

# Muskie Messenger

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# SPOTLIGHT



## Moscow Muskie Club: Motivated to Serve

The Moscow-based Muskie Club Alumni Association, founded in 2005, pursues a goal of uniting alumni of U.S. educational exchange programs into a vibrant community of like-minded and highly motivated people. The Muskie Club organizes professional development and networking events to help alumni and prospective Muskie fellows connect and share experiences. As membership in Muskie Club grew, leaders of the group recognized a desire among the members to promote charitable causes. Within the alumni community, Global UGRAD alumna Elena Sadikova stood out as an individual in need of help from her fellow alumni.

The Club's first experience with fundraising came in winter 2009. In cooperation with the Children's Hearts Charity Foundation, Muskie Club members helped raise money for 6-year-old Anton Larionov's treatment. This past spring the alumni community learned of Global UGRAD alumna Elena Sadikova's urgent need for a bone marrow transplant. A 22-year-old student at Moscow State University, Elena was diagnosed with acute myeloblastic leukemia, a serious cancer of the blood. The Muskie Club took

the initiative to help Elena and her mother raise money for the costly operation.

The Muskie Club started by spreading the word about Elena and her need for a transplant to other alumni associations, friends and family, co-workers, host university contacts, and social networks. The Club did not stop their efforts at simply spreading the word about Elena, but decided to hold a major fundraising event. They organized a charity ball to attract donations from individual and corporate sponsors. The ball, which took place on November 27th, brought together over 500 USG alumni and members of the Moscow community and raised almost \$70,000 for Elena. The Club oversaw all aspects of the event, including the program, sponsors, media support, and invitations.

"Elena's cause is truly good — she is a brilliant and strong person who can inspire others to fight for life. Lena is capable of giving so much to people around her. And as the alumni community we encourage all of you to give a little to her. Great deeds start with small steps," says Marina Zinovieva (Muskie 1997), the President of the Muskie Club.

Information about Elena and her diagnosis as well as ways to donate can be found at [www.elenasadikova.com](http://www.elenasadikova.com).

More information about Muskie Club can be found at [www.muskieclub.ru](http://www.muskieclub.ru).



From left: Anastasia Ekkert, Chairman of the Muskie Club Board, Miss Russia 2010 Irina Antonenko, Elena Sadikova, Oscar Kuchera, a Russian celebrity, and Marina Zinovieva, President of the Muskie Club, at the Christmas Charity Ball.

## Alumnus Appointed Chief Advisor to Georgian Prime Minister

Newly returned Muskie 2008 alumnus **Giorgi Pertaia** was appointed Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister of Georgia and the head of the advisor's Group for the Protection of the Private Sector. He serves as a liaison to the government for business interests, receiving reliable information about challenges faced by local businesses and presenting them to the government. Pertaia advises the Prime Minister of Georgia on current business problems and possible solutions.

Pertaia graduated from Western Illinois University with a Master's degree in Business. Before the Muskie program he worked in the Customs Department of the Ministry of Finance of Georgia's EU-funded customs project: "Technical assistance for the development of secondary customs legislation and customs management in Georgia" implemented by Charles Kendall & Partners, Ltd. and the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) Tbilisi office. He was also a lecturer at Tbilisi State University. While studying in the U.S., Pertaia interned at Booz Allen Hamilton, working on the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Anti-Corruption and Anti-Fraud Project.

Pertaia says, "My Muskie fellowship provided me with the opportunity not only to get my MBA from one of the world-renowned universities, but also to experience being a part of the American society for almost two years. During my MBA studies I obtained [the] business skill necessary to tackle complex business issues that [I] deal with on a day-by-day basis and to succeed in promoting Georgia [in] the global economic arena. I use lots of the ideas in my current projects that I've seen and learned in the U.S. My academic qualifications and professional training allowed me to advance to

a further professional career in my home country... although it is still rather difficult to purely estimate the importance of my participation in this program, it would be impossible to be promoted to this position of such political importance without having proper knowledge and experience, as well personal skills and strength, [for] which I very much feel indebted to the Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program."



Giorgi Pertaia at work.

## Fellow Draws on Business Knowledge as a Community Volunteer

**Rashid Beisenov** (Muskie 2009) recalls discussing the concept of service with other new Muskie fellows at pre-departure orientation in Kazakhstan. "I had a remote understanding of how community service is organized in the U.S.," comments Beisenov. After arriving in the U.S., the business student found an opportunity to serve on-campus at the Alabama A&M Small Business Development Center (SBDC), which delivers counseling, training and technical assistance in small business management. At SBDC, Beisenov learned about service while sharing his business knowledge with aspiring entrepreneurs.

Beisenov's first task was to revise a business plan for an assisted living facility. The entrepreneur leading the project was inspired after visiting the assisted living home where her mother lived. "She saw the facility where her mom was and she wanted to create a better facility," said Beisenov. After working with Beisenov to conduct market research and revise her business plan, the entrepreneur went on to receive a one million dollar loan for her project.

Beisenov was pleased that the Director of SBDC treated volunteers like real employees. In addition to business plan reviews, Beisenov also attended meetings and facilitated seminars at the local Chamber of Commerce. Beisenov drew from his marketing background to lead demographic research and to prepare a marketing checklist to be used as a tool for other consultants.

After completing over 60 hours of community service at SBDC, Beisenov felt that there was still more that he could contribute to the center and was delighted to find a full-time academic training position with SBDC for fall 2010. According to Beisenov, "helping the community has helped me to broaden my horizon, through acquiring first-hand experience in how small businesses are organized in the United States, as well as how non-profit organizations such as SBDC support entrepreneurs." Beisenov plans to contact small business centers in Kazakhstan to share his experience and promote community service.



Mr. Beisenov, far right, with SBDC staff.

## Grant Writing Secrets: Sharing Opportunities with Ukraine's Rural Communities

Writing successful grant applications can be a challenge for Ukrainian colleges and universities. Local Ukrainian NGOs and state authorities often do not have resources for preparing successful grants and project proposals. While students and scientists in the larger cities of Ukraine have better access to information and training, people in small towns have limited opportunities. As a result, regions such as Ternopil receive fewer grants from international organizations, foundations and foreign governments. Noting this problem, **Tamila Karpyk** (Muskie 2004) conducted a number of trainings for secondary school teachers and for the local university students on such topics as "Secrets of Writing Successful Grant Applications," "Writing a Winning Resume," and "Leadership and Making the Team." Karpyk conducted the seminars during fall 2010 in cooperation with the Ternopil Regional State Administration and the Department of Education of the Ternopil City Council.

"Currently, I am representing Ukraine at the Evaluation Committee of the Transborder Cooperation Program Poland-

Ukraine-Belarus of the European Union (EU). This program targets specifically the regions of the three above-mentioned countries that have borders with each other or lay close to the border. Ternopil is eligible for the funds under this program. However, due to the lack of expertise in preparing grants and projects, Ternopil representatives never applied for this worthy EU program. It made me sad when I evaluated projects from Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk (other Ukrainian cities) but did not see a single project from Ternopil. So, I decided to conduct a number of seminars and share my experience in writing successful grants as well as give more information to people about possibilities of foreign assistance. Currently, I am a recipient of the grant under Careers in Public Service Program (CAPS)," Karpyk notes. Karpyk is not only a successful grant-writer and a 2010 CAPS grant recipient but is also a Project Coordinator at the Youth Reformation NGO, which also represents Ukraine in the Evaluation Committee of the Transborder Cooperation Program.

### Alumni Interview: Alona Dorosh

As a public administration fellow at the University of Louisville, **Alona Dorosh** (Muskie 2007) took courses in non-profit management and project planning. Now home in Moldova, Dorosh is putting those skills to use while leading an environmental awareness initiative. With funding support from the ECA Alumni Small Grant Program and Project Smile, Dorosh implemented a series of environmental trainings for students and teachers in Moldova. Participants learned about the negative effects of non-biodegradable waste and had the opportunity to make their own reusable cloth bags to reduce the amount of plastic bag waste in their community.

*Q. What gave you the idea for this project?*

*A. Great things start from small ideas... [mine started from] a simple article that I found on a web site. It described all [of the] harmful effects and negative consequences of using plastic bags and packaging. Those figures and facts shocked me and made me think about some concrete actions that we all can do to have a greener environment.*

*Q. Why is environmental advocacy important to you?*

*A. We all live on a planet that is not ours. It belongs to our grandchildren's grandchildren; therefore we should care about their future, not only about our current needs.*

*Q. How did your study in the U.S. affect your professional goals and your ideas about environmental advocacy in Moldova?*

*A. Upon my return home, with more knowledge, experience, and personal and professional skills and abilities acquired in the field of non-profit management, I realized that I can do more because I wanted to move forward from [my] current habitual job... and explore new areas, for example environmental work.*

*Q. What are your plans for environmental work in the future?*

*A. Together with my colleagues from the National Center for Sustainable Development we plan to extend our project on sustainable ecological education and advocacy in schools throughout our country. Moreover, we intend to organize a series of activities focused on rural women's empowerment to develop their abilities in environmental advocacy at grassroots level and to increase their civic participation in solving ecological problems in their local communities.*



Moldovan students show off their environmentally friendly handmade bags.

## At the Nexus of Art and Democracy: Museum Director Hosts Secretary Clinton

The opportunity for all people to interact with art and culture is a characteristic of a strong democratic society. **Vahagn Marabyan** (Muskie 2003) facilitates that interaction as Director of Administration and Acting Executive Director of the Cafesjian Museum Foundation in Armenia. In addition to ensuring that the public has access to the Cafesjian collection, Marabyan encourages links between the U.S. and Armenia, highlighted by the recent visit of U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton to the Cafesjian Center for the Arts.

As a Muskie fellow, Marabyan never expected that his studies would prepare him for a career in contemporary art. After completing a Master of Library Science degree at St. John's University in New York, Marabyan started looking for a job and came across a vacancy at the Cafesjian Museum Foundation. The Foundation's aim was to establish an extraordinary contemporary arts center — a dream of the center's main benefactor, Gerard L. Cafesjian, whose objective was to share his extensive collection of artwork with the Armenian people. Marabyan immediately saw that in this position he could help to build a bridge between Armenia and the world.

With major developments and training opportunities at the Cafesjian Center for the Arts, Marabyan's career has progressed and since March 2010 he has been the Director of Admi-

nistration and the Acting Executive Director of the Cafesjian Museum Foundation. Marabyan finds the responsibilities of his job to be incredibly rewarding. He enjoys promoting Cafesjian's legacy and ensuring that this extraordinary arts center serves the people of Armenia. He also draws inspiration from the fact that Cafesjian is a fellow alumnus of St. John's University in New York.

Today, the Cafesjian Center for the Arts is an important landmark, a vibrant arts center, a tourist attraction, a major cultural hub and a venue for important public, state and private programs and events. Secretary Clinton's July 2010 visit to the gallery was a highlight of Marabyan's tenure as director. During the visit, Secretary Clinton toured the Sculpture Garden and Gallery One before meeting with representatives of civil society.

Marabyan sums up the values of his work by saying, "Every exhibition at the Cafesjian Center for the Arts is a discovery, and the realization that you foster the mission and vision of the Center to bring the best of contemporary art to Armenia and introduce the Armenian culture to the world is truly a privilege and a blessing... This is the life that started upon my return from the Muskie program — the life, where I have the opportunity to combine contemplation and breathtaking experience in the world of art with circumspective administrative management role."



Vahagn Marabyan, far left, with US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, second from right, during her visit to Armenia in July 2010

## Alumna's Public Relations Insight Fosters Communication

**Natia Sirabidze** (Muskie 2008) is a Press Secretary at the Constitutional Court of Georgia. In 2010, she received a Careers for Alumni in Public Service (CAPS) award, which provides a stipend to alumni working in the public service sector in their home communities. Recently, Sirabidze found an opportunity to share the skills and insight that she gained during her Muskie fellowship with colleagues who were working to improve their own communication.

Recent budget cuts in Georgia's Adjara Autonomous Republic (AAR) resulted in the elimination of the Press Secretary position from most ministries. This loss of key personnel has resulted in miscommunications among the media, the public and the government. Sirabidze saw this gap in information and communication and knew that she could help. Over six months she conducted a series of trainings on various communications topics including Marketing and Public Relations; Media Relations/Functions of the Press Secretary; Creating Data on Media Coverage; Writing Press Releases and Public Speeches; Persuasion Techniques; Creating PR Strategy and Organizing its Implementation; and Writing Project Proposals.

"The school in the U.S. prepared me on being a PR and Communications specialist. I know how to effectively communicate with the media and the population; write efficient public speeches and press conference interviews; conduct surveys

and researches and use techniques of persuasion. I appreciate the chance of raising my knowledge in this field under the Muskie fellowship," says Sirabidze. Because Sirabidze was willing to share what she had learned, Ministry staff members were better equipped with the technical skills to communicate with the media and the public and gained insight into nuanced ways to better convey their goals and their work to their constituents.



Natia Sirabidze, standing, speaks to staff of the Adjara Autonomous Republic ministries.

## Fellow Elected to Leadership Position at the Muskie School

Belarusian Muskie fellow **Yahor Luhauskikh** stands out as a student leader in the University of Southern Maine's Muskie School of Public Service. Luhauskikh, a 2010 fellow studying public health, was recently chosen to represent his program in the Graduate Student Government. As an active participant in student government, Luhauskikh is following in the tradition of Senator Muskie, who served as president of his class at Bates College.

As soon as he heard about the Graduate Student Government, Luhauskikh wanted to be involved. "It was a great opportunity for me to participate in the life of the university," comments the Muskie fellow. Students elected Luhauskikh to Graduate Student Government as a representative for the university's health policy and management program. Luhauskikh also serves on the Executive Board as Treasurer and will represent the Graduate Student Government at Faculty Senate meetings. He is responsible for fundraising activities and for managing grant writing.

In addition to his involvement with student government, Luhauskikh advances international education initiatives as a member of the University of Southern Maine's Model United Nations Club. He looks forward to preparing for the group's spring conference and to mentoring high school students who participate in Model UN. Luhauskikh also works with 2009 Muskie fellow Malika Umarova to lead a weekly Russian conversation group at the university.

On-campus involvement comes naturally to Luhauskikh. Like many fellows, he was a student leader in his home country,

heading a student scientific club and organizing conferences of the Student Scientific Society at Belarus State Medical University. In the future, Luhauskikh would like to teach at a medical university in Belarus where he plans to share his knowledge of international best practices in public health and to promote the modernization of health services. Luhauskikh also wants to inspire other students to be active participants in university life. He notes that after his experience at the University of Southern Maine, "I will have some ideas about how to make changes and help students get involved."



Yahor Luhauskikh at the Muskie School.

# ALUMNI UPDATES

In June 2010, **Alexander Bryukhanov** (Muskie 2000) of Russia volunteered as a facilitator for an Open World professional exchange group visit to Wichita, Kansas. A delegation of ten mass-media professionals from all parts of Russia visited their counterparts in Kansas to learn and share experiences. The weeklong program included visits to local TV stations, newspapers, radio-stations, city

halls and many other points of interest. Russian delegates spoke to elected officials and journalists and asked many questions about effective news coverage, hot issues and best practices in U.S. mass-media. Bryukhanov says: "It was wonderful group to travel with — educated, eager to learn, respectful of others' opinion, yet ready to question information and ask many, many questions."



The Open World Exchange group visits a television station in Wichita; Alexander Bryukhanov is second from left.

# ALUMNI UPDATES

**Fargani Aliyev** (Muskie 2008) of Azerbaijan was recently accepted into British Council's Active Citizen Program, which focuses on intercultural dialogue and global citizenship. The program envisions a world in which people recognize their potential and exercise their responsibility to engage with others in the sustainable development of their communities at a local and international level. In Azerbaijan, this project involves young leaders from various cities and regions aged 18–35 who play an active role in and can develop their communities. Some 20 trainers will receive training and then will conduct similar training in their own organizations and communities, while tailoring the training to meet the needs of that particular community. This will be followed by social action projects and international exchanges and networking. The project is a partnership with Reliable Future Youth NGO. Aliyev was also invited to participate in UNESCO's 6<sup>th</sup> Annual International Leadership Training Program at the University of Connecticut in August 2010.

**Maria Kaneva** (Muskie 2000) of Russia received her Ph.D. in 2007 in Finance and Monetary Economics. She now works as a Research Fellow at the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences. In July 2010, she participated in the summer school on Sustainable Human Development organized by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) at Central European University in Budapest. Kaneva enrolled this online course with no background in sustainable development. The studies were very intense, but she was selected to participate in a second module. She says it "was the most unforgettable experience in terms of the team spirit, new knowledge and policy skills in such topics as environmental protection, Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals, qualitative and quantitative data. I was selected as one of the best performing students and was invited to teach the analogous course as a volunteer in Tashkent, Uzbekistan online." This year Kaneva was selected too as a peer reviewer for the Global Integrity Firm's corruption index and feels that her selection was due in large part to her participation in the UNDP Summer School.

**Lilit Simonyan** (Muskie 2005) has had a busy summer and fall. In September, she traveled to Ottawa to participate in the "Together for Women's Security" Conference hosted by the Right Honorable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada. Over the summer, Simonyan organized a project on social inclusion in Europe. The "Smile! You are in Europe" European Youth Exchange took place in Lusakert, Armenia in July 2010. It brought together 32 young people of different cultural backgrounds from Belgium, Armenia, Georgia and France. The Youth Exchange connected 18–30 year olds to discuss social issues and the multiculturalism in Europe, using photography as a tool. The photos reflected the views, voices and opinions of young people on current social and cultural situations and issues in Europe. About half of the participants from each group were from migrant, refugee or minority backgrounds. The seven-day exchange empowered the participants with the ability to use photography and pictures to overcome social issues. Young people from both disadvantaged and privileged backgrounds gathered to discuss social challenges in their societies. The Youth Exchange focused on raising European citizenship, active youth participation, and enlarging young people's capacity and role in building tolerance and peace. Photo exhibitions were organized in July and August to share the views of the participants on social inclusion in Western Europe and Southern Caucasus.



Lilit Simonyan in front of Rideau Hall in Ottawa at the "Together for Women's Security" Conference.

## ALUMNI SHORTS · ALUMNI SHORTS · ALUMNI SHORTS · ALUMNI SHORTS

**Talant Sultanov** (Muskie 2004) has joined the American University-Central Asia in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan as the Vice President of Finance. In this position, he will oversee financial and administrative issues at the university.

**Vasyl Gorbachuk** (Muskie 1992), an Associate Professor at the Kyiv Mohyla Academy, recently published a book titled "Methods of Industrial Organization. Cases and Exercises: Economics and Organization of

Production." The book answers why real world markets are imperfect, why products are very different in some markets and very similar in other markets, why production costs are sometimes less important than other costs, and why investments in research and development vary in different industries.

In September 2010, **Elnur Mammadov** (Muskie 2004) joined Azerbaijan's Capital Resources Advisors (CRA) Group of Companies as Group Legal Counsel.

He will be in charge of legal and corporate governance issues for all the Group companies. CRA manages portfolio of privately owned businesses in the telecom, oil, gas, construction, and mining industries.

**Andriy Klymchuk** (Muskie 2003) studied Business at Creighton University and is now an active member of CFA Ukraine, the Ukrainian Society of Investment Professionals. Klymchuk and CFA are organizing

the Ukrainian Investment Forum this month.

**Yelzhas Aubakirov** (Muskie 2006) became the Investment Director at Al Falah Investment Management (Kazakhstan) Limited in August 2009. Al Falah Investment Management advises Falah Growth Fund, a \$500 million private equity fund created by a joint initiative of the Government of Abu Dhabi and the Government of Kazakhstan.

## The Muskie Messenger Editorial Committee:

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### Submission guidelines:

If you are interested in making a submission to the Muskie Messenger, please send all text and pictures to <muskie\_messenger@irex.org> by January 15, 2011. ECA and IREX reserve the right to edit submission content. Not every submission will be printed.



Bureau of Educational  
and Cultural Affairs

[www.exchanges.state.gov](http://www.exchanges.state.gov)



# ALUMNI OPPORTUNITIES

US Government sponsored exchange alumni are eligible to take part in various Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) supported conference and training activities. In addition to events that support large audiences, individual alumni may apply for small grants that fund the organization of community service activities, conferences, publications, Internet-related activities, research trips, training programs, the creation of associations and other activities.

## ECA Alumni Programming for Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program Alumni

**State Alumni Website:** The State Alumni website is an online community by and for alumni of US Government sponsored exchange and training programs. As of May 2004, the website has over 8,500 registered users. The content of the site is updated every day and alumni are encouraged to submit information to the website for posting. Features of the website include: calendar of upcoming alumni events, job listings and career development information, searchable database of alumni and US host families who have registered at the site, grant opportunity listings, live online discussions, discussion forum, alumni news, alumni resume database, articles written by alumni, feedback form/online survey, live online guest speakers, photo gallery, and the Alumni ListServ. <<https://alumni.state.gov>>

**The ECA Alumni Small Grants Program (ASGP):** Alumni may apply for a grant of up to \$3,000 to conduct a community development or professional development project. Fundable project ideas include coordinating a community service project, launching a pilot program at an NGO or organizing a training program for professional colleagues and/or other alumni. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. <<http://www.irex.org/programs/asgp/index.asp>>

**Project Smile:** Project Smile is a community development program aimed at helping youth, the elderly and the disabled in Eurasia. Each grantee will receive up to \$250 to perform public service in their home city. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis. <<http://www.irex.org/programs/smile/index.asp>>

**Alumni Events:** IREX and the US Embassy organize monthly alumni events in all 12 countries of Eurasia. These events include workshops, conferences, trainings, roundtable discussions, happy hours, movie nights, seminars and lectures. Larger scale events include job fairs that allow alumni to have their resumes reviewed, learn about the current job market in their home country, and meet with potential employers. IREX local offices and the Embassies encourage alumni to actively participate in the development and implementation of such events.

# MUSKIE FELLOWSHIP

## About the Muskie Program

The Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program is a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Department of State, and implemented by IREX (the International Research and Exchanges Board). Since 1992, the Muskie program has provided opportunities for Master's level study in the United States to more than 4,000 of the most talented citizens from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

Through their academic studies, internships, and community service, fellows come in close contact with Americans and make direct connections with American universities, businesses, social-service organizations, schools, and other institutions, allowing them to develop a deeper understanding of U.S. values and ideals, such as democratic leadership.

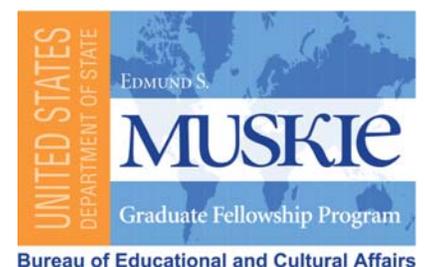
## Goals

Promote mutual understanding, build democracy, and foster the transition to market economies in Eurasia through intensive academic study and professional training. Returning Muskie fellows contribute professionally, engage in democratic processes in their home countries, and strengthen relationships between the U.S. and their home countries.

## Additional Information

For more information about the fellowship application process, please see <<http://www.irex.org/programs/muskie>>.

Universities interested in hosting a Muskie fellow can visit <<http://www.irex.org/application/muskie-host-application>> for more information and to join the Muskie Host Universities listserv.



Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs