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Training manuals spread ‘bilim’ in Kyrgyzstan

The Kyrgyz word for knowledge is ‘bilim.’ A recent project by the Transit Center at Manas is helping to spread ‘bilim’ throughout the country.

In cooperation with the Kyrgyz Academy of Education and the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek, the Transit Center’s Theater Security Cooperation division recently completed a \$33,000 humanitarian assistance project to print a comprehensive set of teacher’s training manuals.

The teachers’ training manuals were compiled by teachers throughout the country and are intended to provide updated curriculum material, as well as information for teachers on how to teach the material.

“Most teachers lacked a standardized, updated set of materials,” said Capt. Ryan Morgan, Transit Center at Manas Theater Security Cooperation division project manager. “The Academy of Education staff went out and gathered the experts who wrote the new material. We came in and worked with the publisher to get them printed.”

More than 62,000 manuals, spanning 17 different subject areas in both Kyrgyz and Russian languages, were printed and will be distributed among the 2,200 schools in Kyrgyzstan.

Education is a top priority for the country. To illustrate this point, Dogdurkul Kendirbaeva, Kyrgyz Republic Deputy Minister of Education, shared a story about a young boy who wrote to the ministry asking for knowledge and the



Photo by: Tech. Sgt. Rachel Martinez

Center, U.S. Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan Pamela Spratlen surveys various training manuals with staff at the Kyrgyzstan Academy of Education in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, Jan. 30, 2013. The U.S. Embassy and the Transit Center at Manas have partnered with the Ministry of Education to publish updated teachers’ training manuals to be distributed throughout the country.

opportunity for an education.

“The desire of this child shows that children want to get knowledge,” said Kendirbaeva. “The U.S. cooperation with the Kyrgyz Academy of Education is going to guarantee sustainability because they are the organization working on improving the standards of education as well as teacher development.”

During a small ceremony to celebrate the printing of the teachers’ manuals and honor the partnership between the U.S. and Kyrgyzstan, the U.S. Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic spoke about the importance of knowledge and

education.

“I think it’s important for all of us to remember why we are here – we are here for ‘bilim,’” said Ambassador Pamela Spratlen. “Today is especially important because this is knowledge for teachers. “As I remember the teachers I had in school, I remember several things,” she said. “Of course, they were wonderful, warm and friendly people. They were also extremely dedicated people. Most of all, they were experts. They had a lot of knowledge. That’s what we are all about today – trying to help the teachers of the Kyrgyz Republic continue to have the best knowledge so

that they can be the best teachers.

“So when that small boy who wrote the Minister of Education, grows up and writes a speech in English, he will remember all of us and all we tried to do,” Spratlen said. “He won’t know us specifically, but inside of him will be all we tried to contribute to his education, so he could contribute to Kyrgyzstan.”

The Transit Center continues to work with the U.S. Embassy, the Ministry of Education and the Academy of Education to explore additional ways to improve education in Kyrgyzstan.

Bayalinov Library celebrates partnerships, renovations

The Bayalinov National Library of Kyrgyzstan in Bishkek has much to celebrate this year – the 50th anniversary of the building and five-year anniversary of the library’s American Corner.

The Bayalinov library, in partnership with the Transit Center at Manas and the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek, held a ceremony Jan. 24, 2013, to celebrate recent renovations to the building and an expansion of the American Corner. The U.S. Air Forces Central Command band, “Total Force,” was on hand to play their first concert in Kyrgyzstan in honor of the occasion.

The Transit Center’s Theater Security Cooperation division financed an approximately \$10,000 humanitarian assistance project to renovate the library’s two bathrooms. The 45-day project included freshly painted and tiled walls, as well as new floors, stalls, countertops, toilets and sinks. In addition, many of the sewer lines were replaced to fix a failing septic system.

“This was something the library asked us to do,” said Staff Sgt. Michael Lazarus, Transit Center’s Theater Security Cooperation division project manager. “We brought it down to bare bones and started from zero. We did all the work in hopes of making it last a long time. Especially with plumbing – it’s the work that you don’t see and appreciate until it doesn’t work.”

The library director said she certainly



Photos by: Staff Sgt. Stephanie Rubi

Col. Corey Martin, Transit Center at Manas director, and Valentina Turabekova, a cultural adviser, offer remarks during a ceremony held at Bayalinov National Library of Kyrgyzstan in Bishkek, Jan. 24, 2013. The Transit Center’s Theater Security Cooperation division recently completed a bathroom renovation project valued at approximately \$10,000.

appreciates the bathroom renovations.

“We’re thankful to the Transit Center because they looked into our problems and one of them was the bathrooms,” said Rosa Sultangazieva, Bayalinov Library director. “I was embarrassed because they were in such bad shape. Now colleagues from other libraries come to see the renovations and are surprised by how modern and well done they are.”

The Transit Center’s contributions to the library go well beyond the renovations. Transit Center members are regular participants in the library’s American Corner talking clubs.

“I am proud that the Transit Center could undertake another partnership project with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. I’m most proud though that the Transit Center gave much more than just money to this library project,” said Col. Corey Martin, Transit Center director. “Several times a week, Transit Center members gave their

time, talent and intellect to American Corner events. Those meetings reached more than 8,000 Kyrgyz guests as we continue to build on a strong U.S. and Kyrgyz relationship.”

American Corner at the Bayalinov Library is a public outreach program sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek. It is a place where library patrons can go to study and read English books, participate in talking clubs and use free Wi-Fi. In honor of its five-year anniversary, the U.S. Embassy sponsored an expanded computer room with 30 new computers for public use. Expansions such as this directly contribute to increased use of the library, said Sultangazieva.

“There is a saying that if your home is warm, bright and modern then you always want to go back to it. This is an example of what American Corner is,” said Sultangazieva. “Readers enjoy coming again and again. In 2008, we had 1,113 readers. In 2012, we had 33,850 readers. You can understand how big a change that is and it’s mostly due to renovations in American Corner.”

The Bayalinov Library project was just one of more than a dozen projects the Transit Center and U.S. Embassy in Bishkek partnered on in 2012. Many more partnership projects are planned for 2013.



Pamela Spratlen, U.S. Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic, speaks during a ceremony held at Bayalinov National Library of Kyrgyzstan in Bishkek, Jan. 24, 2013. The library celebrated the five-year anniversary of American Corner, a room dedicated to helping students to learn about the United States, and recent renovations to the library. The U.S. Embassy also sponsored 30 new computers for public use in American Corner.

TCM celebrates diversity with Kyrgyz students

Service members from the Transit Center at Manas brought a little American flavor to downtown Bishkek recently.

As part of the American University of Central Asia's Diversity Week, the Transit Center was invited to share some American cuisine during Food Day, Jan. 23, 2013.

Diversity Week has been held for more than 10 years as a way to represent the multitude of cultures represented at the university, said Sven Stafford, AUCA director of development.

"We have students from more than 16 countries studying here this year, but we also have students from 25 to 30 ethnicities," said Stafford. "It's a way for them to celebrate that we all study here together; it's a place where people from all different walks of life can come together and study as one student body."

Food day has always been a part of the university's



Service members from the Transit Center at Manas serve American cuisine to students and staff at the American University of Central Asia in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, Jan. 23, 2013. The university invited representatives from the Transit Center to participate in food day as part of their week-long celebration of diversity.

diversity celebration, but this was the first year participation in the event was extended beyond university students and staff. The AUCA staff invited the Transit Center and multiple embassies to share their countries' cuisine.

"It's our 20th anniversary for the university so as part of that we wanted to try to have a greater impact and invite more of the Bishkek community in to experience what we've known to be a great event for a while now," said Stafford.

Staff Sgt. Moli Waldron, 376th Expeditionary Force Support Squadron special events coordinator, and Senior Airman Brett Arsenault, 376th Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron Petroleum, Oils and Lubricants Flight, helped represent the Transit Center and were responsible for creating the American cuisine menu and preparing the food. Beginning with a list of more than 20 typical American foods, the two settled on chicken nuggets, pepperoni pizza pockets, macaroni and cheese bites, and chocolate cookie truffles. Waldron purchased all the ingredients at a local grocery store then spent about 10 hours cooking the food with Arsenault. The opportunity to share American cuisine with international students was exciting, said Waldron.

"It was really neat to see the different countries; I love trying different cuisines," said Waldron. "I think they liked the American food; They kept coming back for seconds."

Waldron wasn't the only who enjoyed the experience. Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Michael Butler, 376th Air Expeditionary Wing chaplain, jumped at the opportunity to experience new culture, food and people.

"I really had no idea what to expect, but it's really quite wonderful – wonderful to see that in this world around us, so many people come together," said Butler. "We're all different, yet we bring so many wonderful, if I might say, flavors together, not only in food, but in cultures and personalities."

If the packed rooms, empty serving trays and full bellies were any indication, the event was a success and something the AUCA hopes to continue.

Kyrgyz Republic dentists visit TCM for medical exchange

Left, Maj. (Dr.) Christopher Nuttall, 376th Expeditionary Medical Group comprehensive dentist, and Kyrgyz Republic Lt. Aibek Mamadiyarov, Ministry of Defense Besh-Kungei Military Hospital dentist, discuss dental procedures during a medical forces exchange at Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan, Jan. 14, 2013. The exchanges occur once a month and the objective is for U.S. Air Force members and their Kyrgyz Republic counterparts to discuss and practice hands-on procedures within their career field. This exchange allowed Nuttall and Mamadiyarov to discuss dentistry materials and their uses, along with dental procedures and challenges within the career field.



'Total Force' band shares mastery of music

A goal of any band is to connect with their audience. After an appearance at the Kurenkeyev College of Music, the U.S. Air Forces Central Command Band 'Total Force' may have made a connection that will last long after their visit.

The AFCENT Band's recent visit to the college was part of a two-week outreach tour in Kyrgyzstan. The band not only performed, but also conducted master classes with the students. The master classes offered included voice, piano, clarinet, saxophone and drums.

The school's director, Tentimish Murataliev, welcomed the opportunity to expose his students to various styles of music and artists.

"Our institution not only teaches academic instruments, singing and Kyrgyz traditional music, but music from around the world. The master classes conducted with the AFCENT band is very useful for both our students and professors. The interaction with professional musicians is a great lesson for them and the more of such events for our students the better," said Murataliev.

The Kurenkeyev College of Music is one of three music colleges in Kyrgyzstan. There are approximately 235 students enrolled in the college ranging in age from 15 to 23 years old. Only 70 applicants are accepted to this four-year institution each year. After graduation, students vie for selection to the National Conservatory of Music, a competitive five-year program for aspiring professional musicians.

Performing in front of professional musicians can be intimidating. Some students were a little hesitant to display their talents to the band. One student who did volunteer was



From left to right, Senior Airman Michelle Hooper, Tech. Sgt. Frances Kness, Staff Sgts. Andy Wendzikowski and Josh Byrd of the U.S. Air Forces Central Command Band 'Total Force' perform at the Kurenkeyev College of Music in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on Jan. 30, 2013. Before their performance, the band members conducted master classes with the students.

Kanybek; a second-year voice major who sang the Frank Sinatra standard "Strangers in the Night."

"I was kind of nervous when I first started to perform, but I felt better after I received instruction and advice," he said.

His master class instructor, Tech. Sgt. Frances Kness, lead vocalist, was impressed with his voice.

"I didn't know what to expect," she said. They're pretty good, I just offered them tips on how to perform in front of an audience, she said.

These tips had an immediate impact on Kanybek.

"The most important thing I learned from the master class was the way you need to move while performing," said Kanybek. "One technique I learned is to pick a girl out of the crowd and imagine that I'm singing the song to her. This was a very useful tip that I will use in the future."

The master classes were as enjoyable for the band as they

were for the students. Staff Sgt. Josh Byrd, lead guitar and vocalist, also led a class.

"I thought this was really neat. This was one of the coolest events we've done," said Byrd.

Byrd focused his time with the students on performance techniques, a consistent theme of coaching from most of the band members.

"It's really interesting; most young players regardless of where they are from usually have the same technical issues. They are so worried about playing the right note that they don't emote. When they reach a certain level of confidence they will stop thinking about getting the notes right and just perform," said Byrd.

After the classes, the band took to the stage and demonstrated the same techniques they discussed with the students earlier. Their hour-long performance covered the genres of rock, pop and country.

For an institution where

classical is the primary music of instruction, students expressed a great appreciation for the American sound.

"I enjoyed [the concert] very much. Every time an American band comes to our school I try not to miss it. I like the American style of music," said Begaim Kydyralieva, a third-year student. "It was very interesting and useful to me to learn how we need to feel while performing on stage."

Following the concert, Kurenkeyev students performed traditional Kyrgyz music for the band.

The music and ideas shared between the band and students may have connected them beyond the stage or the classroom.

"I think their contribution to our students have been great. Music is very sacred, it's a gift, and with music you don't need translators," said Murataliev. May the friendship between our musicians grow.

TCM members spread holiday cheer to orphans

Service members from the Transit Center at Manas demonstrated the “Season of Giving” to the local Kyrgyz community this month.

The Transit Center held a holiday toy drive and joined efforts with the U.S. Embassy Bishkek’s U.S. Marine Corps “Toys for Tots” to benefit more than 350 children and three orphanages in Bishkek.

“The Kyrgyz people are kind enough to have us here in their country; we just want to say thank you by helping the kids,” said Tech. Sgt. Lamount Goodwin, 376th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron flight chief and one of the organizers of the Transit Center’s toy drive. “A lot of service members came together to do a good deed and help out the local kids around the holidays.”

Beginning in mid-November, toy drive organizers began to put the word out on the Transit Center toy drive. Collections were taken up in various units and a donation booth was set up at Pete’s Place, a popular morale location. In just about a month, the team raised nearly \$8,000.

“Our initial goal was \$5,000, but we ended up with a total of \$7,966,” said



Photos by: Tech. Sgt. Rachel Martinez

Service member volunteers from the Transit Center at Manas hand out presents to children at the Belovodski Preschool Orphanage in Karabalta, Kyrgyzstan, Dec. 27, 2012. The orphanage houses more than 70 children between the ages of 3 and 7.

Goodwin. “It wasn’t just Air Force, it was Army, Navy, Marines -- everybody was in the holiday spirit. Once we explained what we were doing and that it was for the children, we had people donating \$100 to \$150 at a time. Everyone wanted to help and give back to the community.”

With money in hand, service members worked with their Kyrgyz colleagues to identify orphanages in need. Three orphanages were chosen, including one that takes in mentally and physically challenged children. Transit Center troops also coordinated to determine the needs and wants of the orphanages.

Toy drive volunteers visited multiple marketplaces in Bishkek to purchase various educational and fun toys. Purchases included dolls, soccer balls, electronic games, puzzles, remote-controlled cars and building blocks. Volunteers also purchased hats, gloves and socks for each child. Additionally, one orphanage received new bed mats for all the children.

“We wanted to get what they needed, but we also wanted to get them some toys,” said Goodwin. “I don’t care what country you are from – kids are going to be kids and want toys.”

More than 50 volunteers, including wing leadership, Transit Center service

members, the U.S. Embassy Bishkek’s Deputy Chief of Mission, and embassy staff, gathered a few days prior to Christmas to wrap all the presents. All the toys were delivered by volunteers between Christmas and New Year’s Day.

“Today is a special day and all the kids are very excited,” said Alena Albertovna, the assistance principal at the Belovodski Preschool Orphanage. “People from the Transit Center have been coming here for years. We can’t imagine our lives without the support from the Transit Center.”

Many of the volunteers who helped deliver the gifts said they enjoyed the event just as much as the children.

“Not being able to physically interact with my own children this holiday season was hard for me,” said Tech. Sgt. Maria Simpson, 376th Air Expeditionary Wing regional equal opportunity director.

“Although when I saw the joy that came on the faces of the children in the orphanage it made all of those feelings of being sorry for myself dissipate. I was filled with joy to be able to fulfill their holiday season with the unexpected surprise of the gifts and interaction.”

“It will be a memory that I will hold close for a long time,” she said. “I do believe that this opportunity impacted me as much as it did them.”



Tech. Sgt. Lamount Goodwin, 376th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron flight chief, sorts wrapped toys during a toy wrapping party at the Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan, Dec. 23, 2012. Goodwin was one of the organizers of a Transit Center holiday toy drive to benefit local orphanages.

Transit Center Economic Impact as of Jan. 31, 2013

Direct Expenditures	FY09 Actual	FY10 Actual	FY11 Actual	FY12 YTD	FY13 YTD
Payments to Kyrgyz Govt - Dip Note	\$26,620,000	\$60,000,000	\$60,000,000	\$60,000,000	\$30,000,000
Payments to Manas International Airport	\$22,999,039				
Lease, Passes, Utilities		\$4,029,091	\$7,817,140	\$4,475,365	\$4,208,333
Aircraft Landing, Parking, Service Fees		\$21,157,571	\$19,460,590	\$21,301,884	\$5,440,415
Contributions to Airport Improvements	\$30,600,000	\$0	\$0	\$20,658,294	\$108,049
Contributions to Kyrgyz Aeronavigation	\$0	\$0	\$30,000,000	\$60,505	\$58,8000
Contract Payments (Furniture, Sports Equipment, Parts, Supplies, Buildings, Renovations, Road Repairs, Grounds Maintenance, Refuse, Custodial, Vehicle Leases)	\$24,601,908	\$42,790,517	\$30,916,871	\$31,567,612	\$10,029,248
Leases (non-MIA)	\$81,562	\$66,596	\$120,698	\$132,687	\$21,315
Programmatic Humanitarian Assistance	\$1,700,000	\$2,273,488	\$823,634	\$1,887,684	\$0
Subtotal Direct Expenditures	\$106,602,509	\$130,317,263	\$149,138,933	\$140,084,031	\$49,866,160
Indirect Expenditures					
Estimated U.S. military local spending	\$1,037,530	\$1,161,743	\$1,427,396	\$2,011,226	\$880,590
Subtotal Indirect Expenditures	\$1,037,530	\$1,161,743	\$1,427,396	\$2,011,226	\$880,590
Total Economic Impact	\$107,640,039	\$131,479,006	\$150,566,329	\$142,095,257	\$50,746,750
DLA Jet Fuel Payments (GAK)				\$208,137,115	\$67,850,664

Kyrgyz, US teams take to court for friendly game



Above: The Kyrgyz Republic team, Tulpar, discuss strategy during a timeout at a basketball game Feb. 9, 2013, at Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan. Tulpar played against members from the Transit Center, defeating them 76 to 71.

Left: Basketball players from Transit Center at Manas and the Kyrgyz Republic team, Tulpar, reach for a basketball during a game Feb. 9, 2013, at the Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan. Sport activities such as this help build relationships and bridge language barriers between Kyrgyz citizens and U.S. troops.