

Mongolian State Alumni Magazine



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cess over 1000 academic and prominent journals and periodicals; and share your stories and participate in global discussions. The State Alumni website is an exclusive community network only for the U.S.G alumni to ensure that your exchange experience does not stop when you return home, but continues to result in productive professional, societal, cultural, and community engagements.

Mongolian Association of State Alumni (MASA) was established in September 2007 as a community of all past and current Mongolian participants of U.S. Government sponsored exchange programs. Since 1989 more than 700 Mongolians have participated in U.S. Government sponsored programs and you are a welcome member of this family.

MASA Mission

To contribute to the bilateral relationships of Mongolia and USA and promote the efforts of Mongolian U.S. Government alumni for the societal and community development.

D.Jargalsaikhan

Current president of the Mongolian Association of State Alumni (MASA)

Economist, Defacto program host

USAID Masters' Program alumnus, 2002

Inside this issue:

ALUMNI NEWS:

Alumni and the Mission: *Brainstorming meetings* 2

Alumni on Air, Continued 3

Alumna Opens an Art Gallery 4

MASA AEIF Project: *Already Making a Difference* 5

PAS Summer Alumni Internship Program 6

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT:

The Mongolian Music Scene's Greatest Assets 7-8

EXCHANGE REFLECTION:

20 Days Visit Equals 2 Years Study 9

SUSI Diary 10-11

FLTA Program 12-13



Alumni discussing ideas

On April 20th, 2012, a handful of alumni from the business and economic sector met to brainstorm ideas for expanding alumni networking and alumni collaboration with the Embassy.

The Public Affairs Officer Allyson Algeo hosted the meeting at her home and the Chief of the Embassy’s Econ section David Whyche attended the meeting to talk about the activities of his section and to solicit alumni ideas for possible collaboration in the business and economic field. The Alumni Coordinator Uyanga Erdenebold and representatives of MASA talked about MASA’s past and current activities as well as its future goals and plans for expansion beyond just “state alumni” and to create the possibility for the Mongolian “non-state-alumni” of American universities to join and support MASA mission and activities. This meeting was a good opportunity to facilitate interaction between Mongolian alumni of U.S. universities who are working in the same field and to hear their thoughts and ideas for expanding alumni collaboration and networking. The meeting was very successful and from the many ideas that came from the alumni, it was clear that Mongolian non-state alumni of American universities are not only interested but are willing to join hands with MASA and support its goal. Current MASA leadership believes that inclusion of non-state alumni in MASA would multiply MASA’s strength and capacity many times and create a powerful and diverse alumni community. Some of the ideas that were discussed during the meeting are running a pilot English language



PAO Allyson Algeo, Econ chief David Whyche nad alumni

Alumni and the Mission: *Brainstorming meetings*

program in one aimag at all of its secondary schools with native speaker teachers recruited from American colleges, an alumni success story speaker series for youth titled “How did you”, creation of alumni and U.S. State Department visitor programs, involvement of American Fulbrights in alumni activities. One activity that was agreed upon during this meeting was to hold a Mongolian U.S. Alumni banquet on the first Friday of July to mark U.S. Independence day, 25th Anniversary of diplomatic relation between Mongolia and the U.S. and the launch of the first Employment web database for the physically disabled in Mongolia.

This was the first of the three alumni brainstorming meetings planned by the Public Affairs Section and the next two meetings will be in the fields of Law and Political/Social Sciences and mining and hard sciences.

We would like to express our thanks for Mr. David Whyche for taking the time from his busy schedule to attend our meeting and helping to facilitate a very dynamic and interesting discussion.



Alumni discussing ideas (Myagmarjav, Otgochuluu and Bold)



Alumni discussing ideas



Alumni on Air, Continued

The readers of our newsletter will remember that last year we organized a series of ten radio programs with the Family Radio FM104.5. These programs were very well received and the station got numerous calls from listeners thanking them for giving them this important information about studying in the U.S. and available scholarships and many of them requested the station to have more of these pro-

Encouraged by this success, the U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs Section is again conducting a series of 16 radio programs with Mongolian National Public Radio and its second channel FM P3. "After you participate in programs like Humphrey, you really want other people to know about what a golden opportunity it is, and most important of all, to give them the conviction that if they want they can do it, they can get this scholarship. We who got this scholarship are no different than them, we just gave ourselves a try and it clicked." said Chinkhand, a 2010 Hubert Humphrey program alumna, when she first approached us with her proposal to have alumni radio talk shows on the national radio in conjunction with the 25th anniversary. She works as the senior Program Editor at the National Public Radio and she studied communications journalism at Arizona State University. Since Mongolian National Public Radio airs in all parts of Mongolia and since it is one of the biggest and the most trusted information and news sources, the information about our scholarships and the success stories of our alumni will reach even the most remote parts of Mongolia. The biggest message we got when PAS and alumni traveled to ten provinces of Mongolia in 2011, is that this is where the skills and experiences that our scholarship and exchange programs can offer are in most need as Mongolia's development is headed out of UB. However, the people in the countryside lack the two most important things: information and conviction. One might argue that there is no such thing as information lack when there is Internet, and Internet is everywhere, even in the countryside, at least in the centers of the provinces. But, is that really so? Computers are dependent on electricity, something one cannot take for granted in the countryside. The internet access in the countryside is just like the electricity, it may be there or it might not. One can never tell and when it is there it is usually very slow. But, even before we start to talk about Internet access, we need the actual computer itself which is not readily available, and when there is one, there is a high probability that it is not fully functional. But, on the other hand, radios are everywhere, and people love them. They don't need electricity, they hardly ever break, and if they do, a hard blow from grandpa will bring it to life



Chinkhand at work



again, and best of all they are small enough for a nomadic family to like them. So, the importance of our radio program will be to give people the information in the format that they trust and are comfortable with.

Secondly, due to the lack of information, the people in the countryside are not and have not been aware of the many opportunities that are burgeoning in UB. So, they go on thinking that things like studying abroad is for city people only. Our programs will simultaneously air in UB as well via the P3 FM radio, an FM radio station that is popular among the youth in UB. The program will have two main components – a Saturday live talk show with alumni and a five minute news session everyday during the radio's morning show. The news session will include a brief information about our scholarship programs, short introduction of alumni who will be participating in that week's Saturday talk show as well as a language tip for improving one's English. The first of our news session program will air on Monday, April 30 at 9:00 on the national radio station and P3 FM and the first of our Saturday talk shows will air on Saturday, May 5 at 13:00.



Alumna Opens an Art Gallery

We all know that 976 is Mongolia's international code. But, everybody who went to the fifth floor of Max Mall on April fifth, will know that now these numbers stand to represent the sample of Mongolia's finest art.

Ms. B. Gantuya, Vice President of MASA and 2006 Fulbright alumna, after being an ardent art lover and collector for many years, finally gave in to her growing devotion for art and opened an art gallery on the fifth floor of Max Mall.

It was clear from the crowd assembled at the gallery opening that paintings and sculptures have no language or cultural boundaries and are in themselves the "universal language" for all human kind. Judging by the number of people who came to the art gallery and how long they stayed there, it was clear that the gallery is something that was really needed and that the arts there appeal to many tastes.

Ms. Gantuya said that aside from promoting Mongolian art and artists to a wider audience, one of her important goals for establishing the gallery is to promote art to the "general public" and help them to learn to appreciate it. She said that one of her first programs at the gallery will be to organize a tour and art workshop for children with disabilities. She also mentioned that one of her reasons for choosing the Max Mall to have her gallery is that it is wheelchair accessible.

Gana said that the cozy coffee shop at the gallery will be a constant meeting place for MASA board and the board members are happy because what better place than an art gallery to inspire and stimulate the mind when discussing various projects and activities to expand MASA.



The new gallery



At Maxmall, opening of the gallery

Art at the gallery



Art at the gallery



MASA AEIF project: *Already Making a Difference*

The readers of our newsletter will know that MASA is working on a project to build an employment database/web tool for physically disabled Mongolians to find employment and to get information. The database will have map and information about public places such as banks and ATMs, restaurants, universities, government agencies, theaters and clubs, libraries and monasteries that have wheelchair access. Moreover, the database will serve as web platform for physically disabled entrepreneurs to promote and sell their products and services as well as for them to network and exchange ideas. The database is expected to be completed by mid May and people and organizations will be able to register and input their information.

However, even before the completion of the project, we are starting to see positive results triggered by the project. After hearing about MASA and its project, Newcom company, where one of MASA's board members works, decided to support MASA's initiatives and hired two physically disabled women to work as call center operators at Newtoll company.

The idea was originated when MASA board members were meeting with groups of physically disabled people to hear their feedback for the employment database project. To work as operators for call centers was mentioned as one of the most suitable and less challenging occupations for a person with wheelchair and our board member Odontuya who works at Newcom Company thought, why wait when we can start the process now.

So, Newcom Company in collaboration with the Universal Development Independent Living Center for Disabled initiated a program for physically disabled people to work as operators for its call centers. The people were given the option to either work from home or at the call centers and the company updated its computer programs to suit the needs of the employees working from home. Over 40 people applied for the four positions that the company made available and two people were hired. Ms. Amarjargal is currently working at the Newtoll call center and Ms. Tsolmon is working from home. They said it is wonderful to have a job and colleagues and to have a personal income.

MASA is thankful to the Newcom Company for supporting its project and setting example and is hopeful that once the project is complete, many companies will follow the example of the Newcom Company and many more people with disabilities will have jobs, colleagues, and salaries.



Ms. Amarjargal working at the Newtoll Call Center

Ms. Tsolmon working at home





PAS Summer Alumni Internship Program

In 2010, at the request of many youth alumni, the Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy started giving its program alumni an opportunity to learn about and assist with the activities and programs of the Public Affairs Section and the U.S. Embassy in general. This is an unpaid internship that Public Affairs makes available for its USG alumni to help them to gain a better understanding of the U.S. Embassy and its public diplomacy activities and to help them to gain work experience. Moreover, it is designed to increase youth alumni involvement in the embassy's alumni and other outreach activities and ensure continued contact with them. This opportunity is made available to any Mongolian USG alumni under the age of 25. So far, six youth alumni from the Ugrad and Intensive English programs have interned with PAS and had the following to say about their experience:

Munkh-Orgil, 2009 Ugrad alumnus: "The six weeks enabled me not just to practice my translational skill but to learn how to be detail oriented, effectively communicate and to be a highly motivated staff member in terms of personal development. It lightened my present path and revealed my advantages and showed a way to correct my weaknesses. Even though the six weeks just flew, the period made me an individual who is more focused on my professional development and career goal than ever before."

Zoljargal, 2009 Ugrad alumnus: "For students like me who are majoring in international relations, interning at the U.S. embassy was a rare and valuable opportunity. During my six week internship, I expanded my knowledge of how an Embassy functions. I am glad that I worked for PAS, the most interesting section of Embassy. I took part in organizing various events, translating interviews and meeting and contacting with so many people. The most enjoyable program was organizing concert of Ari Roland Jazz quartet, U.S. cultural ambassador, in Selenge province. Having fun with Ari Roland and learning about jazz music was awesome experience. Also it was great to watch blending of traditional and jazz music."

The alumnus/a does not have to be a student at the time of internship but should not be employed at any other organization. The students have to be alumni of one of our scholarship and exchange program in order to do an internship at the Public Affairs Section. The alumni interns usually work from four to six weeks and assist with various activities organized by PAS and are eligible to request a reference letter from PAS at the end of their internship.

If any of our youth alumni are interested in this opportunity, an application form is available from the Alumni Coordinator Uyanga E. please write to: uyangae@state.gov. Please note that each alumni interested will be subject to a security background check in order to allow access to the Embassy compounds and that the check takes at least three weeks.



Alumni spotlight

The Mongolian Music Scene's Greatest Asset



BIO: Lauren Knapp is a Fulbright-mtvU Fellow researching modern music in Ulaanbaatar. She arrived in Mongolia in October and will stay through the end of the summer filming and interviewing key players in Mongolia's rock and pop music scene. Lauren studied anthropology and music at Grinnell College, where she received her BA in 2006. Before coming to Mongolia, Lauren worked for The PBS NewsHour, a nightly television news program in Washington, DC, where she produced several interviews with American artists and musicians.

You can follow her research on the MTV fellows blog (<http://fulbright.mtvu.com/>) or watch some of the videos she's producing in Mongolia on her video page (www.vimeo.com/lcknapp).

I will admit, I was not sure what kind of music scene I would find when I left the United States for Ulaanbaatar late last fall. Most of my knowledge of the modern music scene was pieced together from clips I could find on YouTube and various conversations with writers or other researchers. Much has been written about Mongolia's rich music tradition, but their evolving modern scene remains fairly unknown globally.

Now that I am six months in to my ten-month long term as a Fulbright-mtvU Research Fellow, I have become fully engaged with the UB music scene: filming concerts, interviewing musicians and producers, and hanging out at band practices. I have perused record stores and been lost down the rabbit hole of Mongolian music video clips available online.

It might not come as a surprise to many to here that Mongolia's music scene isn't huge. With a population half that of my home state of Minnesota, there's limited room for expansion. But I believe this intimacy is the modern Mongolian music scene's greatest asset.

While Mongolian rock music officially started in 1971 with the founding of government-supported Soyol Erdene, it wasn't until the mid - late 1990s that the diversity of sound and genre taken for granted elsewhere really exploded. That is when all of the musical firsts began to happen: first hip-hop group, first grunge band, first alternative radio station, first amplified horse-head fiddle, the first boy band, and on and on.

It seems nearly every musician or group I meet is able to claim to be the first at something. While that's a reflection of the size and age of the modern music scene in Mongolia, it also seems to foster a sense among musicians that anything is possible. It stimulates creativity and pushes musicians to continue to make music that no one has ever made in Mongolia (and really anywhere) before.

Just this month I have had conversations with three different musicians all attempting to create something entirely new. Kush and Oyuka are working on the first jazz album to be written in Mongolian in over 15 years. Rock band Mohanik is planning an elaborate project to record their upcoming album in the countryside of several different aimags. And DLOB, a DJ who mixes traditional Mongolian music with modern beats, is bringing his performance to Khovd to exchange music and knowledge with the youth there. And that's only a sliver of the myriad ways that musicians in Ulaanbaatar are innovating.

The intimacy of the music scene has also been the source of a collaborative, rather than competitive, atmosphere. Musicians don't feel limited by their genre of choice, but are happy to work with other musicians regardless of style.

The best example of the frequency and depth of cross-genre collaboration is the recent album by pop diva Naran. She worked with over forty musicians from across the Mongolian music industry: rock legends, hip-hop artists, classical musicians, traditional instrumentalists, pop producers, almost no genre was left untouched. She acknowledged their efforts by giving them a big 'Bayarlalaa' in the CD booklet and by inviting them to perform with her when she debuted her album.

While the scale of Naran's collaboration might be unusual, it is by no means an anomaly. Last year rapper Gee and folk rock band Jonon put out an album together called "Mongolz". The two genres couldn't be more different. Gee specializes in harsh lyrics and gangsta rap while Jonon plays pleasant traditional Mongolian melodies on Mongolian instruments with drums and bass guitar. Yet the combination of the two was a huge success, and certainly something that piqued my interest as an outside observer.

Finally, it seems the small size of the music industry is creating a new desire to support uniquely Mongolian music. Having spent a decade copying Western music styles, many musicians are now recognizing the importance of their own musical heritage and trying to honor it, will still creating something new.



One of the horse head fiddlers from folk rock band Jonon told me that a crucial part of their music is to re-popularize the horse head fiddle among younger listeners. By adding drums and bass guitar, wearing trendy, colorful clothes on stage, and partnering with rapper Gee, they are making the horse head fiddle cool again.

Original folk rock band Altan Urug has been doing this for nearly a decade. The group was the first to electrify traditional Mongolian instruments and add distortion. They modified their fiddles by replacing the horse-head with a monster or alien head, to give the band a bit of edge. They are traditional, but not really. Altan Urug plays Mongolian folk songs that, if played by any other band wouldn't get youth riled up. But at a recent performance, I saw fans head-banging and jumping up and down to their music.

Among the forty collaborators on Naran's album, she told me it was important that a philological doctor and lyricist concerned with proper Mongolian language be included. Having sung in five different languages in the past, Naran told me that for this most recent album, it was important that she honor the Mongolian language.

"Now as I mature, I care more about Mongolia," she told me in an interview. "What will happen with Mongolian culture if we forget our language? What will happen with Mongolia if we don't care about our ancestor's musical heritage? So I need to incorporate that into my music so that young children will be able to relate to their home country as they grow up."

The rock band Mohanik has taken a different approach. Rather than using traditional Mongolian instruments or tunes, they have a classic rock setup and sound. Instead, they're honoring Mongolian heritage by writing songs inspired by different places in nature. "If you listen to one of our songs it's going to sound like we're playing in a cave and there are lots of echoes or reverbs... [or you will] feel free standing on top of a mountain," keyboard player Tsog explained.

The members of Mohanik talk about the Mongolian sound. Each of the five members who are in their early 20's grew up in Ulaanbaatar. Two of them studied abroad for university. Their musical inspirations are all British or American bands. Yet, they all talk about a Mongolian sound that is deeply ingrained in their musical psyche.

"We didn't plan to make these songs, we didn't plan to make a Mongolian sound," guitarist and singer Tsogt explained. It happened more on its own, and now the band is recognizing the importance of that Mongolian sound. As bassist Enerelt put it, "These sounds are coming from Mongolia and that's where we're from."

Now, as my project continues and the summer concert series heats up, I am excited to see how this small but vibrant musical community will continue to develop in a way that could only happen in Ulaanbaatar.



Original grunge band Nisvanis plays a rare acoustic set at a recent concert celebrating their 16th anniversary



Altan Urug was the first band to electrify the horse-head fiddle. They also replaced the horse head with that of a monster for a more edgy look.

A metal fan gives the classic 'rock on' signal at the recent 3rd Annual Metal Showcase



The band Jonon rehearses one of their folk rock songs



Mohanik's lead singer Dawaajargal, encourages fans to clap along to one of their hit songs, "I Wish I Had a Horse"



20 Days Visit Equals Two Years Study

For the last several years, I have been working for the Mongolian Government on the issue of Water Policy. The last 4 years were very special time for Mongolian water policy and legislation as well as for the general development of the sector.

In September 2008, when MP L. Gansukh was appointed as the Minister of Nature, Environment and Tourism, he started "Water Years of Mongolia," launching nationwide policy renovations. During these years, I worked as the Secretary General of the National Water Committee which coordinated water Policy and Legislation Renovation and developed New National "Water" Program.

One day, Ms Susan Russell with Ms. Tuul from the U.S. Embassy in Mongolia came to meet with us at the Ministry, and I discussed the New Policy on Water and renewed National "Water" Program. After our meeting Susan said to me "...you need to visit the U.S. for water issue." I said "I will be happy if there is a chance." After a month, she called to me and said she has nominated me for the IVLP program which is supported by the U.S. State Department. I gave her some information about myself and list of what we need to know and to see in U.S. And forgot about this for the next several months. In late November, I received an e mail from the U.S. Embassy in Ulaanbaatar informing me that I was selected as the First Environmental Sector IVLP visitor from Mongolia.

When I arrived in Washington, DC, on January 7, Mr. Batsaikhan (Bata) Ochirbat who was to be my English Language Officer met me at the airport and the following day took me on a tour around Washington D.C. and to its main cultural Monuments. From Monday my IVLP really started. During the orientation meeting, I learned they had planned 55 meetings plus a couple of social and cultural programs for me. To be honest, after hearing my schedule, my first thought was "how am I going to get behind this big program?" However, soon after I learned that it was needless for me to fear as with the combined help of the staff of the IV Office of the State Department, and the Meridian International Center plus my English Language Officer, the program was not only on schedule, but also actually very enjoyable and fun. During my IVLP, I met about 200 Government Officials, Water specialists, Professionals, Scientists, representatives of NGOs and Journalists. There was one unscheduled meeting which became one of the highlights of my visit: meeting with Mr. Joseph Biden - Vice President of U.S. in Philadelphia when I was participating in Martin Luther King Day event. This day is called "Day of National Service" and we went to a Secondary School where we prepared about 60,000 packages of food for people in emergency situations. Vice President Biden came to this event to give opening remarks then he walked around all the volunteers talking and shaking hands. When he saw that our section was working hardest, he came to us and started talking. When he learned that I was from Mongolia on an IV program, he was very happy and he shared with us about his visit to Mongolia



last summer. The meetings in Washington were all very impressive and useful. During those meetings, I tried to introduce about the water situation in Mongolia and study the possibility of further Cooperation in the field. During my IVLP visit, I also visited four states: Pennsylvania, Oklahoma, Montana, and Arizona. Each state was unique and different than one another and gave me an opportunity to get different information and see different practices. These four states covered four different natural zones, four special communities including Indian Tribes. It was interesting to learn that each state has its own Legislation on Water Consumption. It was equally interesting to know that the water agreement made with the Indian Tribes more than a century ago is still up-to-date today. After my visit to Philadelphia, I went to the Constitutional Memorials. There were really exciting monuments and memorials of American Constitution and the History of the development of Democracy. One could see that these monuments could really express key points and nuances of American history and democracy. My overall impression after traveling through America for three weeks was that law is strong and meaningful and all activities are guided by the constitutional values, something I wish was the same in Mongolia.

If I summarize my IVLP experience in few words, it will be ... 20 Days Visit equals 2 years Study.



SUSI Diary

June 17, 2011. Day One or Arrival

At very long last- Louisville, Kentucky, U.S.A. ... Have been waiting for this moment for some endless five months. And, now, I am here in the U.S. ... Local time says it's 2:30 in the morning. Almost twenty two hours' flight... Why am I not feeling tired? - Too excited? ... Will they meet me? - Of course, they will. They have been bombarding me with yahoo-inboxful of messages with programs, schedules, booklists and critical reviews, etc. Oh, thank this SUSI Program. I am out of all those summer jobs. No curriculum renovations, no translations, no summer tasks, nothing... Well, nearly nothing. Just read, participate and enjoy (or relax?) it here. I am a student now, not a teacher. So do as students do.



*Martin Luther King Memorial,
San Francisco*

The first American. Or a Grizzly?

Louisville Airport- the final destination. He must be the person who came to pick me up. I know this look (I used to work as a guide during my summer holidays. So I know that "searching" look). He introduced himself as Mr. Thomas Byers- the head of the Literature Department of the University of Louisville. He looks tired. He said he had met another participant from Cameroon four hours earlier- His "Royal Highness" Dr. Veyu (from Cameroon), as I like to call him because of his gesticulations and way of walking.

June 19, 2011. Academic Orientation Seminar. Met the university staff. Nice people. Too much warnings and apologies about inter-culturalism, different cultures and offensive situations! When in Rome do as Romans do, they say. We came here to experience this country. So, no more "if-"s.

Well, I'd better shut up. They are doing their jobs, after all, and doing it with perfect professional skills. With what caution! With what preparation! Everything has been thought about. Not a single thing left. I wonder how long they have been doing this job! Must be all their lives.

June 20, 2012. I'm in a good mood as usual. Not feeling home-sick yet. Have Internet chats almost every night with my wife and daughter in my room. The dormitory has got everything you need. I wish we had such facilities for students back in Mongolia. But, I hope, we'll have all these very soon.

June 21, 2011. Seminar. Only few days past. But looking at these people in the room, seems like I have known them for months. Eighteen university teachers (including me) from eighteen different countries. We ARE all teachers, after all. And teachers must be able to go along with other people. And, luckily, I haven't met anyone I dislike and I hope I wouldn't.

June 21, 2012. Had another city tour. Saw the Humana building-one of the best architectural constructions in the world. How lucky I am!

Learned a new word- gentrification- making poor places or districts rich with the help of artists, galleries and art-shops. I think, that's what we need in our capital Ulaanbaatar where everyone tries to build something close to the centre of the city not thinking about the traffic, parking space, trees and parks, etc.

June 23, 2011. Another day has passed so quickly. It's break time until 2 p.m. Hot. It is not hot, actually. It is burning hot. I should have listened to Uyanga from the U.S. Embassy in Mongolia and followed her advice. How could I know that it could be this hot. If it is this hot here in America, then how hot is it in Africa! Must check it out later. But now I really need to have something cold to drink.

Where are the people, by the way? Empty streets. And it is not just today. Yesterday it was empty too. And the day before yesterday. Are we out of the city? But the city centre was empty as well. Where do people live? Where do they work? At home? Where are those skyscrapers, busy streets and commuters are expected to see!

June 24, 2011. Lecture on Post-modernism. Very interesting. Mass media, namely TV, has played a leading role in the development of post-modernism. "Movement of modernism to the post-modernism is the movement of paranoia to schizophrenia." By Thomas Byers. Well-said, yeah?

June 25, 2011. Afternoon. Having a self-guided walking tour in the neighborhood with several other fellow participants. Again empty streets. I think I like it. Getting used to the hot weather. Nice houses. And no fences! Looks nice and clean. What are the fences for here in the city if there is nothing to hide or protect from. Houses. Modern, Victorian, wooden or brick. And a lot of space and wide streets. That's what we should have in Mongolia.



Speculation on wealth. What is material wealth? For urban settled nations and people, I think, houses would be the most valuable thing. Because they have been developing settled civilization for hundreds of years. And it is a fun to think that we, Mongolians, carry all our wealth with ourselves since we are nomadic people by nature. I think, nobody would believe me that a mobile phone number beginning with 9911-, or car plate numbers like 22-22 could cost a price of a car in Mongolia.

Looking at program calendar. At first, it seemed to me that forty-five days are too short to see and experience everything. But, now, I start to think that forty-five days are just a perfect time. Not too long and not too short. And still we have many other things to see. There are another four or five cities to visit. And what is important is that there are some dozen more writers to meet.

Plenty of things to do: Monday morning and afternoon-seminars, every day. In the evening- family visit. Informal meeting with the university staff. Another opportunity for communication. Sunday morning- Speed Art Museum. Tuesday 5 pm- Kroger superstore. 6.30-9.30 pm-Baseball game. Thursday- Visiting the Mammoth Cave- the longest cave in the world. And there are some more and more interesting people and places to see.

June 27, 2011. Bought a new camcorder and a laptop. As the hard disk of my old one is already full. And, yet, this is the beginning of the program. I needed to up-date my old camcorder and laptop anyway. Thank you, SUSI Program. Thank you, the U.S. Department, for a generous allowance which allowed me to buy all these. Buy the way, why don't they write or include the tax on the price tag!

July 5, 2011, San Francisco, California. This city seems busier than others. The main street reminds me of Oxford Street, London, with numerous multi-storey shopping centers and luxury hotels and restaurants, and, of course, the Starbucks and McDonalds chains. But the Chinatown is better and bigger, I found. Mr. Brian Leung. What a personality. A successful writer, teacher-lecturer, and what is more- a lot of fun!

July 9, 2011. Saturday. M.L. King Memorial and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Impressive. "I have a dream ..." Interesting city tour with Mr. Browning. Mural art.

July 10, 2011 Santa Fe, New Mexico. Sessions and meetings with another six well-to-do writers-professors including Evelina Galang, Steve Tomasula, Gerald Visenor, and Percival Everett.

July 20, 2011. 9:15 am. Day trip to the Underground Railroad Freedom Ctr., Cincinnati, Ohio, in connection with Toni Morrison's A Mercy.

July 25, 2012. Back to Louisville. Seems like coming back home. I like this city. Because it is the first city I saw in the US? The first impression does have a voice in choice. And the zoo. I think, better than the one in San Francisco. Because you can see animals at very close distance- just behind the glass wall.

July 30, 2012. This is it. The end of the summer program. These forty-five days have passed so fast. But, on the other hand, I feel like I have been in the U.S. for months or years. Well, at least, I can talk to my students about the U.S. with a better confidence, because I have seen and experienced everything myself. And how could the organizing staff arrange all the events and make everything so perfect.

I feel a bit tired now. But I have got another month to rest before a go back to work. And, I think, it is going to be a long month of speculation about what I have seen here in the U.S. and long nights of reading of what I haven't read from the big pile of books they gave me with the cash money to cover the postal expenses. Again very thoughtful, isn't it?

*Mr. Thomas Byers, Farewell Dinner,
University of Louisville*



Mammoth Cave-the longest in the world, Kentucky



*Certificate Reception, US State
Department*



FLTA program

Did you know that the FLTA program is one of the most rewarding programs that you will ever be awarded to do in the U.S.A.? My name is Munkhbileg Janchivdorj, I work at the University of the Humanities as an English language teacher.

In 2009, I was granted the most precious opportunity to be a part of the FLTA program as a teaching assistant at the University of Pittsburgh, Honors College. FLTA program is truly worthwhile opportunity granted to those who are interested in promoting their culture to the American students and teaching their own language, in my case Mongolian language. It has been really educational experience that helped me develop personally by being a part of the FLTA program. I would say there are a lot of things that I learned with the help of this program, all of which modified my knowledge of America, my view of the world, my personality and my skills in different areas. As for me, in many ways I was given a chance not just to teach but also to take classes that I was interested in. I chose classes for teaching methodology, linguistics and some other interesting subjects which were really beneficial for my future career as a teacher.



Got into trouble by saying to my friend that the gorillas looked like people

It was not only a chance to teach and take classes at the host University. It was also a chance to have an exposure to an English speaking country. I would like to share my very first experience talking to an American. It was when I was about to go through the customs at the Chicago O'Hare airport. The inspector was a Hispanic man and he asked me "Where are you staying?" I could not answer right away because I thought I should be very specific when I say my address. So I wasn't sure what to say and hesitated for a while. He got angry at me for not answering immediately. He quickly took my document and saw that I was doing the FLTA program and said that I should at least tell him where I would be staying. And then I said "oh, I will be in Pittsburgh." This was a really uncomfortable first experience. To make things worse, I had left my cashmere cardigan. I couldn't go back to get my cardigan because I had already passed the customs by the time I realized it. From this experience I got the impression that Americans really liked to stick to rules and that the rules are to be followed at any time. At the host University everyone would expect me to comply with the rules about what I can do and cannot do while I am in the U.S.A.. As a Mongolian, obviously my opinion of America would be blurry and disorganized. Therefore, actually going there to experience it for myself was a really great opportunity for me to understand why they do some of the things that they do, and why they say some of the things that they say to others. I learned so much from even the slightest encounters.

As I said before, my world view changed just by being able to go to America. I stayed at a house with some of the most eccentric mix of people. The shared house was located in the Jewish community. One of my roommates became my best friend because she would spend hours with me discussing everything. I would talk to her about anything and practice sharing my opinions. It was so new to me to be discussing some of the problems. I started to learn many things from those discussions. Before, I had never been able to truly accept myself as who I was, as I thought I wasn't good enough for anything.



I thought that life was not fair because everyone commented on my actions or activities and because of that I had to adapt my actions accordingly. Let me give an example to make it clear. I was told by people that I walked like a “girl” many times as I was growing up which I thought was so strange because I felt very embarrassed whenever people told this to me. As a result I would try to walk just because they told me so and tried so hard to fix myself. I always did that to change or adapt to their idea of walking properly. It was something so small, but for me it was a big problem. The most valuable thing my roommate taught me was that I shouldn't do things just because people think it was good or important and that I should not adapt myself to their comments. A person's individuality was the most precious which we should adore and cherish. Now when I look back, I miss those discussions with my roommate. I would like to emphasize her role in my life that helped me realize how I really should live.

Now I am writing about my impressions on living, working, and studying in America as a Mongolian. Living in the U.S.A. is so hard because I should always be ready for unexpected expenditures. It may look like living in America would be a dream come true. However, if you live there yourself for a longer period of time, you will really understand it. You need to be qualified to hold higher positions. Your qualifications are the most valuable thing in keeping your job. You need to keep your skills sharp to override those around you and win recognition. Studying the U.S.A. is as hard as living and working in the U.S.A. Because you are always expected to be on time and prepared for classes. The teachers have high expectations from their students. It is really nice to have a teacher expecting you to do better. Therefore, keeping up to their standards is very difficult. Everything you do should be very well thought of and prepared. By being a part of FLTA program, I came to an understanding that when abroad, I'm my culture and people see Mongolia through me.

One of the many benefits of being a part of this program is that you will be able to share your culture to totally different group of people who have no idea about Mongolia. Another good opportunity that you have is that you can do travels around the U.S.A. to see and experience the different parts. As for me, I visited the Niagara Falls and watched it with my own eyes. It was truly an experience of lifetime. I also played on slot machines to see how lucky I was. There are numerous other opportunities that you can do by going to the U.S.A. through this scholarship program.

Finally, the coordinators of this program were so organized and helpful. They are always ready to help with any problems that you might have. You will not have problems related to the FLTA program as long as you perform your duties. Overall, I would like to say that Fulbright teaching assistantship program is one of the greatest opportunities that was ever offered to Mongolians.



My two roommates, Emily and Levi in the common room



FLTAs of France, Spain, Russia, Turkish and Mongolia

U.S. Embassy in Ulaanbaatar



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AMERICAN CULTURAL AND INFORMATION CENTER

The U.S. Embassy in Ulaanbaatar supports a small American style public library known as the American Cultural and Information Center at the Ulaanbaatar City Public Library. The Center's main goal is improvement of mutual understanding between the people of the United States and Mongolia. Each Center contains reference works, periodicals, and a circulating book collection.

Free on-line reference searching and e-mail access enhance the ability of the Center to provide the most up-to-date information to their patrons. Events at the ACIC for wide audiences give first-hand exposure to American culture, as well as provide opportunities to meet native English speakers and American speakers on various topics. American Centers are often used by USG alumni as venues for their meetings and events.

http://mongolia.usembassy.gov/american_cultural_information_center3.html

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/American-Corner-Ulaanbaatar/162640348874>

"Let's Talk About America" lecture series

Every Thursday at 4pm the ACIC holds an English lecture for the public on a variety of topics. The speakers usually include U.S. Embassy officers or American citizens who are working in Mongolia. These lectures grant the participants an opportunity to deepen their understanding about the history, culture, art and nature of America and improve their language skills. (Please note that this program runs from September until the end of June with a break in January.)

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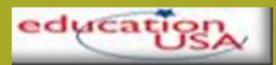
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