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SPOTLIGHT

Fellow Offers Her Time for the Homeless in Indiana

During one of the job fairs at Indiana University-Bloomington, **Tamar Berdzenishvili** (Muskie 2008 from Georgia) met a representative from the Shalom Community Center (<http://shalomcommunitycenter.org>). After a formal volunteer training, she was assigned Hospitality Volunteer duties. In this capacity, Ms. Berdzenishvili helped Shalom Community Center deliver its services to the homeless of Bloomington, the largest town in Monroe County. Shalom is a safe daytime shelter for those experiencing homelessness or those who are in poverty. The center offers breakfast and lunch daily, access to social services on-site, a permanent mailing address and phone number, groceries, clothing, referrals, laundry facilities, diapers and baby supplies, city bus tickets, job search assistance, help obtaining identification, a family center, and many other services that are all free of charge.

Ms. Berdzenishvili says she never thought that this problem existed in the United States. "I had heard that many people chose homelessness in New York as their lifestyle, but the people that I saw in Bloomington were genuinely in despair and would rather live in a proper home and have a proper income than live in the street. I've met people from all walks of life while volunteering for this program. At Shalom, all volunteers were Americans, except for me. Shalom guests were

quick to show interest and share their knowledge of Georgia once they learned that I was from there," she recounts.

According to the United Way, there are 20,095 individuals living at or below the poverty level in Monroe County. The way that nonprofits in the U.S. treat homelessness was surprising to Ms. Berdzenishvili. "Volunteerism and charity is a big thing in the United States. Volunteerism potential never gets wasted here. Americans demonstrate exceptional talent for self-organization and problem-solving. Government cannot objectively provide jobs and houses for everyone but Americans' dense networks of civil institutions offset government's disabilities in this respect. These institutions are America's prime asset," asserts Ms. Berdzenishvili, who is currently studying public administration.

"Shalom is a place which gives hope to many individuals. Low barriers make it a place for everyone. Shalom's atmosphere, volunteers and program staff make Shalom's clients feel dignified and respected. Shalom offers everything essential. More importantly, it offers opportunities. It offers a listening ear, gives hope, inspires, empowers, and doesn't question anything about its clients. Shalom is always positive, and I am proud I've been part of its volunteer community for four months."



Tamar Berdzenishvili in a circle of Bloomington Worldwide Friendship members.



Tamar volunteering at the Shalom Community Center.

Public Administration Student Helps Strengthen the Partnership Between Sister Cities in Ukraine and Kansas

As a graduate student studying public administration at the University of Kansas, **Alisa Moldovanova** (Muskie 2007) has frequently interacted with city council members from Prairie Village, Kansas, which is a member of the Sister City program and paired with Dolyna, Ukraine. As part of the Sister City program, a delegation from Dolyna visited the small town in Kansas from October 17-25, 2008. The Ukrainian delegation attended a pre-departure orientation in Washington, D.C., before making the trip to Kansas. As part of the visit, Ukrainian city council members and representatives met with the mayor of Prairie Village, the superintendent, and the board chair for the Shawnee Mission Public School District. The Ukrainian visitors also met with teachers who were excited about the possibility of e-pal exchanges between their students and children in Dolyna. In addition, the Lions Club of Prairie Village volunteered to help form a Lions Club in Dolyna. Lastly, the Johnson County Community College expressed their interest in possible exchange programs between the college and Ukrainian students. Ms. Moldovanova helped facilitate

the visit, which strengthened the partnership between the sister cities. In May, 2009, representatives from the Prairie Village city council plan to make a reciprocal visit to Dolyna, Ukraine.



Alisa Moldovanova (first row, middle) with Prairie Village representatives and the visiting delegation from Dolyna.

Fellow in St. Louis Enjoys Diversity of Volunteer Projects

As a Muskie fellow living in St. Louis, Missouri, **Lusine Geghamyan** (Muskie 2008) has had the opportunity to directly help those in need in a city that, like many others, is suffering from the recent economic downturn. She volunteered for a project run by AmeriCorps National Direct called Operation Food Search. The project was aimed at educating adults and elementary school children about a healthy lifestyle, nutrition, proper diet, good budgeting, the harm of obesity, and types of food to avoid. The project also included lessons on culinary techniques and how to prepare certain types of dishes that are healthy and do not contribute to obesity. Food was prepared during the lessons, and participants were encouraged to take part in the preparation. The audience was mainly comprised of children from needy families residing in the St. Louis Hill area. According to Ms. Geghamyan, "This was an interesting activity

because during teaching we were observing children's learning styles, pace and even gender differences. The children were particularly thrilled by the cooking part of the project and were taking the recipes home to try the same dish at home with their parents. I was one of the educators on the project."

Ms. Geghamyan also volunteered for the Missouri Coalition for the Environment, an organization engaged in various types of ecological activities, including teaching the population environmentally-friendly behavior. The project for the Coalition included community outreach to educate people about the benefits of renewable energy. The project hoped that by informing people about the sources and impact of renewable energy on the environment, people would voice their concerns about the insufficient use of renewable energy sources. For Ms. Geghamyan: "It was thrilling to see many older people showing interest in the project."



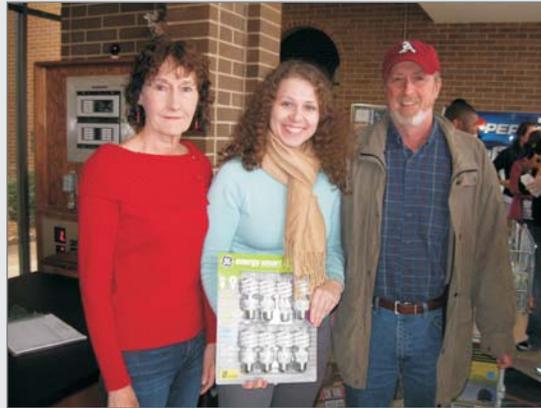
Lusine Geghamyan helps instruct children on how to prepare healthy dishes.



Explaining the Food Pyramid.

Fellow Takes Part in Program to Ensure Renewable Lighting

Elena Khodunova (Muskie 2008) recently worked with the mayor of Fayetteville, AR, the Chamber of Commerce and the University of Arkansas Students In Free Enterprise (SIFE) Team, on a project entitled "Project L.I.G.H.T.S. (Lighting Initiative Giving Hope Through Sustainability)." This project included the installation of approximately 600 energy efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFL) throughout a low-income apartment building. Ms. Khodunova summarized her experience, "I must say that it was a unique experience to combine social and sustainable initiatives. CFL bulbs will help to save up to 75 % of energy to the residents and will last much longer than incandescent light bulbs. Residents were very grateful; for some of them it was also a pleasant time to feel care and to share their thoughts and feelings with a younger generation." You can read more about the project by accessing this link: http://www.accessfayetteville.org/government/mayor/news/LIGHTS_Article.cfm.



Elena Khodunova (middle) with the mayor of Fayetteville, Lionel Jordan (on the right).

Muskie Fellows Enhance Their Professional Knowledge at a Research Conference

Timur Alexandrov (Muskie 2008) and **Aisulu Sulaimanova** (Muskie 2007) recently attended the 30th annual Public Policy Analysis and Management Research conference held in Los Angeles, California. The conference was organized by the Association of Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM), a major American non-profit corporation dedicated to improving public policy and management by fostering excellence in research, analysis and education.

The fellows, who study at the Milano School for Management and Urban Policy at the New School in New York City, were among 950 local and international professionals, practitioners, researchers, academic faculty and students in the field of public policy analysis and management who enjoyed the conference. All sessions, panels and plenary events covered different aspects in public policy and development under "The Next Decade: What Are the Big Policy Challenges?" theme of the conference.

Mr. Alexandrov describes his experience: "This year when the U.S. elected a new president and we are all facing new global challenges, learning about recent research studies in addressing the next decade's big policy issues is highly important. I was attracted by the topic of the conference and decided not to miss

a chance to enhance my knowledge as well as collaborate with professionals in my field of study. I was also happy to meet my faculty professors here who presented their research findings." The conference provided many critical views on current and future policy challenges and raised new questions.

Besides enhancing her knowledge about major contemporary policy-challenging issues such as social policy, access to education, environmental safety and sustainability, and migration, Ms. Sulaimanova found the professional networking events of the conference to be extremely useful. She met outstanding researchers and practitioners in nonprofit management and education and discussed further career development opportunities in the field.

Another exciting opportunity at the conference was provided by the Milano alumni reception, which was designed to bring faculty, alumni, current and prospective students together to create an engaging atmosphere for discussions and information exchange on graduate programs at the New School. Ms. Sulaimanova and Mr. Alexandrov, as the only current Milano students at the event, were a great source of information on the programs, faculty, university life and challenges that prospective students may face living in New York City.



Aisulu Sulaimanova (middle) with Dean Servon and Associate Dean Greller of The Milano School.



Aisulu and Timur at the APPAM conference.

Fellow Facilitates Partnership Program between Utah and Ethiopia

During the fall semester of 2008, **Galina Nam** (Muskie 2007) had a unique opportunity with the local humanitarian nonprofit organization GlobalSoul International as a development intern. GlobalSoul International is dedicated to nurturing impoverished communities. The organization stresses sustainable, community-driven development programs that address issues of poverty, lack of education, and public health concerns. To accomplish the mission, GlobalSoul International establishes partnerships with communities in need, both domestically and internationally, and works with the community to develop a program to overcome the challenges afflicting that community.

Ms. Nam describes her experience: "As an intern, I had to develop and implement an educational exchange program between a school in a developing country and an American school. The major goal of the program is to reduce educational inequality in the developing country by supporting underrepresented children and providing professional support to school practitioners. The program facilitated an educational exchange program between the Entheos Academy in Kearns, Utah and a secondary school in Ethiopia. The partnership was designed to increase cultural awareness of both American and Ethiopian students and build mutual understanding and collaboration which is extremely important in the current era of globalization. The partnership provided a mechanism to teach geography,

cultural appreciation, writing skills, and community involvement in a personal and meaningful way. The program also worked to reduce educational inequality, a major concern in many areas of developing nations, by providing basic supplies to the Ethiopian school."

"I developed a partnership between the two schools with several components. The first part was communication, which included writing letters, sending emails, and creating a website which students from both countries can use to communicate with one another. Furthermore, I plan that the American school will incorporate cross-cultural lessons about Ethiopia into the school curriculum. The targeted age of children is 12–15 year olds.

The second part was fundraising to provide the developing school with basic supplies including books, pens and pencils, paper, craft supplies, uniforms, and other basic materials. GlobalSoul International coordinates the fundraising activities including donations from individuals, grants from organizations/foundations, and donations from private businesses. The third component was establishing a teachers' collaboration between the participating schools to provide professional assistance to practitioners in Ethiopia. The U.S. practitioners were to help their colleagues develop or improve teaching methodologies, curriculum, and lesson plans. The U.S. teachers also hoped to provide literature and professional journals and textbooks when possible."

Fellow Pairs Volunteering with Personal and Professional Growth

Svetlana Sukhacheva (Muskie 2008) completed her community service in the fall with the Neighborhood Business Fellows Program (NBF). Svetlana says, "I had several meetings with neighborhood representatives and business owners, representatives of Net Impact organization and representatives of the Carlson School of Management Faculty and Administration. We discussed the main problems and issues that the local entrepreneurs face and developed activities that can be taken to solve them. We also analyzed the options of further steps to build stronger recognition and a more positive impression of the local community about the University of Minnesota. In particular, fellow MBA student Stephanie Lay and I worked with Stephen Kaggwa, a small business owner and local community member. We interviewed him several times and created a case study. This case was presented to the local community and the university administration and was published by the university. The faculty of Carlson School of Management plans to include this case into curriculum for entrepreneurial courses."

"This experience was very important for me. It was a chance to get closer to faculty members and my peers. These kinds of relationships provided me with support and friendship that I needed as

a stranger. Another important thing was the opportunity to learn how a small business is established and maintained in the U.S. I found out how the social networks and nonprofit organizations are powerful and effective in their actions. I believe now that all votes are important and in the U.S. you can always find help when you ask for it in the local community."



Stephanie Lay, Stephen Kaggwa, and Svetlana Sukhacheva.

Fellows from the University of South Florida Represent their University at Public Health Association Meeting

Mavzuna Burkhanova and **Nellie Darbinyan** (Muskie 2008) recently attended the American Public Health Association's 136th Annual Meeting and Exposition in San Diego, CA from October 25–29, 2008. The two students staffed the University of South Florida's booth. According to Ms. Burkhanova, "We gained a lot of knowledge about other schools of public health, found out what kind of research is going on in the sphere of public health, investigated some internship opportunities, and joined some important organizations like the APHA Student Assembly and Public Health Student Association. We had an absolutely delightful time in San Diego. Thanks to the Muskie program for giving such amazing opportunity for students."

Mavzuna Burkhanova and Nellie Darbinyan at the University of South Florida's booth at the American Association of Public Health's Annual Meeting.



Education Fellow Shares about Uzbekistan During After School Program

Donohon Abdugafurova (Muskie 2008) has been volunteering at the Angel Academy Child Enrichment Center in Kennsaw, Georgia, where she works with students between the ages of 4 and 12. During her time with the students, Ms. Abdugafurova has shared many things about her home country of Uzbekistan, and she believes that "my contributions in after-school programs help students gain tolerance and understanding about different cultures, and I believe that with my volunteering I have brought something useful for the students."



Donohon Abdugafurova at the Angel Academy Child Enrichment Center.

Muskie Fellow Committed to Helping New Students from Overseas Settle into Life at ODU

Farid Safarmamadov (Muskie 2008) knows what it's like to be a new international student in a strange new university. As a result, he decided to help other incoming international students by working with the Global Student Friendship (GSF) organization, a student group at Old Dominion University (ODU). Mr. Safarmamadov helped provide assistance by delivering used furniture and other household facilities for new ODU international students. This furniture was donated by American families and a local church. Together with other volunteers, Mr. Safarmamadov has been involved in organizing deliveries, sorting and moving furniture. He has also assisted in the installation and setup of donated furniture, TVs, PCs, and other electronic equipment. The project has helped international students from over 75 countries. According to Mr. Safarmamadov, "Since the international students encounter many challenges after they arrive, I think that volunteering my time for them is one of the best services I do. Up to now I have volunteered nearly 30 hours of my time for my community service project."



Farid Safarmamadov moving donated furniture for new international students.

Alumnus Organizes Clothing Donation Campaign for Street Children through Project Smile Grant

Through the assistance of a Project Smile grant, **Ahad Kazimov** (Muskie 2005) worked with students studying social work at Baku State University in Azerbaijan to organize a clothing donation campaign for street children. The project began in October 2008 and finished in February 2009. Prior to the actual campaign, announcements about the project were sent through various active online listservs and Yahoo groups. The result was astonishing: dozens of emails and phone calls from people who expressed their support of this action and asked to donate clothes that they had already prepared. Volunteers engaged in the project fanned out to collect the bags of clothes. The project also helped establish a strategic partnership with two prominent organizations working with street children, "Temiz Dunya (Clean World)" and the Azerbaijani Children's Union. Clean World provides shelter facilities for street children. Mr. Kazimov and students visited this organization and gave them some of the donated clothes, since the children who are visiting the shelter can take clothes or can come regularly to exchange old clothes and get new clothes. Other clothes were also donated to other shelters for children, including, "Ishiglii Ev (Lightened Home)" and "Umid Yeri (Place of Hope)."

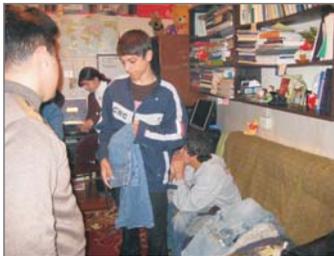


Ahad Kazimov and student volunteers planning their next action.

As part of the project, Mr. Kazimov and the team of students also prepared a booklet to raise public awareness regarding problems of street children in Azerbaijan. About 300 booklets were distributed on

the street and in universities. The project received media coverage in the popular newspaper "Zerkalo" (November 14, 2008), and at Radio Liberty. Mr. Kazimov believes that project achieved some important goals: "First, the project drew attention to the problems of street children. Second, dozens of responses from ordinary people who were supporting this initiative showed that the problem of street children is quite important for Azerbaijani society. Third, the creation and distribution of a booklet was a very important

component in raising public awareness on this issue." Mr. Kazimov and the students hope to apply for a Project Smile grant again for actions related to street children, as well as to organize food and book drive campaigns for street children.



Children at a shelter where they will receive donated clothes.

"With a Little Help from My Friends": 2009 Muskie Semifinalists Support

Natalia Ralyk (Muskie 2006) recently reflected on the opportunity to share her experiences with new Muskie Fellowship applicants: "In November 2008 IREX/Russia asked Russian Muskie alumni to share our experiences with 2009 Muskie semifinalists. We gave our contact information and I personally got many messages from Muskie semifinalists with many questions about the competition process, taking exams, and passing the interview. We are Muskies and we should use a number of strategies to manage our teambuilding. For example: sharing our own experience. I sent many messages, answered the questions, gave advice (hopefully, useful), and communicated with future Muskies.

Like the song "With a Little Help from My Friends" on *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* by The Beatles, we believe that we have contributed to giving Muskie semifinalists a special platform for getting information.

"It is great to feel part of a whole. Why not give team members an idea or a proposal that makes them look good in their own right? None of us is as smart as all of us, says the Japanese proverb. Muskie participants responded and were very thankful for the firsthand experience. By this message I want to say that we all can help Muskie team members become brands-within-a-brand by giving each other an idea or proposal that will help us to shine."

Muskie Alumnus Wins Regional Award for Entrepreneurship in Communications

Artak Aleksanyan (Muskie 2006) has been invited as a regional winner to the IYCE (International Young Creative Entrepreneur) Global Award ceremony in 2009. British Councils recently established this award to champion and celebrate the importance of creative entrepreneurs working in the field of communications. Mr. Aleksanyan won the competition for his television production company Banadzev, and will attend the award ceremony this year in the United Kingdom. Eight to ten international finalists for the award will visit the UK, where they will take part in valuable 12-day program with key UK communications sector partners and other IYCE peers.



Artak Aleksanyan receiving his IYCE (International Young Communications Entrepreneur) award.

One of the First Muskie Fellows Still Very Involved with Host University

Gia Kavtaradze (Muskie 1992) was one of the very first participants in the Muskie Fellowship program. He received a master's degree in law from Indiana University-Bloomington in 1993. Mr. Kavtaradze returned to Georgia and has served in many positions in government, including Chairman of the Central Election Commission and Minister of Justice. After leaving government service, he entered the private sector. Since September 2007, he has been the managing partner of the consulting company Kavtaradze & Partners. Additionally, Mr. Kavtaradze is the founder and chairman of the Indiana University Alumni Club in Georgia. Active since 2002, each year Mr. Kavtaradze organizes the selection of Georgian secondary school teachers to participate in a short-term summer program at Indiana University.

Alumnus Helps Prepare Students for College Applications

Konstantine Grdzlishvili (Muskie 2003) recently initiated and organized a series of workshops on writing CV's and motivation letters for high school students in the cities of Gori, Telavi and Kazreti. During the first part of the workshops, Mr. Grdzlishvili covered a wide range of topics; he first helped the students identify a range of opportunities existing for young people both within Georgia and overseas. Secondly, he screened a short movie on a youth summer camp for leadership, showing the students

ways to become active in their communities. Finally, Mr. Grdzlishvili made a brief presentation about his experience in the U.S. at the University of Minnesota's School of Education. The second part of the workshop covered the main opportunities of international education for Georgian students and the core requirements for these programs: the CV and the letter of motivation. As a part of the workshop, everyone had to compose their own CV's and letters of motivation which were then shared and critiqued.



Konstantine Grdzlishvili showing "Gopher Pride" during the CV and letter of motivation workshop.

Doctor Brings U.S. Research Experience into the Public Health Sphere in Armenia

Dr. Zaruhi Beglaryan (Muskie 2004) works for the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Armenia and has recently received a grant for an intensive research study. With funding provided by the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) and administered by the U.S. Civilian Research & Development Foundation (CRDF), teams of U.S. and Eurasian scientists, together with Dr. Beglaryan, will research innovative projects in HIV/AIDS

and drug abuse research. The grant competition was a follow-up activity to the joint NIDA/CRDF proposal development workshop in Kyiv, Ukraine in April 2008, which focused on identifying a research agenda and developing regional collaborative research proposals. The international team of researchers will assess new trends in HIV-related risk patterns of drug use and drug distribution in four Eurasian countries (Armenia, Czech Republic, Georgia and Ukraine) with high rates of alcohol, tobacco, and drug use. The multinational team will combine qualitative and quantitative techniques to develop data about HIV/AIDS among drug users, recent developments in drug scenes that are associated with the transmission of blood-borne diseases, and the individual and social dynamics of HIV/AIDS risks.

As a Drug Information/Epidemiology Expert at UNDP, Dr. Beglaryan has also been assigned as Principal Investigator for two national epidemiologic studies funded by the UN and European Commission. During her professional career in Armenia, she is using skills and knowledge gained while working on research projects at Emory University and the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention.



Dr. Beglaryan at the UNDP.

UPDATES

ALUMNI

ALUMNI SHORTS · ALUMNI SHORTS

On February 9, 2009, **Andriy Klymchuk** (Muskie 2003) began a new job as Investments and Corporate Finance Director at Octavia Capital in Kyiv, Ukraine.

On October 24, 2008, **Vyacheslav Bezruk** (Muskie 2002) was elected European Regional Director for the Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies Alumni Association, University of California, San Diego, where he studied during his Muskie Fellowship in 2002–2004.

The Muskie Messenger Editorial Committee:

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(IREX)

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Design: **Elena Vaitkiene**

Submission guidelines:

If you are interested in making a submission to the Messenger, please send all text and pictures to <muskie_messenger@irex.org> by May 15, 2009.

ECA and IREX reserve the right to edit submission content. Not every submission will be printed.



Bureau of Educational
and Cultural Affairs

www.exchanges.state.gov



ALUMNI OPPORTUNITIES

US Government sponsored exchange alumni are eligible to take part in various Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) supported conference and training activities. In addition to events that support large audiences, individual alumni may apply for small grants that fund the organization of community service activities, conferences, publications, Internet-related activities, research trips, training programs, the creation of associations and other activities.

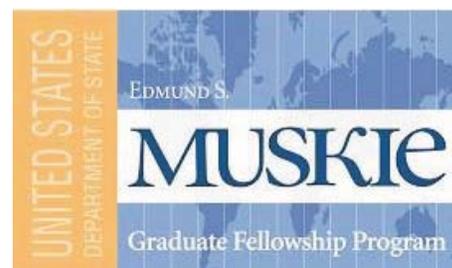
ECA Alumni Programming for Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program Alumni

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. <<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. <<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.



Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs