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UGRAD fellows learn about American life and culture in their everyday experiences on the program. "Letters from America" brings you impressions from the 2007-2008 fellows.

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**career corner** p. 10-11

UGRAD alumni grow professionally following their program experience. Alumni help their countries to develop socially and economically, enter into public service, and succeed in the corporate world. This section highlights the professional achievements of UGRAD alumni.



# Notes FROM UnderGrad



**Eurasian Undergraduate Exchange Program**



summer 2008

## About THE Newsletter

Notes from UnderGrad is a forum for the Eurasian Undergraduate Exchange Program community to express views and share the UGRAD program participant and alumni experience. The newsletter is sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the US Department of State and produced by IREX.



Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

The Eurasian Undergraduate Exchange Program is a program of the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the US Department of State fosters mutual understanding between the United States and other countries through international educational and training programs. The bureau does so by promoting personal, professional, and institutional ties between private citizens and organizations in the United States and abroad, as well as by presenting US history, society, art and culture in all of its diversity to overseas audiences.



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# letters from America



UGRAD fellows learn about American life and culture in their everyday experiences on the program. "Letters from America" brings you impressions from the 2007–2008 fellows.

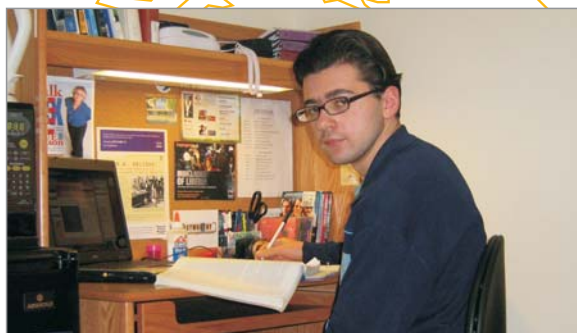
letters from America


171  
students  
from  
over 50  
cities  
across  
Eurasia  
participated  
in the  
2007-2008  
UGRAD  
program.

## Friends Forever

**By Kostiantyn Iakovliev**

Ukraine, University of Missouri,  
St. Louis, 2007-2008



 When I arrived at the University of Missouri–St. Louis (alone for the first time in the trip from Ukraine to the US), I was met by my advisor. The other students hadn't arrived at school yet. Looking back on that time, I can't believe there was such a lonely day in US. Time passed quickly, and I met many interesting people. I had many different friends in all of my classes. In Ukraine, students study in the same groups over all the courses of their education. But in the US, I met unique people in every class. A former UGRAD student, who studied at the University of Missouri–St. Louis the year before me, told me who would help me adjust to life in the US. Thinking about her list now, these were the names of my best friends in the US: people that took me somewhere when I needed it, people that showed me the city I was unfamiliar with, people that I miss most now that I am back in Ukraine. Fortunately, we're able to stay in touch through email. My friends and I went in different directions, but we're still friends.

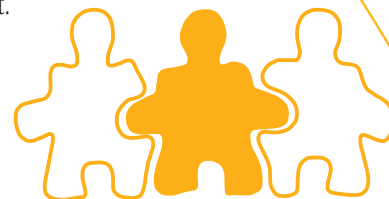
## Appreciating Open-mindedness

**By Aynagozel Ovezova**

Turkmenistan, State University of  
New York at Oswego, 2007-2008



Being in the US, far from everything familiar, was difficult at first, but also helped me to grow personally and academically. What I liked most in the US were the people and the American education system. Before coming to the US, I thought there can be no culture here, but now I know that the culture of one nation doesn't have to be very old. I can say there is a unique and interesting American culture. As an international student, I appreciated American people being so outgoing and open-minded. They were usually ready to listen and exchange their views. My opinion of studying in the US was that I was able to learn more in one year there than I could in four years of studying at home. Professors encouraged a creative and comfortable environment to talk. Even though I was nervous to talk in class, thinking that I might make language mistakes or say something wrong, I tried to convince myself to talk. I think this is the way to think creatively when everyone can express their ideas freely in an encouraging environment.



By Nini Jokhadze

Georgia, North Central Technical College,  
Wassau, Wisconsin, 2007-2008

## Sharing Cultures



It was quite easy to adjust to the new environment of the US. One of the reasons that I liked being in the US is that people were very friendly and helpful, especially my advisors. They really did everything for me. People were very interested in Georgia's culture and I had long conversations about it after almost every lecture with my instructors. Another thing I liked is that I met people from several different countries like India, Morocco, and Germany. It was a really good opportunity for learning about other people's cultures.



## Dinner Diplomacy

By Anna Vartanova

Armenia, Eastern Washington University,  
Cheney, Washington, 2007-2008



One night, I was invited to dinner by an American family. I had a great time spending time with this family, but the greatest thing wasn't the food. It was all the new American friends I made. We talked about everything: our country, our traditions, and people in my country. At the same time I learned a lot about American life; its people, culture and traditions as our new friends told me some interesting and funny stories from their lives while they lived in Florida. I also learned about different American holidays such as St. Patrick's Day and Easter. This night helped me reflect on my American experience and appreciate two other parts of the UGRAD program which had also been great learning experiences for me: the academic experience and the community service. The learning environment in the US was very supportive and it helped me achieve a high GPA. I received a letter from the university president who congratulated me on having one of the highest GPAs in my dorm. The most important thing I learned about the community service is that it was a great thing that people could help at schools, in building houses or helping old or sick people. The same thing should be done in our countries and one of the things I want to work towards is to make community service popular at my university.

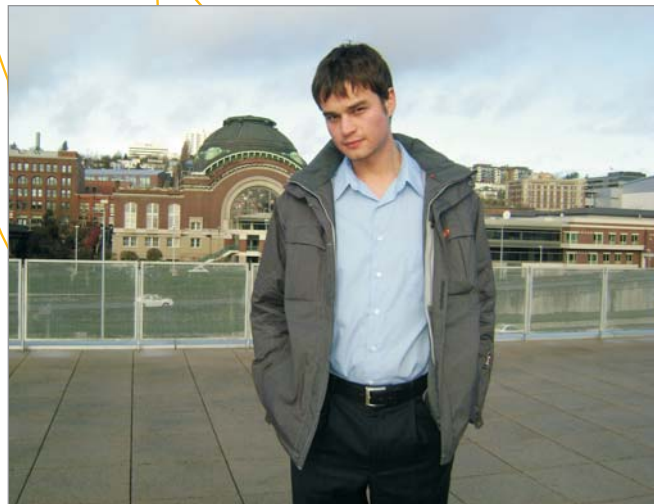
## An Unforgettable Experience

By Vladimir Dotu

Moldova, Tacoma Community College,  
Tacoma, Washington, 2007-2008



When I first arrived in my host community, it took some time to adjust. For example, I didn't know how to register for classes because in my country, students study according to a certain program and we don't have an opportunity to select the courses we want to take. I wanted to take some classes about law, and the dean of the law faculty was very helpful and recommended classes I should take in my first semester. I was simply surprised how friendly people were there. I attended some Rotary Club meetings and one of the other attendees approached me after a meeting and invited me to his house to meet his family and to have dinner with them. It was an interesting experience to be invited into an American home. I also had the chance to visit many cities in the US, learning that each region of the United States has its own culture. I fulfilled my dreams by finally seeing those places that I had previously only read about in books and magazines. It was absolutely amazing and simply unforgettable!







**Maryna Andreeva, Ukraine, *The Messenger*, Troy, Alabama, 2007-2008**

As a Journalism major, interning at a local newspaper was a unique professional opportunity for Maryna to work closely with American journalists. At first, she wasn't sure her English language skills were strong enough to have her articles published, but a short four weeks after she began her internship, her first article appeared on the front page of the newspaper. The Chief Editor, Matt Clover, said: "Maryna tried hard and her articles looked very professional. We were happy to have her." Maryna gained a lot of confidence in her written English from having such a supportive work environment and she intends to continue her journalistic development in her home country.

## Internships

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### internships

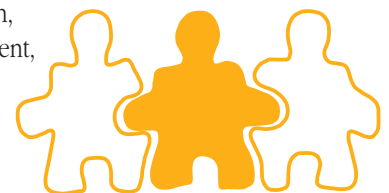


**Aynagozel Ovezova, Turkmenistan, Small Business Development Center, Oswego, New York, 2007-2008**

Aynagozel studied Business Administration at the State University of New York in Oswego. She interned at the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), a major public-private partnership between government and higher education in the USA. A team of professional counselors provided one-on-one services to small businesses and entrepreneurs, helping with business plans and assisting with organizational, financial, marketing, technical and other business-related issues. During her time at SBDC, Aynagozel learned how to write a business plan, do marketing research to find sources of funding for starting or expanding a business, and do past and future economic analysis. She hopes to use her practical and academic experience back home in Turkmenistan. "I think of having our own SBDC in Turkmenistan," she said. "Encouraging and giving professional advice to entrepreneurs to open and run their own businesses is a great contribution to the economic and social



well-being of society. It will help Turkmenistan in its current transition, decrease unemployment, and help create an open-market economy."



# internships



**Madina Begmatova, Tajikistan, Embassy of Tajikistan, Washington, D.C., 2007-2008**



Madina completed her internship at the Tajik Embassy in Washington DC. She had always been interested in diplomacy: "Despite the fact that my major was economics, since I was at school, I dreamed of being a diplomat and being involved in world politics." Madina was the only student chosen to serve as an intern at the embassy and moreover the only female working at the embassy. Madina described her internship as an opportunity to realize a dream: "I was working in the diplomatic department, representing my country and being involved in world politics which is what I would love to do all my life. Living in another country really taught me a lot: not just about the language, but about the world and myself."

## mid-program workshop



In January 2008, the 2007-2008 UGRAD students gathered in Washington, DC for a workshop on youth leadership in community development. Fellows learned how to assess the needs of their communities, design and manage projects, and engage the community to ensure lasting impact.

## Leadership Curriculum Helps Eurasian Youth Effect Grassroots Change

Many initiatives aimed at youth focus solely on keeping them out of trouble. A January 2008 meeting of the 2007-2008 UGRAD fellows turned this thinking upside down, as participants brainstormed youth-led projects to meet the needs of their peers and get them involved in their communities. The training "Youth Leadership in Community Development," held at the UGRAD Mid-Program Workshop, empowered 168 Eurasian student leaders with the tools to assess their communities' needs, design projects that respond to those needs, and win community buy-in.

The leadership curriculum employs positive youth development theory, which draws on youth as valuable agents of change. Before the training began, Karin Adkins of the International Youth Federation led fellows in an open discussion of problems faced in their communities. Corruption, the plight of orphans, environmental issues, and the quality of education were recurring themes. In the first module of the training, participants built on these broadly outlined challenges and learned to gather more specific needs assessment data through interviews, focus groups and community

surveys. "The needs assessment training helped me figure out possible questions that need attention," said one fellow. Another commented, "The trainers helped me to identify and think deeply about problems in my country so that after going back I could think about a resolution." Following this training, participants learned to design and implement effective projects, manage budgets, and delegate responsibilities among their fellow peer organizers. In small groups, fellows completed a project-map worksheet outlining the goal, activities, and timeline of their sample project. "The project map is a truly powerful tool, as it incorporates so much information in an organized way, so that people who are involved directly/indirectly in that project can take advantage of it," said one participant. The final segment of the training equipped UGRAD fellows with outreach strategies to engage volunteers, beneficiaries, and stakeholders in their communities. As the 2007-2008 UGRAD fellows have now returned to their home communities, many already have youth-led project ideas in mind. Elena Seryapina plans to invite her adviser and professors

at the University of North Dakota to train law students and teachers in Russia on mediation and alternative dispute resolution (ADR) strategies. "As I see it, this exchange will be the first step on the way to legal reform in Russia by implementing new ways of conflict resolution," Elena said. "Right before I started working on this project I reviewed all my notes from the workshop in DC. They were helpful in...figuring out the needs of my local community, finding out what sphere of ADR to focus on." In all, over 75 percent of students who responded to a survey said they would definitely use the information on project design and management or that they were very likely to do so. Many are planning to apply for Alumni Small Grants or Project Smile funding to put their ideas into action. "This workshop was very important to me because I always wanted to help the orphanage in my town, but I did not know how to do that," said one participant. Said another future organizer, "Thanks to this training I found out what I want to do and how to start it and how to do it all."



## Teaching Kids About Hygiene While Making Them Smile

By **Ksenia Dmitrieva**  
Russia, 2002-2003



Ksenia's academic year in the US gave her a profound understanding of the importance of helping one's community. She felt lucky to find people in her home town of Omsk, Russia, who shared those same ideas. Together they made several visits to a local orphanage to organize games, celebrate holidays and teach some classes. During those visits, Ksenia noticed that the children lacked proper hygiene so she decided to apply for a Project Smile Grant to teach the children about it. With the help of FLEX alumni, she was able to recruit students to help out with the project. On March 23rd, her team presented an educational activity lead by Moydodyr (a fairy tale character), who taught kids how to brush their teeth, use dental floss, and wash properly. The kids really enjoyed the games and it made Ksenia and her volunteers happy to see the children's smiling faces.

## making a difference



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## Encouraging Children to Think About Their Futures

By **Olena Ovchynnikova**  
Ukraine, 2002-2003




Olena conducted a Project Smile event on February 29, 2008 called "Choose Your Future Profession". The Project was aimed at helping orphans from Bucha boarding school (Kyiv region) learn about potential job options in their future. The pupils of 9th, 10th and 11th grade classes learned about three underlying principles of choosing a profession: 1) "What are my interests and objectives?", 2) "How developed are my skills?", and 3) "What professions are needed in the job market?" Each part of the three components was accompanied by games prepared by volunteers as well as interesting stories about well-known people and their professions. After the presentation, the students asked numerous questions about various jobs and admissions procedures to colleges and universities. The questions led to a lively discussion. At the end of the event every student received a CD with the presentation and informational materials to help guide them in pursuing their future educational and career goals.



## The Real Meaning of Volunteering

**By Denis Yulin**

Russia, 2007-2008


 The community service portion of the UGRAD program turned out to be one of the most interesting and fun experiences Denis had while studying at the University of Wyoming in the United States in the fall of 2007. It gave him the opportunity to explore the internal workings of a non-profit organization the Biodiversity Conservation Alliance (BCA), and to contribute to its mission: protecting wildlife and preserving the environment. Denis really felt like a part of this organization, and it perfectly matched his understanding of the word 'volunteering', noting "You contribute to other people's work in exchange for a sincere and happy smile on their faces when they say 'thank you'." he said. This simple 'thank you', Denis believes, is the best reward you can receive and, in its own way, is much more valuable than money. "Maybe our help sometimes is not as official as an employee's, but the desire to help comes from our hearts, which is much more important."



## Achieving Goals with the Help of Project Smile

**By Lela Putkaradze**

Georgia, 2006-2007


 When Lela returned to Georgia, she was strongly motivated and her main goal was to use her community service experience for the development of her home community. She was awarded a grant through Project Smile at the beginning of 2008. It was a chance for her to share her US experience with members of a charity club at her home university in Georgia, and then to organize various charity activities for local orphans in Batumi on April 26, 2008. Lela managed a book drive, a bake sale, a tennis game and movie screening with other student volunteers at the university so they could raise money to buy English-language textbooks and organize social activities for the children. All of the project volunteers felt proud when they saw the orphans' happy faces and are now much more encouraged to make a positive difference in the lives of Georgian orphans in the future.



## Training Communities About Human Rights

**By Sabina Uzakova**

Kyrgyzstan, 2003-2004

 Sabina was recently nominated for a US Embassy Appreciation Certificate for an Alumni Small Grant project she implemented. Sabina was awarded her certificate on March 15, 2008 at the Seventh ECA Alumni Reunion by the US Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, Marie L. Yovanovitch. Sabina received the certificate for organizing trainings on human rights throughout Kyrgyzstan between December 2006 and November 2007. The trainings focused on three critical human rights issues in Kyrgyzstan: human trafficking, bride kidnapping and labor migration. After attending the trainings, participants conducted seminars in their home communities to increase awareness of these important human rights issues in remote areas of Kyrgyzstan.

**making a difference**

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summer 2008

## Cleaning Up the Environment Through Collaboration

By **Elena Solohin**  
Moldova, 2006-2007



Elena was awarded an Alumni Small Grant in December 2007 for the project "Building Environmental Sustainability through Cooperation". She conducted her project on March 6, 2008. It was aimed at establishing long-term cooperation in the field of environmental monitoring between Dr. Chris B. Keil, Associate Professor of Environmental Health at Bowling Green State University, OH, and the Moldovan academic community. The grant helped Dr. Keil to travel to Moldova to help Elena conduct the project. The event was comprised of a series of activities that involved the larger community including a series of extensive trainings for professionals, seminars for graduate and undergraduate students, as well as field trips for students and professors to conduct environmental research. The field trips, organized at different nature sites, had a great impact on young researchers who showed their growing interest in using modern equipment and new techniques in their research work. The project enabled students and professors to learn about best practices used in environmental monitoring and strengthened the academic community by establishing and maintaining a professional collaboration between students and professors.



## Model United Nations Movement Grows in Russian Far East

By **Anna Pivovarova**  
Russia, 2004-2005



As part of a Model United Nations (MUN) simulation from November 6-9, 2007, partially funded by the Alumni Small Grants Program, Anna brought together over 100 young leaders in Kamchatka, Irkutsk, Vladivostok and Khabarovsk regions who are members of MUN clubs. The event, which was organized in cooperation with the Debate Club at Khabarovsk State Academy of Economics and Law, featured several topics currently on the international agenda, such as "The Effectiveness of the UN Peacekeeping Programs in Sudan", "Preventing Acts of Terrorism on Transport Systems", and "Overcoming Barriers Impeding Third-World Development". The conference was not only an opportunity for students to learn more about these issues and to improve their professional debate and critical thinking skills, but also promoted the Model UN movement in the Russian Far East.

## Developing Future Lawyers in Ukraine

By **Yaroslav Petrov**  
Ukraine, 2003-2004



Through an Alumni Small Grant, a group of students from the Economics and Law Faculty at Donetsk National University teamed up with the Ukrainian Bar Association (UBA) and the Ukrainian law firm Chernyavsky, Kalinska, & Partners to hold a moot court competition on February 15 - 16, 2008. Yaroslav, Founder and current Counsel to the Students League of the UBA helped plan and coordinated the competition. The competition, the League's latest project, was intended to simulate the experience of arguing a case before a panel of three judges, as is required in Ukrainian criminal cases. After fierce legal arguments, the judges awarded first prize to Yaroslav's team from Donetsk National University's Economic and Law Faculty. Increasing the preparedness of Ukrainian law students to enter the country's legal system is a cornerstone of the UBA and Donetsk National University. The Students League has initiated projects to allow law students from all over Ukraine to network among their future legal peers, share knowledge, and develop their professional capacity. On the agenda for reform by the government, the Ukrainian legal system will benefit from an influx of trained and highly competent new lawyers.



## Eliminating Discrimination and Increasing Tolerance

By **Irina Bocan, Olesea Stirbu**

Moldova, 2006-2007



March 21st, 2008 was European Anti-Racism and Xenophobia Day and it was celebrated in the framework of the “European Action Week Against Racism”. Recognizing the importance of this issue, Olesea and Irina organized a workshop on that day for students in Moldova to discuss the problem of racism and xenophobia in the context of European and world-wide diversity. The event was widely attended and included students from Transdnistria and Chisinau, as well as representatives from various non-governmental organizations such as The Tolerance Club, The National Roma Centre, and the Refugee Centre in Moldova. Olesea and Irina sought to increase the public's awareness about racism in Moldova and to show ways to combat the phenomenon. Attendees were given the opportunity to share their own experiences and opinions, and learn more about the point of view of the minorities and foreigners who live in Moldova. As a result of the workshop, participants learned more about understanding the value of diversity and the harmful effects of stereotypes and discrimination.

## Raising Awareness of Eating Disorders

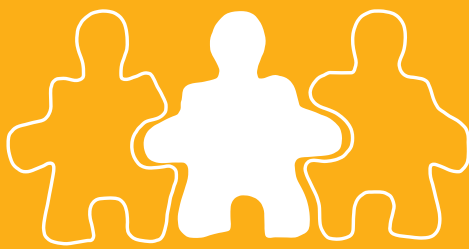
By **Halyna Kurylo**

Ukraine, 2006-2007



On February 23, 2008, Halyna conducted a seminar about eating disorders in order to raise awareness about the issue and to help her community learn about the causes, symptoms, treatment, and prevention of anorexia nervosa. Nastia Bohdanova, a student who is working on her masters in psychology and researching anorexia nervosa, was responsible for the first part of the seminar. She provided a comprehensive view on the nature of eating disorders using non-technical language and various visual aids. Participants later indicated that it was very beneficial to examine this subject from the perspective of psychology and sociology rather than medicine. During the second half of the seminar, Halyna, who is a resource person for the National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders (ANAD), highlighted various approaches to preventing eating disorders. Afterwards, there were exercises aimed at developing practical skills to assist others with eating disorders and body image problems. Overall, the response to the event was encouraging. Each participant received an informational brochure highlighting the main points discussed and other resources to enable the participants to educate and assist others in their communities.

## making a difference



## Protect Children From Abuse and Neglect

By **Ani Derdzian**

Armenia, 2007-2008



A year of study in the US was an exciting experience for Ani, but she especially enjoyed her community service working with children in the fall of 2007. She did her volunteer work organizing classes for children in neighborhoods where children very often face such problems as abuse and neglect. Now she understands how important it is to have organizations that can protect neglected children. Ani is sure that she can apply her volunteer experience back home in Armenia. She said “There are still problems in preschool and kindergartens systems here. Since I am a future teacher, it was a very good experience for me to learn how to interact and communicate with children.”



making a difference

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from  
UnderGrad

summer 2008



 **Geysar Gurbanov**  
(Azerbaijan, 2005-2006)

In spring 2007, Geysar, together with twelve young community leaders, founded the Rotaract Club of Baku International and he was elected as its first president. Rotaract is one of a series of youth programs created by Rotary International, which focuses on the development of young adults as leaders in their communities and workplaces by training and community service, locally and worldwide. The members hold formal meetings, usually every week, which feature speakers, special outings, social activities, discussions or visits to other clubs. The club's purpose is to provide

an opportunity for young men and women to enhance their knowledge and skills that will assist them in personal and professional development, to address the physical and social needs of their communities, and to promote better relations between all people worldwide through a framework of friendship and service. At the same time the organization helps young people enhance their educational and career goals and to organize leisure and entertainment activities with likeminded active youth.

 **Sanoat Jumaeva**  
(Tajikistan, 2002-2003)

Sanoat recently joined UN/ISDR (United Nations/ International Strategy for Disaster Reduction) as a Financial/Administrative Assistant after graduating with honors from the Russian-Tajik Slavonic University. It's her first experience working for a global organization in the area of disaster reduction. While her work is mostly in administration, she also is involved with core program activities, helping communities to implement disaster risk reduction strategies. She says her UGRAD experience and her work with the UN have influenced her

decision to pursue a career in international development. Sanoat recently won a scholarship to pursue her MA in International Relations at the University of Neuchatel in Switzerland.

 **Maia Jaliashvili**  
(Georgia, 2002-2003)

Maia Jaliashvili was able to participate in some professional development activities after being awarded a Domestic Violence Fellowship to spend four months at the law school of the State University of New York at Buffalo. The competition was for young lawyers in Central and Eastern Europe, the CIS, the Balkans, the Caucasus or the Central Asian Republics who work on women's and children's issues. Maia had the opportunity to participate in the UB Law Family Violence Clinic and took classes on domestic violence and in US family law with widely recognized American experts in these fields. Maia also observed the work of various officials and professionals in the Family Violence Intervention System in Buffalo, NY, and looks forward to using her newly gained professional knowledge back home in Georgia.



## career corner

UGRAD alumni grow professionally following their program experience. Alumni help their countries to develop socially and economically, enter into public service, and succeed in the corporate world. This section highlights the professional achievements of UGRAD alumni.



**Aylara Nepesova**  
(Turkmenistan, 2005-2006)

Aylara landed a job at the world's fifth largest global energy company. Chevron Corporation recently opened an office in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, and has been looking to fill some open positions. Aylara is the office's Assistant Accountant where she is responsible for accounts payable, tax reporting, banking transactions, and managing property depreciation. Also, in September, Aylara will travel to England for several days of professional development training for Chevron. Aylara is a graduate of the American University in Central Asia in the field of Business Administration.



**Regina Griciuc**  
(Moldova, 2004-2005)

Regina started working as a Judicial Sector Assistant at the Moldova Governance Threshold Country Program (TCP), a project being implemented by Millennium International Consulting and the Institute for Public Private Partnerships (IP3). The goal of the TCP is to promote good governance, reduce corruption and improve public sector service

delivery in Moldova. Regina assists the Judicial Reform Component with conducting workflow and case flow analysis in district pilot courts in Ungheni, Rezina, and Comrat, and the Chisinau Court of Appeal. Regina is responsible for the recruitment, training and supervision of legal interns on site and organizing trainings and other events related to the activities of legal case management. To effectively track the government's performance, the program will work with civil society and the media to improve their monitoring role and ensure citizens are informed.



**Maksatbek Damiruulu**  
(Kyrgyzstan, 2006-2007)

Maksat is a Program Manager for Counterpart International in Bishkek where he works on the Community and Humanitarian Assistance Program (CHAP/KR). Maksat manages all aspects of the project planning, implementation, and monitoring. He also conducts detailed needs surveys and assessments of organizations and indigenous populations. Specifically, Maksat has been working on a reconstruction project on a school for hearing impaired children. As part of the project, he was able to secure funding from

the Ministry of Education and obtained donations from the Rotary Club of Bishkek. "It's directly related to the experience I received from my community service experience in the US. During my service, I volunteered for different student organizations which worked on homelessness, HIV/AIDS, and after school programs providing clothing, food, and housing to children and families in need." In addition to it being a great work experience, Maksat says it has helped him understand that the most important thing in this world is to help those who really need it.



**Diana Babayan**  
(Armenia, 2006-2007)

Diana is interning at USAID's Social Protection Systems Strengthening (SPSS) Project. Diana credits her UGRAD experience with being able to get her foot in the door since any position in the project is highly competitive. The project is designed to help improve social insurance delivery, introduce job market reforms and occupational safety standards, and reduce vulnerable citizens' dependence on public support for their basic needs. Diana organizes and administers trainings, seminars, prepares publications and reports, and updates the project's website.



## Notes from UnderGrad Editorial Committee:

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### Submission guidelines:

Have something to share with  
the UGRAD community?

We encourage you to participate  
and submit your articles and  
pictures to the newsletter!

Please submit material to  
<ugradnotes@gmail.com>.

Submissions may be edited for style  
and language. Not all submitted  
material will be printed.

Deadline for submissions for  
Fall 2008 issue is October 6, 2008.



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 Eurasian Undergraduate Exchange Program Alumni

**State Alumni Web Site:** 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 (ASG):** Alumni may apply to IREX 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, administered by IREX, 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.



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