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SPOTLIGHT

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Pooled Resources Expand Educational Opportunities for Youth in Kyrgyzstan



In January 2012, **Ulan Shabynov**, a 2005 Muskie alumnus, created a scholarship fund to support six young talented students in Kyrgyzstan. Seeking to supplement opportunities provided by the education system in Kyrgyzstan, Shabynov's program promotes self-study through financial assistance and by instilling beliefs in the power and value of education.

Shabynov initiated the fellowship by organizing an informal club of young professionals like himself, which currently consists of 25 members. Each member contributes approximately \$20

in local currency per month to the newly-established scholarship fund. This money is then re-distributed to recipients as monthly stipends in the amount of \$85 per person. The stipends are provided for academic development: partial school tuition, textbook purchase, and English and Russian language course attendance.

To ensure that the selection process is transparent and inclusive, Shabynov advertised this opportunity in the local newspaper *Vecherniy Bishkek* and on social media sites. After review of the 89 applications and a round of candidate interviews, a selection committee consisting of six members of the young professionals club selected the top six applicants. Many of the talented young scholarship recipients are originally from remote areas of Kyrgyzstan and came to Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, to study.

The awards are stipends rather than one-time assistance. In order

to have a greater impact, the same recipients will receive the stipends through the end of the school year. In addition to financial assistance, each scholarship winner is paired with a mentor from the young professionals club. Mentors will help scholarship recipients develop and follow an academic, personal and professional development plan. Students who demonstrate academic and personal growth will continue to receive stipends next year.

Two Muskie alumni, **Jazgul Arikbaeva** (2007) and **Keneshbek Sainazarov** (1999), joined Shabynov's initiative. In the future, Shabynov plans to reach out to more Muskie alumni for the next scholarship round to provide more opportunities for more students. Shabynov has been working with youth in Kyrgyzstan since 2007 after his return from the Muskie fellowship program at the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont.



Scholarship Recipients with Gulnur Esengul, Member of the Young Professionals Club.

Taking It to the streets: Muskie Fellows in Action in their Communities

Each year, Muskie fellows dedicate countless hours to share their energy and skills with their host communities. Muskies consistently report that their experiences are personally rewarding and professionally relevant.

During his time at the University of Wyoming, **Askhat Yerkimbay** a Journalism fellow from Kazakhstan, is focusing on the impact of social media on society. As part of his community service, Yerkimbay created a special program for his local Senior Center entitled "New Media Tools" where he provided technical trainings on items such as how to use a computer, email, or software. Carol, pictured in the photo with Yerkimbay, is now able to send emails and Billi, also pictured, is now using Microsoft Word to write his book. Yerkimbay says, "I am happy to have helped Carol understand email and how to create a word file. She made a very nice holiday postcard for her son on the computer and she sent three emails in 15 minutes."



Askhat Yerkimbay with Billi and Carol

"I consider my volunteering as one of the most important experiences I received from the Muskie program. I've seen how selfless work can contribute to your local community. That's what I'd like to plant back in my home country."

Anonymous Muskie fellow



Lina Acalugaritei and Bakhadur Paluaniyazov in action

University of Kentucky Muskie Fellows **Lina Acalugaritei** from Moldova and **Bakhadur Paluaniyazov** from Uzbekistan volunteered at the International Book Project (IBP) in Lexington. IBP is a non-profit organization in Lexington, Kentucky which promotes literacy, education and global friendships by sending over 150,000 books annually to schools, libraries, churches, community organizations and Peace Corps Volunteers throughout the developing world and in the United States.

4,350+ Number of community service hours provided by 2011 Fellows to their local communities.

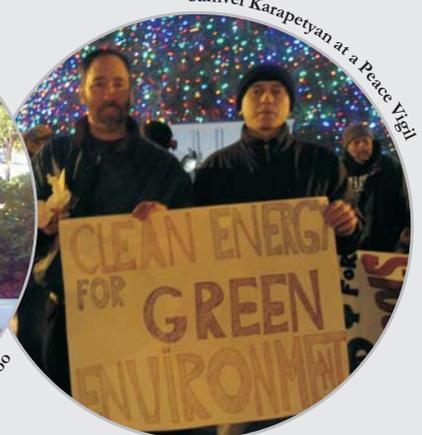
Several Muskie fellows participated in environmental projects which focused on environmental preservation, protection or education. Belarusian fellow **Larisa Fedarushchanka**, as pictured below, rolled up her sleeves for Emory University's "Rollins-teer Day of Service" at the Clyde Shepherd Nature Preserve Park in Decatur, GA. Russian fellow **Ekaterina Kniga** volunteered with the Atlanta Audubon Society. In this photo, Kniga participates in an education fair at the Atlanta Zoo, where she explained to teachers how to integrate the study of birds into school programs. Armenian fellow **Samvel Karapetyan** volunteered with the Syracuse Peace Council, where he worked with the local community and individuals to promote environmental conservation and the benefits of nature protection. Karapetyan participated in a variety of the Council's projects and campaigns related to the public's struggle for clean environment, including attending their New Year's Eve Peace Vigil where participants were invited to display posters that reflected his/her intention for peace and justice in 2012.



Larisa Fedarushchanka hard at work



Ekaterina Kniga at the Atlanta Zoo



Samvel Karapetyan at a Peace Vigil

Public Administration Professionals Connect

In January, **Yuliya Rashchupkina**, a 2010 Muskie fellow from Ukraine, facilitated an online discussion between faculty representatives of the School of Public Administration at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) and students and professors of the Public Administration department at Volodymyr Dahl East-Ukrainian National University. Participants discussed the challenges Ukrainian state and local government employees face in their daily activity through the lens of the American experience in public administration.

During the conversation, Dr. Ken Kriz and Dr. Robert Blair from the School of Public Administration at UNO not only described the organizational, legal, financial, and budgetary aspects of public administration in the U.S. but also answered questions from Ukrainian public administration practitioners and academicians.

"Dr. Blair and I were very pleased to engage in conversation with the students and faculty of Volodymyr Dahl East Ukrainian National University. It was a very productive conversation. We learned much about the current situation in public administration and public finance in Ukraine, and we hope that our comments on the situation in the United States were



From Left to Right: Yuliya Rashchupkina, Dr. Kriz, and Dr. Blair (University of Nebraska at Omaha)

enlightening and helpful for the Ukrainian participants. We are looking forward to many more opportunities to collaborate with our new friends," said Dr. Kriz.

Professor Viktor Philippovsky, who organized the event in Ukraine, shared his impressions of the event. "Online communication with American experts in different areas of public administration was interesting and important. For instance, in Ukraine, there are no real

mechanisms to recall elected representatives who do not meet [the] public's expectations and it was surprising that U.S. communities have not only formal procedures of recalling elected officials, but real examples of how these procedures are practically applied. Sharing experience in public administration is an essential part of its improvement and we believe that collaboration in these areas between universities will continue in future."

U.S. Professor Introduces Therapeutic Jurisprudence to Law Professors in Kyrgyzstan

Using Skype as a virtual exchange platform, **Aida Satylganova** (2009) connected lawyers in Kyrgyzstan with a U.S. legal scholar from her host university. Through Satylganova's efforts,

nine educators from the Law Academy in Bishkek participated in a three-hour workshop, "New Directions in the Practice of Law in the United States-Therapeutic Jurisprudence."

At the beginning of the workshop, Bernard Perlmutter, Professor from the University of Miami, connected with the Bishkek audience via Skype. He introduced Therapeutic Jurisprudence as one of the U.S. interdisciplinary approaches to legal education used to prevent undesired psychological impact law practices may have on clients.

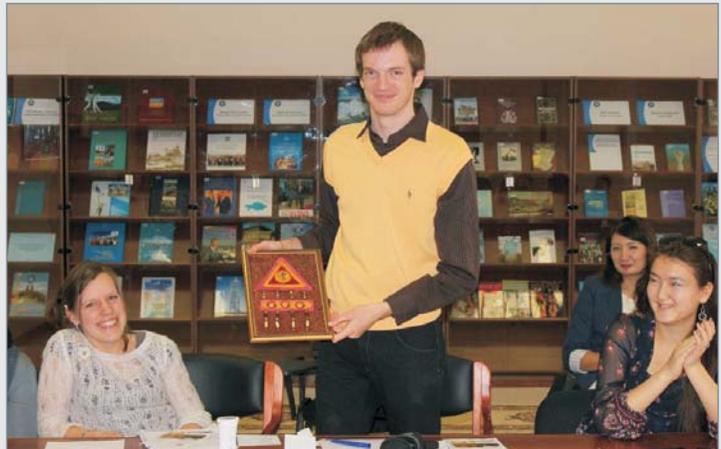
Satylganova interpreted the lecture to connect both audiences and to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences. Therapeutic Jurisprudence was a new topic for local educators. They actively asked questions and discussed differences and similarities of U.S. and Kyrgyzstani legal professionals' attitudes towards their careers. Educators used this opportunity to seek advice from Satylganova and Professor Perlmutter on the best way to approach legal issues related to clients applying Therapeutic Jurisprudence.



Alumni Catalyze Professional Success for Local Youth

Skill in oral communication and presentation is an important factor for success in most professions. Muskie alumnus **Samat Panov** (2005) honed his presentation skills during his fellowship through participation in the Golden Gate University Toastmasters Club. Panov's experience as a member of Golden Gate University Toastmasters club was the impetus for the creation of a Toastmasters club in Astana. The Astana Toastmasters Club (ATC), founded in February 2010, is a chartered club founded by a group of American-educated alumni, including Panov and Global UGRAD alumna Asem Panova.

ATC holds weekly meetings in English, where nearly 50 youth practice delivering speeches and also receive evaluations and coaching on how to improve their presentation skills. Apart from these regular meetings in English, ATC organizes monthly meetings in Kazakh and Country Days dedicated to different countries. The Country Days Program is a series of special events that host representatives of a certain country, including Ambassadors and distinguished guests. ATC has organized Country Days for the United States, Japan, the European Union, Norway, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Brazil, Indonesia, Malaysia, Finland, and Cuba.



Dutch fellow winning the prize for the Best Speech in Kazakh

With a growing membership, ATC is already well-known among youth in Astana and in other regions of Kazakhstan. The group has several leadership projects, such as organizing events and speech contests. The first project within ATC Community Leaders was the "Leadership Skills Project," a series of presentations on different aspects of leadership, including leadership styles, emotional intelligence, and learning from mistakes.

One of the latest achievements of ATC is an ongoing Kazakh speech contest. This contest provides an excellent opportunity for youth to improve public speaking skills not only in English but in Kazakh as well.

ATC was the first of its kind in the region, but it is no longer the only Toastmasters Club in Kazakhstan. An additional club was officially established at Nazarbayev University and ATC leaders are actively mentoring members of the newer club. ATC has made a positive change in the community as more young people want to improve their skills and expand their experiences.

By promoting innovative and progressive ideas, professional skills and sustainable growth of the youth participants, alumni-initiated Toastmasters Clubs are doing far more than providing opportunities to practice speeches.

Tajikistan: Impacting Policy and Leading Government Support for Entrepreneurs



Manzura Makhkamova (2003) of Tajikistan was recently appointed to serve as Deputy Chair of the State

Committee for Investments and State Property Management. Makhkamova now leads government initiatives aimed at further developing entrepreneurship in Tajikistan. Her responsibilities include promoting reforms to encourage the development of small and medium-sized businesses, drafting relevant state policy regulations, monitoring national business programs, and supervising the Division for Support of Entrepreneurship, a group of 21 staff spread throughout the country.

As a student in the Master of Public Administration program at Binghamton

University, Makhkamova studied principles of public service, financial management, and evidence-based decision making. After returning to Tajikistan, Makhkamova led her own consulting firm before becoming Economic Advisor to the President of Tajikistan, a position that she held until her appointment to the State Committee for Investments and State Property Management. Reflecting on her new role, Makhkamova said she aims to "pay special attention to the development of women's businesses as well as coordination of better public-private dialogue and partnership."

Muskie Alumnus Promotes E-Governance in Kyrgyzstan



Omurbek Ibraev (2008) is among a small group of professionals effectively applying e-governance in Kyrgyzstan. Ibraev's Careers for Alumni in Public Service (CAPS) grant helped to support his work at the National Statistical Committee in Kyrgyzstan. Ibraev worked for the Committee before his Muskie fellowship and returned to work for the Committee to apply the new skills

and knowledge gained during his studies and internship experience in the U.S.

Ibraev is now the project coordinator on modernization and digitalization of the household book system, a set of various statistical data on rural residents at the local government level.

During his participation in the CAPS program, Ibraev formed a team at the National Statistical Committee to modernize a paper-based statistical data system called the "household book" at the lowest administrative level of the country *aiyl okmotu* (rural municipalities). Ibraev was responsible for planning, implementing and reporting on the outcomes of the project. He coordinated activities in software design, procurement of computers and other equipment.

There are about 450 rural municipalities in Kyrgyzstan and, in the next two years, Ibraev will be in charge of launching this electronic data management system

in all of them. The new electronic data collection system will provide access to vast amounts of data that were not accessible in the past to many policy-makers, civil society members, researchers, businesses and international organizations. Users will now have a unique opportunity to analyze and assess the socio-economic situation of citizens to make and formulate relevant policies based on data from the "household book" system.

According to Ibraev, his educational experience in the U.S. greatly influenced his ability to manage and accomplish this project on the country level. "The knowledge I gained in the United States was really helpful in terms of promoting the notion of electronic government at the level of local government bodies in Kyrgyzstan. I could better explain the importance of this system in furthering the democratization process, facilitating decision-making process and increasing efficiency of public service system."

Passionate About the Environment: Muskie Alumna Fights for Environmental Rights

"Environmental issues can and should be dealt with; you can't ignore them! You have to understand that safe ecology is a door to democracy," explains **Liza Aleksyeyeva** (2007). Aleksyeyeva is the head of the legal department for Environment People Law (EPL), an international public interest non-governmental organization based in Lviv, Ukraine. The organization protects environmental rights, supports, restores and improves the environment and provides legal assistance.

At age 14, Aleksyeyeva joined EPL as a summer volunteer. Aleksyeyeva still smiles when remembering her first days in the organization. "My family was always passionate about nature. My grandfather brought me to this organization, where I volunteered for three years before I became a law student. All my professional internships took place here and after graduating from law school, I was officially hired as an EPL lawyer." Cooperating with lawyers from

all over the world at EPL, Liza admired their professionalism, knowledge and skills. Seeking further training in international legal standards, Aleksyeyeva applied for the Muskie program.

In 2008, Aleksyeyeva graduated from the University of Oregon with new experiences and skills. According to Aleksyeyeva, one of the most valuable parts of her studies in the U.S. was connecting with an international network of renowned environmental public lawyers. "The classes were extremely useful. I was taught not only by professors but also by leading international lawyers, people who participated in negotiations of environmental agreements, people who run well-known environmental NGOs. It's impressive just to get to know those people. It's not only experience sharing but sharing of inspiration."

Aleksyeyeva is now an accomplished lawyer, having won more than 30 legal cases, but she doesn't underestimate

the importance of the connections she made during her studies in Oregon. "Working in this sphere is tough and having a colleague who can support you is extremely important," notes Aleksyeyeva.

The list of Aleksyeyeva's legal victories is impressive. One case was heard before the European Court of Human Rights against Ukraine. The Court established that Ukraine violated the right to protection of private and family life of citizens living in an industrially polluted area. The families whose rights Aleksyeyeva defended in this case have already received financial compensation from the state.

Aleksyeyeva acknowledges that winning a legal case is often just a partial success and doesn't necessarily mean that the appropriate measures will be taken afterwards. But her list of concrete victories shows that anything is possible and she continues to strive to make a difference.

Celebrating Inclusivity and Opportunities for All

As a Project Development Manager at Special Olympics Armenia (SOA), **Anush Shahverdyan** (1999) is dedicated to creating opportunities for persons with disabilities. She recently organized the Sport Play Program for young athletes and primary school students, which engaged children with intellectual disabilities through developmentally appropriate play activities designed to foster physical, cognitive, and social development. Through an induction workshop, trainings for the athletes, and competitions, the event welcomed family members of children with intellectual disabilities to the Special Olympics network of support. It also raised awareness about the abilities of children with intellectual disabilities through inclusive peer participation.

IREX recently interviewed Shahverdyan, who studied educational administration at Kent State University, about SOA's Sport Play Program for young athletes and her work promoting an inclusive society.

What was your role in organizing the Sport Play Program?

I applied for and received funding from the Mattel Children's Foundation to conduct the event. I also identified and contacted a school to get involved in the project... and coordinated the event with the Armenian State Institute of Physical Education and Yerevan School #27.

How did your Muskie fellowship prepare you for your role at SOA?

Special Olympics is a non-profit movement heavily reliant on volunteers. My fellowship and studies in the U.S. gave me the opportunity to explore another kind of culture where volunteerism is part of most people's lives, where many hands make light work.

What inspired you to get involved with the Special Olympics?

As a volunteer, I get inspired by the athletes. In return, they are inspired by

me. My involvement with the movement gives me an understanding and realization of the profound impact I can have on the lives of these children when I see what they can achieve if given a chance.

Why do you believe that disability rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities are important for your country?

According to recent estimates of the Ministry of Education and Science of Armenia, there are 8,000 children with special needs in Armenia. Only half of them attend educational institutions. No data is available about the other 4,000 and whether they receive any training or education. While every child has the right to be educated, the majority of children with disabilities have limited access to education. Thus, for a country to develop, it is important to ensure that all children receive quality education and have opportunities to develop physically, socially and emotionally.



Participants in Special Olympics Armenia's Sport Play Program.

Muskie Messenger

ALUMNI UPDATES

Timur Karimov (2000) has opened a restaurant in Moscow. After obtaining his Master's at the Monterey Institute of International Studies as a Muskie fellow, Karimov worked for British American Tobacco and later for McKinsey & Company. His studies at Monterey provided a very strong background to help him advance his career. Timur says, "My two main takeaways from my two years at graduate school were to structure any problem or situation and, of course, being in America made me more aware of my entrepreneurial spirit. After deciding to leave McKinsey and engaging in several independent consulting jobs, I started looking for a new way to apply my skills and energy. A family friend invited me to become a co-owner of Aiva Cafe. After some due diligence, I decided to buy the share." The restaurant specializes in hot Uzbek dishes which are complemented by European style appetizers and salads.

Mykola Komarevskyy (2006) is part of a successful Internet start-up team. The team is working on a set of family oriented applications that allow people with little or no computer skills to safely and comfortably connect with their family and friends using online communication tools such as video calls, email, viewing and sharing online albums, and social networks such as Facebook. The team won a start-up competition held by one of the most prominent Silicon Valley incubators Plug and Play TechCenter. The product is currently in Beta phase and they are anxiously waiting for it to be ready for the general public.

In addition to a full-time job as a Project Director with American Councils Azerbaijan, **Ramina Murshudova** (2009) also works as a trainer on different local and international projects. In November and December of 2011, Murshudova co-facilitated a three-day workshop for British Councils' Active Citizens Program. In February, 2012 Murshudova was invited to lead a "Teambuilding and Leadership" training for one hundred first and second-year student participants of "Winter Leadership Camp" in Khizi, one of the regions of Azerbaijan. She also trained more than eight hundred Eurovision 2012 volunteers who helped during one of the biggest music contests that took place in Baku in May.



ALUMNI SHORTS · ALUMNI SHORTS · ALUMNI SHORTS · ALUMNI SHORTS · ALUMNI SHORTS

Turana Baghirova (2009) joined the Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Baku, Azerbaijan as a Protection Field Officer in December 2011. Ms. Baghirova works primarily on the collection of Detailed Data on the persons who went missing in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. She also deals with matters related to the problems faced by families of the missing and internally displaced persons in post-conflict Azerbaijan.

Ruslan Mirzayev (2010) had an article published in the February issue of the Journal of International Arbitration (Volume 29, Issue 1), a Wolters Kluwer publication which is generally considered one of the most authoritative journals in international arbitration in the world. The article titled "International Investment Protection Regime and Criminal Investigations" discusses the real challenges foreign investors face in developing countries.

Turan Jafarova (2009) completed the "Educating Women and Girls Project" for the U.S. Embassy Baku and the U.S.-Educated Azerbaijani Alumni Association in Winter 2012, translating and publishing the "Educating Women and Girls" e-journal from the Bureau of International Information Programs. The journal was used during the Embassy's Women's Success Conference and was widely distributed in both the regions and in Baku.

Zorair Kirakosyan (2006) was awarded the title of "Honorary Citizen of Tavush Marz" by the Governor of Tavush Marz, Mr. Armen Ghularyan. The honorary citizen title was awarded for Kirakosyan's enormous contribution to the socio-economic development of Tavush Marz. Kirakosyan helped the villagers to establish more than 40 businesses and assisted them in creating new marketing tactics and networking projects to survive in the local competition. These businesses created new jobs in the economically depressed villages of rural Armenia.

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If you are interested in making
a submission to the Muskie Messenger,
please send all text and pictures
to muskie_messenger@irex.org
by November 12, 2012. The Bureau
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Not every submission will be printed.



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ALUMNI OPPORTUNITIES

U.S. 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 U.S. 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 U.S. host families who have registered at the site, grant opportunity listings, live online discussions, discussion forum, alumni news, alumni resume database, articles written by alumni, feedback form/online survey, live online guest speakers, photo gallery, and the Alumni ListServ. <<https://alumni.state.gov/>>

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

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.

Alumni Events: IREX and the U.S. 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.

About the Muskie Program

The Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program is a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Department of State, and implemented by IREX (the International Research and Exchanges Board). Since 1992, the Muskie program has provided opportunities for master's level study in the United States to nearly 5,000 of the most talented citizens from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

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

Goals

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

Additional Information

For more information about the Muskie Program,
please see <<http://www.irex.org/programs/muskie>>.

