



American Center Newsletter

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American Center

Colombo

December 2008

American Center In Action

Inaugurating lecture series on "Education - Investing in Future Generations"



Participants at the DVC program

U. S. Embassy Colombo and Room to Read Sri Lanka inaugurated its education lecture series with a discussion on "Bridging Gaps in Education Delivery in the United States and Sri Lanka" on November 20, 2008. Dr. Tara De Mel, Former Secretary to the Ministry of Education and Adviser to the former President Chandrika Kumaratunga spoke on perspectives and challenges in Sri Lanka and Dr. Pamela Gray-Bennett, Director of the Commission on Public Secondary Schools for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) presented the American view.

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U.S. Presidential Elections 2008



Victorious moment at the election event

The U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs section in Colombo, Sri Lanka hosted a breakfast at the Colombo Hilton Hotel to receive the U.S. Presidential Elections results live via CNN on November 5, 2008. Beginning at 6 am and continuing until 1130am, it was attended by approximately 700 key Mission contacts from the academic, political, media, and the diplomatic community. The press interviewed the Ambassador, DCM, PD Officers and other mission employees on result updates, foreign policy, how Obama's victory would affect Sri Lanka, which interviews were aired live on local TV channels and the state-owned SLBC.

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Upcoming Events

January 23-25, 2009

The American Center will take part in the EDEX (National Higher Education and Careers Expo) 2009 to be held at the BMICH Convention and Exhibition Center.

U.S. Embassy Launches Blog

The U.S. Embassy in Colombo announces the launch of an Embassy blog. With the site, the Embassy aims to inform the Sri Lankan public about various programs, activities, and initiatives. Additionally, the Embassy would like the site to become a forum for Sri Lankans to share their views and perspectives. The Embassy welcomes visitors and comments on the blog at:

<http://usembassycolombo.blogspot.com/>



Season's greetings

Inaugurating lecture series on. from page 1

The presentations and discussion focused on how the two countries are addressing gaps in the delivery of education in areas such as literacy, school curricula, school enrolment, gaining access to universities, competencies in Information Technology and mathematics, and infrastructure. The event was attended by educators, policy makers, members of the general public, and journalists.

The next event is tentatively scheduled for December 22 and will focus on investments in education and how to quantify returns.

The series, which focuses on education policy, aims to build connections between U.S. and Sri Lankan educators, educational institutions, and policy makers through digital video conferences.

Ambassador Blake at Elizabeth Moir School



Ambassador Robert Blake answers questions about President-elect Obama from Elisabeth Moir School students

Ambassador Robert Blake spoke on November 18, 2008 with over 200 secondary school students of the Elizabeth Moir School in Colombo about U.S. President-Elect Barack Obama. The Ambassador discussed Mr.

diverse American voters, and his hopes for bringing American political parties together to address challenges facing the nation and the world. "This is a very significant time. It was only 40-50 years ago that the United States was experiencing the darkest days of the Civil Rights movement," said Ambassador Blake. "President-elect Obama will be different and perhaps uniquely poised to bring not only our country together, but also build America's friendships and partnerships around the world."

Students asked Ambassador Blake about the President-elect's plans for tackling tough issues like the economy and nationalized health care, as well as the support he receives from his family and congress.

Obama's multi-cultural background, his technologically savvy campaign, his appeal to

U.S. Presidential Elections from page 1



Polling booth at the election event

The American Chamber of Commerce and the American Alumni Association co-sponsored the event.

The IRC made available copies of an e-journal of IIP

products which consisted of biographies of the Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates and related material. We also conducted a straw poll at which People enjoyed voting, getting buttons and stickers, and showed exceptionally strong support for Obama among Sri Lankans. The PAO also presented PowerPoint presentation on the Electoral College. Finally, to celebrate the victory there was a band that played the perfect jubilant music to add to the excitement of the victory.

U.S. Embassy helps Habitat for Humanity build affordable homes in Moratuwa

On November 7, Ambassador Robert Blake, Deputy Chief of Mission James Moore, and other staff of the U.S. Embassy Colombo volunteered for a day with Habitat for Humanity to provide impoverished Sri Lankan communities with decent housing.

U.S. Embassy volunteers laid roof tiles and poured cement floors at two homes for families in Moratuwa. "For years Habitat for Humanity has been organizing volunteers and materials to build homes for needy families around the world, including in the United States," said Ambassador Blake. "We're happy to have this opportunity to donate time and energy to improve living standards for less-fortunate communities."

Hisham Cader



From being a waiter in Bob and Edith's Diner in northern Virginia to the founder and owner of The Sandwich Factory in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Hisham Cader has come a long way in the restaurant business.

Cader (who goes by his surname rather than his first name) got his start in the restaurant business while he was an undergraduate student in the U.S.

It was in 2001 that he first went to the U.S. to attend Clarion College in Pennsylvania. After a holiday in Washington, D.C. he found the cosmopolitan atmosphere there more suitable to his tastes and soon transferred to Strayer University, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in International Business Management. Because Strayer is designed for students who work full-time, Cader found he had quite a lot of time on his hands and decided to get a job. He worked as a waiter in a number of restaurants in Washington D.C. and Virginia, including Bob and Edith's, Silver Diner, and Carlyle Grand. Cader enjoyed the work, especially the interaction with a variety of people. While in the capital area, he also developed a taste for foods that wouldn't normally be found in Sri Lanka, like Buffalo wings, Philly steak and cheese sandwiches, and Peruvian-style pollo rico (a chicken dish).

Cader describes his time in the U.S. as a "great internship in life." "It showed me what I could do as a person," he added. More specifically, Cader's work in the U.S. restaurant industry taught him about customer service, the importance of offering people choice and value for money, and about a wide array of new foods.

Cader returned to Sri Lanka in 2005, intending to go into the tanning business with his father. When those plans fell through, he wasn't quite sure what to do for several months. Then one of his friends, after hearing him complain about the

limited choice and poor value of Colombo's sandwich and fast food outlets, suggested that he go into the sandwich business. By November 2006, Cader had developed a menu and was making subs, wraps, and Buffalo wings for delivery from his home, thereby launching The Sandwich Factory. In 2007, Cader set up a take away and delivery shop on Green Path in Colombo 3, and his business is now growing steadily. When you talk to Cader and look at how his menu has developed, it is clear that he is driven by his customers needs and by an interest in a wide variety of cuisines. (Cader also admitted that some of the items on offer are those he personally misses the most from his time in the U.S.) Building on his original menu, The Sandwich Factory recently added a line called "A New Tandoor Experience." Whether it's Tandoor Chicken, Pollo Rico or Italian Prawns, Cader takes the best from Indian, Mexican, Peruvian, Italian and Middle East cuisine (often adding a Sri Lankan twist), and prepares it all in a tandoor oven. In the near future, Cader plans to offer a new line of hot dogs, with a wide variety of choices not presently on offer elsewhere in Colombo, including chili dogs, Italian sausage, veggie dogs, and bratwurst.

Given his hands-on approach to running his business, Cader is almost always on hand to interact with and hear from his customers. He said he is grateful to customers for their suggestions and noted that he works by the motto: "It's your money, your food, I want to give you what you want."

For those who might be interested in trying out The Sandwich Factory, this is about to get even easier, when a new outlet is opened in Odel's in December. You can also check out their new website, also to be launched in December, at www.thesandwichfactory.lk. In the meantime, you can always call 5666550 to place your orders for hot wings, subs, wraps and more at The Sandwich Factory.

Free Group Advising for the Month of December

At US-SL Fulbright Commission Colombo :

1st and 8th 2.45 pm

Orientation for undergraduate studies.

For Prospective students for Bachelor's Degrees

(Covers background information, entrance requirements, how to select universities and application process)

9th and 15th 3 pm

Orientations for graduate studies

For Prospective students for Post-graduate Degrees

(Covers background information, entrance requirements, how to select universities opportunities for financial aid, and application process)

16th 3 pm

Essay Workshop

For Prospective students for Bachelor's Degrees

(Prepares students to write an effective college essay for successful admission.)

17th 3 pm

Financial Aid Awareness Program

For Prospective students for under-graduate Degrees

(Covers what financial aid is and how to compile a strong application to win the limited resources.)

Admission: Free. Please note that prior registration is necessary to attend the above.

Please contact by visit, phone, fax or e-mail:
United States - Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission
7, Flower Terrace, Colombo 7
Phone: 011 2564176
Fax: 011 2564153
E-mail: advising@isplanka.lk

At Mahinda College OBA Auditorium Galle :

28th and 29th

Please contact by phone: 011 2564176 / 011 4718744

At Kandy American Corner :

Wednesday 10th 11:00 am - 1:30 pm

Individual Appointments.

2:30 pm onwards

Orientation Program as needed or Individual Appointments

Thursday, 11th - 8.30 am - 10.30 am

Individual Appointments.

10.30 am - 1.30 pm

Orientation Program as needed or Individual Appointments.

2.00 pm - 4.00 pm

Special session / Writing a winning application essay / Financial aid awareness program as needed or Individual Appointments.

American Corner,
1st Floor,
D.S. Senanayake Memorial Public Library
Kandy

Did you go to University in America?



Then join the American Alumni Association of Sri Lanka.

AAA is an active group of US University Grads and we're looking for new members!

For information about membership please contact Mukesh Shanker at mukesh@sltnet.lk



U.S. Government gives Batticaloa improved opportunities for trade



Business is brisk at the newly renovated Batticaloa Municipal Market

November 12, 2008 – One of the major sources of income for the Batticaloa Municipal Council is now restored to full capacity following opening of the Batticaloa Market.

A bustling marketplace since 1948, the Batticaloa market has been badly affected by repeated natural and man-made disasters since the late 1970's. With the successful completion of major rehabilitation activities, the market can now attract both vendors and customers with its new fruit and vegetable stalls, a new fish market, a state-of-the-art water treatment system, a cold room for the fish market, a central courtyard, and a fully rehabilitated building. USAID provided over \$475,000 to improve the Batticaloa Municipal Market for the benefit of the local community.

Great interest for new U.S. Government funded Vocational centers among Eastern youth



A student of Ampara Vocational Technical Center chats with USAID Mission Director Rebecca Cohn at the opening ceremony

November 13, 2008 - The United States Agency for International Development marked the successful completion of the final two out of a total of nine new vocational

education schools. Located in both southern and eastern Sri Lanka, the vocational education schools were built with funds provided by the American people as part of USAID's Sri Lanka Tsunami Reconstruction Program.

The two new schools in Central Camp and

Sammanthurai will provide a new opportunity for the young people of Ampara to become proficient in trades in high demand by the Sri Lankan workforce, such as apparel, masonry, electrical and electronic repair, and information technology.

In total, the two schools can accommodate 650 students per year. In addition to constructing the buildings, USAID and several private sector partners supplied the schools with all necessary items such as furniture, tools, sewing machines and other commodities to make them fully functional.

The new center in Sammanthurai will specialize in apparel, and has attracted a huge interest amongst more than 1000 hopeful youth who are competing for the 450 slots available.

The U.S. Government and AmeriCares provide safe water to Ampara communities



AmeriCares Country Director Lisa Hilmi (left), USAID Mission Director Rebecca Cohn (center), and Hon. Al-Haj A.L.M. Athaullah, Minister of Water Supply and Drainage (right) at the event

November 17, 2008 - USAID and the international relief organization AmeriCares marked the completion of the Pottuvil/Ulla Water Treatment Plant and Ulla Supply System, to give the residents of these coastal villages safe and

clean water for the first time since the tsunami.

"With the introduction of advanced water treatment technology and equipment, the new system can provide 4,000 liters per minute of clean water, benefiting over 40,000 residents, as well as local businesses and hotels," USAID Mission Director Rebecca Cohn said at the opening ceremony. "In addition to safeguarding the health of the communities, it will contribute to stabilizing the tourist industry and help boost the local economy," she continued.

Thanks to an additional grant by AmeriCares, USAID has been able to complete its investment in wells, transmission lines, the treatment plant and a large elevated storage tank.

Americans Celebrate Christmas in Diverse Ways

Holiday observances blend the traditional with the new



Dionna Kogassagon, 9, gets a hug from an Alaska National Guardsman dressed as Santa Claus. (© AP Images 2007)

Christmas, celebrate by most Christians on December 25, commemorates the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. Americans, like many of the world's peoples, have developed their own Christmas traditions and

observances, and these have changed greatly over time.

Today, most Americans blend religious and secular customs with their own family traditions. Thus, even though Christmas is for many Americans a religious occasion, the federal courts have upheld its status as a legal holiday. As one court reasoned, "by giving federal employees a paid vacation day on Christmas, the government is doing no more than recognizing the cultural significance of the holiday."

Development of the American Christmas

The early New England Puritans frowned on the often boisterous Christmas celebrations they witnessed in Britain. In 1659, the Massachusetts colony briefly criminalized observance of the day and Christmas remained a regular workday in much of New England and Pennsylvania. Other parts of British North America, however, celebrated with gusto, with costumed revelers passing door to door and receiving small gifts of food and drink.

The modern, more commercialized Christmas began to emerge in the 19th century with the new custom of purchasing gifts for young children. Seasonal "Christmas shopping" began to assume economic importance.

Other Christmas traditions similarly began during the 19th century. Santa Claus - derived from the

Dutch Sinter Klaas and the German Saint Nicholas - assumed the persona of a jolly dispenser of gifts and pilot of a reindeer-drawn sleigh through such works as the 1823 poem "A Visit from Saint Nicholas" and an 1863 Harper's Weekly portrait by the illustrator Thomas Nast. Many organizations, from the Salvation Army charitable organization to the Coca-Cola Company, since have employed Santa's image.

According to legend, Christmas trees date back to Martin Luther, the 16th century German cleric whose critique of established Catholic Church practices precipitated the Protestant Reformation. According to legend, Luther brought home to his children and lit with candles a fir tree one Christmas Eve to remind them of the wonders of God's creation.

The custom spread to Britain and the United States in the 19th century. Today, many contemporary Americans either purchase a cut, fresh evergreen tree or a reusable aluminum and plastic model. Placed in the family living room, the Christmas tree is decorated with lights and various ornaments, typically small orbs depicting angels and other figures associated with the holiday. In some families, Christmas gifts appear under the tree on the morning of December 25, deposited there by family members, or, as smaller children might believe, delivered by Santa Klaus after landing reindeer and sleigh on the roof and traversing the chimney -- all after the children are fast asleep!

Mass-produced Christmas cards began to appear in the last quarter of the 19th century. In 1996, Americans purchased and mailed an estimated 2.6 billion Christmas cards. These might depict religious scenes or else convey more secular, often humorous, messages. With the rise of the Internet, electronically transmitted "e-cards" are an increasingly popular option.

As with so many aspects of U.S. cultural life, Christmas in the United States reflects the values of a free and diverse people.

Source: www.america.gov

American Center Library hosts a program for LIS students.



Students exploring hundreds of online journals and databases available at the library

30 students from University of Kelaniya who study Library and Information Sciences (LIS) visited the American Center library accompanied by

one of the senior lecturers on November 24th, 2008. They were given an introduction to American Center library, its resources and services and a tour of the library as well. In addition they were shown how to search effectively using Google and how to access electronic databases such as EBSCO host.

A documentary film on "Introduction to libraries" and a CD produced on Library of Congress were also screened.

Seminar on the Role of Library Associations in Library and Information Science



Kathy Fox, Assistant Public Affairs Officer welcoming participants attended at the program

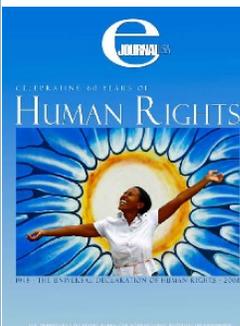
The American Center held a digital video conference (DVC) titled "Preparing for the Future: The role of library associations in promoting

marketing, education, training and research in Library and Information Sciences (LIS)" on November 28th at 10.30 am at the American Center Auditorium.

Several dozen library and Information Science professionals, members of the Sri Lanka Library Association (SLLA) and students who follow Masters and diploma level LIS courses attended the event. Renowned LIS expert and the President of Special Libraries Association Stephen Abram made his presentation to Sri Lankan audience from the American Center, New Delhi, India and spoke extensively about library associations.

Among the 30 participants there were some leading librarians from academic libraries, special libraries, and council members of the SLLA.

eJournalUSA



Sixty Years: Celebrating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

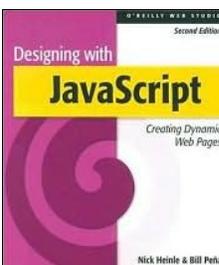
Electronic Journal of the US Department of State

November 2008

This issue of eJournal USA celebrates the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It explores the document's origins, sites it within humanity's common intellectual heritage, and explains how it has bettered the lives of individuals in every corner of the globe.

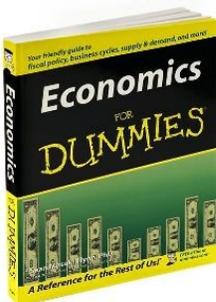
Web access : <http://www.america.gov/media/pdf/ejs/1108.pdf#popup>

NEW ARRIVALS TO THE LIBRARY



Designing with Javascript: A Definitive Introduction

This isn't a hard-core programming book; it isn't geared toward someone who has a computer science degree from MIT and five years experience of programming in C++. This is the JavaScript book for the rest of us.



Economics for Dummies

This guide for students and general readers uses plain language to explain the principles of economics at both the macro and micro levels.

Flynn (economics, Vassar College) begins by explaining how people deal with scarcity and the tradeoffs it forces them to make.

Film Screenings at the American Center

December 2008 – Holidays

Every Tuesday at 6.00pm

December 2 - A Christmas Story (1983, 94 minutes)

Adapted from a memoir by humorist Jean Shepherd, the film centers on Ralphie Parker, a young boy living in 1940s Indiana, desperately yearning for a Red Rider BB gun for Christmas. Despite protests from his mother that he'll shoot his eye out, Ralphie persists, unsuccessfully trying to enlist the assistance of both his teacher and Santa Claus. All the while, Ralphie finds himself dealing with the constant taunts of a pair of bullies and trying to not get in the middle of a feud between his mother and father regarding a sexy lamp.

December 9 - How the Grinch Stole Christmas (2000, 104 minutes)

Under a thick carpet of green-dyed yak fur and wonderfully expressive Rick Baker makeup, Jim Carrey is up to all of his old tricks (and some nifty new ones) in this live-action movie of Dr. Seuss's holiday classic. He commands the title role with equal parts madness, mayhem, pathos, and improvisational genius, channeling Grinchness through his own screen persona so smoothly that fans of both Carrey and Dr. Seuss will be thoroughly satisfied. Adding to the fun is a perfectly pitched back-story sequence (accompanied by Anthony Hopkins's narration) that explains how the Grinch came to hate Christmas, with a heart "two sizes too small." Ron Howard proves a fine choice for the director's chair with a keen balance of comedy, sentiment, and light-hearted Seussian whimsy. Production designer Michael Corenblith gloriously realizes the wackiness of Whoville architecture, and his rendition of the Grinch's Mt. Crumpit lair is a marvel of cartoonish, subterranean grime. Then there's Cindy Lou Who (Taylor Momsen), the thoughtful imp who rallies her village to recapture the pure spirit of Christmas and melts the gift-stealing Grinch's cold, cold heart. Won Oscar, another 16 wins and 29 nominations.

December 16 - Miracle on 34th Street (1947, 96 minutes)

At the Macy's Department Store Thanksgiving Day parade, the actor playing Santa is discovered to be drunk by a whiskered old man. Doris Walker, the no nonsense special events director, persuades the old man to take his place. The old man proves to be a sensation and is quickly recruited to be the store Santa at the main Macy's outlet. While he is successful, Ms. Walker learns that he calls himself Kris Kringle and he claims to be the actual Santa Claus. Despite reassurances by Kringle's doctor that he is harmless, Doris still has misgivings, especially when she has cynically trained herself, and especially her daughter, Susan, to reject all notions of belief and fantasy. And yet, people, especially Susan, begin to notice there is something special about Kris and his determination to advance the true spirit of Christmas amidst the rampant commercialism around him and succeeding in improbable ways. Won 3 Oscars, another 4 wins and 1 nomination.

December 23 - White Christmas (1954, 120 minutes)

Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye play nightclub entertainers Bob Wallace and Phil Davis, while Rosemary Clooney and Vera-Ellen are cast as singing-sister act Betty and Judy. The foursome travel to Vermont to visit Bob and Phil's World War II commanding officer, General Waverly, who now runs a rustic old inn. Discovering that the general is in dire financial straits, the four entertainers secretly make plans to bail the old guy out with a big musical show, enlisting the aid of Bob and Phil's army buddies. Corny in the extreme, White Christmas evidently struck a responsive note with film fans; it was the high-grossing picture of 1954, and a decade later proved to be a ratings bonanza when it was given its network-TV premiere. Of the four stars, Crosby comes off best, especially when singing the title song at the beginning and end of the film; Kaye is a bit overshadowed this time out, though he's quite funny camping it up in a "drag" version of Irving Berlin's "Sisters."

December 30 - National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation (1989, 97 minutes)

The Griswold family has yet another family adventure from hell and this movie has all the clichés. Clark Griswold (Chevy Chase) desperately wants to have the greatest Christmas ever and hosts his extended dysfunctional and quirky family in an attempt to share the holiday spirit. He expends considerable effort on the Christmas lighting for his house but can't seem to get it to work. As he desperately tries to get the lights working, his wife's (Beverly D'Angelo) idiot cousin Eddy (Randy Quaid) and his bizarre family -- including their pet dog, Snots -- show up uninvited and unexpected. Things go from bad to worse in a hurry. Clark's secret Christmas present to the family is a swimming pool which he intends to pay for using his Christmas bonus from his employer but he's financially overextended because he had to put down a huge deposit. When the bonus turns out not to be the financial blessing he expected, the stress becomes too much and he goes nuts (and gives us one of the all-time classic movie monologues).

Amen
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