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Monthly Newsletter

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Disabled Children Express Themselves Through Arts and "Earn" a Printer

International Visitor Program alumna Valentina Hairova combined her International Visitors training in special education programs in America with the support of a grant from the FSA Alumni Small Grants Program, and organized the third in a series of art therapy projects for disabled children, called Art for the Disabled. Art for the Disabled has so far introduced children to the art of origami,

watercolor painting, and appliqué with dry leaves, giving them an opportunity to express their inner thoughts through art.

The Embassy's Public Affairs Section chose twelve winning pictures from students at the School for Mentally Impaired Children to display in a 2004 calendar, which was sold at a Children's Winter Festival on December 7 and at other events throughout December. Proceeds from the sales will benefit children who contributed their pictures for the calendar.



The Embassy staff presenting a printer to the School for Mentally Impaired Children.

In celebration of the International Day of Disabled Persons on December 3, the Embassy's Cultural Affairs Officer Natalie Ashton and Alumni Coordinator Dinara Matkarimova presented students with certificates of honor, as well as a laser jet printer, donated by a local computer shop. To find out more information about purchasing the calendar, you may contact Dinara Matkarimova at 35-00-45.

Vermont Newspaper Describes Turkmen Exchange Student's First Christmas Celebration

A Turkmen exchange student Jahan Memmeyeva's first Christmas experience with her host family in Essex, Vermont, was described in a local newspaper "Burlington Free Press". The article entitled "Exchange Student Experiences First American Christmas" portrays Jahan's amazement at the spirit of love and caring during Christmas and her plans to bring some American holiday customs to Turkmenistan.

Along with participating in American Christmas celebrations, Jahan also shared her home country's culture and traditions with her host family and the local correspondent. "This time of year in her home country, Jahan would be celebrating New Year's in much the same way Americans celebrate Christmas, only in a more secular way," Adam Silverman writes in his story.

"I like that idea. You can show that you love your parents and that you can kind of take care of them," the author of the piece, Adam Silverman, quotes Jahan, who is planning to give gifts to her parents next holiday season. This is the first time she has been exposed to this custom, which is common practice in America.

Jahan also presented her host mother, Martha, and host father, Don, with traditional hats from Turkmenistan called boreks, painted wooden spoons, a brooch and a pillow cover. Her host sister, Connie, and brother, Willie, also received presents. Martha Kent said having Jahan in the house for Christmas made the entire family more aware of holiday traditions and why they observe them.

Jahan, one of five Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) students in Vermont, is living with the Kent family in the town of Essex and attending Essex High School, where she's a junior.

"It's a family holiday," Jahan said describing Christmas. "It makes you feel like everybody loves each other and takes care of each other - giving presents and preparing food and following traditions. You feel cozy in the home."

U.S. Ambassador's Statement in Honor of International Human Rights Day

On December 10, the U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat released a statement made by Ambassador Tracey Ann Jacobson to the people of Turkmenistan on the occasion of International Human Rights Day. In her statement, the Ambassador praised the ideals set out in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights promulgated in 1948. Ambassador Jacobson expressed her belief that "these are not just American ideals, but human ones desired by all people of the world". The following is the full text of the Ambassador's statement:

"For the past fifty-five years, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has presented the nations of the world with a bold vision of liberty that we all hope to achieve. This vital document outlines what all people should expect from their governments, from their communities, and from themselves. Most importantly, it is a document accepted by all members of the United Nations.

"We, as Americans, take pride in our nation's key role in the formation of this document, especially as the Universal Declaration becomes an ever more important emblem of the international movement towards freedom. The United States was founded on an idea of human rights, on a dream of freedom and equality for all people. President Bush has identified several non-negotiable demands of human dignity. They are the rule of law, free speech, equal justice, limits on power of the state, respect for women and

religious tolerance. We believe that these are not just American ideals, but human ones desired by all people of the world.

"Like all things of value, human rights are not quickly or easily attained. Americans know from our own history that democracy is a journey, and liberty a work in progress. Rights will always require defense. Equality and freedom will always need to be strengthened. Neither is this solely the work of government. We as individuals and as communities must work to expand human rights in our daily lives. Eleanor Roosevelt, former First Lady of the United States, and chairperson of the UN Human Rights Commission that drafted the Universal Declaration said, "Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person: the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world." The people of the United States look forward to working with the people of Turkmenistan to promote human rights, in every place throughout the world."

Human Rights Day Symposium

The Public Affairs Section of the Embassy conducted an alumni symposium to mark International Human Rights Day on December 10. Among the attendees were FLEX, FSAU, RSEP, and JFDP alumni as well as regular visitors to the American Center. The Symposium began with a welcome speech by Cultural Affairs Officer Natalie Ashton presenting a statement by the U.S. Ambassador to Turkmenistan on the occasion of International Human Rights Day. Azat Myradov, Information Resource Center Assistant, in his turn introduced available resources on International Law and Human Rights online through an informative Power-Point presentation. Grants Coordinator Kevin Dean then explained the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, which began an active discussion, during which alumni expressed their opinions on inalienable natural rights versus the rights given by a government or society. The discussion reached its peak when participants started debating the possibility of whether some legitimate responsibilities of a state, such as security, could

conflict with the provision of its citizens' human rights. All participants found the Symposium very interesting and inspiring to promote local respect for human rights and freedoms.



U.S. Embassy Grants Coordinator Kevin Dean leading a discussion on the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights at the Alumni Symposium.

IRC Assistant Introduces Online Resources on U.S. Government Response to Human Trafficking

On December 5, 2003, Information Resource Center (IRC) Assistant Azat Myradov gave a presentation at the "Protection of Rights of Women and Children: International and National Legal Aspects" conference jointly organized in Ashgabat by the International Office of Migration (IOM) and the Ministry of Justice in Turkmenistan. This presentation highlighted official online resources on the fight against trafficking in persons including policy statements, articles, fact sheets, annual reports and electronic journals available through the websites of the U.S. Department of State and International Information Programs (IIP). About 70 participants from Turkmen ministries, government agencies and educational institutions learned of electronic resources about the U.S. experience both domestically and worldwide. Participants also received the journal "U.S. Government Response to Human



Azat Myradov during his presentation at the Conference on rights of women and children.

Trafficking" in Russian and a copy of excerpts from the U.S. law on protection of trafficking victims.

On December 11, the IRC Assistant participated with a similar presentation at an IOM conference "Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protection of Vulnerable Groups, especially Women and Children" where the participants came from international and local non-governmental organizations and embassies of foreign

countries in Turkmenistan.

December 1 - World AIDS Day

Time To Speak Out Against HIV/AIDS

by Tracey Ann Jacobson, U.S. Ambassador to Turkmenistan



The accelerating spread of the HIV virus worldwide threatens millions of people on all continents. Forty-two million people are already infected. An estimated 8,500 men, women and children die every day. That's eighteen more people by the time you finish reading this column. Without concerted action, an additional 45 million will be infected by 2010. According to UN, World Bank and other experts, HIV/AIDS is spreading faster in parts of Europe and Eurasia than in any other region - including Africa.

HIV/AIDS is not just a compelling humanitarian issue. It tears social fabrics and robs young democracies of the citizens they need to build freer, better futures. It deprives nations of the human resources they need to develop, sapping global growth. Unchecked, HIV/AIDS can threaten whole countries and destabilize entire regions. No nation is protected by geography or by political, social or religious association. Global trade and tourism tie us together inextricably. We are all vulnerable.

Combating this disease is a national security priority for the United States. President Bush has committed the U.S. to provide \$15 billion for an Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. We are working multilaterally through the UN, WHO and as the single-largest donor to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria. We are also working bilaterally in over 75 countries, including countries in Europe and Central Asia, to save lives by preventing new infections and helping communities cope with the existing burden of disease. Europe has joined us in this fight, as evidenced by European governments' own efforts and their generous contributions to the Global Fund. Yet more can be done. We must all work ever more closely together and enlist non-government actors and the private sector. We must use our limited resources effectively and with compassion. And we must not be complacent about the fight against AIDS on our own continents.

Like all great evils, AIDS feeds on ignorance and fear. Experience has shown that when government and social leaders speak out and support programs to educate people on the dangers of HIV/AIDS, the disease can be controlled. The time to speak out is now, while we still have time to educate and prevent AIDS' devastation to our societies, our economies and our lives.

U.S.-Turkmenistan Cooperation

U.S. and Turkmenistan Sign Agreement Regarding the Surrender of Persons to the International Criminal Court

On December 25, 2003, U.S. Ambassador Tracey Ann Jacobson and Turkmenistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs Rashid Meredov signed an Agreement between the Governments of the United States and Turkmenistan regarding the surrender of persons to the International Criminal Court. The Agreement pertains to Article 98 of the Rome Statute signed in 1998 and provides for the United States and Turkmenistan to withhold from transferring each other's officials, employees, military personnel or other nationals to the International Criminal Court or to third parties for the purpose of surrendering them to the International Criminal Court. In her media statement after the signing ceremony, the Ambassador

underlined the importance of the agreement between Turkmenistan and the United States and expressed her hope in strengthening cooperation with the Government of Turkmenistan in many other areas. The Ambassador noted, "With this signing, Turkmenistan joined 75 other countries around the world that have signed such agreements with the United States." Ambassador Jacobson concluded her statement by extending her best wishes for peace and prosperity for Turkmenistan and the United States in the new year.

2003 Marks the 10th Anniversary of Fulbright Program in Turkmenistan

December 3, 2003, Ambassador Jacobson hosted a reception in honor of all Fulbright Program alumni, and to mark 10th anniversary of the program in Turkmenistan. In her speech, the Ambassador highlighted the role Turkmen scholars play in developing of their society after they return from the United States with more knowledge and experience and inspired with new ideas. Ambassador Jacobson also noted that Fulbright Program participants, current and future leaders of their country, promote cross-cultural dialogue between the Turkmen and American peoples. One of the first Turkmen Fulbright participants Dr. Edjeghyz Saparova, on behalf of all Fulbright alumni, thanked the U.S. Government for the program, which "provides a valuable opportunity to work with American colleagues, discover American life and values, and share the best of Turkmenistan with the American people."

The purpose of the Fulbright Program worldwide is to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of academic and cultural exchange. The Fulbright Program encompasses a variety of exchange programs, four of which were introduced in Turkmenistan in 1993. Dozens of Turkmen academics, university faculty, and specialists conducted research and lectured in the United States as part of the Visiting Fulbright Scholar Program.

Several American English language professionals have lectured in Turkmen higher educational institutions under the U.S. Fulbright Scholar Program.

The Hubert Humphrey Fellowship Program also brings accomplished mid-career professionals from Turkmenistan for a one-year non-degree study and related professional experience in the United States. Summer and Winter American Studies Institutes provide six-week workshops on various issues in the United States for teachers, lecturers, academics and professionals from various fields.



2002 Fulbright fellows from Turkmenistan Aysoltan Bazarova and Maya Sarrykova with Mrs. Fulbright, spouse of Senator J. William Fulbright, who established the program in 1945.

Turkmen Alumni Join Their Kyrgyz Fellows in Caring for Orphans

On December 28, Turkmen alumni studying at American University in Central Asia (AUCA) in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, joined their Kyrgyz fellows in celebrating the New Year with kids at a local orphanage. Alumni of the FLEX exchange program Annagul Yaryeva, from Dashoguz, and Vladimir Inozemtsev, a resident of Mary City, along with several Kyrgyz Undergraduate program alumni conducted a New Year's play in the "Krasnorechenskaya" orphanage for mentally disabled children in the outskirts of Bishkek.

Over 100 children aging 5 to 15 years old crowded the orphanage gym to be a part of the exciting show. Despite their usual shyness, kids at the orphanage were quickly captivated by the scene and were active and enthusiastic throughout the play. All dressed in striking costumes, they surrounded Santa Claus and other "fairy

heroes", eager to play games, cite poems, sing songs and dance. At the end of the show, happy children received New Year's gifts, which they appreciated very much.

"Please, come back and visit us again," the orphans said as alumni were leaving. For alumni, these words were the best reward they could ever receive for their performance.

Two weeks prior to holding the event, alumni began visiting local companies and organizations to raise enough funds to prepare festive costumes, and make and buy gifts for the orphans. Many alumni in Bishkek held a number of clothes and toy drives and other fundraising activities to help children at different orphanages throughout Kyrgyzstan.

About 17 FLEX alumni from Turkmenistan began their bachelor studies at AUCA in 2003. AUCA is a university with a large U.S. Government-sponsored exchange program alumni enrollment, one of the largest not only in Central Asia, but also throughout the NIS region. Because of this, Turkmen FLEX alumni easily joined the large and friendly alumni family in Kyrgyzstan.

Turkmen alumni are planning to continue visiting and organizing various shows for children at this and other orphanages in Kyrgyzstan. "We alumni, whether we are Kyrgyz or Turkmen, are infused with the spirit of changing the community we live in for the better by conducting activities useful for the people around us," wrote Annagul Yaryeva in her letter to the Embassy.

(Annagul Yaryeva contributed to this article)



Annagul Yaryeva (left) with a Kyrgyz alumna and children at the "Krasnorechenskaya" orphanage.

Alumni Roundtable and Happy Hour Celebrate Joys of the Season

To keep up the holiday spirit, the Embassy's Cultural Affairs Officer and Alumni Coordinator led a roundtable discussion with exchange program alumni and members of the local community on Christmas Eve. The interactive discussion touched upon celebrating Christmas and New Year's Eve around the world, with alumni recalling their experiences of celebrating these holidays in America and discussing similarities and differences in traditions between American and Turkmen cultures. By the end of the discussion all alumni expressed the same opinion that though the mode of celebration, the dates, and the traditions vary, the main spirit of the holidays remain the same everywhere.

Then on December 29th, the Alumni Coordinator organized a Happy Hour for active alumni of Future Leaders (FLEX), Contemporary Issues (CI), Regional Scholars (RSEP), and Muskie exchange programs, which included an informal dinner and bowling. Thirty alumni were rewarded for their dedication and hard work in advocating and promoting exchange programs, and for their contributions to the development of the Turkmen alumni community. The event turned into a mini-reunion, with many current exchange students who were home for winter break joining the group. Participants were fascinated to hear the adventures of their colleagues working and studying in England, Jordan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Christmas and New Year 

FSA Alumna Pays Tribute to Turkmen Writer on Website

On December 18, Ayna Kekilova (SABIT 99, CI 00) created a website about her famous grandfather, Aman Kekilov, at the Alumni Resource Center (ARC) in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. Her grandfather is recognized as one of Turkmenistan's most famous contemporary Turkmen writers and poets, in addition to being a scientist and linguist. He passed away in 1974, and Ayna wanted to build the first Russian- and English-language website (www.iatp.edu.tm/akekilov) with his biography, a description of his works, and a list of his accomplishments. She used skills she gained participating in a four-hour IATP Web design course to design her website. Her website, www.iatp.edu.tm/ayna, contains personal information, including her CV, projects, publications, and a family photo gallery. After she saw what she could do for herself, she felt qualified to create a memorial to her late grandfather.

FLEX Alumnus Posts Scientific Research on Turkmenistan's Energy Resources

On December 18, Arslan Penjiyev (FLEX 03) posted his first website about Turkmenistan's energy resources at the Alumni Resource Center (ARC) in Ashgabat. Arslan is a new alumnus, who just recently started coming to the ARC. With some assistance from IATP Web Development and Training Coordinator Zohrab Abdullayev, Arslan dove into the work and created www.iatp.edu.tm/tmenergy, which contains information about solar energy, energy of biomasses, complex resources, and experts' conclusions, most of which come from his father's publications. His father, Ahmet Penjiyev, is a professor of agricultural and technical sciences at the Turkmenistan Desert Institute who has participated in five international desert technology conferences. Mr. Penjiyev's articles have been published in "Desert Technology" magazine and in the German magazine "Sigma." Arslan hopes his website will help his father make new connections with scientists from around the world.

Employment Opportunity

U.S. Peace Corps/Turkmenistan Program Assistant (full-time)

Peace Corps is a United States humanitarian organization that works in 137 countries, helping local people meet their need for trained men and women and promoting a better understanding of people from the U.S. and Host country about each other. Peace Corps began its work in Turkmenistan in 1993. Currently 86 Volunteers are working in all 5 welayats, in English Education and Community Health Education programs.

The Program Assistant works with Volunteers as well as government agencies, schools, health institutions, host families and the community at large, in order to support the Volunteers in their work and host family living arrangements.

Desired Qualifications:

- Basic knowledge of Turkmenistan's education and health systems. Experience with English education in schools is preferred
- Experience in community development and a commitment to the development of the peoples and cultures of Turkmenistan
- Strong interpersonal skills and ability to initiate and maintain strong professional relationships with government and other organizations at national, regional and local levels
- Excellent oral and written skills in English, Turkmen and Russian
- Strong organizational skills and an ability to work well independently and as a team member
- Frequent travel outside of Ashgabat required

- Basic computer and word processing skills
- Education: Equivalent of Bachelors degree required.

Application deadline: Friday 23 February, 17:00

To apply submit a resume and a completed Peace Corps Application Form
(available at PC Office, 31A Professor Myati Kosaeva St., Ashgabat)

For more information: Call 35-04-50