

**2006 UGRAD alumni regional conferences** p.2-5

In spring 2006 IREX worked with ECA and PAS to organize regional conferences to further strengthen the UGRAD program through alumni activities. The conferences facilitated networking among alumni and provided forums to address timely issues for regional development and for alumni to share knowledge and skills with each other. This section brings you the conference reports.

**in the community** p.6-9

UGRAD alumni are a community of young leaders that contribute to their society by working with local youth. Alumni utilize their UGRAD program experience and organize social and educational projects that target the local youth and help them succeed in life. Alumni share their American experience and spread their spirit for community service with their peers at home. Read about it – "in the community!"

**internships complete the UGRAD program journey** p.10-11

The internship component of the UGRAD program is a unique professional development opportunity for students to receive hands-on experience in their field of study, to learn about the American professional standards, and to establish professional contacts that could be sustained after returning to their home country following the UGRAD program. UGRAD participants share their internship experience.



# Notes FROM UnderGrad



**Eurasian Undergraduate Exchange Program**



summer 2006

## 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. 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 IREX.



Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. 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 U.S. history, society, art and culture in all of its diversity to overseas audiences.



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IREX (the International Research & Exchanges Board) is an international nonprofit organization providing leadership and innovative programs to improve the quality of education, strengthen independent media, and foster pluralistic civil society development. Founded in 1968, IREX has an annual portfolio of \$50 million and a staff of over 500 professionals worldwide. IREX and its partner IREX Europe deliver cross-cutting programs and consulting expertise in more than 50 countries.



UGRAD alumni working in small group on "Promoting a Healthy Lifestyle Among Youth"

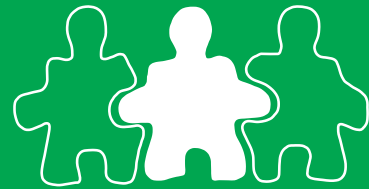
On March 31-April 1, 2006 UGRAD alumni gathered in Moscow for the UGRAD alumni regional conference entitled "Empowering Alumni to Make a Difference: Implementing Social Projects in Russia." Forty alumni representing over twenty different regions of Russia attended the conference.

During the two-day conference alumni discussed strategies and methods for implementing social projects in Russia. Four panels took place to assess the needs and opportunities for implementing social projects in different spheres: "Promoting a Healthy Lifestyle Among Youth," "Aiding in Social Adaptation of Orphans to Independence," "Teaching Youth to be Tolerant," and "Encouraging Student Activism."

## 2006 UGRAD alumni regional conferences



# UGRAD alumni work together to implement social projects in Russia



2006 UGRAD alumni regional conferences



UGRAD alumni working on a project entitled "Teaching Youth to be Tolerant"



UGRAD alumni Alexander Boytsov (2003-2004) from St. Petersburg, Aysa Tyumenova (2002-2003) from Elista and Anna Bezroukova (2002-2003) from Samara discuss how to encourage student activism on campus

Eight experts spoke about the current situation in Russia and UGRAD alumni shared their experience of implementing projects in these fields.

IREX organized trainings for alumni to teach them skills to successfully implement social projects. Conference participants participated in two trainings; a motivational speaker conducted a session about what communication and personal skills are necessary to be a successful leader and how to inspire leadership skills in others, and the second training focused on working with and motivating volunteers.

As the culmination of the conference work and discussions, alumni worked in small groups by topic to brainstorm new ideas for socially beneficial projects. Each group came up with recommendations and ideas for socially beneficial projects they would like to implement in their communities. Group One discussed methods and strategies for educating Russian youth about the dangers of drug consumption and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Group Two came up with several ideas for educational programs with Russian orphans and how UGRAD alumni can contribute to orphanages in their cities. Group Three made recommendations for promoting tolerance among Russian youth and gave recommendations for the rest of the group on how to do so in their communities. Finally, Group Four came up with a project that would support student initiatives on campus and shared with alumni their vision for how to encourage Russian students to be active.

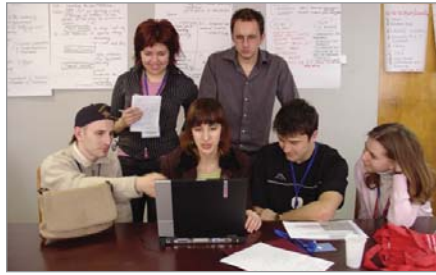
Small groups presented their ideas during a plenary session during which alumni gave suggestions and recommendations to the group for implementing and moving forward with their proposed projects.

The conference provided an excellent opportunity for alumni from similar professional backgrounds to network, share ideas for professional development and collaboration for the betterment of their country. Alumni from the same geographic regions discussed opportunities for organizing joint events and social projects in their cities.

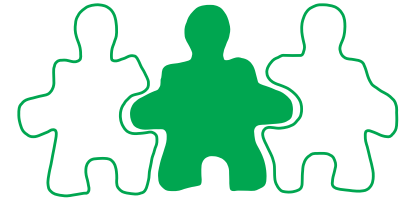




UGRAD alumni representing the "Program Management" training group



UGRAD alumni from Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova are developing their advocacy plan



## 2006 UGRAD alumni regional conferences



# Western Eurasia alumni are building civil society through participation and action

On April 6-9, 2006 over fifty UGRAD alumni from Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova participated in the UGRAD alumni regional conference entitled "Building Civil Society: Participation and Action" that took place in Lviv, Ukraine.

The conference was an excellent opportunity for alumni to gain the skills and knowledge needed to continue their active participation in developing civil society in their home communities.

On the first working day of the conference, alumni participated in a series of trainings: Advocacy and Influencing Policy-Making Bodies, Designing and Creating an Action Plan, and Mobilizing Volunteers. Alumni learned new skills that will help them in designing and implementing projects aimed at developing civil society. Alumni were given tools to create a project action plan that includes concrete and dynamic steps for implementation. They learned ways to attract volunteers and involve them successfully in civil society projects. Finally, the alumni examined policy-making bodies, how they can help or hinder a project's activity, and how the alumni can work with the policy-makers to ensure success.

On the second working day of the conference, alumni broke out into groups based on their fields of study or work (Business, Government,

NGO and Media, and Education). The main goal of each discipline group was to design a project(s) using the knowledge and skills the alumni received on the previous training day. The group work was facilitated by an invited specialist who provided an overview of the current situation in the field, helped the alumni to set achievable goals and advised on the best steps in creating an action plan. At the end of the day, all groups

presented their projects and project posters. As the result of the conference UGRAD alumni from Western Eurasia came up with concrete project ideas to implement in their home cities, strengthened their contacts among the UGRAD community, and felt more empowered to make a difference in the development of civil society in the region. On the last day of the Conference, alumni had a tour around the beautiful city of Lviv.



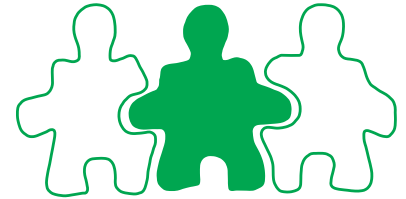
A circle of friends – UGRAD alumni working together to build a stronger alumni community in the region



One of the PACE small groups pause their discussion for a group photo



UGRAD alumni untying a human knot during the icebreaker session on the first morning of the workshop



## 2006 UGRAD alumni regional conferences



### UGRAD alumni from South Caucasus develop protection action campaigns for the environment

#### 2006 UGRAD alumni regional conferences

UGRAD alumni from Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan gathered in Gudauri, Georgia on May 6-9, 2006 to participate in the UGRAD alumni regional conference entitled "The Role of the Community in Environmental Sustainability."

Alumni met with and heard from accomplished professionals in the field of environmental sustainability, learning about timely issues in sustainable development and environmental conflict resolution, success stories of environmental campaigns in the region and the importance of community participation in environmental problem solving.

Throughout the workshop, alumni worked in small groups on Protection Action Campaigns for the Environment (PACE). The goal of the PACE project was to develop a project that any of the alumni in each of the small groups could implement in their home community, to help protect the environment.

Participants from Group One worked on the lack of waste management in all three of their countries, including ameliorating littering in historic sites in Georgia; working the oil industry in changing their improper disposal of the hazardous wastes in Azerbaijan; and targeting youth in Armenia to decrease their littering habits and the Armenian industries in changing their waste disposal systems.

In Group Two, special attention was paid to the problem of water pollution, parti-

cularly in Lake Sevan and the Kura and Araks rivers. The alumni decided to raise public awareness and effectively touch decision-makers in the government through a series of TV talk shows, documentary films and commercials about environmental protection.

The members of Group Three wanted to address a problem that was relevant in people's daily lives, and could be addressed inexpensively. They developed a campaign to teach community members about the dangers of throwing away batteries and to encourage citizens to use rechargeable batteries as a cheaper and more earth-friendly solution.

Groups Four and Five took an interesting look at the problem of deforestation.

Group Four developed an extensive plan to fight deforestation through a social marketing project to bring about greater

awareness of the negative side affects of deforestation in affected areas. Group Five decided to organize a reforestation campaign, targeting both schoolchildren and adults to plant more trees, and reaching their target audiences through a variety of TV commercials.

At the end of the workshop, all of the small groups presented their action plans to the large group, as well as discussed ways for acquiring the financial and social support necessary to enact their action plans at home.

The workshop came to the end with closing remarks made by all three active and hard-working UGRAD Alumni Fellows – Tatev Matinyan (Armenia), Ketevan Vatiashvili (Georgia) and Eldar Babayev (Azerbaijan) – who thanked all the UGRAD alumni for their active participation and cooperative atmosphere.



UGRAD alumni from Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in Gudauri, Georgia during the conference





One of the small groups discussing the issues of trafficking and labor migration in Central Asia following a movie showing



UGRAD alumni during the session entitled "Framing the Issues: From Voluntary Labor Migration to Illegal Trafficking"



UGRAD alumni planning strategies for raising public and community awareness of migration and trafficking issues

## 2006 UGRAD alumni regional conferences



# UGRAD alumni raise awareness of human trafficking and labor migration in Central Asia

On April 29-30, 2006 UGRAD alumni from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan participated in the UGRAD alumni regional conference entitled "Migration and Human Trafficking in Central Asia: Prospects for Regional Cooperation" held in Almaty, Kazakhstan. More than 50 alumni from different years of the program participated in the conference.

On the first day of the two-day conference alumni gained a solid, fundamental knowledge of the issues, facts, and statistics surrounding labor migration and trafficking in Central Asia. Alumni heard from presenters from various organizations such as the International Organization for Migration, the Eurasia Foundation, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), representatives

from the American Embassy, along with other local non-governmental organizations. Alumni were also exposed to contemporary theories in addressing these problems, and learned about projects underway in the region.

On the second day of the conference, alumni participated in a training on strategies for raising public and community awareness of the issues surrounding these topics. The interactive training allowed alumni to express their concerns about labor migration and trafficking issues as well as to develop activities and strategies for implementation in their home countries. Representatives from the Public Affairs Section of the US Embassy presented information on grant opportunities available that could provide alumni with resources to execute their ideas.

"... the Regional Conference for UGRAD alumni in Central Asia was


a good chance for alumni from all Central Asian countries to get together and discuss the issues of human-trafficking and labor migration, meet with professionals dealing with these problems on a day-to-day basis, and gain the hands-on experience necessary to conduct

awareness-raising campaigns in our regions. Getting together around one table, representatives of the five Central Asian countries explored and discussed these problems, which are common to everyone," an alumna commented after the conference.



UGRAD alumni from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in Almaty, Kazakhstan during the conference



 In April 2006, **Yana Mikharava** (2004-2005, Belarus) organized a project to teach the Belarusian students the latest marketing tools and how they can be used in building a market economy in Belarus. Mikharava invited American Professor Patrick Kurtz from Nazareth College in Rochester, New York, to conduct marketing seminars and to teach the students practical knowledge that will be applicable in Belarus. Professor Kurtz shared his wealth of experience in this field and gave unforgettable presentations for twenty-five students. Some of the participants still keep in touch with Professor Kurtz. “At the end [of the project] I couldn't help but ask [Professor Kurtz] what did he like about our country”. He answered: “It's you, the people”. Doing this project was a challenge, but the experience I gained is priceless,” said Mikharava. UGRAD alumni **Yura Radionov** (2004-2005) and **Volha Dziunel** (2004-2005) helped organize the project.

UGRAD alumna cooperates with an American professor to teach students the latest marketing tools



## in the community

UGRAD alumni are a community of young leaders that contribute to their society by working with local youth. Alumni utilize their UGRAD program experience and organize social and educational projects that target the local youth and help them succeed in life. Alumni share their American experience and spread their spirit for community service with their peers at home. Read about it “in the community!”



UGRAD alumna brings the Nauryz holiday to children

 In March 2006, **Milana Karayanidi** (2004-2005, Kazakhstan) organized an exhibition of children's paintings to introduce the Nauryz holiday to thirty 1<sup>st</sup> grade students at boarding school #8 in Almaty. The children painted pictures for exhibition in their school halls, while a committee selected the top three pictures. All participants received a toolkit for aspiring artists. Working on the project helped Karayanidi to develop her leadership skills and was one of the first steps toward her goal of becoming a UN Goodwill Ambassador.





## UGRAD alumni help rural youth discover and develop their leadership skills

 During summer 2006, UGRAD alumni **Kanat Kalmakiev, Dinara Turabekova** and **Shyira Kochubayeva** (2003-2004, Kyrgyzstan) implemented The Isfana Summer Youth Training Program in Isfana, Barken

Oblast. Alumni organized debate training and tournaments, seminars and workshops on academic integrity and human rights, and field trips to neighboring towns, among other educational and networking activities for participants to dis-

cover their talents and skills. The project also helped raise awareness of problems such as discrimination against women, health and hygiene, and environmental problems in the local community. The project provided the participants with a variety of ways to express themselves and was an excellent opportunity for alumni to share knowledge and skills gained as the result of the UGRAD program.

## in the community


### UGRAD alumna mobilizes local youth to help under privileged children



In April 2006, **Keti Darakhvelidze** (2003-2004, Georgia) conducted a project entitled “Children Helping Children” in her home city of Gori, Georgia. The project was a cooperative effort between local NGOs, youth clubs, and schools to engage local youth into community service for under privileged children in the region. On the day of the event, more than twenty volunteers, carrying supplies and snacks, traveled to the orphanage in Surami. There they had a party for the children, played games with them and distributed all the materials to more than forty orphaned children. In addition to helping the orphans, Darakhvelidze points out that she and the youth club volunteers, “raised community awareness of the material needs of under privileged children, especially among other children.”


## UGRAD alumna is promoting positive changes for children with disabilities



 In May 2006, **Ani Zakaryan** (2004-2005, Armenia) implemented a project for thirty children with mental disabilities from Noubarashen school #11. Zakaryan cooperated with “Tsitsernak,” a local non-governmental organization, to implement the project. A series of events took place for the children, including art lectures and a tour of the National Gallery of Armenia. “This project enabled the children to get engaged in a positive educational experience and to meet new people. As a result of the project, I was also able to create a valuable network of people willing to further cooperate for a good cause,” said Zakaryan.

## UGRAD alumnus organizes educational activities for orphanages




 In May 2006, **Yury Dagaev** (2004-2005, Russia) implemented a project entitled "Movie for Kids" for over 100 children from Elista orphanages and boarding schools. Children watched an animated movie that teaches them about tolerance and friendship and made new friends with children from other orphanages in Elista. This project helped promote family values among children who never had a family and was a beginning of a long-term project that Dagaev will implement with Elista orphanages on regular basis as Head of "Variant," an NGO that he has created with fellow students. Dagaev cooperated with the Department of Education of the Administration of the Republic of Kalmykia to implement the project.


## in the community



### UGRAD alumna helps peers with disabilities learn computer skills

 **Guzal Azamatova** (2004-2005, Uzbekistan) is a volunteer with the UNDP Satellite Center for People with Disabilities in Tashkent. The center in the past served as an IATP site for people with disabilities and Azamatova has been working there since November 2005. She teaches basic computer skills such as MS Office applications and a special program of touch-typing to the disabled. In May 2006 she organized a competition entitled "The Best and Fastest Touch-Typing Contest" for the center's students. "While staying in the United States I participated in different kinds of community service and it made me understand that people and especially the youth of my home country should help each other, share their kindness and support in order to build a stronger society," says Azamatova. Her future plans include recruiting volunteers among the students of the local university to work at the center.


## UGRAD alumni join forces to make a difference for an orphanage

 In May-June 2006, UGRAD alumni in Moldova united people from inside and outside the alumni community to organize a donations drive for a local orphanage. Alumni recruited students from the Moldova State University and the Academy of Economic Studies to contribute efforts to the cause. As the result of everyone's active participation the donations drive collected a considerable amount of books, toys and clothes, and a group of alumni personally delivered them to the children. "There is a great sense of responsibility towards the people in need [in the alumni community]. It is without doubt that such drives will continue, and we will join forces whenever there is a chance," said **Pavel Sarghi** (2004-2005, Moldova), one of the participating alumni.



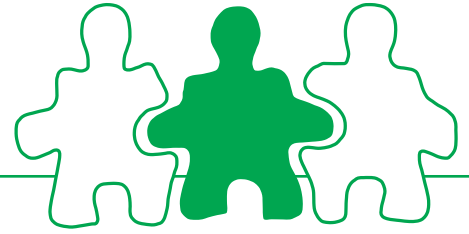


## UGRAD alumna shares the America she discovered with high-school students

 In spring-summer 2006, **Naila Mammadova** (2004-2005, Azerbaijan) implemented educational projects for high-school students in Ganja. The first project, "The America I Discovered," included presentations about American culture and traditions. The second project focused on the American system of education and academic life in the United States and was entitled "Education in the US." During the seminars

Mammadova worked with the students to compare the systems of education in the two countries and discussed the similarities and differences between the two systems. Finally, Mammadova conducted a three-month English language course at the Ganja Education Information Center, helping the students not only improve their language skills but also to become acquainted with innovative teaching methods. Mammadova studied the American

education methods during the UGRAD program and gained skills and knowledge that helped her conduct her educational projects in Ganja.




### UGRAD alumni encourage youth to express themselves through music



### UGRAD alumni engage orphans in creative thinking



### UGRAD alumna seeks business support for a daycare center

 In April 2006, UGRAD alumni in Ashgabat came up with a creative way to celebrate Global Youth Service Day. Alumni and local volunteers organized a "Rap Battle" contest at the Turkish Cultural Center in Ashgabat. Nearly two hundred people participated in the event that helped promote volunteerism and raised funds for community service activities. **Azat Shamuradov** (2003-2004, Turkmenistan) was one of the main organizers of this event. Shamuradov studied movie and music editing courses at the MiraCosta College during the UGRAD program and is now working at the Turkmen Television and Radio Company as a music and movie editor. Thirteen young musicians and dancers participated in the contest that encouraged local youth to help change their world for the better.

 In March 2006, UGRAD alumni **Veronika Razikova**, **Malika Jurakulova** (2004-2005, Tajikistan) and **Botur Qosimov** (2002-2003, Tajikistan) joined forces with other ECA alumni to organize "Let's Make Them Happy" event for children with disabilities in an orphanage outside Dushanbe. The event was dedicated to celebrating the International Women's Day and included such activities as an essay and picture contest for the children, a game of basketball, and watching cartoons together with alumni. The children wrote essays on the topic of their future goals and personal wishes, and contest winners were awarded prizes. Alumni are now making plans to help make some of these wishes come true for the children.

 **Tetyana Potapova** (2003-2004, Ukraine) is an Account Coordinator in "Romyr & Associates Ukraine," a public relations firm in Kyiv. In April 2006 she organized and implemented the "Easter for Street Children" project to encourage financial support for the Kyiv Child Rescue Daycare Center from the Ukrainian business community. The project featured a lesson of painting traditional Easter "pysanky" for the kids by a member of the National Union of Folk Art Masters. "Pysanky" were sold at the press conference that was covered by local media, including three local TV channels and two newspapers. "Volunteering at the Child Rescue Daycare Center for homeless kids was my way of changing the world for the better," said Potapova.

## UGRAD participant develops professionally as an editor-in-chief

By Maka Aliogli  
2005-2006, Georgia

 My internship took place at the International Studies Department of Bowling Green State University (BGSU). I was editor-in-chief of the monthly newsletter called "The Frequent Flyer" and worked with guest speakers visiting BGSU. I have learned a lot from this experience, and improved my writing and communication skills by meeting different people and writing articles about them. I am now familiar with the American style of developing publications and news-


letters. In the United States the students are interested in reading their newsletter. They are free to express their opinions and are eager to contribute comments to this publication. This is something I would like to work towards to in my country. I am really glad to have had the opportunity to be a part of the BGSU International Studies Department. It was a rewarding experience and I learned a lot from working with my American colleagues.



## Making the environmental connection between the United States and Ukraine

By Olena Noda  
2005-2006, Ukraine



 My internship with the Sierra Club, one of the biggest non-governmental environmental organizations in the United States, gave me many opportunities for professional growth in my field of study. For example, I participated in a work-shop entitled "Citizen Engagement in Public Lands Management" that took place at Arizona State University in Phoenix. I learned about different environmental policy acts in the United States, and met accomplished environmental leaders that gave me valuable advice in this field. This internship opportunity was very unique for me because I gained knowledge and skills to help me work towards accomplishing my professional goal of writing a college course entitled "The Environmental Law of Ukraine, Europe and the United States: The Practical Implementation."

## internships complete the UGRAD program journey

The internship component of the UGRAD program is a unique professional development opportunity for students to receive hands-on experience in their field of study, to learn about the American professional standards, and to establish professional contacts that could be sustained after returning to their home country following the UGRAD program. UGRAD participants share their internship experience in the United States in the "Internships Complete the UGRAD Program Journey."

163 American organizations in 41 US states served as internship hosts for 2005-2006 UGRAD participants.

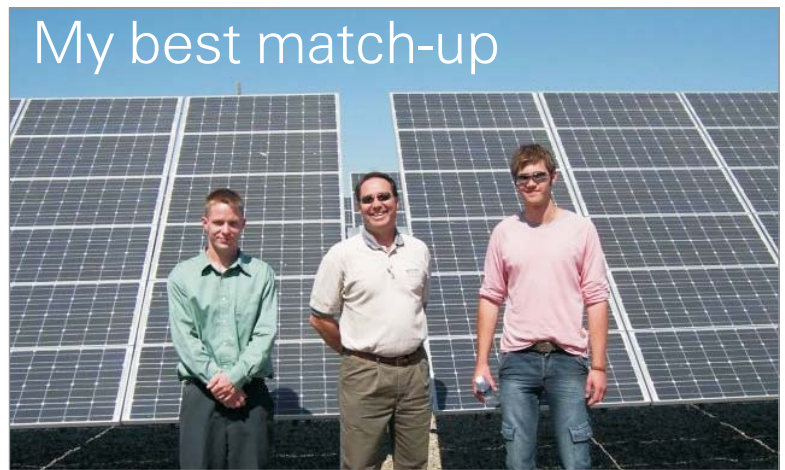




# Learning about financial markets

**By Anastasiya E**  
2005-2006, Russia

 During my internship at Tri-State Financial, a financial planning company, I was lucky to acquire hands-on experience in New York, the cradle of financial markets. I analyzed mutual fund performances, worked with client portfolios, and created weekly financial newsletters for the whole company. This experience will undoubtedly be of great use for me in the future. After experiencing a real business environment in New York, I came to the realization that clients matter the most. In cutting-edge business college courses you hear that sophisticated market analysis and innate mathematical abilities are the backbone of success of any wealth manager. However, in reality all financial instruments already exist. In this respect, keeping and growing your customer base is a real art. And that is the area in which Mr. Pink, my internship supervisor, really excelled. Throughout the entire internship he taught me ways to accommodate clients and take over market share from rivals. I gained priceless skills that I will definitely apply while working in Russian financial markets.



**By Ilya Shaiderov**  
2005-2006, Kyrgyzstan


 During the second quarter at California State University at Bakersfield I participated in the Kern County Export Program, a program designed to teach students how to conduct international market research for companies in Kern County, CA. Following the training I was assigned to work at the United States Export Assistance Center (USEAC). I consider this internship to be one of the largest and most significant steps toward my future career. I gained new knowledge that now allows me to grasp the international affairs of Kyrgyzstan from a different point of view, a view more broad and positive. I learned new information that is crucial for my field of study, customs affairs, and I made every effort possible to learn everything about different issues concerning international trade practices. I will share this new knowledge in Kyrgyzstan, explaining the Ameri-

can way of conducting international business to Kyrgyz companies, and also representatives from the Kyrgyzstan government.

The goals of the UGRAD program are economic development, international collaboration, and mutual understanding between countries. My internship was a tool that helped me work towards achieving these goals by learning, working and experiencing the American way of conducting business on the international arena.

One day in my Career Skills class our professor grabbed my attention by saying: "The key to a successful career is to have a passion and love for your career." I have found that passion during my internship, and I would like to wish all UGRAD participants the possibility to find their own key to success in our rapidly changing environment.

## Putting law knowledge to practice; from Tacoma to Azerbaijan

 Although the study of American law at Tacoma Community College has been of great interest to me, it was challenging to understand how to apply the knowledge that I have gained. In my opinion the information that we are getting from our textbooks and college instructors must be supplemented by real life practice. Thus, I did my internship as a legal assistant at a local law office in Tacoma. In Azerbaijan the private attorney business is poorly developed. During my internship I understood why attorneys succeed in the United States, while in my country they usually fail. The internship was a great chance for me to test and to improve my communication and professional skills, and to meet new and interesting people such as local judges, prosecutors, police officers and other attorneys. It was a fabulous experience and the first insight into my future career. I feel that my internship helped me to utilize the skills I have learned thus far, and to effectively apply them in my home country's legal system, especially in the development of human rights.

**By Geysar Gurbanov**  
2005-2006, Azerbaijan



**internships complete the UGRAD program journey**

**11** Notes  
from  
**UnderGrad**



# in memoriam

The U.S. Department of State, IREX, and the UGRAD community send their heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of two UGRAD alumni from Azerbaijan who recently passed away.

**Gunay Mammadova** (FSAU 2003-2004) passed away during an automobile accident in Azerbaijan in July 2006. Mammadova recently graduated from the Faculty of Law, Baku State University. She was talented and successful, yet always maintained a sense of humility and goodness. She is remembered as a girl full of life, always cheerful and fun-loving. Her friends called her "Curly" in reference to her frizzy curls. One of her fellow UGRAD alumni wrote: "In the US, where we all were so far away from our homes and sometimes feeling so very lonely and even vulnerable, our "Curly" was always responsive, trying to help to the best of her abilities and be supportive in hard and happy times."

**Rustam Mufidzade** (UGRAD 2005-2006) passed away in April 2006 as a result of an automobile accident in his host state of Wisconsin. Mufidzade will always be remembered with a smile on his face. His teachers described him as a "beacon of light" on the University of Wisconsin-Richland campus. Mufidzade had a sense of openness and purity about him that drew people to him. His dedication to Azerbaijan was apparent. He once wrote in an e-mail to a fellow UGRAD student from Azerbaijan: "The United States is a nice place to live and to study, especially for young students like you and me. But we must go back. Our home is Azerbaijan. We cannot stay here when our people and government need us."

Rustam Mufidzade and Gunay Mammadova will be deeply missed and always remembered by those whose lives they touched.

## 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 <mchetyrkina@irex.ru>. Submissions may be edited for style and language. Not all submitted material will be printed. Deadline for submissions for Winter 2007 issue is January 31, 2007.

## A message from the Department of State

The UGRAD community, both current UGRAD participants and UGRAD alumni, is made up of a wealth of knowledge, experience, initiative, and ambition. This is evidenced by your work and activities while you are/were in the United States, and your continued enthusiasm and interest in your home countries.

In August, we welcomed the 2006-2007 UGRADers at an orientation in Washington, D.C. where IREX presented a world of information about the United States such as the American culture, the people, and student life at an American university. Participants also had a chance to meet their fellow UGRADers and take part in the famous UGRAD

### A note from U.S. Embassy, Bishkek Rafael Perez, Assistant Public Affairs Officer

All of you are undoubtedly flourishing as students and young professionals. Your greatest accomplishment is your remarkable representation of Kyrgyzstan. The alumni network continues to grow and become stronger year after year. We encourage all alumni to remain active and contributing members of this special family. In all, you are the future of Kyrgyzstan, a future that holds great promise due to your acquired skills, talents, and leadership.

### A note from U.S. Embassy, Moscow Anna Poplavko, Alumni Coordinator

I know that a lot of you initiated and implemented projects that contributed to development of your local communities. That's why I have no doubts that the UGRAD alumni will stay active and continue their efforts to make the alumni network stronger. We at the U.S. Embassy will support such initiatives as much as we can.

field day. It was a pleasure to participate in the orientation, to see the excitement and eagerness of all the participants anticipating their UGRAD experience. It is this energy that will carry the new UGRADers through their year in America and beyond, when they return home and become part of the UGRAD alumni community.

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) at the U.S. Department of State is proud of the UGRAD community and looks forward to seeing the many more wonderful things you will do.

Laura Alami, Program Manager  
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

