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## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

### **U.S. Embassy Sponsors Visual Arts Initiative**

**November 2, 2011**

The U.S. Embassy and Park Boulevard Mall on November 2 concluded the Embassy's Visual Arts Initiative with an exhibition featuring art work created by Baku street children and students from Khizi. The artwork was created as a result of mentoring received by three visiting artists from the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) who were brought to Azerbaijan by the State Department's Visual Arts Initiative.

The three artists have, since October 14, carried out photography projects with orphans and street children in Baku and Ganja, and drawing projects school children in Khizi and Mingechevir. The program, which was organized in partnership with Azerbaijan's Children Union, trained participants to express their opinions and feelings through art, allowing them to use art as a basis for discussion about important societal issues. The artists also held five workshops to train NGO and government volunteers in community art programming.

Speaking about the Visual Arts Initiative, Embassy Public Affairs Officer Victoria Sloan told attendees, "This program is an example of how three artists, working intensively in people-to-people diplomacy, have made a lasting, positive impact in children's lives." She complimented the quality of the work in the exhibition, noting

that she hopes that the work of Baku street children on display will help draw attention to their existence and advocated for their ability to be full members of society.

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