



# American Center Newsletter

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American Center

Colombo

January 2009

## Embassy In Action



A marine officer with a child being treated at the hospital

### U.S. Marines deliver Christmas toys to needy children

The annual Toys For Tots program was a big hit at the National Cancer Hospital in Maharagama, Sri Lanka. The Marine Detachment from the American Embassy Colombo had the opportunity to meet with 31 children who are being treated for leukemia and deliver toys to brighten their holiday season. Mr. Upali, the supervisor of the children's ward was instrumental on helping coordinate the event.

Started in 1947, the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program seeks to deliver, through a shiny new toy at Christmas, a message of hope to needy youngsters that will motivate them to grow into responsible, productive citizens and community leaders. Over the 59 years of the program, Marines have distributed more than 370 million toys to more than 173 million needy children.



Secretary Rice presented the award to Michael at a ceremony held in Washington recently

### Embassy official receives Human Rights Award

Michael DeTar, the chief of the political section of the U.S. Embassy in Colombo, Sri Lanka, was awarded the Human Rights and Democracy Achievement Award for seeking ways to curb human rights abuses that have escalated over the last two years by the warring parties in Sri Lanka's 25-year internal conflict.

"Michael found creative and pragmatic ways to engage constructively with Sri Lanka while underscoring our human rights concerns," Rice said. "Michael helped position the United States to play a leading role in the stabilization and recovery of the conflict-torn Eastern province, focusing on disarming and demobilizing paramilitaries there."

DeTar was also a key participant in the international effort to monitor an official Commission of Inquiry investigating high-profile cases of human rights abuse, Rice said. He has also responded quickly and effectively when journalists and other activists have been threatened or arrested, she said.

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## Upcoming Events . . . . .

### Artist of the Month Exhibition



**Namal Jayasinghe**, will display her paintings at the American Center from January 1-31, 2009.

Namal Jayasinghe, one of the promising young artist in Sri Lanka has been painting for the past 10 years.

According to a critic Namal's works portray the dreams and aspirations of a woman. Her sense of visual expression and skill has developed gradually through color and line. Her painting elements blend with figurative and abstract forms. Her works are in acrylic and mixed media.

## Sewing a better future for Sri Lankan workers



When Rachel Weeks first arrived in Sri Lanka in October 2007, the last thing on her mind was starting her own company. Back then, Rachel was a recent graduate in Women's Studies from Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. She came to Sri Lanka as

a Fulbright Scholar looking into the Sri Lankan Joint Apparel Association Forum's program "Garments without Guilt," which claimed to produce ethically sourced clothing. She did accomplish her research objective, but in the process she also started her own apparel company, School House.

During her yearlong research project, Rachel learned that apparel factory owners here in Sri Lanka were actually getting paid less money each year, despite ever increasing prices charged to consumers by the retailers. More disturbingly for her though was that on average, apparel workers were only paid about \$60 per month, even though labor was only a small part of the overall clothing production costs. That being the case, Rachel said, "I thought that there must be a way to increase the wages paid to garment workers without affecting the bottom line."

It was not possible for her to force other companies to pay factory workers more, so instead she decided to take matters into her own hands and start School House. School House's target customers are American university students and the campus bookstores that sell clothing with university logos. Rachel teamed up

with two Sri Lankans who work in the apparel industry, Upali Weerakoon and Kuman Kuberan, and a Brooklyn based free-lance fashion designer. Together they set out to create an ethically based clothing company, which would pay workers up to three times higher wages than other manufacturers, while still charging the same prices as their competitors; the actual wages that School House will pay (production is only beginning this month) will not be determined by School House or the apparel factory. Instead, School House's contract with JK Apparel (Pvt.) Ltd. requires that workers be paid a "living wage" which will be determined by a local consortium of unions and NGOs.

How does Rachel plan to compete with larger clothing companies while also paying workers higher wages? Simple, as a niche apparel firm, School House doesn't have the high overhead costs that big firms do. Rachel acknowledged, "Our profit margins will be a bit smaller than our competitors, but with our low overheads, our profitability forecast still looks very strong." School House though is not just about paying workers higher wages.

It also aims to fill a void in university bookstores' apparel selections. University bookstores tend to sell the same basic articles of clothing – t-shirts, sweatshirts, etc. printed with a university's logo. For School House though, a unique clothing line will be produced for each school that it sells to, and will include a variety of different articles of clothing including underwear! Starting in spring, School House products will be sold at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, in addition to Rachel's alma mater, Duke University, and she is in talks with other schools as well.

## Free Group Advising for the Month of January

### At US-SL Fulbright Commission Colombo :

**Monday 5th, 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)

**Friday 9th, 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)

**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  
22, Flower Terrace, Colombo 7

Phone: 094-112-564176

Fax: 094-112-564153

E-mail: [advising@isplanka.lk](mailto:advising@isplanka.lk)

### At Kandy American Corner :

**Wednesday 7th 8:30 am - 10:30 pm**

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,  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor,  
D.S. Senanayake Memorial Public Library  
Kandy

### U.S. - Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission Donates Books to the American Corner Kandy



The US-SL Fulbright Commission staff discuss about the donation with Director and Assistant Public Affairs Officer of the US Embassy Colombo

The U. S. Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission donated a large collection of books on U.S. higher education to the American Corner in Kandy to assist

students who are interested in studying in the United States. The donation consists of 41 educational books on SAT, TOEFL, GMAT, International Students' Handbook and graduate and undergraduate programs. Mrs. Nelum Senadira, Student Advisor at the U. S. Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission, conducts monthly student advising sessions at the American Corner for potential students in the Kandy region. To find out more information, visit the Fulbright Commission's website: [www.fulbrightsrilanka.com](http://www.fulbrightsrilanka.com)

### 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](mailto:mukesh@sltnet.lk)



## US Government partners with Brandix to train 600 workers for new jobs in Batticaloa District



Ashroff Omar, CEO of Brandix Lanka Limited, and Rebecca Cohn, USAID Mission Director celebrate the beginning of the Apparel Sector Training Partnership

December 10, 2008 – USAID and Brandix Lanka Limited are working together to train 600 people for employment at a new Brandix apparel factory in Batticaloa District.

Under the Apparel Sector Training Partnership, USAID's grant of \$100,000 will provide a monthly stipend and a meal allowance for the workers during eight weeks of pre-training. Brandix, the largest apparel exporter in Sri Lanka, has committed \$500,000 to fund all of the training costs, plus the monthly stipend during an additional six months of on-the-job training.

Graduates of the Apparel Sector Training Partnership program will be eligible for permanent employment with Brandix. While local average incomes are only \$26 per month, graduates will earn at least \$85 per month. This trained workforce will provide the company with a prepared labor pool. The first group of 70 workers trained under this partnership will start pre-training December 1, 2008 and advance to on-the-job training by February 1, 2009.

## Children affected by violence learn new job skills thanks to funding from the US Government



Left to Right: Provincial Commissioner Gamini Weerakoon, Principal of Hikkaduwa Certified Government School Mr. Thilak Shanta, Hon. Minister Piyasiri Gamage, USAID Mission Director Rebecca Cohn, and Save the Children in Sri Lanka Southern Province Manager Ranjith Endera Arachchige

December 30, 2008 – Seven young men who are victims of violence have acquired new job skills and are ready to reintegrate into society after a job training program funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

The program, New Beginnings for Children Affected by Conflict and Violence, is funded by a \$2.6 million grant from USAID and implemented by Save the Children in Sri Lanka. All seven boys live at the Hikkaduwa Government Certified School and received their training in vocational centers in the local community.

New Beginnings helps young people learn trades so they can get jobs and become financially independent. The Provincial Ministry of Probation and Childcare donated the tools the seven boys will need to pursue careers in hairdressing, tailoring, cushion work (upholstery), cooking, and iron work or welding.

In addition, the program reunites children with their families by providing economic and material support. New Beginnings has also strengthened child protection through training programs for probation officers and magistrates.

**For more USAID stories visit:**

**<http://srilanka.usaid.gov>**

Monthly Essay Competition



Learn about  
America

ESSAY COMPETITION



**Essay Competition for School Children on the theme of Learn About America**

The American Center has organized an essay competition for school children which will be published in Junior Observer of the Sunday Observer from Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2009.

The monthly essay topic is given under three age categories 12-14 years, 15-16 years and 17-19 years.

Each age group is given a monthly topic related to the United States of America and are asked to write an essay with minimum word count. The students can conduct research for their essay at the American Center Library in Colombo, at American Corners in Kandy and Oluvil, or from other sources like the Internet. America.gov is a very good internet resource with lots of information on the United States, its culture, history, literature, politics, tourist attractions and much more.

The first three winners in each age group will be given a selection of American books, as well as lifetime membership of the American Center Library and a certificate signed by the U.S. Ambassador. A prize giving ceremony will be held at the American Center Colombo once every two months.

Essay topics for January are as follows :

**12-14 years**

Martin Luther King (500 words)

**15-16 years**

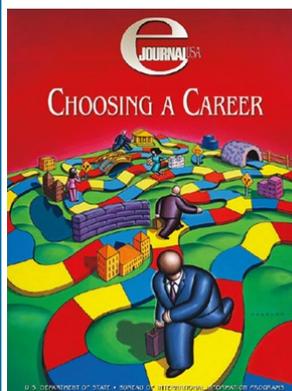
Benjamin Franklin (750 words)

**17-19 years**

The Election System in the United States. (1000 words)

Please see the Junior Observer of the Sunday Observer for more details.

eJournalUSA



**Choosing a Career**

Electronic Journal of the US Department of State

December 2008

This edition of eJournal USA rambles down the many varied paths that Americans take on their way to find their life's work.

Professionals in various fields explain how they got there, and some wrong turns they made along the way. Experts describe how young people can weigh and explore the options before them.

**Web access :** <http://www.america.gov/media/pdf/ejs/1208ej.pdf>

**New American Center service gives Sri Lankan academics access to latest worldwide research**

The American Center Library has taken initiatives to compile a series of Article Alert Service on several major disciplines with a view of catering needs of local researchers and academics.

The Article Alert Services will be issued on the topics of :

Agriculture, Education, Business and Management, Science and Technology, Press and Media, International Relations and Human Rights and Library and Information Sciences.

These will be compiled quarterly from the latest academic and research journals using the electronic databases available with the American Center Library for updating the potential users on current information and latest research findings.

### Inauguration Celebrates Continuity of American Democracy

#### Barack Obama will take oath of office at noon on January 20, 2009



The oath of office has been taken 55 times since George Washington first spoke the words in 1789.

When Barack Obama takes the oath of office on January 20, 2009, it will mark the 56th time that a U.S. president has been sworn in for a four-year term since 1789, when George Washington first took the same

oath.

During that period, eight presidents died in office and one resigned; each time, the vice president took the same oath, and completed the four-year term.

Many inaugural events have been added during the past 220 years, but the steps that the president-elect follows to take the constitutionally mandated oath of office, the central event of the inauguration, are essentially unchanged.

The oath will be administered at the U.S. Capitol, in a ceremony on the west front of the building, overlooking the National Mall, as it has been since 1801 when Thomas Jefferson was sworn in there. The Supreme Court chief justice first administered the oath in 1797 to John Adams.

The swearing-in ceremony — televised since 1949 — will be attended by Obama's family, past and future Cabinet members, members of the Senate and House of Representatives, Supreme Court justices and many invited guests.

Joe Biden will be sworn in as vice president prior to Obama taking the oath of office, with the oath administered by Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens. The vice presidential oath has been part of inauguration ceremonies only since 1937, President Franklin Roosevelt's second inauguration. Previously, the vice president was sworn in at a Senate ceremony because the Constitution designates the vice president as

president of the Senate.

On January 20, Obama will stand before a judge — in this case Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts — and swear the 35-word oath prescribed in Article II, Section 1, of the Constitution:

"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

When taking the oath, Obama will place his hand on the same Bible President Lincoln used at his first inauguration in 1861. The Bible is currently part of a collection at the Library of Congress. Although a Bible is traditionally used at the swearing in, it is not a constitutional requirement.

President Bush and first lady Laura Bush dance at an inaugural ball in 2005. There will be many balls in honor of Barack Obama. The 20th Amendment to the Constitution, adopted in 1933, sets the time and date for the presidential oath at noon on January 20. In the early days of the nation, when wintertime travel was difficult, inaugurations were held in March.

As in previous inaugural ceremonies, going back to that of George Washington, after taking the oath President Obama will give an inaugural address that outlines the themes for his four years in office.

#### Other Inaugural Events

Many elements have been added to the inaugural program over time. President Obama's inauguration will follow the trend of recent years and feature several days of dinners, balls, receptions and other events focused on the theme of "Renewing America's Promise."

Obama and Biden will arrive in Washington, via train, on January 17.

Continued on page 7

Room to Read & the American Center Present  
a Public Lecture Series  
on  
"Education - Investing in Future Generations"

**Topic : Education Finances: Investments vs Returns**

**Speakers :** **Dr Harsha Aturupane**  
Senior Economist World Bank , Sri Lanka  
**Dr Nancy Carriuolo**  
President of Rhode Island College, USA  
(linked via Digital Video Conferencing)

**Date :** 22nd January from 6.30 p.m. - 8.00 p.m.  
**Venue :** American Center Auditorium  
Colombo 3



American Center,  
No.44 Galle Road, Colombo 3



**All interested parties are welcome!**

RSVP: 011-2498163  
Seating is limited

*A Glorious Quest*  
*Music in the Air*

An evening of uplifting and  
inspirational music

*Soul Sounds*  
conducted by  
*Prof. Mark Wilson*, DIRECTOR  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKLEY GOSPEL CHOIR

accompanied by  
*Soundarie David*  
*Neranjana de Silva*  
*Christo Prins*

SUNDAY 11TH JANUARY 2009  
7:30 PM

*Lionel Wendt Theatre*

TICKETS Rs.1500, Rs.1000 & Rs.750,  
BALCONY RS 500, AVAILABLE AT THE VENUE

OFFICIAL HOTEL  
*Cinnamon*  
GRAND  
COLOMBO

**Inauguration Celebrates . . . . .**

The first inaugural celebration will take place on the afternoon of January 18, with welcoming events throughout the city. Throughout the weekend, there will be festivities honoring the incoming president.

On January 19, Martin Luther King Day, the president-elect and vice president-elect will participate in a day of community service.

On the morning of January 20, the president and president-elect likely will meet with outgoing President Bush at the White House and travel to the Capitol together.

Following the noon swearing-in ceremony at the Capitol and the new president's speech, President Bush and first lady Laura Bush will leave Washington that day, as private citizens.

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The new president and vice president will make their way from the Capitol back to the White House, where they will view a traditional parade that begins at the Capitol and follows a 1.7-mile (2.7-kilometers) route up Pennsylvania Avenue and past the White House.

In the evening there will be many formal inaugural balls — a few of which the Obamas will attend. Typically, the new first lady's gown for this evening is big news in the fashion world; the dress eventually will make its way into the Smithsonian Institution's collection of inaugural gowns.

The inaugural events conclude with a prayer service the morning of January 21 at the Washington National Cathedral. After that, the work of the new administration begins in earnest.

Source: [www.america.gov](http://www.america.gov)

Every Thursday at 2.30pm

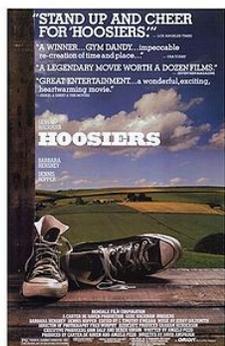
*Entrance free!*



**January 8**

**Singin' in the rain** (1954, Running time: 103 minutes)

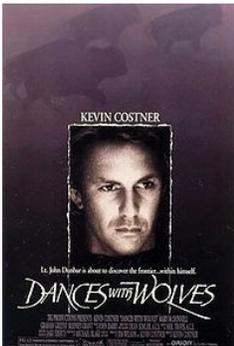
In 1927, the former stunt Don Lockwood becomes a successful actor with the company of his best friend Cosmo Brown forming a romantic pair with the actress Lina Lamont. In the period of transition from silent movies to talking pictures, Don accidentally meets the aspirant actress Kathy Selden while escaping from his fans and fall in love for her. Lina has troubles with the sharp tune of her voice, and Cosmo and Don decides to dub her, using Kathy's voice, to save their movie. When the jealous Lina finds the strategy of the studio, she does not want to share the credits with Kathy and tries to force the studio to use Kathy in the shadow to dub her in other productions. But when Lina decides to speech and sing to the audience, the truth arises. Nominated for 2 Oscars, another 3 wins and 7 nominations.



**January 15**

**Hoosiers** (1986, Running time: 114 minutes)

An unexpected late-1986 box-office hit, Hoosiers tells the true story of a group of underdogs who become champi-ons. Set in the 1950s, Hoosiers is about a hard-luck, unemployed college basketball coach (Gene Hackman) who gets a chance to coach a small-town Indiana high-school basketball team. Facing resentment from the community and the team itself, Hackman manages to inspire his young athletes, leading them to the state championship with the help of the assistant coach (Dennis Hopper), who happens to be a recovering alcoholic. Nominated for 2 Os-cars, another 3 wins and 3 nominations.



**January 22**

**Dances with Wolves** (1990, Running time: 180 minutes)

A historical drama about the relationship between a Civil War soldier and a band of Sioux Indians, Kevin Costner's directorial debut was also a surprisingly popular hit, considering its length, period setting, and often somber tone. The film opens on a particularly dark note, as melancholy Union lieutenant John W. Dunbar attempts to kill himself on a suicide mission, but instead becomes an unintentional hero. His actions lead to his reassignment to a remote post in remote South Dakota, where he encounters the Sioux. Attracted by the natural simplicity of their lifestyle, he chooses to leave his former life behind to join them, taking on the name Dances with Wolves. Soon, Dances with Wolves has become a welcome member of the tribe and fallen in love with a white woman who has been raised amongst the tribe. His peaceful existence is threatened, however, when Union soldiers arrive with designs on the Sioux land. Won 7 Oscars, another 30 wins and 20 nominations.



**January 29**

**The Day After Tomorrow** (2004, Running time: 124 minutes)

Directed by Roland Emmerich, this mega-budget, special-effects-laden epic revolves around the onset of an interna-tional series of crises brought on by the long-term results of the greenhouse effect. At the eye of the storm is paleo climatologist (a professor dedicated to the study of weather patterns throughout the ages) Jack Hall (Dennis Quaid), who voluntarily takes on the preservation of the world in the dawn of the next ice age and all the disaster that comes along with it violent hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, tidal waves, massive floods, etc. Hall must also contact his son, Sam (Jake Gyllenhaal), who was in the middle of an academic competition in New York City when the chaos begun. In addition to facing the largest-scale onslaught of natural catastrophes in the history of humankind, Jack, in his journey north, must contend with the masses fleeing south in an attempt to resettle in a warmer climate.

For more details about after school movie screenings : Tel: 2498146 E-mail : [amcentersl@state.gov](mailto:amcentersl@state.gov)

## Film Screenings at the American Center

**January 2009 - Americans Abroad**      **Every Tuesday at 6.00pm**

### **January 6 - The African Queen** (1951, 105 minutes)

Adapted from a novel by C.S. Forester, *The African Queen* stars Humphrey Bogart in his Oscar-winning portrayal of Charlie Allnut, the slovenly, gin-swilling captain of a tramp steamer called the African Queen, which ships supplies to small East African villages during World War I. Katharine Hepburn plays Rose Sayer, the maiden-lady sister of a prim British missionary (Robert Morley). When invading Germans kill the missionary and level the village, Allnut offers to take Rose back to civilization. She can't tolerate his drinking or bad manners; he isn't crazy about her imperious, judgmental attitude. However it does not take long before their passionate dislike turns to love. Together the disparate duo work to ensure their survival on the treacherous waters and devise an ingenious way to destroy a German gunboat. *The African Queen* may well be the perfect adventure film, its roller-coaster storyline complemented by the chemistry between its stars. Won 1 Oscar, another 1 win and 5 nominations.

### **January 13 - An American in Paris** (1952, 113 minutes)

Musical starring Gene Kelly as a young American painter in Paris who falls in love with a Parisian (played by Leslie Caron). Released in 1951, the film won Academy Awards for best picture, best screenplay, best art direction, best cinematography, and best costume design. The American Jerry Mulligan (Kelly) is involved with a wealthy older woman (Nina Foch) when he falls in love with Lise Bouvier (Caron), a young French girl. The two try to forget their attraction because Bouvier is already engaged to one of Mulligan's musician friends, Henri Baurel (Georges Guetary), but the American ends up with the girl. The film concludes with an 18-minute ballet number designed by Gene Kelly, who received a special Academy Award that year for his versatility as a performer and for his contributions to the art of dance in film. Won 6 Oscars, another 3 wins and 7 nominations.

### **January 20 - The Quiet Man** (1952, 129 minutes)

A movie about an Irish American boxer who returns to his family homestead in Ireland and falls in love with a local woman, based on a short story by Maurice Walsh. John Ford earned an Academy Award for directing this romantic comedy, which was released in 1952. Sean Thornton (played by John Wayne) wants to leave his violent past behind him and start a new life in the village where he was born. He falls in love with Mary Kate Danaher (Maureen O'Hara) and marries her, despite the objections of her brother Red (Victor McLaglen). Red refuses to pay the dowry and challenges Thornton to a fight. Thornton refuses to fight because he accidentally killed a man the last time he was in a prizefight. Mary doesn't know this, and leaves Thornton because she believes he is a coward. Thornton proves his bravery and his boxing ability in a long, brutal fight with Red, winning his wife's love and Red's respect. The film also earned an Academy Award for Winton C. Hoch and Archie Stout's cinematography. Won 2 Oscars, another 5 wins and 8 nominations.

### **January 27 - Good Morning Vietnam** (1987, 121 minutes)

The film begins in 1965, when disc jockey Adrian Cronauer (Robin Williams) is assigned to take over the AFR's Saigon radio broadcasts. In contrast to the dull, by-rrote announcers that have preceded him, Cronauer is a bundle of dynamite, heralding each broadcast with a loud "Gooooood morning, Vietnaaaaaam," playing whatever records tickle his fancy (even those not officially sanctioned by his hidebound superiors), and indulging in wild flights of improvisational fancy. Cronauer's immediate superior Lt. Hawk (Bruno Kirby), whose own notions of humor are puerile and pathetic, jealously attempts to dethrone Vietnam's favorite rock jock. Fortunately, Cronauer's popularity is such that he enjoys the full protection of the higher-ups. But when Cronauer, after experiencing the horrors of war first-hand, insists upon telling his listeners the truth instead of the official government line, he is instantly replaced by the unfunny Hawk and must struggle to get back on the air. Nominated for Oscar, another 6 wins and 2 nominations.

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