion in Ashgabat on February 13, 2003, marked the 10th anniversary of the program in Turkmenistan. Scientists, researchers, agribusiness managers, farmers and other specialists involved in agriculture gathered to catch up with each other on various happenings in their lives and developments in the agricultural field.

Some alumni brought their products to demonstrate them at the reunion. A cheese producer from Dashoguz welayat and a mushroom farmer from Lebap exhibited their products, which they called the "fruit of the Turkmen-American friendship." Both cheese and mushrooms were produced using U.S. technology, which the farmers learned about during their program in the U.S.

Administrators of the Cochran Program from the U.S. attended the reunion and discussed various benefits of the program for agricultural activities of alumni in Turkmenistan and numerous follow-up projects. As one of them noted, "the goal of the program is not only to exchange agricultural technologies, but to establish cultural and personal contacts between the two nations."

Since 1984, the United States Congress has made funds available to the U.S. Department of Agriculture

(USDA) to provide short-term training for agriculturalists from middle-income countries, emerging markets and emerging democracies under the Cochran Fellowship Program. In Turkmenistan, the program started in 1993 with six participants, who went on an agricultural financing and banking program. Since that time, about 100 Turkmen specialists involved in agriculture in various ways, such as agricultural research and management, agricultural production, processing and marketing, have taken part in the program, administered through the U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat.



Cochran alumni with program administrators

START Project and "Bilimli Nesil" Center Provide Computer Training for Orphans

START Project, which is the USAID Regional Training Program administered by the Academy for Educational Development (AED), in cooperation with "Bilimli Nesil" Youth Educational Center, launched a computer course for orphan teenagers on February 18, 2003. Upon completion of the four-month course, 40 ninth-graders of secondary schools, including 13 students of the Orphans' Palace in Berzengi, will be able to use major software programs and understand basic concepts of computer hardware.

At the opening ceremony of the PC training course held in the "Bilimli Nesil" Center's office, Bradford Camp, USAID Country Director; Tatyana Galkanova, START Project Director; Aleksandr Fataliev, Director of "Bilimli Nesil" Center, and Berdiguly Rahmanov, Director of the Orphans' Palace in Berzengi, greeted the students and wished them success in mastering computer skills. Specialists of "Bilimli Nesil" will teach the course, while the START Project provides the funding. Students will be provided with learning materials

and some petty cash for transportation expenses. Course organizers will also assist the teenagers in continuing their education and finding jobs after they graduate from school in a few months.



USAID Country Director Bradford Camp (left), START Project Director Tatyana Galkanova and Director of "Bilimli Nesil" Center Aleksandr Fataliev greet children on the first day of the computer training course

Peace Corps Marks 42nd Birthday and 10th Anniversary of Activities in Turkmenistan

A roundtable featuring Peace Corps activities in Turkmenistan held in Ashgabat on February 28, 2003, marked the 42nd anniversary since the establishment of the U.S. Peace Corps and the 10th anniversary of the organization's activities in Turkmenistan. Turkmen state officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Education and Healthcare; Peace Corps Volunteers, specialists from Turkmen medical institutions, and educators gathered at Peace Corps' head office in Ashgabat and discussed important issues of improving and expanding professional ties between volunteers and their local counterparts.

Education and Health Volunteers and their counterparts shared their successful joint projects and praised the fruitfulness of their cooperation. Turkmen government officials spoke about the role and contributions of the volunteers in implementing education and healthcare

reforms in Turkmenistan and expressed their appreciation for the Peace Corps' valuable work in Turkmenistan. Representatives from other international organizations, the U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat, and Turkmen media also attended the event. The roundtable was followed by an informal reception, where guests were treated to a Peace Corps birthday cake, presented by the U.S. Embassy.

The Peace Corps came to Turkmenistan in 1993 after signing the agreement between the Government of Turkmenistan and the U.S. Peace Corps. Since then more than 300 volunteers have served in Turkmenistan. The mission of the Peace Corps is to help interested countries meet the need for skilled professional men and women and to promote better mutual understanding between Americans and local citizens.

Regional English Language Officer Visits Ashgabat to Promote English Teaching Activities

English teachers at School 27, at which majority of Ashgabat's schools were represented. She also held seminars for members of the Professional Organization of English Teachers (POET) and alumni of U.S. Government-sponsored Teaching Excellency Awards (TEA) and Junior Faculty Development

(JFDP) exchange programs. Ms. Harshbarger was impressed with the level of achievement of Turkmen teachers and plans to work closely with the U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat and the Turkmen Government to further expand and improve English language programs in Turkmenistan.

Turkmen Students and Teachers Attend EdNet Seminar on Methodology and Research

The Education Network (EdNet) project in Turkmenistan organized its seventh Visiting International Professor (VIP) seminar titled "Methodology of Teaching and Conducting Research at Higher Educational Institutions" in Ashgabat on February 8, 2003. During a daylong seminar attended by students, faculty and administrators of Turkmenistan's universities and institutes, two Visiting International Professors and four guest lecturers made professional development presentations on various aspects of teaching methodology and research in institutes of higher education. Visiting International Professor William Prebble, Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Kentucky, representing the Educational Network Academy gave a thorough lecture on the necessity of changing people's ideology from one of socialism to capitalism in order to ensure economic progress in Central Asia. In his presentation, Professor Prebble encouraged faculty members to study and research "capitalism" and "free market" theories on their own and find out what they mean.

Mrs. Stephanie Tansey, a social foundations educator, made a presentation on the topic "What Is Needed In A Teacher For Your Student To Become Successful," in which she featured teaching techniques and approaches for



VIP William Prebble presenting his lecture on "Changing Ideology"

helping students become more independent and practical. Regional Academic Director of EdNet Dina Mukhammetkhan, PhD, Master of Education and Management, gave a lecture on "Teaching Critical Thinking at the University Level." Deputy Academic Director of the Khemayat LLP's Business School of Management Valentina Shustova covered psychological aspects of innovative pedagogical technologies in training managers. Visiting International Professor from Kazakhstan Maira Usabayeva, MBA, PhD, spoke on the prospects of increasing the efficiency of economic research in educational institutions. "Challenges in writing and teaching cases based on the experience of Turkmen businesses" were discussed in a presentation made by Yuri Aronskiy, PhD, Vice President of the Union of Economists of Turkmenistan.

In just one day, Turkmen students, faculty, and administrators learned many practical ideas on the development of improved learning situations. Seminar participants were also exposed to new data processing and research methods, application of which will encourage economic research in Turkmenistan.

EdNet's Visiting International Professor seminars offer a unique chance for Central Asian university administrators and faculty to network with each other on various aspects of academic life and new teaching methodologies, and to discuss ways they can improve academics at their universities.

Education Network is a higher education project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and administered by CARANA Corporation. EdNet offers services in the following six areas: technical assistance, faculty development, intellectual exchange, administrative governance, direct support to universities, and information and communication technology (ICT).

Americans in Turkmenistan Gather for a Town Hall Meeting

On February 25, Ambassador Laura Kennedy convened a Town Hall Meeting at her residence for American citizens registered with the U.S. Embassy in Turkmenistan. About 40 Americans attended the meeting. The Ambassador called the Town Hall Meeting to address general concerns of American citizens in Turkmenistan. The possibility of war with Iraq, heightened global terrorist threats, and new visa and registration procedures for foreign citizens in Turkmenistan were among the primary subjects addressed. Consular Officer Jennifer Hall-Godfrey and Regional Security Officer Steve Sexton also spoke at the meeting. Mr. Sexton addressed security precautions that could be taken to lower the risk of becoming a victim of a crime in Turkmenistan, and discussed the assistance that his office could offer. Mrs. Hall-Godfrey addressed measures that all citizens living abroad could take to prepare for any emergency, from an illness to a death in the family, to an earthquake or civil unrest. Americans present

at the Town Hall Meeting asked a range of questions, but focused primarily on recent changes in Turkmen visa and registration requirements for foreigners. Consular information for American citizens in Turkmenistan can be found at the Embassy's website, [index.html](#).



Ambassador Kennedy and local Americans at the Town Hall Meeting

"International Visitors" Share Experiences with Local Counterparts After Their Trip to America

On February 18, representatives of various non-governmental organizations gathered for a roundtable on domestic violence, which featured two Turkmen NGO activists and one lawyer, who recently returned from an International Visitors program in America on domestic violence. The primary purpose of the roundtable discussion, organized by the "Ynam" Club, was to share the experiences of the International Visitors and discuss ways of incorporating the knowledge gained during the program in the U.S. into NGO activities in Turkmenistan.



International Visitors from Turkmenistan at a shelter for victims of domestic violence in Phoenix, Arizona

From December 1 - 21, 2003, Turkmen activists working in the field of family conflicts and domestic violence Olga Mamedova, Elena Yaroslavtseva and Olga Shevchenko were exposed to an extensive program on domestic violence, which involved trips to Washington, D.C., Arizona, Iowa, Florida, and New York. The program was aimed at learning about the American experience of acknowledging and preventing domestic violence, assisting victims of domestic violence and the roles of U.S. government agencies and NGOs in dealing with this issue. The International Visitors learned about dealing with domestic violence on the local level, raising awareness in the community, the services governments and NGOs can provide to battered women and related programs for children. They visited shelters and safe houses and were introduced to procedures and methods of prosecuting cases of domestic violence.

During the roundtable on February 18, International Visitors Olga Mamedova, Elena Yaroslavtseva and Olga Shevchenko shared these and other experiences from the U.S. with their Turkmen counterparts and discussed further opportunities for improving assistance to women who are victims of domestic violence in Turkmenistan. Roundtable participants agreed that the first step is increasing women's awareness of their rights and legal procedures in Turkmenistan. Women should also know about psychological ways of addressing conflicts in families. "Women's high self-esteem should become the final result of these activities," noted some activists during the roundtable.

Turkmen Law Students Participate in International Moot Court Competition

During February, the American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative in Turkmenistan (ABA/CEELI), in cooperation with Turkmen State University, completed the national rounds of the Jessup International Moot Court Competition. The national rounds of the competition in Ashgabat were held to choose the team, which would best represent Turkmenistan in the international phase of the competition, to be held in Washington, D.C. in April. Held worldwide, the Jessup Moot Court Competition provides law students the opportunity to argue important and timely questions of international law.

Each year's competition involves a different hypothetical case written by leading international law scholars. The fictional case being used in 2003 deals with the rights of women and children in the context of civil war. The case required participating law students to formulate legal arguments to address issues of rape, sexual slavery, and large-scale corruption, based on their knowledge of international law, international custom, recognized general principles of law, and judicial decisions and teachings of highly qualified legal scholars. The competition also provided an opportunity for top Turkmen law students to gain practical legal skills and substantive legal expertise. In preparation for the competition, law students were taught substantive legal concepts, the process of legal analysis, and oral and written advocacy skills by the staff of ABA/CEELI. They also experienced a healthy competition subject to strict rules, and developed confidence and poise.

Judges of the competition, Turkmen lawyers from various Government ministries and other private lawyers from the community chose a team of two law students as national champions. These two outstanding students, Ashgabat Yusupov and Djahan Guseynova, will represent Turkmenistan in the international rounds held in Washington, D.C. In all, nearly 400 teams from about 75 countries are expected to participate in the international rounds of the competition, making it the largest such moot court competition in the world.



Djahan Guseynova makes her argument to the panel of judges during the finals of the moot court competition. Djahan and teammate Ashgabat Yusupov were named national champions of Turkmenistan.

The Turkmen law students' participation in the international rounds of the competition is organized and sponsored by ABA/CEELI and the Academy for Educational Development (AED). The training of law students is in recognition of the critical role future lawyers of Turkmenistan have in the development of civil society and democracy in the country. Further, the development of law students into skilled lawyers represents the greatest opportunity for lasting legal reform.

IREX/IATP Celebrate Valentine's Day with the Kids of the Ashgabat School for Hearing-Impaired

On February 14, St. Valentine's Day, a group of 11 ECA alumni (representing FLEX, FSAU, CI and RSEP programs) made a charity trip to visit the kids of the Ashgabat School for the Hearing-Impaired. There were 25 kids of varying ages with hearing disabilities. The school provided a sign language interpreter to assist in the workshop.

During the event, alumni illustrated the history of St. Valentine's Day and its traditions, and played the Circle Time Heart Match Game. In this game, alumni cut paper hearts in half in a zigzag or swirly fashion, so that each cut was unique and identifiable. Each child was given a part of a heart and was supposed to



Children of the Ashgabat School for the Hearing-Impaired

find his/her partner by matching the valentine halves. After they did so, they wrote their names on their valentine halves and pasted the matching parts on a large poster board. After developing the photos from the day, IREX/IATP staff attached them to the poster and returned it to the School for the Hearing-Impaired.

After this game, IREX Country Director Bahar Atayeva led an origami workshop. By the end of the workshop, kids were able to make their own paper cranes -- which symbolize peace -- by using the origami techniques that they learned from Bahar. The session on origami was also helpful to exercise the children's fingers, which is very vital for their communication. Both the kids and the alumni enjoyed all of the activities.



Alumni and Children playing a Heart Match Game

The kids were pleased with the attention that alumni gave them on this day of love. One of the RSEP alumni brought her two nephews and a niece with her to meet the kids at the school. These children were a bit reserved in the beginning of the workshop but then they got really involved and excited about what was going on. They understood that there are many different ways to communicate. "When will we come here again?" asked one of the invited kids to her auntie-alumna on the way back from the school.

If you have any comments on the newsletter,
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