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A new component of the program, the Passport to America is the vehicle by which current Global UGRAD fellows share their experiences and impressions about American life and culture in their everyday life on the program.

**making a difference p. 4-8**

Global UGRAD fellows and alumni are a community of active people who help their communities. They design and implement development projects, volunteer, and perform community service. They promote positive social change and raise awareness about important social issues to those around them.

**alumni updates p. 9-11**

Global 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 personal and professional achievements of Global UGRAD alumni.



# Notes FROM UnderGrad



**Global Undergraduate Exchange Program**



**winter 2009**

## About THE Newsletter

Notes from UnderGrad is a forum for the Global Undergraduate Exchange Program community to express views and share the Global 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 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.



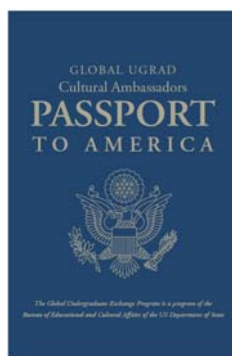
IREX (the International Research & Exchanges Board) is an international nonprofit organization providing leadership and innovative programs to improve the quality of education, strengthen independent media, and foster pluralistic civil society development. Founded in 1968, IREX has an annual portfolio 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.

# passport to America

A new component of the program, the Passport to America is the vehicle by which current Global UGRAD fellows share their experiences and impressions about American life and culture in their everyday life on the program.



## passport to America



Beginning with the 2008–2009 academic year IREX has instituted a special enrichment program, called the Cultural Ambassadors Passport to America, in order to complement the

academic portion of the Global UGRAD program. The centerpiece of the program is a "cultural passport" with pages to record exploration of various aspects of American culture, such as arts and music, holiday celebrations, sports and leisure, daily life, and community life.

The passport ensures that students receive a well-rounded introduction to American institutions, people, values such as diversity, faith and family, and civic engagement, and gives a common Global UGRAD program identity across American host institutions. It also helps them integrate into the community and meet American friends – opportunities that international students desire, but cannot always find on their own.

In this section, current Global UGRAD fellows share some of their passport experiences.

## Daily Life

**Olga Bogdan**

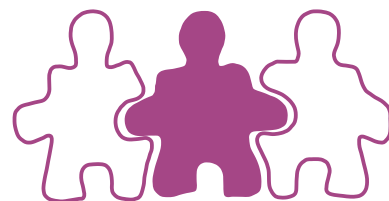
Moldova, Johnson County Community College, Overland Park, Kansas, 2008–2009



I am happy with my stay in the U.S. I have a great host family who understands me and we spend a lot of time together. There are many differences between the way people live here and the way people do that in my native country. Something new happens here all the time. I keep discovering that day after day. Part of my daily life here involves things like eating American meals with my host family, and visiting local places of interest which my host family enjoys doing.

For me, a typical American dinner is meat or fish, a side-dish, and vegetables. The last one is very important! So, I've learned that it's not necessarily sandwiches or burgers and french fries. Also, apple pie is something very, very American and so is macaroni and cheese. I'm starting to enjoy American food.

There are several places I've visited here so far. The Deanna Rose Children's Farmstead is an educational farm where parents bring children to learn an appreciation for wildlife and Kansas heritage. I also went to the campus of Kansas University – one of the major public research and teaching institutions in Kansas. The campus is as big as an entire city and has beautiful buildings. It's also a special place for my host family as my host parents met and became engaged there. Lincoln Presidential Museum and House in Springfield, Illinois is one of the best places I've been to since in the US. It's my favorite museum of all time. It combines priceless historical artifacts with innovative, contemporary storytelling technologies. It was a very emotional and educational experience.







## Local Pride

**Evren Rahimov**

Azerbaijan, Shawnee State University,  
Portsmouth, Ohio, 2008–2009



I'm glad to be a part of a small community here. Some Global UGRAD students prefer big cities, but I think that a small community is much more interesting. Here, people are closer to each other and they are always together which I think makes them stronger. When I think about my community it reminds me of the phrase "local pride". Each community has something specific to be proud of. Here, there is a local holiday called River Days. I had the chance to take part in the River Days Parade and watch the River Days fireworks display. I loved the River Days Parade and especially enjoyed the band music performed by high school students. I had never heard live band music before and I never knew I could be such a big fan of it. It was definitely something new for me and it will stay with me forever.

## Arts and Music

**Nurgul Tilenbaeva**

Kyrgyzstan, Carroll College,  
Helena, Montana, 2008–2009



October 23, 2008 was a very special day for me. I went to a musical for the first time in my life on this day. Students at my school performed "The Producers". In Kyrgyzstan, my home country, musicals are not part of our life; we simply do not have them. I think that musicals are a very American thing, like American football or Thanksgiving.

Watching the musical was a wonderful experience. I loved it so much that even after the end of it, even when I came home, and even the next day, I was thinking about what I watched, listened to, and felt. It touched my heart very deeply, and I felt like I was going through the story with the heroes. The most surprising thing for me was that the actors, mostly Carroll College students, were so talented, and had such versatile personalities. They were singers, dancers, and actors all in one. The audience perceived them not as Carroll students, but as Bialystock, Leo Bloom, or Ulla. It seemed like it was real life, and I was a witness to the characters' life stories.



## Football Fever

**Anna Saniukevich**

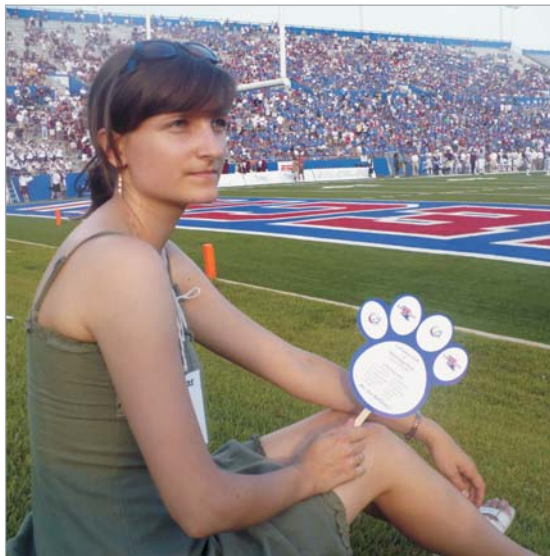
Belarus, Grambling State University,  
Grambling, Louisiana, 2008–2009



Football in the American south is taken very seriously. The first experience that I thought deserved to be recorded in my cultural passport was a football game between the Mississippi State Bull Dogs and the Louisiana Tech Bull Dogs. The game took place on the Louisiana Tech campus in Ruston, Louisiana. I arrived at the stadium 3 hours before the game started. That's when I had a chance to walk among the stalls of a temporary camp near the stadium. Cars were everywhere. The odor of grilled meat filled the air. People were preparing hot food. The whole camp was white and blue, the school colors of Louisiana Tech. My green outfit was seen as suspicious.

I thought the camp was a way for Americans to celebrate the fact that their team hasn't lost yet. However, an American friend laughed and explained that it was called tail gating. Meanwhile, the stadium slowly filled with people. I can't describe the game, as the rules don't make any sense to me. One person tried to explain them, but he only confused me more so I just tried to enjoy the bright uniforms of the teams, their fierce clashes, and the absolutely amazing music of the marching bands.

Without any idea of what was going on, I screamed when everybody else screamed. It seemed like the right thing to do. Near the Mississippi Bull Dog's bench, the Louisiana



Tech fans teased the players saying things like: "Loooooneeeeey! You hear me, Looney? Go play soccer! My mom plays football better than you!" The Mississippi State Bull Dogs were calm despite everything, but their fortitude didn't help them to win that day. However, being at the game was a very enjoyable experience for me.

## Orphanage Clean-Up



On July 5<sup>th</sup>, Global UGRAD alumni in Khujand gathered to visit the “Malytuka” orphanage in Khujand. The event was organized by Global UGRAD alumnus Bakhtiyor Isoev (2006). Bakhtiyor had visited the orphanage before and noticed the surrounding grounds were not a very clean place for children to play. He gathered both Global UGRAD alumni and this year's Global UGRAD finalists and visited the orphanage to make a clean play area for the children. The alumni spent the morning cleaning the

### Bakhtiyor Isoev

Tajikistan, Lees-McRae College,  
Banner Elk, North Carolina, 2006–2007

surrounding grounds of the orphanage and took some time off to play with the children as well. Global UGRAD finalist Masuda Sobitova (2008-2009) said: “When we entered the children's room, all of them were very happy to see us and they kept hugging us. Children in this orphanage really need our love and care.” As a result of the event, the children now have a clean, safe place to play at the orphanage. The alumni were inspired by the experience and expressed strong interest in continuing their visits to the orphanage in the future.

## making a difference

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## Working for Peace and Development

### Gurgen Balasanyan

Armenia, Bemidji State University,  
Bemidji, Minnesota, 2007–2008



Gurgen serves as a European Voluntary Service Program Coordinator at a local NGO in Gyumri called “Youth for Peace and Development” (YFPD). The organization, founded in part by Global UGRAD alumna Anna Yeghoyan (2002), works to involve youth in conflict resolution and civic activity, informs youth about their legal rights, teaches about the cultural heritage of Gyumri, and unites youth around issues of common interest. Gurgen said “As soon as I came back from the United States, I realized that I cannot live the life I was leading before; that I need to work and to make use of my knowledge and skills so that I could know that at least I did something useful.”

Starting in mid-2007, YFPD began hosting a Polish volunteer from the European Voluntary Service, a program which allows a participating country's citizens to live and work in developing countries and to assist those communities to meet their development needs. The EVS volunteer implements projects at a local orphanage in Gyumri and a youth center in Dilijan. As the EVS Program Coordinator, Gurgen is responsible for organizing and managing the volunteer's activities. Gurgen is also working towards wider collaboration with the EVS in hosting additional volunteers, and also sending volunteers from Armenia to participate in the program in other countries.

“Working as an EVS Coordinator at a youth organization helps me to meet the youth of my city and country, to identify the core problems affecting society, to coordinate the potential within it for solving those problems and for making society a better place to live. I am very happy that as a result of my participation in the Global UGRAD program that I have had the chance to have an impact in the development of my own community.” Gurgen said.



## Helping Children Smile

**Sofya Tairova**

Kazakhstan, Jacksonville University, Jacksonville, Florida, 2004–2005

**Inkarim Beg-Ali**

Kazakhstan, Amarillo College, Amarillo, Texas, 2005–2006

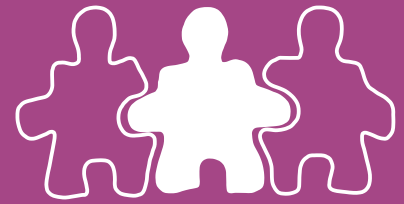


In September 2008, Sofya, Inkarim, and a team of volunteers designed games and discussions at a local Almaty orphanage for children ages 12–15. The activities consisted of games and creative exercises to help the children learn about empathy, the meaning of responsibility, and to think what it might be like to be an adult. The children were given pictures of sad, happy, and angry people and asked to decide with which people they'd like to be friends. The children picked the happy face, but also the sad face in order to help that person become happy, demonstrating the children's ability to empathize with others in need. The children were also given pictures of people, animals, and situations to color and tell how they would be responsible for these things. The children made a list of promises they would keep in taking care of things for which they are responsible. The children then played “dress up” and had a lot of fun marching around in adults' clothing and accessories and talked about what they'd like to do when they grow up.

## Youth Protecting the Environment

**Olga Balysheva,**

Turkmenistan, Garrett College, McHenry, Maryland, 2007–2008



In August 2008, Olga Balysheva won a Project Smile grant and organized a two day event called “Our Environment” in her home city. The first day was a workshop organized for 15 youth in the city of Turkmenbashi to raise their awareness about the environment. Currently, the beach near the city is littered and little attention is paid to its cleanliness. The government of Turkmenistan is planning to build a tourist zone in the Balkan region and the workshop taught the students how a clean environment is important to the economic development of the area. After the workshop the students proceeded with a beach clean-up and cleared an area of beach of garbage making it a more pleasant place to visit. The group collected several bags of trash and made sure they were disposed of properly.

## Celebrating International Children's Day

**Mahira Mukhtarova**

Azerbaijan, Lees-McRae College,  
Banner Elk, North Carolina, 2005–2006

**Naila Mammadova**

Azerbaijan, Slippery Rock University,  
Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania, 2004–2005



On International Children's Day, alumni in Ganja visited Boarding School #1 to spend time and play games with the orphans there. Mahira and Naila were assisted by FLEX alumnus Emin Korjiyev. The alumni dressed up and taught the children the story of Little Red Riding Hood. Mahira played the part of Little Red Riding Hood, Naila was Granny, and the Big Bad Wolf was played by Emin. The children then began to act out the play themselves. The alumni played a game with the children whereby every time they successfully hid Little Red Riding Hood from the Big Bad Wolf, they would win sweets and colored balloons. The alumni continued the day with singing and dancing with the children and presented them with chess sets for them to learn and play in their free time.



**making a difference**

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## Building Houses... and Friendships



As part of my community service Passport activities, I choose to volunteer at Habitat for Humanity.

It helps people in need by building and renovating houses for those who can't afford their own home. I enjoy the building process and seeing the results of my own work. So far, I've worked on two houses and one of them is almost done. A family should move into one of the houses by the end of the year. I am the only international student at Berea who takes part in Habitat activities so I made friends with the American volunteers very quickly. They're from different states and it's been very interesting to learn that other parts of America are very different than

**Sergii Gladchuk**

Ukraine, Berea College, Berea, Kentucky, 2008–2009

Kentucky! Right now, volunteering is not very popular in Ukraine and I was surprised that many American students take part in volunteer work. It's satisfying to see so many people work together towards one aim and one that has such a good result. The most memorable day so far was the first day. In the beginning I was nervous, because I couldn't understand many words (builders' slang) and I didn't know what to do. But then my new American friends showed me how to build a wall, and after a few hours I and three more people finished it. It was great to see the beautiful wall after a hard day's work and know that it's going to help people. That was the best reward.

## Learning Local Heritage

**Natalia Gomankova,**

Russia, Wittenburg University, Springfield, Ohio, 2005–2006



Through a recently awarded Project Smile grant, Natalia, with the help of other Global UGRAD alumni, organized an excursion for children from an orphanage in Petrozavodsk. The alumni and the children visited Kizhi Island for a day of recreation. Kizhi is a UNESCO world heritage site located in the Republic of Karelia and is of high historical and cultural value to the region. The children participated in an excursion around the island where they learned about the site's history and main attractions, and then concluded the day with a picnic. Several days later, alumni organized a follow-on party for the children so they could reflect back and discuss their thoughts and impressions about the island. As a result, the children recognized that interesting sites exist very close to where they live and they were inspired to learn more about the Karelia region's history, culture, and people.

## Teaching About Renewable Energy

**Sofya Tairova**

Kazakhstan, Jacksonville University,  
Jacksonville, Florida, 2005–2006



While studying in the United States, Sofya performed community clean-up projects, such as collecting and sorting through items for a recycling center, which sparked her interest in renewable energy and the environment. In spring 2008, she won a Democracy Outreach Grant from the US Embassy to spearhead a project teaching children at boarding school #2 in Balkhash about renewable energy. In cooperation with Kazakh National University, Sofya led a group of alumni to teach children

about renewable energy and how to apply this knowledge in practice. During the seven days of the course, the boarding school hosted professors from Kazakh National University, Kazakh National Technical University, The Institute of Botany, The Fish Institute of Balkhash, independent scientist-inventors, and businessmen working in the renewable energy area. Lectures covered topics of solar and wind energy utilization, biogas production, biohumus accumulation (an organic, nutrient-rich fertilizer), fish conservation, and water and electricity conservation.

All of the lectures were followed by practical workshops where children learned about and made their own solar oven, wind turbine, and biogas unit. A compost pit was made by the children for production of biohumus, and a day was spent constructing a large solar greenhouse with a water-saving drip-irrigation system inside which vegetables for the boarding school will be grown in the years ahead.

This summer, seven of the students from the Balkhash boarding school spent two months in Almaty with professors from Kazakh National University to continue learning about renewable energy. Sofya is continuing to make weekly visits to the children to help them with their work and teach them courses in English.



## Students Develop Outreach Services for Disabled Youth in Ukraine

**Olga Mangusheva**

Ukraine, Niagara County Community College, Sanborn, New York, 2002–2003



Motivated by the year she spent studying in the United States and by her experiences working at summer camps for disabled children, Olga Mangusheva decided to help integrate them into Ukrainian society at large. An alumnus of the 2002–2003 FREEDOM Support Act Undergraduate Program (now the Global UGRAD Program), Olga applied for an ECA Alumni Small Grant and created “World Open to Everyone,” a community service project in Zhytomyr, Ukraine that coordinated events for disabled children and their families.



The primary goal of “World Open to Everyone” was “to educate disabled children about the world and help them make friends, but also to promote social awareness and acceptance of people with disabilities by the community.” Over the course of 10 months, Olga recruited 59 student volunteers from local high schools and universities to help coordinate and participate in various field trips, lectures and celebrations for children with disabilities. Through the course of the project, the volunteers began to establish close friendships with the children. Field trips to local parks and shopping malls became learning experiences for volunteers and children alike, many of whom had never been to these public places before. Although the project has been completed, the lessons learned and friendships formed by children and volunteers alike remain strong. There are plans to create a new volunteering organization at Zhytomyr State University and meetings between “World Open to Everyone” members are likely to continue. Olga developed a short, English-language video of the project to give others an overview of World Open to Everyone and the impact it has made (video available at the following link [http://www.irex.org/newsroom/news/2008/1203\\_EPD\\_UGRAD.asp](http://www.irex.org/newsroom/news/2008/1203_EPD_UGRAD.asp)).

## Student Diplomacy

**Giorgi Tskhekhani**

Georgia, Tacoma Community College, Tacoma, Washington, 2006–2007



After participating in a Model United Nations (MUN) project in the U.S. as part of the Global UGRAD mid-program workshop in Washington, DC, Giorgi Tskhekhani knew it was something that could be of great value if he could replicate the project in his home country. MUN is a simulation of the United Nations which aims to educate participants about civics, effective communication, globalization and multilateral diplomacy. Students take on roles as foreign diplomats and participate in a simulated United Nations session. Participants research a country, investigate international issues, debate, and then develop solutions to world issues.

With assistance through an Alumni Small Grant and the support of the United Nations Association of Georgia, Giorgi was able to implement his project giving an opportunity to more than 230 students from 10 Georgian universities to share in the MUN experience. First, university students took part in Model UN classes. Those class participants were trained by Global UGRAD alumni in how to conduct a Model UN at the university level. From those students, three students

from each school were chosen to participate in a three-day Central Model UN simulation in Tbilisi. All 30 finalists had additional intensive trainings and prepared for the Central Model UN, which took place at the Parliament of Georgia. This experience imparted valuable critical thinking, debate, negotiation, and decision making skills to all those who participated.

Giorgi said “[My fellow students and I] gained valuable knowledge in how to research about a country, take on the role of a diplomat, investigate international issues, debate, deliberate, consult, and then develop solutions to world problems.”



**making a difference**

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## Alumni Career Development Summer Workshop

### Bakhtiyor Isoev

Tajikistan, Lees-McRae College,  
Banner Elk, North Carolina, 2006–2007

### Nadejda Sosnina

Tajikistan, Valdosta State University,  
Valdosta, Georgia, 2004–2005

### Veronika Razikova

Tajikistan, Chatham College,  
Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, 2003–2004

### Ayshakhon Eshonova

Tajikistan, Wartburg College, Waverly, Iowa, 2006–2007



Over the summer, a team of Global UGRAD alumni organized a three-day Alumni Career Development Summer Workshop in Kayrakkum funded by a US Embassy Democracy Outreach Grant and an Alumni Small Grant. The alumni worked through June and July to recruit and select participants for the workshop. The workshop itself was organized on August 15–17 and was attended by over thirty five Global UGRAD, Muskie, TEA and FLEX alumni from Sugd Oblast, Dushanbe and Khorog. Several Muskie alumni served as trainers at the workshop and gave presentations to the other alumni on resume and cover letter writing, interview techniques, public speaking,

crisis management, interpersonal relations, money management, and fundraising. After the workshop, a job fair was held where both international organizations such as the OSCE and Habitat for Humanity, and local organizations such as the Consumers Union of Tajikistan and Youth Group for Protection of the Environment were invited to recruit new employees. Alumni were able to use their new job hunting skills while meeting with organization representatives. Alumni participants also received a catalog of contact information of international and local organizations functioning in Tajikistan in order to maintain and grow their network of professional contacts as they seek job opportunities.



## Learning History & Culture

### Ecaterina Iavorschi

Moldova, University of Louisiana-Monroe,  
Monroe, Louisiana, 2007–2008

### Mariana Oprea

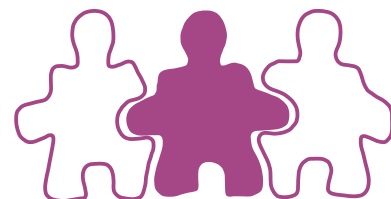
Moldova, Florida Gulf Coast University,  
Fort Myers, Florida, 2007–2008

### Vladimir Dotu

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



As part of a Project Smile grant, Ecaterina, Mariana and Vladimir planned and coordinated a field trip for disabled youth in the local community in September 2008. It was a special opportunity for these youth since because of their age (20–25), it's not possible to attend summer camps in Moldova as camps tend to be for younger children. So, the alumni decided to do something about it and provide an opportunity for these youth to have a day of fun. The alumni rented a minivan which was specially modified for wheelchairs and departed for Curchi monastery and the Old Orhei archaeological site situated in the Orhei region. The group toured the monastery, the archeological site, and the surrounding area and learned about the history and culture of this area of Moldova. The youth enjoyed the trip and made new friends of the Global UGRAD alumni.





### Veronika Novoselova

Russia, Kansas State University,  
Manhattan, Kansas, 2007–2008



Veronika now works as a Development Assistant at the American Information Center in Yekaterinburg where she advises visitors and provides them with information about American culture, institutions, and educational opportunities. Veronika also organizes presentations by visiting Americans. The center is located inside the Yekaterinburg library and sees many visitors. When Veronika was studying English and was preparing to be a Global UGRAD fellow, she visited the American Information Center many times.

Now she has an opportunity to grow professionally and give back to her community. Veronika said “Local students and the media are very interested in learning about America and Americans' way of life. Using my personal knowledge of and experience in the US, I'm happy to help fill their requests for information to help them broaden their view of the world.”

### Vladimir Dotu

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



When Vladimir was a Global UGRAD fellow, he did his internship at the Juvenile Court in Tacoma, Washington. After his arrival back home in Moldova, he was looking for a way to implement his knowledge in the field of justice in Moldova. Vladimir's Global UGRAD internship experience led him to an internship with the Court of Appeals in Chisinau, Moldova's capital. Vladimir is responsible for filing pleadings with the court and assisting the judge and attorneys at trial. He said his current job is helping him to advance his skills in civil and criminal procedure.

## alumni updates

Global 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 personal and professional achievements of Global UGRAD alumni.

### Natalia Etskalo

Russia, California State University, Hayward, California, 2002–2003



Natalia found a creative and artistic way to spread ecological messages to city residents in Yekaterinburg. In partnership with local NGO, EcoAction, Etskalo and friends brightened one of the city's main streets with pictures of ecologically-friendly activities. The aim of the activity was to encourage local citizens to think about the environment in their everyday lives through positive social messages. In total, the group painted 14 blocks of wall with the help of local youth as well as artists from the Design and Fashion College. The project was such a success that follow up activities in other areas of the city are being planned. In addition, the group hopes that they can involve local schools in their activities.

### Boris Penkov

Russia, University of Alabama,  
Tuscaloosa, Alabama, 1996–1997



After Boris completed his FSAU fellowship at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, he went on to earn three Masters' degrees in Education, Linguistics, and Translation as well as a PhD in Linguistics from Voronezh State University. Boris credits his exchange experience with helping him to publish a book on the topic of international education. He relocated to Moscow and worked as a lecturer at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations and a faculty member at Natalya Nesterova Academy of Education. He recently completed a Fulbright fellowship at Washington DePauw University where he served as an Assistant Professor of Russian History and Spoken Language. During the fellowship, he led university students on a trip to visit Gulfport, Mississippi to assist in the region's efforts to recover from Hurricane Katrina. The team gutted and rebuilt homes and a church, and volunteered to help with projects to rebuild elementary schools. Boris is back in Russia now and is planning to continue his research on new guidelines and standards for promoting international education.

### Stella Bilalova

Kyrgyzstan, University of North Dakota,  
Grand Forks, North Dakota, 1997–1998



Before becoming a FSAU fellow, Stella dreamt of working in the Office of the President of Kyrgyzstan one day as an economic advisor. After attending the University of North Dakota in Fargo where she studied economics, Stella worked as a Senior Economist, then Chief Economist, in the National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic where she performed economic analysis. In 2004, her dream came true when she served as a European Commission project consultant for the economic policy department in the Office of the President. Presently, Stella works as a manager at a marketing consulting company that offers e-marketing consulting services for local and foreign businesses. She said "Thanks to the FSAU program I gained invaluable knowledge and skills in economics that helped me to make my dream come true, and I was glad I could contribute to Kyrgyzstan's development in this way. Now I continue to contribute to Kyrgyzstan's business development by offering e-marketing consulting services to leading businesses that will drive success in selling Kyrgyzstani products abroad and attracting foreign investment, helping to improve the lives of the Kyrgyz people."

## alumni updates



### Geysar Gurbanov

Azerbaijan, Tacoma Community College, Tacoma, Washington, 2005–2006



Geysar worked as a Parliamentary Liaison Assistant for the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to assist with monitoring in the run-up to the presidential elections in Azerbaijan on October 15. The ODIHR coordinates and organizes the deployment of several observation missions with thousands of observers every year to assess the compliance of elections in OSCE participating.

In his role, Geysar was responsible for the smooth deployment of hundreds of observers across the country as well as organizing high level briefings for all parliamentary observer delegations from Europe. Geysar remarked, "This unique experience provided me with an in-depth insight into all elements of an electoral process, and helped me further improve my knowledge of democratic electoral processes as Azerbaijan moves towards building democratic statehood and civil society."

**Giorgi Tshekhani**

Georgia, Tacoma Community College,  
Tacoma, Washington, 2006–2007

**Davit Bochorishvili**

Georgia, Iowa Western Community College,  
Council Bluffs, Iowa, 2006–2007

**Teona Zirakashvili**

Georgia, Wartburg College, Waverly, Iowa, 2006–2007

**Niko Sumbadze**

Georgia, Graceland University, Lamoni, Iowa, 2006–2007

**Lela Putkaradze**

Georgia, Hennesaw State University,  
Kennesaw, Georgia, 2006–2007



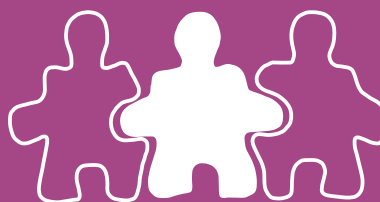
From July 12 – August 2, five alumni participated in the American Institute on Political and Economic Systems (AIPES) summer school in Prague, the Czech Republic. The summer school was organized by the Fund for American Studies for 140 students from 28 countries. AIPES is an academic program designed to explore the political, economic and cultural issues of the world as it grows under democratic principles. Students are encouraged to apply these principles to the transitions already taking place in their home countries. End of program exams are given in both politics and economics and participants receive academic credits from both Georgetown University and Charles University.

**Murad Ovez-Mamedov**

Turkmenistan, Middlebury College,  
Middlebury, Vermont, 1993–1994



Murad is proud to note that he was one of the first students from Turkmenistan to participate in the FSAU program. As a FSAU fellow, Murad attended Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont. After completing his education at Turkmen State University in 1995, he worked for the Commercial and Aid Sections of the British embassy in Ashgabat where he was responsible for reporting on business opportunities for UK companies, assisting the NGO sector, and working on legislative reform in Turkmenistan, respectively. In 1999, Murad became a finalist in the Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship program and earned his MBA at the University of Scranton in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Upon his return home, Murad worked in development at the United Nations Development Program and at the Asian Development Bank. He also worked at the US embassy for four years, first being responsible for border security issues and then reporting on Turkmenistan's economic development. He currently works at Petronas Carigali, a Malaysian gas and oil company, where he advises senior management on tax and insurance requirements and manages audits and insurance claims procedures.

**Anna Yeghoyan**

Armenia, Wabash Valley Community College,  
Mount Carmel, Illinois, 2001–2002



In August, Anna participated in a training organized by the Moldovan organization ADVIT and the Dutch organization CODE-X International as part of the European Commission's "Youth in Action" Program. The main topic of the training was volunteering and how to increase the number of people that do volunteer work. Anna is cofounder of the Armenian NGO Youth for Peace & Development. The organization advocates for at risk youth such as refugees, the unemployed, teenage orphans, and those from rural areas, and uses the help of volunteers to get youth involved in community development. Anna said the skills she learned, such as how to recruit, retain and recognize volunteers, and how to work with foreign volunteers, particularly those from the European Voluntary Service (EVS), will be essential in helping to continue the success of her organization's work.



## Notes from UnderGrad

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### Submission guidelines:

Have something to share with  
the Global 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 Spring  
2009 issue is February 27, 2009.



Bureau of Educational  
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# 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 Global 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. 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.



**GLOBAL UNDERGRADUATE  
EXCHANGE PROGRAM**