



Notes FROM UnderGrad

Eurasian Undergraduate Exchange Program

The World We Live In

by Abduljalil Abdurasulov

"A tolerant person must listen not only to his/her ideas but also to the ideas of others. S/he must respect the legacy, faith and values of other cultures. However, he does not have to change his/her opinions and beliefs."

Ekaterina Savochkina, Kyrgyz high school student.

"Conflicts are unavoidable. Yet, we should remember that we must not follow the feeling of anger; we must deal with conflicts in such a way so that violence will not be the only solution. Being angry is normal but at the same time we must not hurt ourselves or others."

Gulasyil Tursunaliyeva, Kyrgyz high school student.

"Whether we want it or not, we are all different. The universe is created as such where there is a great diversity of nationalities and races – this is the world we live in..."

Viktoria Kuznetsova, Kyrgyz high school student.

These thoughts were written by participants in the Dialogue through Education project, which was carried out by Undergraduate alumni in Kyrgyzstan during the winter of 2004. The alumni traveled to rural high schools of their country to deliver sessions on critically important topics that are rarely discussed in these conservative settings. The session on sexual health revealed that students receive most of their information from friends, rather than through formal education or knowledgeable professionals, and many students had very serious misconceptions. Some of the young people thought they could get AIDS through touching, and most did not know how to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases. The blunt and informative training by the alumni might indeed save some lives.

The sessions on tolerance and inter-ethnic / inter-cultural communication led the students through a discussion of stereotypes, conflict resolution, and the value of cultural pluralism. Most of the schools visited had a multi-ethnic student population, and many are in areas with large refugee groups and a high incidence of discrimination. Overall, 98 students took part in the two seminars, which inspired some of the groups to develop their own youth-oriented initiatives as a result. Students at Sosnovka High School decided to organize a youth club at their school, and participants from Uzgen have challenged Osh-area students to an intellectual contest based on what they learned in the lessons.

The alumni organizers are confident that the sessions affected the students in a meaningful way, and they will share what they learned with others. One alumnus commented, "I could see it in their speech [that the seminar will remain in their minds]. One girl said in the very beginning of the seminar that she did not like Tajik refugees and was afraid of them. On the last day of the seminar, this girl said 'I realized that we were treating Tajik refugees unjustly. I never thought that they could be suffering from loneliness. At least, I will stop avoiding them.'"

Abduljalil Abdurasulov (2000-2001) is an undergraduate alumni fellow from Kyrgyzstan.

Participants in the Dialogue through Education project think carefully about inter-ethnic communication during one of their group sessions."

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From the Field

Thoughts from
your new
Alumni
Coordinator



Moscow, August,
Aerostar Hotel, early
morning... Two
groups of people

getting ready for a long journey, anxious about the upcoming changes in their lives but anticipating exciting adventures on the other side of the world. On us, green t-shirts saying "Russian Young Leaders;" on them—black backpacks with the "FSA Undergraduate Program" logo.

I didn't realize then that my first meeting with those representatives of the Ugrad community was very symbolic. That day, they were just people who shared my feelings of uncertainty as well as extreme happiness about going abroad. I was so preoccupied with my own emotions and reflections that I didn't even remember the face of the girl from the Ugrad group who told me that we would meet again sometime at alumni events.

The year I spent in the U.S. on the Russian Young Leadership Fellows for Public Service Program was a great push forward in my professional development, as well as a thrilling challenge for me personally. Sometimes I felt as if I was a balloon expanding with new ideas, constantly absorbing opportunities that I had never had before. Grad school enriched me with the power of knowledge. Working at the World Affairs Council in Pittsburgh destroyed many stereotypes I had, helped me meet fascinating people and introduced me to good friends for life. But most of all I'm grateful to my overseas experience for two things: first, I better understand my own culture; second, I realized who I am and what I want to be. This is why I was really happy when I was offered the position of Eurasia Undergraduate Exchange Program Alumni Coordinator with American Councils for International Education—I felt like I was on the right road.

Working as an alumni coordinator helps me expand my inner geography, be proactive and ready to change, and gives me the chance to realize various ideas I have. I really enjoy working with as talented and creative an audience as Ugrad alumni. I also feel part of a large community, a sort of great versatile family that shares a common experience and has similar attitudes.

At the very first alumni activity I organized, we talked at length about our U.S. experiences. One alumna, Tatiana Kuznetsova from Lipetsk, reminded me of the fact that we, the Ugrad and Russian Young Leaders, went to the U.S. together. Then I remembered that morning in Moscow and the Aerostar hotel, and I thought that life is full of accidental coincidences.

Katya Turkina is the Moscow-based alumni coordinator for the Eurasia Undergraduate Exchange Program. Katya studied at the University of Pittsburgh on the Russian Young Leadership Fellows for Public Service Program in 2002-2003, and is originally from Ryazan, Russia.

About THE Newsletter

Notes from UnderGrad is a forum for the Eurasia Undergraduate Exchange Program community to express views and share the Undergraduate experience. Published three times a year, the newsletter is sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State and produced by American Councils for International Education: ACTR/ACCELS in conjunction with the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX).

About the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs conducts educational and training exchange programs with Eurasia with the aim of fostering mutual understanding between the United States and the countries of Eurasia. Authorized through the Fulbright-Hays Act and the FREEDOM Support Act, the FSA Undergraduate Program is designed to foster democratization and economic development in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

How to Participate - See yourself in Print. Here's How!

Open Forum | Have something to share with the Undergraduate community? Submit personal essays on your experience with the program, thoughts on international politics or current affairs, or statements about your academic or professional challenges. Essays should be 300 words or less.

Point of View | We know you have an opinion. Tell us what it is! Stay tuned for the **Point of View Question** by email and through the new list-serve groups.yahoo.com/group/NotesfromUnderGrad/. Essays should be 300 words or less. Photos strongly encouraged.

Upward Mobility | What have you done for yourself lately? Tell us about your promotions, participation in conferences, professional and academic achievements. Submissions should be 100 words or less.

In the Community | What have you done for your community? Let us know about your community service either in the U.S. or at home. Submissions should be 200 words or less.

Photo Gallery | A picture is worth a thousand words. Tell us your Undergraduate story in either electronic or hard copy photographs. We'd like to see you at alumni events, conferences and workshops, professional and community service activities. Include descriptions of the event and names of all individuals in the photo. Please send hard copy photographs with return address information so they can be returned to you.

Websites | Do you have an alumni website or website of interest to the Undergraduate alumni community? Submit your URL to the editorial committee with a one-sentence description of the site. All approved sites will be printed in upcoming issues of *Notes from UnderGrad*.

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Did we forget something? Submit ideas for new sections and other ideas about *Notes from UnderGrad*. The Editorial Committee will take all letters into consideration.

Submission Guidelines

In Russia and Eurasia, please submit materials to ugradalum@actr.ru or millman@americancouncils.org. Submissions may be edited for style and language. Not all essays submitted will be printed. All submissions must include name, year of participation in program, university attended and contact information including email address.

In the United States, please submit materials to jilkalm@state.gov or asantimore@irex.org.

**DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS
FOR THE FALL 2004 ISSUE: SEPT.
20, 2004.**

Open Forum

My Life in the *Abroadplanet* Community

by Olesya Kravchuk



When I was back in the States, I learned that some guys from the program created a web-portal where all Ugradders could meet, share their ideas and even have a chat with each other. I thought, "Cool!

Maybe I'll be able to find my old friends from our pre-departure orientation at the University of Delaware there!"

When I first logged on to *abroadplanet.com*, I felt as if I was entering an alien area—everything was new and unknown. Then I posted a message on the forum and introduced myself. In several hours I saw the responses from people I did not know before, but who were in the States doing the same thing as I was doing—being FSA Ugradders. They all greeted me and said how nice it was to meet new people at *abroadplanet*.

One night when I was feeling very lonely and homesick in the U.S. (believe me, it happens even when you have a lot of friends there), I logged on to *abroadplanet* again. Maybe I hoped to read the messages of other lonely people or maybe I wanted to chat with people in order to feel less alone. When I logged on, I saw that people were talking about everything—about how they like America and how much they want to go home, about their classes and traveling, about their feelings towards each other and even about their boyfriends and girlfriends. I also "saw" a lot of familiar "faces" of people I already knew or met through the site. I returned back to my room with the feeling of having been at home, having a cup of tea and chatting with my Ukrainian friends.

Once, I saw somebody with the nickname "Irjan" in the chat room and could not believe my eyes. At our pre-departure orientation, I had the best roommate and friend ever. Iryna went to Pennsylvania and I was going to spend a year in Wyoming, so we were across the country from one another. We had some Armenian friends in Delaware and they used to add "jan" to our names, which in the Armenian language means something like "dear." I assumed that this "Irjan"

was really my dearest Iryna, and I was happy to find out I was not mistaken. We talked about so many things in a private chat room and we thanked the moderators of *abroadplanet* for giving us the opportunity to talk with each other again and again.

With the help of *abroadplanet* I also made a lot of new friends. When I saw those residents of the *abroadplanet* community in Washington DC at the end of the year, I thought I was right in calling those people my true friends. Everybody is busy with everyday life, but we always find time to see each other, because we remember that we live on one planet—*abroadplanet*—and this is what connects us with each other forever.

Olesya Kravchuk (2000-2001) studied at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, Wyoming, and is from Ternopil, Ukraine.

The 21st Century and Its Challenges

by Olexander Martynenko

The new millennium has presented us with profound challenges, forcing us to examine and adjust previously held beliefs about the world around us. One such belief that needs to be examined is the idea of national sovereignty, which no longer seems to respond to the demands of our world. Formerly, national sovereignty was perceived as a prerequisite for development and enhancement of life in every community and throughout the world. Currently, national sovereignty is not a requirement for promoting the wellbeing of a country. On the contrary, it is something that dooms its existence in an increasingly global society.

Can an idea adopted five centuries ago correspond to the demands of our rapidly developing world where the only constant is change? How can states confined by a number of restrictions ("national sovereignty obligations") successfully handle problems such as international terrorism and climate change that ignore national boundaries?



In the Community

Azerbaijani Alumni Bring Democracy to School

Undergraduate alumni in Azerbaijan understand that their country is passing through the period of democratization, but believe the majority of Azeri society is still not familiar with the essence of what democracy exactly is. Kamil Valiyev, Kamran Aga-zade and Samir Hamidov want to build democracy in their country, and understand that "it is our duty to participate in this educating process." On February 7, 2004, they held a one-day seminar for 10th and 11th graders in Ganja, Azerbaijan that began with a brainstorming session to get the active involvement of all students. They spent much of the day discussing such ideas as a government based on the consent of the governed, equality before the law, the guarantee of human rights, and minority rights' issues. They examined their country's constitution and identified where these ideas are laid out in it. At the end of the day, the students better understood what democracy is and were convinced this was the correct path to their country's future. Kamil commented that, "we truly believe that these kinds of seminars will play a significant role in the democratic education of our society..."

Kamil Valiyev (2001-2002) studied at the University of Oregon in Eugene, Oregon, and is from Baku, Azerbaijan. Kamran Aga-zade (2001-2002) studied at Clemson University in Clemson, South Carolina, and is from Baku, Azerbaijan. Samir Hamidov (2000-2001) studied at the University of Missouri at St. Louis and is from Baku, Azerbaijan.

Ugradders Active at "COOL" Conference

In March 2004, Shams Asgarova and Nataliya Zheleznova participated in "The 20th Annual COOL-Idealist National Conference" in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The conference focused on public service, and Shams gave a short speech about her own community service experience during a forum called "Youth Service Goes International."

Shams Asgarova (2003-2004) studied at Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, North Carolina, and is from Khanlar, Azerbaijan.

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In the Community

Nataliya Zheleznova (2003-2004) studied at the University of Southern Maine in Portland, Maine, and is from Kharkiv, Ukraine.

Vladivostok Alumni Speak to Youth in Need

On Saturday, April 17, Ugrad alumni joined forces with FLEX alumni to visit a juvenile detention center in the village of Vrangel, Russia, and deliver a series of talks on social adaptation issues that are critical to the young boys' healthy development. The alumni spent two months researching these issues and created a brochure that summarized the critical information and distributed it on the day of the visit. The brochure included information on the rights of minors, education opportunities, job training courses for the unemployed and contact information for NGOs and other places they can get all sorts of help upon their departure from the center. The lectures delivered to the 70 young boys by Undergraduate alumni included "Freedom of Choice" by Alexei Suslikov (1999-2000) and "The Right to Your Home" by Ivan Pechorin (2001-2002). Maxim Korenkov (2000-2001) and Yana Loskutova (2002-2003) assisted in the project with logistics and communications. The final lecture was a reading of Kipling's poem *I* by Ivan Pechorin.



Ivan Pechorin and Yana Loskutova are pictured at a charity fundraising event in Vladivostok.

Ugrad Alumna Featured at "WoW"

As part of the popular "Workshop on Wheels" ("WOW") alumni outreach project in North West Russia, Undergraduate alumna Tatiana Lisitsina conducted several seminars in Cherepovets and Vologda, Russia during April 18-23, 2004. She presented her training session entitled "The Best Web-Sites for English Teachers" at School Number 37 and at the Vologda Oblast Library. Tatiana was accompanied by fellow alumni from several

Open Forum

The answer is obvious—certainly they cannot!

We are currently living in a time when we must learn how to see ourselves as others see us, and to see others as they see themselves. It is essential to find a way to design international institutions to reflect the reality on the ground, not just on paper. We should learn how to become farsighted statesmen who divorce themselves from personal or ideological approaches that cast international issues into rigid categories of right and wrong, and instead place ourselves in our adversary's shoes.

Olexander Martynenko (2001-2002) studied at Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky, and is from Lviv, Ukraine.

Azerbaijan Do not ask, "Where the heck is it?"

by Emil Zaynalov

Hello. My name is Emil Zeynalov and I am a fellow from Azerbaijan studying at Otterbein College in Westerville, Ohio. This is a liberal arts college with international students from all over the world. However, I found myself to be the only international student from Azerbaijan. People had absolutely no idea where in the world is Azerbaijan! But this situation changed drastically after one very important event.

Every year, Otterbein College holds an international festival where both American and international students take part. What could I do? Would I be able to find a better chance to represent my country? Definitely not.

My participation in the Festival included two presentations: one about Azerbaijan in general and the second about the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline. But let me first tell you about the name that I chose for my presentation about Azerbaijan in general. I had to devise something really funny... So after several days struggling with this task I ended up with "Azerbaijan: Do not ask, 'Where the heck is it?'"

On the day of my presentation, believe it or not, the entire auditorium was **full** with people who were really interested in knowing where was this country whose name people are just ruthlessly murdering. I successfully gave both my presentations and saw that people in the United States are very interested in getting to know other cultures and civilizations.

In the meantime, I wasn't released from my task of participating in the "Global Village & Show." To tell you the truth, I was just about to have a nervous breakdown while preparing for it. My primary concern was about the "Global Dinner." I personally gave the college cafeteria the recipes of Azeri national dishes and even went to the cafeteria to show the staff how to cook those dishes properly. As a result, delicious lamb kabob and salad "Al-Sheky" appeared in front of the participants. It was then that I felt myself like in my homeland.

In the meantime, there still was the fashion show ahead of me. My parents sent me my national costume and Azeri national songs. On the day of the fashion show, despite the fact that I was practicing my gait, my speech and everything, I still had an extreme feeling of anxiety. The fact that I was the only male among the fashion show participants attracted more attention to me and I thought to myself, "well, Emil, now you're in trouble." Somehow I got over my anxiety; this was the time for the show, not for hesitation.

After a couple of minutes I found myself walking on the podium and showing my national costume accompanied by Azerbaijani national music. God, that was so impressive. That was the happiest day of my life. Everybody admired my national costume and afterwards, I was just surrounded by a crowd of people who were waiting patiently just to take a picture with me.

And I was more than happy to take a picture with them, answer their questions about my homeland and simply talk to them. I was proud that I managed to represent my country at such a high level. It was a real shock for those who had never seen anybody from Azerbaijan, and I was twice as happy that I showed them the best of Azerbaijan in such a short amount of time.

Emil Zaynalov (2003-2004) studied at Otterbein College in Westerville, Ohio, and is from Baku, Azerbaijan.

Point of View

The essays below were written in response to the following statement, "Describe the experiences that affected your cross-cultural understanding (or misunderstanding) either in the United States or after your return home. You might identify profound moments that stick out in your mind, or describe a time period or series of incidents. Essays can be humorous or thought-provoking, and should be revealing either about your home country or American culture." The views and opinions expressed on this page are strictly those of the authors.

American Individualism

by Irina Gubareva

Among all the surprising things in American culture, the most challenging for me was American individualism.

In Russia, I used to see close friends always hanging out together. Americans usually stay together in big groups of friends or walk alone. Americans usually keep their distance from one another. Even with good friends, non-verbal means of communication like tapping a shoulder or hugging are less observed than in Russia.

At the beginning of my first semester in the U.S., I was so surprised when an American girl and I were waiting for an elevator in the dorm. She was holding a big box overloaded with lots of things. We approached the elevator at the same time. I thought she would expect me to push the elevator button since her hands were full holding the box, but she twisted her body and, I don't know how, pushed that button by herself still holding her box! The same thing happened in the elevator: instead of asking me to push the button for her floor, she managed to do it by herself still hugging the box with her hands.

I often noticed that Americans are not likely to accept help from other people, except when they really, truly can't do something by themselves. In the beginning, I considered this behavior to be a sign of mistrust. However, once I realized it was just a part of the American culture of "individualism," I accepted it. I like this independent American way of thinking, because Americans have more responsibility in their lives.

As for me, I prefer to stay somewhere in between American independence and the Russian spirit of fellowship.

Irina Gubareva (2003-2004) studied at Minnesota State University in Moorhead, Minnesota, and is from Kazan, Russia.

First Impressions that Do Not Last

by Sabina Uzakova

"Sabina, accept our congratulations! You are going to the Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University in Normal, Alabama," said a pleasant voice on the phone. I could not believe I was going to the land of my dreams—America. The first day I set foot on American soil was July 29, 2003. After pre-academic training, I arrived in Alabama in a small airplane. At the time, I had no idea what my host town and university were going to be like.

Our host adviser's daughter met us at the airport and drove us to campus. She was a student herself at the university. When we were driving to campus she asked, "Did you know that this is an all black university?" I felt apprehensive at first because I was going to be living in a culture that was completely different from my own. We finally arrived at A&M University. I could not believe until the next day that I was indeed attending an all black school.

I noticed that the students were looking at me and were surprised to see me on campus. There were such differences between our cultures that I found it difficult to adjust. I was disappointed that I had been sent to this university because everything was so different—the people, the culture, the food, the language and many other things that I didn't even know about. I wanted to go back home where I knew everything would be simple and easy.



teacher training programs such as TEA, PIE and JFDP, as well as Muskie alumni, but was the only Undergraduate trainer in this WOW session this year.

Tatiana Lisitsina (1998-1999) studied at the University of Wisconsin in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and is from Izhevsk, Russia.

Learning Small Business in South Dakota

Sofia Kordzakhia and Marta Vynnytska interned at the Small Business Development Center and USBank in Aberdeen, South Dakota.

At the Small Business Development Center, Sofia and Marta reviewed financial statements and looked at spending trends of local companies to determine good investments. They met with clients and helped them with their business plans. Sofia writes, "we were very lucky to work with professionals like the president of the Small Business Development Center Kelly Weaver." At the end of their internship, they attended the Aberdeen Development Corporation Conference and met the governor of South Dakota. The local Aberdeen newspaper American News interviewed Sofia and Marta. The interview can be found at: www.aberdeennews.com/mld/americannews/news/local/7954489.htm

Sofia Kordzakhia is from Tbilisi, Georgia, and Marta Vynnytska is from Lviv, Ukraine. Both Sofia and Marta (2003-2004) studied at Northern State University in Aberdeen, South Dakota.

Ugrad Alumnus Part of Voter Education

Undergraduate Alumni Fellow Dmytro Hryhorenko served as one of the alumni trainers at the Kharkiv Regional Voter Education Training of Trainers on April 24-25, 2004. The training brought nearly 30 alumni from eastern Ukrainian cities to learn about Ukrainian elections procedures and laws, voting irregularities and the importance of voting in preparation for this fall's presidential elections. The alumni who attended

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In the Community

this training or another Voter Education TOT session held by American Councils in several cities throughout the country are tasked with reaching out to their communities to inform citizens of their rights and urge them to make informed elections' decisions.

Dmytro Hryhorenko (2002-2003) studied at New England College in Henniker, New Hampshire, and is from Kharkiv, Ukraine.



Dmytro is pictured in front of his group of trainees during the voter education outreach project.

The Power of Community Service

In January, 2004, current Eurasia Undergraduate Exchange Program participants gathered in Washington, D.C. to discuss the power of community service. At that point, the 300 students had already put in over 6,000 hours of service at 200 institutions across the United States. During the workshop, the fellows created posters to illustrate their community service experiences and the impact on themselves and others. IREX invites you to view a sample of these posters online at www.irex.org.

FreeDOM Attracts American Volunteer

Undergraduate Alumna Irina Golenkova has further developed the "FreeDOM" Education-Information Center that was established one year ago. In February, 2004, Irina and her colleagues launched a series of lectures at the schools and universities in her region with the most limited resources. In February, 2004, an International Relations and Russian Language graduate of the University of Wyoming, Kristin Edwards, voluntarily came to Omsk to assist with the project. Along with Undergraduate alumni Natasha Pankova and Ksenia Dmitrieva (both 2002-2003), Kristin has traveled throughout the region and taught about the United States, international educational exchange opportunities, and answered questions from students and English teachers with little interaction with the United

Point of View

However, one thing made me change my mind—everyone's attitude towards me. People on campus were friendly and nice, saying "hi" and asking me how I was doing. They were always willing to help me when I encountered problems. Because of their friendliness and generosity, I was able to combat homesickness and culture shock. I felt welcomed and started to like it very much.

During those several weeks I met a lot of wonderful people, all of whom are black, and made friends with them. Nothing was difficult any more. I had a lot of friends, a nice campus, a dorm and a wonderful suitemate. She helped me survive my days of culture shock. Thanks to her, I was able to experience American culture and share my own at the same time.

I have started to learn about black culture, as I was eager to know more about it. Thanks to this experience, I learned some things about myself as well that I did not know I possessed. It turns out that I can get along with people easily. I learned how to be thankful for every single day and not to take anything for granted. I know that I can give a hand to someone else, just like these people did for me when I needed help.

I have come to understand that we cannot always rely on our first impressions. You have to give yourself a chance to see and discover the wonderful things around us. I am not disappointed with my host school anymore.

Sabina Uzakova studies at Alabama A&M University in Normal, Alabama, and is from Karakol, Kyrgyzstan.

Dressing Ups and Downs

by Sofiya Skachko

"Only shallow people do not judge by appearances," said Oscar Wilde. However, we do make our judgments based on others' appearances, especially if they are eccentric and blatantly different from what we are used to.

Nobody will deny that fashion is a fickle "frienemy." Every culture develops its own stereotypes and tastes for clothes. Movies and glamorous magazines may help penetrate all the subtleties and nuances of how to dress, and as cultures move closer to one another, people tend to look more similar. However, there are still many pitfalls and traps on this slippery catwalk.

A few examples will illustrate why I think our dressing habits often contribute to cross-cultural misunderstanding.

When I was leaving for the U.S., I was advised by one alumna to leave most of my clothes at home. She reasoned that I would not wear them while in the U.S., because I would not fit in. As it often happens, I disregarded her advice and was brave enough to wear my Ukrainian clothing on campus (those hand-made, hippie-style skirts and sweaters). Sure enough, some students would give me weird looks. But there were others who, on seeing me in my outlandish attire, would exclaim, "you look smart," adding, "is it some special occasion today?"

This experience was not painful, but it already throws some light on the problem. The next story is more controversial. During orientation week in Philadelphia I was walking with my friend, who was wearing a romantic white dress, into the student cafeteria. A lady at the door, knowing that we were foreigners, beckoned to the girl and explained to her that "it's better not to put that dress on because it's 'provocative.'" In reality, it was nothing of the kind, and far from the minitops and non-existent skirts that are so common for girls to wear in Ukraine in the summer.

The most recent incident happened when my friends and I went out to a club in Lviv. There was one young Bulgarian guy among us, who now lives and works in Britain. He was stunned to see the girls all dressed up, which was a sign for him that they were all "available." I launched into a lengthy explanation of why he was mistaken, and that girls wear such fancy clothes simply because this is our style and aesthetic preference.

All of this set me off thinking: If our cultural dress code is mis-deciphered, should we change our ways of dressing, or should we stick to our own peculiar tastes and explain them to foreigners when it becomes necessary?

Sofiya Skachko (2001-2002) studied at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York, and is from Lviv, Ukraine.



Upward Mobility

CLASS OF 1994-1995

Natalia Prisekina recently earned her Ph.D. in Juridical Sciences (Law) from the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation after successfully completing her dissertation "Discrimination in International Labor Law." Natalia is currently a professor of international law at Far Eastern National University in Vladivostok, and directs the Far Eastern office of *Russin and Vecci*, an international law firm. Natalia studied at Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont, and is from Vladivostok, Russia.

CLASS OF 1995-1996

Nozima Tojimatova has been hired as a senior expert in the Department of Foreign Economic Relations of the Chamber of Entrepreneurs of Uzbekistan. Nozima studied at Hocking College in Nelsonville, Ohio, and is from Ferghana, Uzbekistan.

CLASS OF 1996-1997

Kamilla Nurbaeva has been hired as a project specialist in the Public Awareness Section of the Natural Resource Management Program, a USAID-funded initiative. Kamilla studied at the University of Wisconsin in Richland, Wisconsin, and is from Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Boris Penkov recently earned his Ph.D. in Linguistics at Voronezh State University. In February and March 2004, Boris was a visiting instructor at the Moscow State University of International Relations teaching a course called "The Theory and Practice of Translating the English Language." Boris is currently employed at Moscow School No. 87 as a teacher of English. Boris studied at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, Alabama, and is from Voronezh, Russia.

Mikhail Rybalko teaches law and management at the Siberian Institute of Economics. Mikhail is also a professional instructor of Latin American dance. Mikhail studied at Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington, Illinois, and is from Irkutsk, Russia.

CLASS OF 1997-1998

In November 2003, **Sergey Davidyants** attended the "Human Rights' Defenders on the Frontline of Freedom" conference, organized by the Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia. In March 2004, Sergey went to Geneva to participate to the Sixtieth Annual Meeting of the UN Commission on Human Rights as part of the Freedom House delegation (where he is employed). Freedom House is the oldest human rights' defense non-governmental organization in the U.S. Sergey studied at Utica College of Syracuse University in Utica, New York, and is from Chkalovsk, Tajikistan.

CLASS OF 1998-1999

Sergei Kikhtev has been hired to work as a project accountant at Exxon in Houston, Texas. For the past two years, Sergei has worked for Exxon on Sakhalin oil and gas projects. Sergey studied at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, and is from Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Russia.

Tatyana Sivaeva recently earned her Master's Degree in Local Economic Development at the London School of Economics. Following graduation, she interned at Severn Trent Water International, Ltd. in Birmingham, England. Upon return to Russia, she volunteered to be one of the moderators at the Russian regional conference "Russia at the Crossroads: Defining Political, Economic and Cultural Identity." Tatyana studied at the University of Wisconsin in Richland, Wisconsin, and is from Moscow, Russia.

CLASS OF 1999-2000

Manuchehr Kholov has successfully completed a human rights course held by the Danish Institute for Human Rights on March 12-27, 2004, in Copenhagen, Denmark. The Danish Institute for Human Rights was established in 1992 as a national human rights institution in accordance with the UN Paris Principles. Manuchehr studied at Rochester Community and Technical College in Rochester, Minnesota, and is from Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

CLASS OF 2000-2001

Elena Gorovenko participated in the *Volunteers for Europe* seminar for volunteer coordinators in February 2004, which gathered 34 representatives of 21 European countries. She was also selected to attend the Council of Europe conference "Europe, Youth and Globalisation" in Strasbourg, France, in May 2004. Elena studies at the Wisconsin International University in Ukraine, and studied at the University of Wisconsin in Marinette, Wisconsin, when she was in the U.S. Elena is from Kyiv, Ukraine.

Sergi Kapanadze has recently enrolled in a Ph.D. program at the Academy of Sciences of Georgia, and was promoted to the position of editor-in-chief of the English-language newspaper *24 Hours*. Last March, Sergi worked as a moderator and discussant at a nationwide conference sponsored by the Civic Education Project. Sergi studied at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, and is from Tbilisi, Georgia.

Elena Kim was hired as a program specialist for the Resource Center for Elderly People in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Previously, Elena worked as an expert researcher at RMC Consulting Cor-

States. This initiative was made possible through support by the Bosch Foundation in Germany. Irina is accepting other volunteers, both alumni and American students, to continue her project in Omsk. See www.freedomcity.info for more information.

Irina Golenkova (2002-2003) studied at the State University of New York in Oswego, New York, and is from Omsk, Russia.



Kristin Edwards talks to a group of English teachers at an Omsk-area high school.

Alumnus Making a Difference in Samarkand



Ravshan Yakubov has been quite busy since he returned from the U.S. in 2002. In September

of that year, he started the registration process for an "English for Special Purposes" Center in Samarkand (ESPC) in close cooperation with a local American English teacher, John Witcher. The ESPC provides English training to children and adults, as well as those working in the service industries in the city. In August 2003, Ravshan began work on his "Students can Make a Difference" project that was awarded LIGP funds. Ravshan organized weekly workshops for students on career development, social problems, and open student discussions to encourage the advancement of a democratic society in Uzbekistan. The student organization that was created as a result is still quite active and busy. Finally, Ravshan works as the Samarkand region project officer for the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's (EBRD) Business Advisory Service, where he assists small businesses become viable and profitable in his region. An impressive website detailing all of these projects can be seen at <http://scmd.freenet.uz>.

Ravshan Yakubov (2001-2002) studied at the University of Wisconsin in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and is from Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

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George Zedginidze (2003-2004) and his fellow Undergraduates from Georgia pose with their new president, Mikheil Saakashvili, at a reception in his honor at George Washington University in February, 2004.



Russian alumni Sofya Mezhorina and Olga Kaverina (both 2002-2003) conduct a lecture on social welfare for students at Tambov State University.



Zarina Mussakhoyeva (2003-2004) poses with her internship colleagues at the Halverson Law Office in Mankata, Minnesota.

Undergraduate alum Amannazarova (both) Valentine's Day party



Irina Guberova (2003-2004) stands with her ESL students from Cambodia, Somalia and Iraq at Moorhead High School in Moorhead, Minnesota, where Irina did her community service.

Anastasia Belova (2002-2003), Elena Chernigina (2001-2002), Sergei Ogurtsov (1997-1998) and Dina Khrennikova (2000-2001) work on their tasks at the April workshop on "Non-Standard Methods of Systemic Thinking" delivered by fellow Ugrad alumnus Alexander Beliltsev (1999-2000).





Ugrad alumni in Turkmenistan Gurbanbib Meredova and Gulyalek (2002-2003) pose with hearing impaired children following a fire that was caused by the 28 children.



▲ *Ulkar Babayeva (2001-2002) was selected to take part in the youth forum "Focusing on the Issues" put on by the International Republican Institute (IRI) for various NGOs, political parties, and young people in Azerbaijan.*

◀ *Shams Asgarova (2003-2004), one of the participants at the "COOL-Idea Conference," is pictured with the Statue of Liberty during her year in the U.S.*



◀ *Representing Germany at the Odesa National University Model UN 2003 conference are Ugrad and FLEX alumni, including Alexandr Svetlicinii (2002-2003) on the left.*

◀ *Ugrad alumni volunteers led by Hasmik Minasyan (2002-2003) (second from left) prepare for a seminar series on "life skills" that they delivered at the Yerevan Special Orphanage in January 2004.*

Upward Mobility

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poration in St. Petersburg, Russia. Elena studied at the State University of New York in Oswego, New York, and is from Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Bobur Kuchkarov was recently hired as a program assistant for the USAID Drug Demand Reduction Program. Bobur studied at Ashland University in Ashland, Ohio, and is from Angren, Uzbekistan.

Giorgi Meladze has recently been awarded a full scholarship to pursue his Ph.D. in international relations at the American University of Hawaii located in Tbilisi, Georgia. Giorgi is expected to graduate in 2007. Giorgi also works as a lecturer of public administration and has been hired as a chief advisor to the Executive Secretariat of the President of Georgia. Giorgi studied at Alma College in Alma, Michigan, and is from Tbilisi, Georgia.

Naila Nemikina, an employee of the advertising agency McCann-Erickson in Azerbaijan, represented her firm at an international advertising conference in Kyiv, Ukraine, in January 2004. Naila commented that, "It was a terrific experience because I could see the works of European professionals from the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Poland, Lithuania and others. Advertising is a young industry in Azerbaijan and we really don't feel strong competition, but in Kyiv, I could work on a creative concept together with foreign colleagues and get to know their style of work. This business trip inspired me a lot and I returned home full of ideas." Naila studied at Wabash Valley College in Mt. Carmel, Illinois, and is from Ganja, Azerbaijan.

Dinara Rahmanova has been hired as an intern in the U.S. Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan. Dinara studied at Carl Sandburg College in Galesburg, Illinois, and is from Kashkadarya, Uzbekistan.

CLASS OF 2001-2002

Bekzod Abdugarimov has been hired as PST logistics coordinator for the Peace Corps, Uzbekistan. Bekzod studied at Fairfield University in Fairfield, Connecticut, and is from Andijan, Uzbekistan.

Alexander Azikov has been hired as an intern at the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy, Tashkent. Alexander studied at Lincoln Trail College in Robinson, Illinois, and is from Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Sayiora Ismailova was recently hired as an intern at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan. Sayiora studied at the University of Oregon in Eugene, Oregon, and is from Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Shair Juraev participated in an elections workshop organized by USAID on February 2004, in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Shair was representing his organization, the Institute for War and Peace Reports (IWPR), where he works as a project coordinator on initiatives that aim to strengthen the dialogue between civil society and the state. Shair studied at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, Mississippi, and is from Leilek, Kyrgyzstan.

Ruslan Kalinin has been working as an intern in the Sustainable Business Solutions Department of PriceWaterHouse Coopers' Moscow office since November 2003. Ruslan studied at the University of Richmond in Richmond, Virginia, and is from Mytishchi, Russia.

David Koberidze works as a consultant for the Ministry of Finance of Georgia. David is also active in Model UN in Georgia. David studied at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and is from Tbilisi, Georgia.

Lilit Kocharyan has been awarded the DAAD/OSI scholarship for a Master's degree in economics and management science at Humboldt University of Berlin. Her two-year scholarship also includes four months of German language training prior to the beginning of classes. Lilit studied at the University of North Carolina in Charlotte, North Carolina, and is from Vanadzor, Armenia.

Vasily Lucashevich has recently become the president of the Russian Federation Scholarship for Outstanding Results in Academic Research and Studies at Altai State University. In March, Vasily won a scholarship to participate in the European Union Youth training course "Diversity and Cohesion" in Hungary, where he had seminars and training sessions on intercultural learning, human rights education, social integration and minority/majority issues. Vasily studied at the University of Richmond in Richmond, Virginia, and is from Barnaul, Russia.

Akhat Maneshev won second place at a regional conference of universities for his presentation on the distinction of private companies' names. He also participated in the conference entitled "Student Scientific and Technological Progress" sponsored by the Ministry of Education of the Russian Fed-

eration. Akhat recently earned his orange belt from the Siberian Aikido Association. Akhat studied at Mississippi State University in Starkville, Mississippi, and is from Novokuznetsk, Russia.

Olexander Martynenko was awarded a scholarship to attend the Geneva International Model UN Conference in Geneva, Switzerland, in March 2004. Olexander studied at Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky, and is from Lviv, Ukraine.

Ozoda Musakhanova has been hired as division head of the International Financial Institutions Division of "Zamin-Invest" LLC. Ozoda studied at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, and is from Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Pavel Ovchinnikov participated in the European Union's Tempus Exchange Program, where he studied at the University of Antwerpen in Belgium during the fall semester of 2003. He worked as an intern at a transportation company during the winter of 2004, following his semester in Belgium. Pavel studied at Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York, and is from St. Petersburg, Russia.

Inoyat Sadikova has been hired as a senior loan officer for an EBRD micro-lending project at the Hamkorbank in Andijan, Uzbekistan. Inoyat studied at the University of Wisconsin in Richland, Wisconsin, and is from Andijan, Uzbekistan.

David Sakvarelidze works as a senior advisor in the Department of Relations between the Government and State Bodies of the President's Administration, Georgia. David studied at St. Bonaventure University in St. Bonaventure, New York, and is from Tbilisi, Georgia.

Slava Shirokov has recently been appointed managing director for the Model United Nations Russian Far East organization (MUNRFE). In April 2004, Slava served as a judge at this year's International MUN Conference in San Francisco, California. Slava studied at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, Nebraska, and is from Blagoveshchensk, Russia.

Qobiljon Yunusov has been hired as the DIPECHO project instructor for Mercy Corps in Andijan, Uzbekistan. Qobiljon studied at Bethany College in Lindsborg, Kansas, and is from Andijan, Uzbekistan.

Olga Zhurzhenko took part in the Moscow International Model United Nations conference at MGIMO University from April 5-9,

2004. She played the role of observer from Israel in the Security Council. Olga also made a presentation on the topic of her current research "the perception of terrorism," during the Eleventh Annual Lomonosov International Conference for Young Scientists, which was organized by Moscow State University and took place April 12-15, 2004. Olga studied at St. Bonaventure University in St. Bonaventure, New York, and is from Odesa, Ukraine.

CLASS OF 2002-2003

Kira Bondarenko was hired as the cruise manager of the Mayakovskiy ship for the period May through September 2004. Her responsibilities will be hotel management and working with foreign tourists. Kira studied at Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa, and is from St. Petersburg, Russia.

Ksenia Dmitrieva is a computer technician at the Educational Information Center "FreeDom" in Omsk, Russia. She actively submits articles to the organization's newspaper (www.freedomcity.info). The project "FreeDom" first appeared as a student project during the U.S.-Russia Young Leaders' Summit at Stanford University, California, and is distributed free of charge to local universities and high schools throughout the region. The Center recently announced an international fundraising campaign to foster civic society in Russia through charitable activities in the Siberian region. Ksenia studied at Clemson University in Clemson, South Carolina, and is from Omsk, Russia.

Irina Golenkova conducted research on the educational system of the European Union at the representative office of the European Union Brussels, Belgium, last December 2003. Irina is the initiator and currently the editor-in-chief of the student newspaper "FreeDom" in Omsk. In January 2004, Irina attended the conference "New Dimensions in World Politics" in Berlin, Germany, which was organized by the German Society for Foreign Politics of Berlin, Germany, the Koerber Foundation of Hamburg, Germany, and the Youth Club "New Generation" of Moscow, Russia. Irina studied at the State University of New York in Oswego, New York, and is from Omsk, Russia.

Olga Kaverina participated in the Social Partnership International Conference organized by Tambov State University and the University of Indiana in November 2004. Olga studied at the University of South Alabama in Mobile, Alabama, and is from Tambov, Russia.

Khurshid Kholov works as a financial manager at AGRO-STAR, a private company operating in Uzbekistan. Khurshid studied at Francis Marian University in Florence, South Carolina, and is from Bukhara, Uzbekistan.

Nino Kobakhidze has worked as an observer for "Fair Elections" since January, 2004. Nino studied at the University of Wisconsin in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, and is from Tbilisi, Georgia.

Yana Loskutova has been hired as a marketing specialist at the far eastern office of Mutual Commodity Credit Bank. Yana studied at Bethany College in Lindsborg, Kansas, and is from Nakhodka, Russia.

Sofya Mezhorina has recently become the student activities' facilitator for the English Club at Tambov State University. Sofya studied at the University of Wisconsin in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, and is from Tambov, Russia.

Konstantin Polyakov was hired to work as an intern in the Department of Assurance and Advisory Business Services at Ernst & Young. Konstantin studied at Alabama A&M University in Normal, Alabama, and is from Vologda, Russia.

Botur Qosimov holds an informal English club every Saturday and Sunday afternoon for two hours; the objective of the club is to teach English to those interested and to assist young people in their applications to the Undergraduate Program. Botur has created a website including a photo gallery with relevant information: see www.iatp.irex-tj.org/fsau. Botur studied at the University of Missouri in Kansas City, Missouri, and is from Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Denis Stetsenko works as the web development and training coordinator for IATP and helped organize the March 25 conference on the "Development Academy" project, at which he was one of the speakers. More information on the Development Academy can be found at: <http://iatp.irex-j.org/EN/devacademy.php> Denis studied at Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, Texas, and is from Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Alexandr Svetlicinii has been accepted to attend the 2004 American Institute on Political and Economic Systems in Prague, Czech Republic and was awarded a \$2,500 scholarship to defray travel and living costs. He is one of approximately 120 students to be accepted from 600 applicants and 27 countries. Alexandr Svetlicinii studied at California State

University in Bakersfield, California, and is from Balti, Moldova.

Yana Zabanova was awarded a scholarship to study at the American Institute of Political and Economic Systems in Prague, Czech Republic, for the month of July 2004. Yana studied at Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa, and is from Ulan-Ude, Russia.

Anna Zhilina twice became a recipient of the Potanin Charity Fund Grant for excellent studies and leadership skills. Anna studied at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, Wyoming, and is from Tula, Russia.

CLASS OF 2003-2004

Ruslan Aliyev completed his internship with the Office of the District Attorney in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. He helped prepare cases for trial, prepared witness lists, and broke the case file down for prosecution. Ruslan studied at Forsyth Community College in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and is from Baku, Azerbaijan.

Anna Balichina conducted her internship in the office of Senator George Allen (Republican-Virginia) assisting on legislative projects. Anna studied at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, and is from Nizhniy Novgorod, Russia.

Viktor Mosiy, a business student from Ukraine at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, is interning at Amity Technology in Fargo, North Dakota. He performs basic research on the status of the Polish and Ukrainian sugar beet industry and carries out market research on the potential of farm machinery into the Ukrainian and Polish markets. Viktor studied at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, and is from Lviv, Ukraine.

Yuriy Onyshkiv spent the spring semester 2004, interning at the Hague Appeal for Peace in New York City and attending non-governmental organization and United Nations seminars and workshops. Onyshkiv's responsibilities included researching reports and information to support Hague Appeal Peace projects, updating websites and peace education workshops/presentations, and inputting data to maintain current contact information and resources of the organization's worldwide partnerships. Yuriy studied at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey and is from Ternopil, Ukraine.

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Alumni in Action

ARMENIA

Alumni Fellow Interviewed by Popular TV program

On February 2, 2004, Undergraduate Alumni Fellow Hasmik Minasyan was invited to the Yerevan Television Center to give a live interview on the daily TV program "Good Morning." She was asked about the Undergraduate program on which she studied and about the activities the alumni of this program implement in Armenia after coming back from the U.S. Hasmik also spoke about Armenian Model United Nations, the association created by a group of Undergraduate alumni, and about the projects the association implements.

AZERBAIJAN

Undergraduate Alumni Organize Charity Soccer Tournament for Local Orphanage

On December 7, 2004, alumni in Baku launched the Undergraduate Alumni Charity Soccer Tournament, consisting of a team made up of FLEX and Undergraduate alumni playing against a team of alumni from the SOROS undergraduate program. To participate in the game, each player paid \$2 as an entry fee. Other alumni were encouraged to participate and bring friends to cheer on the teams; those who came as guests only had to pay \$1 as an entrance fee. All of the funds raised were spent on New Year's presents and food for residents of a local orphanage.



Undergraduate alumni take a break from the game to pose for a photo.

BELARUS

Belarussian Alumni Trained in Dispute Resolution

On April 18, 2004, Undergraduate alumni in Belarus participated in an interactive seminar on "Alternative Dispute Resolution: Nego-

tiation, Mediation, and Arbitration." The trainer was CEP Visiting Fellow Bryan Taylor, who delivered the six-hour workshop that explored negotiation and mediation practices, skills and strategies. It included exercises designed for learning conflict management skills in a variety of situations. The alumni practiced their new skills emphasizing a variety of organizational settings that are applicable anywhere conflict occurs.

GEORGIA

Rehabilitation of Iraq the Focus of Model UN Session

In cooperation with the United Nations Association of Georgia (UNAG), American Councils sponsored an alumni-driven Model UN Simulation and Security

Delegates to the Model UN conference listen to arguments about the rehabilitation of Iraq. At the head of the table are President

Nino Kobakhidze (2002-2003) and Secretary General Gio Meladze (2000-2001).



Council meeting at the Caucasian House, Tbilisi, on December 21, 2003. Approximately 20 Undergraduate alumni and representatives of UNAG took part in the session, which began with the preparation of materials, speeches and resolutions for the one day-long event. Undergraduate Alumni Fellow Dato Kapanadze and the UNAG representative were honored with giving the welcoming remarks. During the first session of the Security Council, the delegates stated their positions regarding the issue of the day—the rehabilitation process of Iraq. This topic was selected during the orientation sessions held earlier in the month, and was the one theme that received the majority of support when alumni voted on topics. Throughout the day, delegates clarified their positions on the topic and entered into coalitions

with those with whom they agreed. The delegates drafted resolutions, lobbied them, and voted on the final resolution that was adopted by all. Resolution highlights include an appeal to all member states to assist in the reconstruction of Iraq, a recommendation that member states consider canceling any debts it is owed by Iraq in order to stimulate economic recovery, and an acknowledgement of the need for the full involvement of and open competition for foreign contracts in the rehabilitation of the country.

KAZAKHSTAN

Recycling the Topic of Outreach for Almaty Alumni

In early May, Undergraduate alumni in Almaty had the opportunity to leave the classroom and take their training outside. They carried out a recycling information campaign in the Charyn Canyon, outside the city. Despite rainy weather, the alumni and their fellow students from local universities (as well as one professor) had fun during the presentations on recycling and the practical exercises to collect recyclable materials. Hand-outs on materials that could be recycled were provided to each participant by Alumni Fellow Yuliya Pak, and the alumni spent some time collecting trash from the popular hiking destination as a demonstration of the importance of "practice what you preach."

Alumni and local university students pose in the rain with bags of recyclable materials that they collected from Charyn Canyon.



KYRGYZSTAN

Ugradders Plant Trees with Local Orphans

Undergraduate alumnus Suymonkul Kutbidinov (2000-2001) was in charge of the Earth Day celebration for alumni in Kyrgyzstan. Together with a group of orphans from the Voенno-Antonovka Children's Home in a nearby village, the alumni took part in a tree-planting campaign in honor of the holiday to protect the environment. There were so many children interested in attending that the alumni had them fill out child-friendly "application forms" in which they explained why they wanted to take part, including a desire to meet the alumni

Undergraduate alumni Maksat Koroluev and Daniya Basibanova (both 2002-2003) take a break from their cleaning and planting to examine the worm found by Ildar Yunusov, one of the forestry experts.



again, who always left a positive impression on them during previous visits. One child selected for participation admitted that he had been awake since 6 a.m., worrying that he might miss the bus that was coming to get the group at 8:30.

The participants went to Ala Archa National Park—an area that had recently suffered damage following a flood. With brief instruction given by forestry experts, the children and the alumni started planting the trees that had been specially selected for that forest (junipers and birch trees would strengthen the soil and make it more resistant to floods). The alumni and children worked together to plant the trees, and had a great time doing it. One child noted, "when I will grow up and find a good job, I will come back to this place with my friends and will take care of my tree." The children also enjoyed having their pictures taken with their friends and their trees. All of the participants earned the gratitude and free passes for future visits to the park by National Park rangers, who appreciated the project and especially the participation of children in it.

Following the tree-planting, exercises on leadership and teamwork, as well as a game to pick up trash and earn prizes, kept the orphans busy for the rest of the day. The children collected 50 trash bags from the park, further contributing to the long-term protection of this national forest.

MOLDOVA

Canned Food Drive dedicated to International Women's Day

From early February through March 4, 2004, Undergraduate alumni worked with their colleagues from the FLEX program in Moldova to run a canned food drive for elderly women in honor of International Women's Day. Contributors to the food drive included fellow alumni from the Muskie, JFDP, RSEP and Community Connections programs, as well as from a wide variety of international and local organizations including the U.S. Embassy, the International Women's Club, the International School, IREX, the Local Government Development Program, the Peace Corps, *Aquarelle* magazine and the New York Bowling Club. Through this fundraising, the alumni collected enough non-perishable food items to put together over 100 packages. During the holiday weekend of March 6-8, the alumni distributed the food packages with free copies of *Aquarelle* magazine and holiday cards they had made to elderly women in all regions of Moldova, including Balti, Cahul, Causeni, Soroca and Ungeni.

RUSSIA, ST. PETERSBURG

Ugradders Participate in Northwest Alumni Congress

Undergraduate alumni in Russia were involved in the Northwest Alumni Congress "Uniting Efforts for Civil Society," which was held last December 6, 2003, in St. Petersburg. The event started with a plenary session where Vladimir Lukyanov, the president of the Nevskiy Angel Charitable organization, spoke about



civil society, which was followed by short presentations on alumni life by the coordinators from American Councils and IREX. The participants were divided into four groups according to their interests (business, NGO development, education and government) and participated in roundtable discussions of the relevant civil society issues in these fields. In the second part of the congress, Undergraduate alumni participated in workshops on fundraising, working with local authorities, working with volunteers and NGO and professional development. As a result of the congress, alumni of 11 different U.S. government-sponsored programs administered by three different organizations, all living in the Northwest region of Russia, had the opportunity to network, to get acquainted with civil society development projects and to perceive themselves as part of an active and important alumni community.

RUSSIA, NOVOSIBIRSK

Poetry Appreciation in Novosibirsk

On April 9, 2004, several Undergraduate alumni in Novosibirsk brought their fellow university students together for an evening dedicated to poetry, live music and new friendships. The poetry of Byron and Pushkin were read, and those with musical talents shared them with the group. Each participant was awarded with a certificate for his contributions to the evening. The group plans to organize the poetry evening on an annual basis, and gather more and more young people to it each year. The event was organized by Alumni Fellow Tatiana Sklyarova with fellow Undergraduate alumni Akhat Maneshev and Stanislav Okhvat.

Akhat Maneshev is handed a certificate for his enthusiastic poetry rendition.



Alumni in Action

TAJIKISTAN

Tajik Alumni Visit Mountains, Clean the Trails

On April 24th, 2004, Undergraduate alumni joined their colleagues
f r o m



Alumni and students form a line along the mountain trail, picking up trash along their way.

the FLEX and TEA programs to bring a group of high school students to celebrate Earth Day in the Varzob Mountains, outside of Dushanbe. The team of 30 people was guided by four professional trainers who led the group to the east Varzob canyon and ensured their safety in the mountains. The purpose of the trip was not only to spend some time in nature, but also to carry out an environmental project in the canyon, a popular tourist site for the city's residents in the spring and summer. However, many visitors leave so much trash in the canyon, that the alumni decided to do something about it. They spent a good deal of time picking up rubbish and household goods left behind in the canyon, and then spent the next five hours hiking along its trails. Everyone in the team admired the majestic and picturesque mountain scenery, waterfalls, endangered species of butterflies and blossoming spring flowers. After cooking dinner over a campfire, the happy team came back to the city with fond memories of their beautiful, and now cleaner, mountains.

TURKMENISTAN

Undergraduate Alumni Are "Big Sisters" to Local Disabled Children

As part of their "Big Brother, Big Sister" project, Undergraduate alumni Firyuza Babayeva and Gurbanbibi Meredova (both 2002-2003) organized a trip to the mountains for 20 disabled children of the "START"

center in Ashgabat on a warm spring April day. The goal of the event was to foster positive interaction between alumni and the disabled kids in order to strengthen the children's self-esteem and introduce them to positive role models. The alumni also wanted to teach the children about Earth Day and explained what the celebration is about. They spent some time teaching the children how they can contribute to keeping the environment clean and safe. After a short discussion of the problems related to pollution, the children who could walk helped the alumni collect trash that they saw in the park. At the end of the day, the alumni succeeded in giving these children the opportunity to see and feel the nature around them, as well as learn more about environmental initiatives from all over the world.

UKRAINE

Undergraduate Alumni organize conference dedicated to the International Day of Human Rights

To celebrate the 55th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Day of Human Rights, Ukrainian alumni organized a conference dedicated to the status of human rights worldwide and in Ukraine. The conference was held on December 13 in the office of American Councils and gathered 13 Undergraduate alumni from Kyiv, Zhytomyr, Kharkiv and Izmail with representatives from OSCE, the Political Section of the U.S. Embassy, the National University "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy" and the Ukrainian-American Bureau for the Protection of Human Rights. The conference was held in the format of short presentations by the guest speakers from the above-mentioned organizations and group discussions by the guest speakers and alumni. Among the questions discussed at the conference were the issues of trafficking in women, the meaning and effectiveness of the UN Human

Rights Committee, and the effectiveness of the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

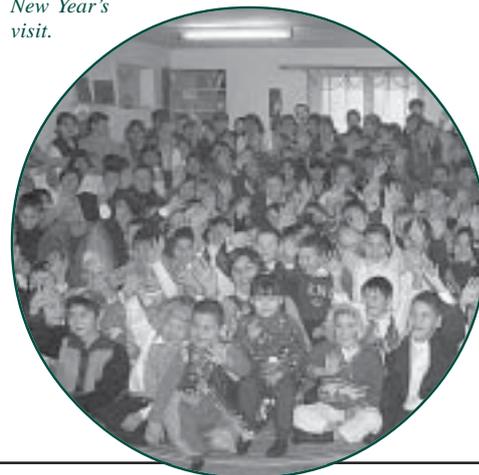
At the end of the conference, the alumni were divided into two teams and competed in a trivia game related to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Human Rights protection bodies. All the participants of the event were presented with books on human rights issues donated by the U.S. Embassy, the OSCE and the Ukrainian-American Bureau of Protection of Human Rights. The conference created a dialogue between the representatives of the international community working in the sphere of human rights, local experts and practitioners and Undergraduate alumni who are interested in these important issues.

UZBEKISTAN

Alumni Raise Funds for Orphans' New Year's

On December 21, 2003, Undergraduate and FLEX alumni visited an orphanage in the Boka region outside of Tashkent that had been in need of help, but lacked sponsors to make regular donations, including for the New Year. Thirteen Undergraduate alumni took part in a fundraising project that benefited 175 residents of the orphanage. They collected clothing donations at various universities and organizations throughout Tashkent, and gathered cash donations from a number of international organizations in the city (including staff at the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy, the American Bar Association, the Peace Corps, and others). The alumni were able to raise almost \$1,000 to donate to the orphanage along with the clothing.

Some of the happy residents of the Tashkent-area orphanage show their feelings towards the alumni during their New Year's visit.



Upward Mobility

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Erlan Rustavletov conducted his internship at Clean Water Action, a national citizens' organization in East Lansing, Michigan, working for clean, safe and affordable water, prevention of pollution and the creation of environmentally-safe jobs and businesses. During his internship, he was responsible for educating voters throughout Michigan on the importance of water quality protection, motivating voters to participate in the political process by having them sign petitions, and writing letters to elected officials. Erlan studied at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan, and is from Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Aliaksandr Smirnou conducted his internship at the California Student Public Interest Research Group in Santa Cruz where he served as a research coordinator for the Environmental Alert Campaign. His responsibilities included conducting research on environmen-

tal problems in California and working with local communities to address these issues. Aliaksandr studied at the University of California in Santa Cruz, California, and is from Minsk, Belarus.

Tetyana Simchuk interned with the Mayor of Waterloo of Waterloo, Iowa, where she worked directly with the city's community development office. Through this internship, she has been able to observe city board meetings, research regulations regarding a Housing and Urban Development-funded grant and meet with other community development organizations. Tetyana studied at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, Iowa, and is from Rivne, Ukraine.

Dinara Turabekova interned at the New York State Division of Human Rights, where she had the opportunity to assist the human rights specialists in investigations, interviewing people and filing discrimination com-

plaints based on the alleged violation of rights. Turabekova reported, "I learned to work in a professional setting with a team of experienced people and experts." Dinara studied at Nazareth College in Rochester, New York, and is from Osh, Kyrgyzstan.

Winthrop University students **George Zedginidze** and **Asset Abdualiyev** served as interns at the York County Democratic Party Chair's office in Rockville, South Carolina. Not only did the students have the opportunity to experience the U.S. political system, but they also were able to meet former presidential candidates Senator Joseph Lieberman and General Wesley Clark. George studied at Winthrop University in Rock Hill, South Carolina, and is from Akhaltsikhe, Georgia. Asset also studied at Winthrop University and is from Astana, Kazakhstan.

U-Grants

Small Grants Program for Eurasia Undergraduate Alumni: "University Awards Program"

American Councils for International Education: ACTR/ACCELS under the auspices of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State have initiated a small grants program for alumni of the Eurasian Undergraduate Program. The University Awards Program is designed to support alumni leadership initiatives on their home university campuses that further the objectives of the Eurasian Undergraduate Program, such as community outreach, cultural exchange and other educational activities, and enrich campus life for all students.

WHO: Eurasian Undergraduate Alumni

WHAT: Grants up to \$500 each

WHEN: Open deadline while grant funds last

HOW: Find an application form on www.americancouncils.org or visit your local American Councils office to pick up a form.

ECA Small Grants Program

The ECA Alumni Small Grants Program was piloted by IREX in Feb-

ruary 1999. The program is funded by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and is designed to enable alumni of ECA programs to increase the impact on their home communities by providing funding for individual projects that further the goals of their original programs in the United States. Grants have been awarded to alumni to organize community service projects, publish self-authored books and materials, invite US colleagues to Eurasia for collaborative projects, make research trips within Eurasia, and organize and/or attend regional seminars and conferences. IREX has administered six rounds of the program to date. Alumni of the following ECA-sponsored programs are eligible to apply:

* Eurasia Undergraduate Exchange Program (formerly the FSA Undergraduate Program)

* Regional Scholar Exchange Program (RSEP)

* Freedom Support Act Fellowships in Contemporary Issues (CI)

* Russian-US Young Leadership Fellows for Public Service Program (YLF)

PURPOSE

The purpose of the ECA Alumni Small Grants Program is to further the professional development of ECA alumni. Grants are a maximum of \$5,000, and allow alumni to do the following:

- * Initiating a public or community service program;
- * Launching a pilot program at an nongovernmental organization or academic institution;
- * Organizing training programs or conferences for professional colleagues and/or other alumni;
- * Funding travel of U.S. colleagues to eligible Eurasian countries for conferences, training programs and professional collaboration;
- * Development and publication of curricula, textbooks, or related reference or educational materials;
- * Publication of public information pamphlets or brochures; and
- * Conducting any other projects judged by the selection committee or ECA to be in the interest of program goals.

The application is posted on our website: <http://www.irex.org/programs/asp/index.asp>

The deadline for submissions will be in October 2004. All the application materials should be sent to the following address electronically: asgp@irex.org. A copy of the application should also be submitted to your local IREX office.

Local Initiative Grants Program (LIGP)

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State is pleased to announce the Alumni Local Initiative Grants Program (LIGP), which was established to assist former participants of the Eurasian Undergraduate Program, Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program, Junior Faculty Development Program (JFDP), and Partners in Education (PIE) to contribute to the social, economic and political development of their countries.

WHO: ECA alumni of the programs names above, including Eurasian Undergraduate Alumni

WHAT: Grants up to \$5000 each

WHEN: February 2005

HOW: See application form on www.americancouncils.org or visit your local American Councils office to pick up a form.

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