



## A-SMYLE Newsletter

### American Serbia and Montenegro Youth Leadership Exchange Program

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### Skype—the World Project

Most of us use Skype to talk to our friends and family when we are abroad; others use it to keep in touch with all the friends they made while in the US. A-SMYLER Jelena Jezdimirovic had another idea.

“Every Sunday I have a video conversation with my family in Serbia—and that gave me the idea. Why wouldn't I bring my laptop with web camera to school and tell my class in Serbia to do the same so we can have a conversation where Serbian and American teenagers can actually talk and exchange ideas?”

So, instead of setting up Microsoft Power Point for another presentation, Jelena hooked her Truro, IA high school classmates into Skype for an hour-long conversation with her classmates from Uzice, Serbia.

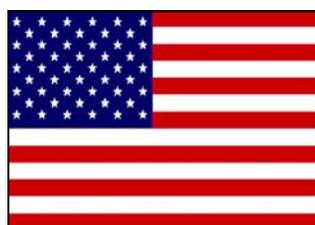
“While Americans explained the rules of baseball, Serbs were talking about the Easter traditions in Orthodox Church. The topics varied from politics—Barack Obama—to global economy crisis to sports and school and agriculture.”

The students also discussed different birthday traditions, at which point the American students made known the birthday of their classmate. Clearly ready to impress, Jelena's Serbian classmates belted out a round of “Happy Birthday” in English to celebrate the occasion.

“She was very proud of that and wanted to tell everybody that she had Serbia singing Happy Birthday!” reports Jelena.

Also there to witness the cultural exchange were Jelena's English teacher, Mr. Oakley, and the school's principal, Mr. Busby, both of whom loved the idea.

“Everybody learned a lot through really painless process. The main thing was that teenagers had a lot of fun and learned something—you can't get better than that!”





## Small Grants

It is not within the size of this newsletter—nor perhaps even of the *New York Times*—to accurately report just how busy A-SMYLE alumni have been over the past three months.

In February, American Councils announced a call for small grant proposals and then another in March, for projects to be completed for Global Youth Service Day. We were...overwhelmed, shall we say, by the number, range, size, scope, and awesomeness of the projects that were proposed.

Here, below, are just *some* of the great things A-SMYLE alumni told us they have done, are doing, and will do to make their communities a better place this year:

### **MP to MP Cooperation**

Presevo, Serbia

*Milica Stojkovic*

After returning from the A-SMYLE program last summer, Milica felt the need to help the members of her school's student parliament organize and to gain more experience in student government. She contacted Fractal, a Belgrade-based Serbian NGO, to find other Members of Parliament in schools across Serbia. Milica and the other MPs decided to hold a workshop where they could gain and share experiences, best practices, and form connections and relationships with one another. A total of 25 Serbian student MPs participated, and another workshop is in the works. '08 alumne Dardana Suleymani and Ljupka Sibinovic also participated in the event.

### **Promoting Youth Activism on a Local Level**

Uzice, Serbia

*Martin Stevanovic*

Frustrated with the small number of local NGOs and the lack of opportunities to become involved in civil society, Martin decided to develop a campaign to show young people in Uzice how they can get involved. Martin and his recently formed NGO, Otvoreni Centar, organized a volunteer street event with a number of activities and, most importantly, information on how Uzice's youth can find out how to become active members in civil society.

### **Different, but Equal!**

Novi Sad, Serbia

*Ivana Kalaba, Tamara Tonovic, Aleksandra Oletic, Stevan Perovic, Nemanja Simeunovic*

This team decided to raise public awareness about the mentally and physically challenged youth in their town and to enable those youth to become more involved and better represented in society. They have undertaken a large-scale campaign to collect research on the status of the mentally and physically challenged population in Novi Sad, introduce themselves to that community, make a documentary on the subject, organize a series of workshops, and finish the project off with a large festival in the center of town. They will record a video of their project and provide edited copies to schools and other NGOs.

### **Archery Club "Kotor"**

Kotor, Montenegro

*Dejana Adzic*

Dejana requested assistance in putting together a fundraising event for her school's archery team. Her school lacks the space for the archery team to practice during daylight hours, as the fields are given to the soccer team for use. And, as it turns out, it's hard to see archery targets in the dark—*go figure!* The team put together a community archery competition in order to raise money to pay for lights.



### **Ecological Action in Loznica**

Loznica, Serbia

*Nikola Mladenovic*

Nikola is leading a team of his peers in an effort to raise environmental awareness in the town of Loznica. They will distribute a questionnaire in their high school to gain an idea of students' current knowledge of ecological issues. They will also research the biggest ecological issues facing the city. After conducting research in these two capacities, they will clean a park in the center of town that is popular among local youth, after which they will present to the media the efforts behind their project and talk about the ecological issues at stake. Lastly, they will edit a video about their efforts, which will be presented on the local TV station.

### **Youth and Civil Awareness Rhetorical Competition**

Podgorica, Bijelo Polje, and Bar, Montenegro

*Fedja Pavlovic, Boris Dosen, Ivan Vuksanovic, Vladimir Rakocevic*

Fedja requested funds to organize a rhetorical competition in three high schools in Montenegro. The goals of this project are threefold: to encourage young Montenegrins to be responsible members of society; to promote the culture of public speaking in Montenegrin high schools; and to promote the values of the A-SMYLE program.

### **Diversity in Serbia and Montenegro**

Belgrade and Novi Sad, Serbia; Podgorica and Kragujevac, Montenegro

*Aleksandar Matic, Jelena Lucic*

Aleksandar and Jelena believe that many in Serbia and Montenegro suffer from racial and ethnic inequality and that the public at-large fails to deal effectively with the situation. To help promote recognition and appreciation of diversity within society, the team has planned a series of photo art

shows in four separate cities. Their pictures will be in black and white in order to emphasize that, without color, people are the same.

### **Think Green. Make It Clean!**

Nis, Serbia

*Ljupka Sibinovic, Dusan Ilic, Miljana Stamenkovic, Maja Ignjatovic, Ksenija Pesic, Milos Radovanovic, Aleksandra Radojevic, and Ana Brzakovic*

A group of A-SMYLE alumni in Nis requested funds to assist them in their efforts to clean the area surrounding a local river. Besides cleaning the river area, the group's goals are to increase awareness of environmental issues, to teach the importance of civil activism, and to encourage citizens of Nis to participate in the action as well. The project will unfold over an entire month, beginning with an eco-workshop and ending with a concert and festival at Nis's Student Cultural Center.

### **Subotica Environmental Clean-Up**

Subotica, Serbia

*Bojan Francuz, Dunja Rapic, and Dunja Zaric*

Bojan, Dunja, and Dunja organized a large-scale environmental action in their city of Subotica. They created a group by the name of Green Mile, and they chose "Start from Yourself" as their motto. They also created a logo and printed flyers on recycled paper to advertise their action.

Working with the Serbian organization Forest Dump, which has had prior experience organizing environmental clean-ups, alumni scheduled the action for February 21st. Dunja Rapic held a press conference a few days before the day the action was scheduled to take place. However, snow interrupted the clean-up. Instead, the group held an eco-workshop at American Corner in Subotica and discussed environmental problems in Serbia and also learned about recycling

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and ecology. The clean-up was rescheduled for and took place exactly one month later.

Joining Bojan, Dunja, and Dunja in the action were US Ambassador Cameron Munter and Subotica's mayor and fellow citizens. The American embassy also provided transportation from Belgrade to Subotica for all A-SMYLE alumni who were interested in participating.

All in all, 15 alumni went to Subotica to help pick up trash. The group then dined in a students' canteen

and then took a short trip to Lake Palic to celebrate Green Mile's achievement.

*Way to go, everyone!*

*Stay tuned for updates on alumni projects throughout the year, or contact small grant winners to find out more about the wonderful things they're doing!*