



U.S. OFFICE PRISTINA

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Monthly Newsletter



Clay Ross (left) jams along as a young musician sings a Roma folk song.
Photo: Laura Hochla, USOP 11/28/2007

U.S. MUSICIAN JAMS WITH KOSOVO YOUTH

New York-based Jazz Guitarist, Clay Ross (www.clayross.com) spent November 28th-December 2nd traveling around Kosovo, working with aspiring musicians. Jamming with Albanian, Serb and Roma students, Clay taught them new rhythms and tunes, while incorporating their own musical expertise. Clay also performed a jam session with local musicians at the PAO Residence to an audience of his students. His visit to Peja (40 miles west of Pristina) coincided with a USAID-funded World AIDS Day Awareness Concert, where Clay was the opening act.

This target of opportunity visit brought a unique piece of American culture to Kosovo's aspiring musicians. By reaching out to youth, Clay's program exposes them to a musical style that expresses U.S. cultural, ethnic and musical diversity.



ELF Molly Staeheli (center) and her multi-ethnic English students after a day of Ultimate Frisbee.
Photo: Ardita Hima, KEC, 11/24/2007

ULTIMATE FRISBEE FORGES TIES ACROSS ETHNIC LINES

On November 24th English Language Fellow Molly Staeheli brought together over 30 Kosovar Albanian and Serb ACCESS students from Pristina and the surrounding area, for a second annual day of Ultimate Frisbee in Prishtina. American volunteers helped Molly coach students in a game of team spirit and sportsmanship. Hoping to play soccer, students eventually committed to working with their teammates to score a point with a Frisbee rather than a ball. The ACCESS program in Kosovo continues to expose students from multi-ethnic backgrounds to experiences and opportunities which promote cooperation and mutual understanding.

ACCESS English classes bring students from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds together to communicate in a neutral language: English. The classes also highlight American culture and values. By bringing in different people from the Mission, these classes have exposed students to various American experiences.



APAO Laura Hochla (center) and representatives of *Radio Romano Avazo* cut the ribbon to open the station.
Photo: Burim Pllana, USOP, 11/9/2007

USOP FUNDS FIRST ROMA-LANGUAGE RADIO STATION

The very first Kosovo-wide, Roma-language radio station, *Radio Romano Avazo* went on the air on November 9th. Based in Prizren, 50 miles south of Pristina, the station will reach several communities of the estimated 50,000 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in Kosovo. USOP contributed \$30,700 which helped set up the station with transmitters, antennae, microphones, and recorders, and get it on the air.

On behalf of COM Tina Kaidanow, APAO Laura Hochla emphasized the USG's commitment to minority media development in Kosovo, including SEED grants, exclusive interviews and media training programs. Kosovo-wide print media and Prizren-based broadcast media covered the ceremony, with significant reporting in the next day's dailies.

This project furthers Post's work to support the free-flow of information in Kosovo's nascent democracy. Reliable, timely news and other programs are crucial for a community to be connected to local issues, local government, Kosovo-wide government and beyond. In the case of Kosovo's Roma community, which spans several municipalities, this station is a new, important unifier.



ACCESS English students tour a photo exhibit at the Kosovo Gallery in Pristina. Photo: Molly Staeheli, ELF, 11/9/2007

ACCESS ENGLISH CLASS BRINGS KOSOVO SERB YOUTH TO THE CAPITAL TO INTERACT WITH ALBANIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Despite the fear that many Kosovo Serbs feel about traveling to Pristina for English classes, ACCESS English students walked through the city to visit a photography exhibit on November 9th. Using English as a neutral communication tool, ACCESS students spoke with University of Pristina students working in the gallery about the photos, their studies and their lives. For many of the Kosovo Serb students, this was their first time they had left the safety of their classroom to walk around and visit the city center.

The ACCESS program is USOP's most grass-roots program for promoting inter-ethnic cooperation in Kosovo. Through their classes and extracurricular trips like this one, students forge friendships that bridge the ethnic and linguistic divide.



APAO Laura Hochla (right) and ITD representatives describe the Faith & Community project to prospective participants. USOP, 11/7/2007.

MUSLIM LEADERS BEGIN FAITH & COMMUNITY PROJECT WITH WORKSHOP

During a visit from November 5-10, representatives from the Institute for Training and Development interviewed candidates to participate in the Faith and Community citizen exchange program. Funded by the Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs, the project will bring leaders from Muslim communities in Kosovo and Macedonia to the U.S. to work with scholars and faith community representatives.

The aim of the project is for participants to "better understand and be able to communicate to audiences in their native countries how Islam works in an open, diverse, democratic society and particularly how ethnically, nationally, and culturally diverse American Muslims can worship together and live with communities of other faiths without violence." ITD's representatives interviewed students, teachers, imams and other influential members of Kosovo's Islamic Community for this competitive and prestigious program.

The project will forge long-term links between religious and academic communities in Kosovo and the U.S. This project furthers post's goal of promoting a free, democratic and open society in Kosovo. It also aims to counter terrorism and promote mutual understanding.



USOP Chief of Mission, Tina S. Kaidanow

COM KAIDANOW TO KOSOVO SERBS: FOCUS ON SPECIFIC GOALS, VOTE

In separate interviews with Serbian language, Kosovo-based stations, Radio KIM and Radio Kontakt Plus, COM Kaidanow stressed that status needs to be resolved soon. She highlighted that work on elements of the UN plan for status that Kosovo Serbs care about most (decentralization and cultural heritage preservation) has already begun. Expressing regret about recent calls for Serbs to boycott elections, she reiterated the U.S.'s hope that Kosovo Serbs would vote in elections on November 17th.

In this tense time preceding a final status solution, Kosovars in all ethnic communities are anxious to know their future and are listening carefully to the USG's assessments, encouragement and warnings. These media appearances are helping keeping the peace on the ground.



Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu with DPO Alex Laskaris & APAO Laura Hochla with KUSA members at the new KUSA center. USOP, 10/30/2007

KOSOVO U.S. ALUMNI (KUSA) INAUGURATES ITS CENTER AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF KOSOVO (AUK)

On October 30th, President Fatmir Sejdiu (an International Visitor alum) and DPO Alex Laskaris joined the President of AUK, Dr. Chris Hall and over 40 alumni of USOP programs to inaugurate the KUSA Resource Center on the campus of AUK. Attendees included advisors to the Prime Minister, the President of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo and various NGO leaders—all alumni of USOP programs in Kosovo. Founded only a few months ago, KUSA is already establishing itself as a resource for its members, and an important piece of Kosovo's budding civil society. KUSA will celebrate its first General Assembly in December.

This association not only connects our alumni to each other and to the mission, it sets an example for what a diverse, democratic civil society organization is and how it functions.