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SPOTLIGHT

Muskie Fellow Builds Experience Needed to Start Health Foundation in Russia

Dystonia is a chronic movement disorder that causes the muscles to contract and spasm involuntarily, resulting in mild to severe levels of disability and pain. With a cure still yet to be found, sufferers must manage the challenges of living with the disorder. **Oxana Zabelina** (Muskie 2008) spent the summer interning at the Dystonia Medical Research Foundation (DMRF), a Chicago-based non-profit that serves people with dystonia and their families, gaining valuable experience that she plans to apply by starting a similar foundation for dystonia sufferers in her native Russia.

Ms. Zabelina, who is studying health policy at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, worked on a variety of projects during her internship. "We designed and carried out a survey for patients about their experiences of getting dystonia treatment covered by insurance," she writes. "Along with the insurance project, I was engaged in the revision of legislative priorities, developing local support groups, and some events that DMRF organized this summer."

"One of the most exciting events was the John H. Menkes Children and Family Dystonia Symposium. It is a special meeting held by DMRF for dystonia-affected children, teens, and their families. This year's symposium brought together families from across North America to

learn more about dystonia. They had the opportunity to interact with experts and the chance to find support with one another. Named in honor of Dr. John H. Menkes, DMRF's founding Scientific Director, who passed away in 2008, the symposium was a great success. My role was to be an MC in the kids' section, and I was happy to see that the kids had a really good time there."

"The internship with DMRF was priceless for me," Ms. Zabelina concluded. "I really appreciate that the staff shared their experience with me as well as showing me many faces of Chicago. I'm sure that I'll work with this organization in future, and we will fight together for a dystonia cure as international partners. It was a great summer and another bright page in my Muskie life journal."



Oksana Zabelina (back row, third from left) with children and volunteers at the John H. Menkes Children and Family Dystonia Symposium.

Muskie Intern Participates in 2009 Global Peace Index Launch



Margarita Tadevosyan at the Global Peace Index launch event in Washington.

Released annually since 2007, the Global Peace Index (GPI) is a tool developed by London's Economist Intelligence Unit to rank countries based on their peacefulness and to identify some of the key drivers of peace. **Margarita Tadevosyan** (Muskie 2008) of Armenia, who is studying Peace Operations at the George Mason University School of Public Policy, had a chance to work with the GPI firsthand during her summer internship with the Alliance for Peacebuilding. As part of her focus on building partnerships with organizations that can implement or publicize the material in the GPI, Ms. Tadevosyan participated in the June 2nd launch event for the 2009 edition in Washington, DC.

"The GPI, which ranked 144 countries in 2009, is composed of 23 qualitative and quantitative indicators from highly respected sources which combine internal and external factors," Ms. Tadevosyan writes. "These indicators were selected by an international panel of experts, including academics and leaders of peace institutions. This year New Zealand came to be the most peaceful nation in the world, followed by Denmark and Norway. The United States was 83rd this year, up six places from 2008."

"The GPI has been endorsed by ten Nobel laureates as well as hundreds of government and business leaders and non-governmental organizations. This year the GPI generated unparalleled interest and had significant media coverage resulting in more than 300 articles within the first 24 hours of its release. Within the United States, the GPI was covered by major news agencies including CNN, ABC, NBC, Fox News, *Newsweek*, *The Washington Times*, and Bloomberg, to name a few."

In addition to her duties with the GPI, Ms. Tadevosyan assisted the Alliance for Peacebuilding's planning committee and reviewed the organization's peace education curriculum. She hopes to bring peace and reconciliation to her native Armenia, which has an outstanding conflict over territory with neighboring Azerbaijan.

UN Internship Exposes Fellow to Diverse Perspectives, New Networks

The highly competitive internship program at the United Nations Headquarters (UNHQ) in New York receives thousands of applications for approximately 200 graduate intern positions each session. In summer 2009, interns representing 70 different countries came to New York to take advantage of this prestigious opportunity. **Tamar Berdzenishvili** (Muskie 2008) of Georgia was among them, interning in the UN Development Business unit under the Department of Public Information. *UN Development Business (UNDB)* is a publication providing information on opportunities to supply goods, works and services for projects financed by the United Nations, governments and the world's leading development banks.

Ms. Berdzenishvili took advantage of many opportunities to learn and network during her internship. "The very first day, interns have a chance to get involved in several self-organization bodies, called intern committees, such as the mission, seminar, yearbook, social, sports, and newsletter committees," she writes. "This is a great opportunity to contribute, to network, and to get to know fellow interns professionally." She was involved in the seminar and mission committees, which organized five seminars and 30 country mission visits in two months' time.

"You hear a lot of inside information from UN diplomats and high-ranking UN officials, ask them all sorts of hard questions, listen to their argumentation, and get to know their perspectives," she said of the experience. "It's very engaging! I personally visited 13 country missions, plus visits to Amnesty International and the World Bank's representative office." Working on the committees also introduced Ms. Berdzenishvili to several new collaboration technologies. "You experience firsthand the usefulness of tools like Google shared documents, Yahoo mailing groups, and Survey Monkey to get 250 people on the same page," she said.



Tamar Berdzenishvili at the United Nations pointing out the flag of her home country, Georgia.

As an intern, Ms. Berdzenishvili was pleased to have the chance to “infuse new blood” into the institution and implement several of her ideas on the job. She considers developing information management tools for her unit and working on a customer satisfaction econometric model to be some of her most interesting summer projects. At the end of the internship, she took a group photo with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, who personally expressed his gratitude to the summer class of interns.

“You might have mixed feelings about the UN, but several things are clear – by interning at the headquarters, you get exposed to a lot of diversity, and this experience proves enriching if you are active. You network and form friendships, and you are part of Manhattan’s corporate culture,” she concluded. Ms. Berdzenishvili is pursuing a master’s degree in public administration at Indiana University – Bloomington.

Muskie Intern Contributes to Child and Family Services Policy in Pennsylvania



Svetlana Doni (left) with Department of Human Services colleagues at the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas after a public hearing on children’s services.

Svetlana Doni (Muskie 2008) of Moldova gained policy experience with a local government agency this summer during her internship with Pennsylvania’s Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS). Ms. Doni, who is studying public policy at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, worked with the DHS Executive Office. She focused on the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS), a tool developed to integrate systems throughout all DHS departments and partnering mechanisms to improve child and family services in the county.

“The CANS provides a structured assessment of children along a set of dimensions relevant to service planning and decision-making,” Ms. Doni writes. “It also provides information regarding the child and family’s service needs for use during system planning and/or quality assurance monitoring.”

“The novelty of the new assessment tool is that now it includes a broader conceptualization of needs and it also looks at clients’ strengths, which eventually can be used to address those needs. I truly believe in this holistic approach in human services, as it should become a tool of communication between different systems and provide a better outcome for the child and family. Due to its strength-based approach, the CANS will clearly point out gaps in the current service plans.”

As an intern, Ms. Doni was trained and certified in the CANS, and assisted with classroom training and the final phases of the tool’s development, incorporating practitioner feedback and final edits. “I really enjoyed my summer internship as it offered me the opportunity to have hands-on experience in the policy implementation process,” she reflected. “I met amazing people who have inspired me and because it was such a great experience, I decided to continue my internship through the fall semester and write my thesis on how the CANS was developed and is being implemented. I want to focus on the challenges different systems face, while embracing the new policy through the lenses of different theories of organization.”

As Ms. Doni did not have previous experience in child and family policy, she calls the internship “an eye-opening experience, which made me discover a new domain of public service.” While participating in public meetings to prepare for the G-20 Summit, hosted by Pittsburgh in September, Ms. Doni also drew parallels between the international talks and local action. “The magnitude of such an event is not limited to making the streets look nice, but also to challenge [local] institutions like the DHS and other human services providers to ensure the flow of services to residents in need,” she concluded.

Fellow Shares Turkmenistan's Perspective on Rule of Law

Gunesh Bakgalova (Muskie 2008) was honored by the University of Pittsburgh School of Law for her on-campus presentations on Turkmenistan’s culture and legal system. “I got to know many students and professors at the School of Law during the year,” Ms. Bakgalova writes. “I knew American culture and other social rules. At the same time, I wanted to share with them about my own country, region, our traditions and the legal system in the former Soviet Union.”

“In our university, we have the Center for International Legal Education, which organizes different kinds of workshops. I was one of three LL.M. students to give a speech on ‘Rule of Law Around the World.’ Besides this, I made presentations about regional matters of interest, including traditions, culture, social rules and religion, at round tables, discussions, and workshops organized by the law students’ association.”

Ms. Bakgalova also visited Atlanta during her fellowship and gave a guest presentation on Turkmenistan’s resources and foreign policy during a class at the Georgia Institute of Technology. “I am glad that I could make my own contribution by bringing specific information about my country and my region,” she explained.



Gunesh Bakgalova (second from right) receives an award from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law recognizing her community service contributions.

SPOTLIGHT

Welcome Workshop Equips New Muskies with Tools, Connections for a Successful Fellowship

The 2009 cohort of Edmund S. Muskie Fellowship Program participants embarked on their U.S. experiences at the Welcome Workshop held August 2-5, 2009 at Gallaudet University in Washington, DC.



2009 Muskie fellows Malika Ibrohimova (left) and Nargis Karimova, both of Tajikistan, point out their host universities on a map of the United States.



2008 Muskie fellows (left to right) Daler Irmatov of Tajikistan, Giorgi Pertaia of Georgia, Irina Ovsyannikova of Russia and Eraj Kaniev of Tajikistan at the Welcome Workshop.

Several current Muskie fellows from the 2008 cohort helped IREX staff to provide advice on succeeding in graduate school, locating housing, managing personal budgets, finding a community service project, and securing an internship. The event also laid the foundation for successful fellowships by providing an opportunity for the new Muskies to network with one another, forming a support system to help them navigate graduate study in the U.S.

"The orientation was full of information about academic integrity, housing, living and studying, to name just a few!" said one fellow. "Supporting handouts for all sessions and the participant handbook are so useful. It was a good idea to allow fellows from various countries in the same field of study to get to know each other."

The current Muskie fellow mentors provided helpful academic advice to the new cohort preparing to start graduate classes. "Although we will have lots and lots of reading to accomplish, I discovered from previous year fellows that we're not supposed to literally read every page and every paragraph carefully," shared another new fellow. "It's much more important to gain effective note taking skills to extract the most intrinsic and key information from the reading material."

Others left with concrete ideas for community service projects and strategies for the internship search. "I've been engaged in dozens of community service activities both in the U.S. and my home country, but I couldn't think of a community activity that'd be related to my field of study before the session," reflected a fellow. "I saw an excellent example on one of the handouts and that was like an 'aha' moment for me."

The Welcome Workshop concluded with a luncheon featuring speakers and guests from the U.S. Department of State and several foreign embassies. Mary Ellen Koenig, Chief of the Europe/Eurasia Branch of the Office of Academic Exchange Programs of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. State Department, gave a warm welcome to the incoming fellows and congratulated them on becoming finalists through a competitive selection process. Over 3,000 candidates applied for 141 available fellowships in the 2009 cycle.

Muskie Alumna Helps Develop New Generation of Women Leaders in Armenia

The teenage years are rocky for most people, male or female, with self-esteem decreasing for both sexes after elementary school. However, the drop is more dramatic for girls, and in a male-dominated society, a lack of strong female role models and opportunities for women can exacerbate the problem. That's where Camp Girls Leading Our World (GLOW) comes in, says **Lilit Simonyan**, (Muskie 2005) who has conducted annual summer leadership workshops for young women in Armenia through her NGO, the Stepanavan Youth Center.

Camp GLOW provides girls with a well-rounded view of different women's roles in society, Ms. Simonyan says. "The role of women in Armenia, especially in rural areas, remains a traditional one," she explained, citing a culturally induced lack of support for strong, enterprising women. "Women play a minor role in national and local government decision-making and often face obstacles when attempting to achieve managerial positions in the private sphere." Just 4% of Armenia's parliament seats are held by women.

The camps connect participants, largely from small towns and villages, with successful Armenian women in different professional fields to learn about leadership and career planning. According to Ms. Simonyan, they also provide a safe space for girls to discuss gender issues, domestic violence, human trafficking, and sexual health. After the workshops, alumnae are more active in their communities, do better in school, and strive for more educational and career opportunities. Several have successfully won scholarships to study abroad or enrolled in top Armenian universities.

"The six days of the summer school completely changed my life," shared Seda Vardazaryan, 16, who is from a village in a southern region near the border with Iran. "I became a different person, as if I found myself and finally realized what I want to do and be in life. I was a very reserved person before taking part in GLOW. The camp allowed me to become a full member of society. Every evening, putting my head on the pillow, I was satisfied to have learned something new, having another dark place lightened up, and was full of excitement for the next day to learn new things."

Originally developed in 1995 by U.S. Peace Corps volunteers and their local counterparts in Romania, GLOW leadership camps have since been held in more than 20 countries. Heather Conjura, a Peace Corps volunteer, learned about previous camps organized in Armenia and approached the Stepanavan Youth Center in 2007 to implement the GLOW model locally. The inaugural Stepanavan camp was held in June 2008 and successfully repeated the following summer. The camps are run in Armenian, with sessions jointly facilitated by Armenian counselors and American Peace Corps volunteers, opening participation to girls not proficient in English.

The young women – over 70 have participated so far – have formed a tight-knit network and have become "the carriers of the GLOW torch in their communities," Simonyan commented. Camp alumnae serve as peer educators, sharing information about gender, HIV/AIDS, and human trafficking with other youth in local schools and NGOs, magnifying the impact of the program. Regional seminars and peer education workshops on camp topics have reached over 400 teens.



GLOW campers participate in a discussion

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In small towns and villages that lack extracurricular programs for youth, Camp GLOW fills young women with the inspiration and self-confidence to successfully navigate the transition to adulthood and become leaders. "GLOW became the guarantee of my success," Ms. Vardazaryan reflected. "Returning home, I feel proud that I could do something important for my community."

Ms. Simonyan received her master's degree in public administration from the University of Kansas in 2007 and now serves as the Stepanavan Youth Center's Director of Development and International Programs. During her Muskies fellowship, she interned at the Global Fund for Women, an experience she credits with expanding her views on civic action. "During the internship, I had many chances to see how one person can make a big difference in various parts of the globe," she said. "After my return from the U.S. to Armenia, I am more motivated and interested than ever not only to transfer my newly gained experience, knowledge and skills with others in Armenia, but also to create links and possibilities for the transfer and exchange of competencies between professionals who studied in the U.S. and Europe and the youth in Armenia. I intend to continue working for the development and strengthening of civil society in Armenia."

The July 2008 and 2009 Camp GLOW workshops were supported with IREX-administered Alumni Small Grant funding from the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The project has secured \$38,000 in cost share over both years from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan's Democracy Commission Small Grants Program, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the United Methodist Committee on Relief, the United Nations Development Program, Peace Child International, Crayola, and various individual donors and local sponsors.

"Being a Muskies": An Alumna Shares Her Re-Entry Experience

Ekaterina Shmykova (Muskies 2006) of Russia received her master's degree in journalism and mass communications from the University of Georgia in 2008. She submitted the following reflection on being a Muskies fellow and alumna:

"Being a Muskies, I am happy and proud of having a degree from the University of Georgia, obtaining cross-cultural experience and being familiar with the best practices available in the world – but this is not all. Being a Muskies means being a part of a bigger community, part of the Muskies community – professionals with similar life experience. Searching high and low for a perfect apartment... getting a Social Security number... explaining to people that you've been to Georgia before – to another Georgia – spending nights in the libraries writing essays and then, yes, getting A's, celebrating the end of the first term – we all went through this, grew together professionally, helped each other and became friends."

"Now I am back and still enjoy being a part of the Muskies community. Recently I learned that Ulugbek, my Muskies friend from Uzbekistan, is now a father. A few days ago I received a surprise box full of fruits from Armine, my Armenian friend, and the other day I went to a Muskies Club Moscow happy hour event and met my old friends. Communication with other Muskies brings light memories to my mind and makes my life happier. I am proud of being a Muskies!"

Alumna Helps Launch New Platform for Social Entrepreneurs in Ukraine

Viktoriya Dzyuba (Muskies 2006) believes something good can come out of the recent world financial crisis – the inspiration "to do business for more than a profit." "The global changes and scarcity of resources pose extraordinary challenges for creative thinking, the identification of opportunities and bringing meaningful ideas into reality," she writes. "For those of us who burn to combine professional development with the larger social good, the financial crisis became a driving force to become amazingly entrepreneurial."

In December 2008, Ms. Dzyuba joined a team of young professionals with similar values to found Hub-Kyiv (www.hub.in.ua), a resource platform connecting innovative and socially active Eastern European entrepreneurs. Their model was The Hub-London (www.the-hub.net), which serves as a physical platform for social entrepreneurs – a place where they can rent office space, find useful business contacts, bounce new ideas off professionals from a variety of fields and attend informative trainings.

The Kyiv team publicly launched their idea this summer with a Start-Up Picnic that aimed to measure the demand for the Hub's services in Eastern Europe. The three-day alternative summit, held June 19-21, brought together more than 60 current and aspiring entrepreneurs from Ukraine, Russia, Denmark, the United States, and the United Kingdom to examine new ways of running businesses to benefit society and build the competencies and confidence needed to become successful change agents.

"The Start-Up Picnic was conducted in the spirit of trust, generosity, and constructive communication," Ms. Dzyuba explained. "Participants were able to meet with progressive activists, investors, and creative people from a variety of fields. With the help of Bliss Browne from Imagine Chicago, Stine Arensbach Szlavik and Ole Qvist-Sørensen from the Bigger Picture in Denmark, and Eleanor Whitley and Jonathan Robinson from The Hub in the UK, the program was based on interactive learning and dialogue, visual graphic facilitation, and facilitation practices such as Open Space and Circle."

"Now is the time for further steps to keep the momentum going and to let the Hub Kyiv develop into an online platform, a strong network and eventually into a physical space to build and grow the community of like-minded entrepreneurs who live out value-based businesses in Ukraine and outside its borders."

Ms. Dzyuba received her MBA from Georgetown University in 2008.



The Hub-Kyiv start-up picnic brought together entrepreneurs and activists to discuss new possibilities in socially-minded business.

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Alumnus Shares His Experience in Corporate Social Responsibility



Ahad Kazimov presents Corporate Social Responsibility practices to Muskie and UGRAD alumni in Baku.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is concerned with treating the stakeholders of a company or institution ethically or in a responsible manner.*

Ahad Kazimov (Muskie 2005), who specializes in CSR in his position as Corporate Social Investment Program Manager at the Eurasia Partnership Foundation, led a workshop on the topic for Muskie and UGRAD alumni in April. Mr. Kazimov received his master's degree in public administration from Indiana University – Bloomington.

The workshop, held at ISR Plaza in Baku, opened with an overview of the basic principles of CSR and corporate philanthropy in Azerbaijan.

Mr. Kazimov provided examples of corporate social initiatives run by national and international companies operating in Azerbaijan. CSR managers and specialists from Access Bank, Azersun Holding, Bakcell, Garadagh Cement, and Procter & Gamble also participated in the event, giving presentations about their successful public-private partnerships and CSR projects. To wrap up the event, alumni and CSR managers discussed ways to enhance strategic corporate philanthropy in Azerbaijan and possible cooperation between companies and public agencies and NGOs.

"As a representative of an NGO, I was quite eager to attend this workshop in order to get deep information about CSR from industry members," said **Royal Jafarov** (UGRAD 2006-2007). "I had opportunities to learn the industry leaders' views about CSR and their plans and expectations from the community. Overall, the workshop was useful and I am sure the experience gained there will be very helpful in future partnerships between the public and private sectors."

* Hopkins, Michael. *The Planetary Bargain: Corporate Social Responsibility Comes of Age*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998

Alumnus Travels to Pittsburgh as Facilitator for Open World Delegation



Talant Sultanov (back row, second from right) with Open World delegates in Pittsburgh.

In May 2009, **Talant Sultanov** (Muskie 2004) accompanied a delegation of people with disabilities from Kazakhstan on their visit to Pittsburgh through the Library of Congress Open World Program. Mr. Sultanov, who is from Kyrgyzstan, was one of three facilitators for the delegates during their ten-day trip. Mr. Sultanov used his past experience in the United States to help the delegates better understand American customs and culture during their stay in Pittsburgh, and assisted the delegates who use wheelchairs or have vision impairment to ensure their safety while moving around the city. The trip provided an opportunity for both Mr. Sultanov and the Kazakhstani delegates to gain a greater perspective on living with a disability in the U.S. and learn about the legal rights of Americans with disabilities.

Alumna Shares American Media Sales Strategies with Journalists in Siberia

While pursuing her master's degree in Media Arts and Technology at Duquesne University, **Olga Ivanova** (Muskie 2007) completed a summer internship in the advertising department at The Washington Post Company. After graduating, Ms. Ivanova returned to her hometown of Irkutsk, Russia to share the knowledge she gained with journalists at the regional bureau of the national Russian newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. Her presentation, titled "Media Sales: Your Way to Success" drew on the American approach to client relations she observed during her internship and in courses at Duquesne.

One of Ms. Ivanova's goals is to help regional media outlets in Russia build more profitable businesses so that they can become more financially and politically independent. "The best way to increase revenue is to sell advertising and to sell it well," she said. "At my host university I've been taught the American way of dealing with clients. Now it's time to pass my knowledge to the regional media so they can use this information to build better information resources for Russians."

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Olga Ivanova during her media sales presentation for journalists in Irkutsk, Russia.

The presentation also included a brief overview of current trends and developments in Internet technology. In addition to her experience with The Washington Post Company, Ms. Ivanova interned in the Information Technology Services unit of the World Bank Group and at Carnegie Mellon University's Entertainment Technology Center during her Muskie fellowship.

Alumnus Coordinates Study Trip to Brussels for Russian Youth Leaders

Tamirlan Kurbanov (Muskie 2003) had an active summer through his work as Regional Program Officer with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in Russia. In June, he coordinated a week-long study trip to Brussels for 12 Russian youth leaders from Pskov region, the Republic of Karelia, and Siberia, who represented the youth wings of political parties, civic groups, and student councils. Organized in cooperation with the EU-Russia Center, the trip's primary goal was to let young Russian leaders explore how Belgian youth participate in civil society, political life and government. Emphasis was placed on how youth organizations interact with their communities, influence public policy, and build cooperative relationships with other organizations.

"The participants discussed Russian and European youth issues with representatives of Belgian civil society, government and the European Union, including the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of Europe," Mr. Kurbanov writes. "The young Russian leaders also met with numerous organizations which promote the development of active young citizens, youth issues, and the youth point of view in decision making."

"We also held roundtables on topics related to Internet and youth activism, the impact of youth on public policy, and the youth role in political parties. All the meetings and discussions were very interesting, deep, and rewarding. The European and Russian participants benefited from the mutual exchange of information regarding youth issues, which revolved around public policy and political processes."



Tamirlan Kurbanov (front row, third from left) with Russian youth leaders in front of the European Commission in Brussels.

After returning home, the Russian participants held information sessions with their peers to share their impressions from the trip and are planning to initiate projects in their home regions inspired by what they saw in Brussels.

Mr. Kurbanov also had the opportunity to participate in a June webinar held by David Plouffe, former campaign manager for Barack Obama, and shared the information with a wider audience. Plouffe's on-line session focused on strategies from the Obama campaign, including using technology for political organizing, building a national campaign of diverse interests, mobilizing youth, and voter protection issues.

"My colleagues and I recorded his presentation, dubbed it into Russian, and brought it to an international conference organized by State Duma Deputy Markov in Foros, Ukraine," Mr. Kurbanov explained. "This annual event brings together students from various educational institutions in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to discuss various urgent topics related to politics, economy and social issues in the CIS. It was a very interesting discussion, as young people had a chance to learn in more detail about Obama's campaign structure for his presidential race."

Summer Fellowship Gives Alumnus Insight on Democracy in the United Kingdom

Artyom Geghamyan (Muskie 2006) spent June 4-July 10 in the United Kingdom through the John Smith Fellowship Program, which focuses on good governance, democracy and social justice. Aimed at young leaders working in politics, local government, or civil society in countries of the former Soviet Union, the program brings fellows to the UK for five intensive weeks of seminars, job shadowing, and visits to Parliament and other institutions.

Mr. Geghamyan, who heads the Department for the European Court of Human Rights at Armenia's Ministry of Justice, began his fellowship in Edinburgh.

"I had meetings and discussions at the Scottish Parliament involving Members of Parliament (MPs), cabinet ministers, and representatives of various public institutions," he writes. "I also visited the Scottish Law Society. Then the other fellows and I spent a weekend at the Leadership Trust, where we learned about the values and behaviors of tomorrow's leaders, democracy and good governance."

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Artyom Geghamyan (left) receives his certificate from Jack Straw MP, the UK Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice.

The two-week “individual attachments” portion of the fellowship gives participants a chance to observe and work with UK organizations in their field of interest.

During the attachment period in London, Mr. Geghamyan visited the Ministry of Justice Human Rights Team, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House), the Foreign Affairs Select Committee on Human Rights, Amnesty International, Interights, and the Bar Council. He also had the opportunity to visit 10 Downing Street, the British Prime Minister’s residence and office, and meet Prime Minister Gordon Brown. On the eve of their departure home, Mr. Geghamyan and his fellow participants were presented with certificates of accomplishment by Jack Straw MP, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice.

“This program granted me an opportunity to get insight on the UK democracy and good governance, obtain firsthand experience on the functioning of democratic institutions in the UK, and make useful contacts that will contribute sufficiently to my future professional development,” Mr. Geghamyan reflected. “The network created thanks to the John Smith Fellowship Program will be of huge importance for the future democratic development of Armenia and other participating countries.”

Mr. Geghamyan also met other Muskie alumni participating in the fellowship program during his stay in the United Kingdom. Among them were **Tolkunbek Abdygulov** (Muskie 2006) and **Aicholpon Jorupbekova** (Muskie 2004) from Kyrgyzstan and **Olha Batishcheva** (Muskie 2003) from Ukraine.

Alumna Examines Legislation with Ministry of Labor and Social Protection in Tajikistan

In June 2009, **Ludmila Lavrova (Petrova)** (Muskie 1994) traveled from her native Russia to Tajikistan to serve as a senior legal consultant to a European Union project supporting the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and the Agency on Social Insurance and Pensions. Ms. Lavrova worked on a team of three international experts in Dushanbe, examining Tajikistan’s pension, social protection, and insurance legislation, writing a comparative analysis of current and draft pension laws, and providing commentary and recommendations. During her stay, she also liaised with the Deputy Ministers of Justice, Economics, and Finance, the head of the National Tax Committee, and the chairman of the Association on Social Protection of the Population. Ms. Lavrova and fellow members of the project team also conducted a seminar for interested ministries and agencies where she presented her legislative findings and pension policy recommendations.

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Demetrius (Dmitry) Grigolaya (Muskie 2000) has joined Argus Media (www.argusmedia.com) as managing editor of the independent energy news and price reporting agency’s Moscow office. Mr. Grigolaya formerly worked for Prime-Tass, a Russian business news agency, where he was chief editor of Dow Jones Newswires’ Russian language service. A native of Belarus, Mr. Grigolaya attended the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and previously worked for the independent business news daily *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta*.

As part of his enrollment at the Ukrainian School of Political Studies, **Vyacheslav Bezruk** (Muskie 2002) participated in the Council of Europe’s Fourth Summer University for Democracy, held in Strasbourg, France from July 6–10. The summit, which focused on contemporary challenges to democratic values, human rights, and the rule of law, gathered approximately 600 participants from 16 countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The Ukrainian School of Political Studies, founded in 2005, is an independent, non-partisan project of the Agency for Legislative Initiatives, a Ukrainian NGO, and the Council of Europe, and aims to support the development of European values in Ukraine.

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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 Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program Alumni

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

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

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

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

