



# AMERICAN CENTER NEWSLETTER

The American Center, 44 Galle Road, Colombo 3

Telephone: 2498100 Telefax: 2498101

Email: amcentersl@state.gov



**American Center**

**Colombo**

**April – May 2014**

## CONTENTS

### Page 2

- Earth Day Celebrations

### Page 3

- Poetry Slam Season XVII
- U.S. Education Fair
- Training for English Teachers

### Page 4

- YMMA Workshop
- Cricket Tournament in Kandy

### Page 5

- DynEd Awards Ceremony
- English Enrichment Course
- 2014 Youth Empowerment Grants

### Page 6

- Uniting Communities
- "Learn About America" Essay Winners

### Page 7

- Storytelling Program

### Page 8

- Ace Your Next Interview
- Access Graduation Day

### Page 9

- English Enrichment Course in Matara

### Page 10 - Fulbright Awards

### Page 11 - Photography Competition

## Empowering Women and Girls through Sports



Ambassador Sison introducing NBA players to Sarath Ekanayaka, President of the SL Basketball Federation and Chief Minister of the Central Province. Christopher Teal, Public Affairs Officer of the U.S. Embassy looks on.

Retired professional NBA players Tamika Williams, Edna Campbell and Manager Rebecca Bonner toured Sri Lanka under the "Sports Envoy" program, conducting coaching sessions focused on empowering women and girls through sports, April 20-25, 2014.

In Matara they conducted a clinic at Sujatha Balika Vidyalaya for secondary school girls. In Colombo,

they held basketball training sessions at the Royal College Sports Complex for the Women's National Team, coaches, national pool (under 18 years) and secondary school girls.

The power of sports can positively influence the lives of girls and women, help to build confidence and a healthy outlook on life. In the training sessions, female athletes learned new sports skills, leadership and teamwork. The Embassy partnered with the Sri Lanka Basketball Federation and the Royal College Sports Complex to offer this sports diplomacy program.

*(More photographs on page 9)*

## Upcoming Events . . . . .

### "Life Without Love"



The American Center in Colombo is currently holding an art exhibition featuring the work of Nihal Senarathna. The exhibition runs until June 20, 2014.

### May 24, 2014, 2:30 pm

Monthly storytelling program at the American Center. Call 011 2498128 or 011 2498169 for more details.

### May 27, 2014, 2:30 pm

Public Lecture on "How to Ace Your Next Interview" at Navalar Cultural Hall, Nallur, Jaffna. Call 021 2220665 for more details.

### May 27, 2014, 6:00 pm

Free screening of the movie "State of Play" at the American Center Auditorium.

### May 29, 2014, 3:00 pm

Open Mic Competitive Poetry Slam (Season XVII) will be held at the American Center Auditorium. Call 011 249 8128 to get more details.

**Week-end Movies in May. Every Saturday at 3:30 pm @ the American Center Auditorium.**

May 24: The Goonies  
May 31: Kung Fu Panda

Call 011 2498146 or 011 2498169 for more details.

## Celebrating Earth Day



Earth Day Ambassadors at the American Center in Colombo.

On April 22, 2014 sixty girls from the Sri Lanka Girl Guides Association met at the American Corners in Colombo, Kandy and Jaffna to celebrate Earth Day with Ambassador Sison. Along with being selected 'Earth Day Ambassadors' by the Girl Guides chapters in Jaffna, Kandy and Colombo, they participated in a "Green Cities Rating" activity, based on a score card designed by the Carbon Consulting Company. Ambassador Sison congratulated the Earth Ambassadors and said 'Every day is Earth Day; we all have the responsibility to do our part and keep this planet in good shape'. Each team presented their findings via video conference to Colombo, Kandy and Jaffna, and Sanith Dias Wijeratne, Chief Operating Officer of Carbon Consulting facilitated the discussion and advised on an action plan.



Earth Day Ambassadors at the American Corner in Jaffna.

Shalika Abeygunasekara, World Board Member of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts World Association spoke

on the relevance of such an Earth Day program, and Krishmal Warnasuriya, lawyer/activist on environmental issues spoke about the role children can take on in being accountable for environmental justice. The Earth Day Ambassadors will be supported by the American Corners in their future efforts to promote Green Cities in Sri Lanka.



Earth Day Ambassadors at the American Corner in Kandy.

Another event was held on April 23, 2014, at the American Corner in Jaffna to celebrate Earth Day 2014. More than twenty students participated in a workshop called "3Rs: reduction, reuse and recycle" in an aim to promote Green Cities. Sinthuka Vivekananthan, the AC Coordinator, briefed the participants on the importance of Earth Day, and how to promote green building through the 3Rs concept. During the workshop, the participants made flowers, greeting cards, pen holders, and other decorative items out of waste materials with the help of Antony Bantsa Anoja, the program facilitator. The program showed a team effort among all participants to make handicraft items from recycled waste material. Participants included school students and underprivileged children in Jaffna. In all, the program was a great opportunity to build awareness among young participants in how to promote green cities.

*Continued on page 7*

## Open Mic Competitive Poetry Slam - Season XVI



Poets from the junior category.

Poetry Slam - Season XVI was a huge hit at the American Center on March 31, 2014. Twenty-four poets shared their original works and enthralled the audience with their performances reminiscent of open-mic poetry slams in the United States. Cultural Affairs Officer Dawn Suni emceed the event. Winners and runners-up received free lifetime memberships to the American Center Library in Colombo and to American Corners in Kandy and Jaffna. The American Center will continue to serve as a platform for talented Sri Lankans to express themselves freely and creatively by hosting an ongoing series of poetry slam competitions every other month. Youth are encouraged to participate. The American Center will hold the next Poetry Slam - Season XVII on May 29, 2014. (More photographs available on our facebook page: [www.facebook.com/Colombo.usembassy](http://www.facebook.com/Colombo.usembassy))

## U.S. Education Fair at the American Corner in Kandy

On March 25, 2014, American Corner Kandy, in collaboration with US-SL Fulbright Commission, hosted a U.S. Education Fair at the AC Kandy. At the education fair counseling desk, Ms. Edna Selvanayagam, EducationUSA Advisor of US-SL Fulbright Commission, provided in-depth information to students about higher education opportunities in the United States. Representatives from Fairleigh Dickinson, Monroe College, New York University School of Engineering, Truman State University and University of Buffalo provided information about their respective universities, courses and scholarship programs to the visitors.

Many college and university students, parents, teachers and the general public visited the education fair and expressed their gratitude to the

American Corner and US-SLFC for hosting the education fair.



Selvanayagam and American University representatives providing information on education opportunities at the Counseling Desks.

## Training for English Language Teachers



Effective classroom management and student-centered classrooms encourage learners to participate and improve student outcomes. Teachers eagerly practiced interactive learning strategies when English Language Fellow Carol Marsh conducted training workshops for government teachers and university lecturers at South Eastern University, April 28-30, 2014.

The Embassy conducts training for English language teachers and English courses for youth across Sri Lanka.

## U.S. Embassy Collaborates with YMMA on Youth Development



Ice-breaking session at the workshop.

On Sunday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014, U.S. Embassy Colombo, in collaboration with the All Ceylon Young Men's Muslim Association Conference (YMMA), organized a workshop in Colombo on "Challenges and Opportunities" for 36 undergraduates from across

the island. This three-day residential workshop focused on personal and community empowerment, youth development and inspired the participants to use their beliefs as a path to personal, professional, and community success. This workshop worked to enhance reconciliation efforts by helping empower these youth to be positive forces for growth, change, and development in Sri Lanka. Hon. Palitha Fernando, President's Counsel and Attorney General, was the chief guest at the opening ceremony while Mr. Christopher Teal, the director of the American Center was the guest of honor. On May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014, Ambassador Michele J. Sison was the chief guest at the closing ceremony, and awarded certificates to participants.

Ambassador Sison congratulated the youth participants and urged the group to continue their work to foster tolerance in a multiethnic society and to view diversity as strength for Sri Lanka.

## Sports Diplomacy: Cricket Tournament with American Corner Kandy and Jaffna Teams

On April 5, 2014, Ambassador Michele Sison hosted the 1st Ambassador's Cup Cricket Tournament, bringing together teams from the American Corner Youth Forum in Kandy and Jaffna. This six-aside tournament was held in Gatembe Ground, Kandy, with the Jaffna A-Team emerging as the winner to claim the Ambassador's Trophy, while the Kandy A-Team claimed the Runners-up shield. In her remarks, Ambassador Sison noted that sports promotes the spirit of unity among Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim youth. All teams members were presented with cricket bats by the Ambassador and were awarded certificates at the end of the tournament. The Jaffna team presented the Ambassador and the Kandy team with Palmyra hats as a token of friendship. Kandy Mayor, the Hon. Mahendra Ratwatte, joined to hand out the awards and cheer on the teams.



Presentation of the Ambassador's Cup to the winners, Jaffna A-Team by Ambassador Sison and Kandy Mayor, Mahendra Ratwatte.



Join the U.S. Embassy facebook page with more than 97,000 fans and counting...

<http://www.facebook.com/Colombo.USembassy>

## DynEd Awards Ceremony



Students, teachers and DynEd consultant with Christopher Teal.

On April 28, students from the 'Fathima Welfare Centre' who completed the DynEd online English course were awarded certificates of completion by Director of the American Center Christopher

Teal. This is the 3rd batch of students who benefited from the DynEd computer-based English course which was conducted at the American Center during the past six-months. The teachers were trained by the Headway School of Languages, who monitored and guided the students to achieve a higher-level of English knowledge and confidence in communication skills. The students performed a skit and talked about their English learning experience through DynEd which had helped them attain a higher level of English skills.

The students expressed their interest in continuing to use the resources available at the American Center to enhance their knowledge of English and participation in future programs.

## Award Ceremony - English Enrichment Course in Kandy

Ambassador Sison was the chief guest at the awards ceremony for the English Enrichment Scholarship Course for A'Level students, held in the Children's Library Auditorium in Kandy on April 4, 2014. The students shared their classroom-experience and thanked the Embassy and their teacher for her stimulating and practical teaching methods; then they impressed the audience by performing a skit on the importance of English. The Ambassador stated in her remarks that she was proud that they have achieved their goal of being able to converse fluently in English. This is the graduation of the first class in Kandy for the 2013-2014 year. This 4-month course is conducted free of charge for students mainly from low-income families, providing them an opportunity to improve

their English knowledge prior to following higher studies. A total 90 students will complete the course in Kandy by the end of 2014.



A student receiving his certificate from Ambassador Sison.

## US Embassy Announces Grants Program to Support Youth in Sri Lanka

The U.S. Embassy in Colombo is proud to announce the 2014 Youth Empowerment Grants Program to fund projects for Sri Lankan youth. The main objective of the grant program is to support innovative, small-scale, cutting-edge projects developed and implemented by and/or for young people between the ages of 15-25 in the areas of educational development, environment issues, community development, civil society building, human rights, youth enrichment activities, health and human services and employability. The competition is open to Non-Governmental Organizations registered in Sri Lanka.

Application forms are available on the Embassy website: <http://srilanka.usembassy.gov/yeg2014.html>.

Please e-mail your completed proposal to [AmCenterSL@state.gov](mailto:AmCenterSL@state.gov) on or before May 31, 2014.

## Uniting Communities through English, Sports, and Youth Development



During the cooking demonstration.

Students from the Embassy's English Access Micro Scholarship programs in Mullaitivu and Beruwela joined together April 28th at the Henry Pedris grounds for a fun filled basketball session with Embassy staff, followed by a teambuilding and leadership challenge. The students had a bit of friendly competition on the court, creating new friendships between their Southern and Northern communities. The students then visited Jetwing Sea in Negombo to learn about job opportunities in the hotel industry. The Jetwing General Manager and staff warmly welcomed the students and treated them to a cooking demonstration and treats, a tour and presentation on hotel operations, and sneak peeks into a deluxe suite and the spa.

## U. S. Embassy Celebrates "Learn About America" Essay Winners

On May 9, 2014, the winning essayists in the "Learn About America" Essay Competition (held by the Junior Observer in conjunction with the American Center) received their awards at the American Center in Colombo. There were two categories: ages 12-15, and ages 16-18. The essay topics focused on Role of Youth in society and Dr. Martin Luther King. The winning essays were

published in the Junior Observer during the months of September-December 2013 and January-March 2014. Mr. Christopher Teal, Public Affairs Officer, made the welcome speech and presented the awards to the winners.

The winners, together with their parents, family members, some school principals, were present at this event. Winners will be highlighted in an upcoming issue of the Junior Observer.



Winners of the Essay Competition held during September-December 2013

From Left to Right: M. I. Mumthaj, Mehendran Dhakshi, M. F. Kadheeja Wizam, Mr. Christopher Teal, Rushda Najeeb; Asna Ashraf and T Aarthiepan



Winners of the Essay Competition on Dr. Martin Luther King held during January-March 2014

From Left to Right: K. D. Merian Sherika Tiuni; Praveen De Silva; Samalya Wedaarachchi; Mr. Christopher Teal, Sathana Mahesan; Amaniyah Fathima Fazal and Sucharith Vichakshana Kirige

## Celebrating Earth Day . . . . From page 2



Students making hand crafts out of recycling waste material at the workshop held in AC Jaffna.

On April 22, in celebration of "Earth Day", the American Center Colombo organized a public lecture and workshop for its young environmental club members at the American Center auditorium. Mr. Vimukthi Weeratunga, a well-known environmentalist, made a presentation to young environmental club members to create awareness of such threats as environmental pollution, harms on fauna and flora etc. Separately, Mr. Pubudu Weerarathna conducted a workshop for kids. The members designed greeting cards from natural resources. The members participated in the program with great enthusiasm and have decided to meet again to celebrate World Environment Day on June 5th.



Mr. Vimukthi Weeratunga talks to environmental club members at the American Center, Colombo.



Children designing greeting cards during the workshop.

## IRC Colombo promotes Reading among Young Children

With the main objective of developing a taste for reading in young adults and strengthening their reading skills, the American Center library has been conducting a monthly reading club named "Readers Are Leaders" since January 2010.

Several American Officers attached to U. S. Embassy Colombo and their family members and volunteers from Asia Foundation read to children at the reading clubs. The April 2014 reading club was held on April 26 at the American Center Colombo. This time "Behind Enemy Lines – True Stories of Amazing Courage" story was read by Patty DeRousse for children of 11-15 age group, while Chatrini Weerathunga read "Max Goes to the Moon" for children of 6-10 age group.



Patty DeRousse reads to children from *Behind Enemy Lines – True Stories of Amazing Courage*

Continued on page 11

## Workshop on "Ace Your Next Interview"



Section of the large audience in Kandy attentively listening to Mr. Rodrigo.

On April 29, 2014, the American Corner Kandy hosted a workshop on "Ace your next interview" by Sunesh Rodrigo, a corporate trainer, consultant, lecturer and a renowned public speaker. The workshop was sponsored by the U.S. Embassy with a grant provided to Mr. Sunesh Rodrigo. The project was aimed at assisting youth in designing effective curriculum vitae, clear cover letters and helping them confidently face interviews. Over 60 youths attended this workshop, including students from universities, high schools, institutions and technical colleges. Afterwards, there was a Q&A session, and many participants commented how helpful the program was, and requested the American Corner organize similar programs.

## Workshop for English Teachers at American Corner Kandy

On April 22, 2014, the American Corner Kandy hosted a workshop on "Student-centered learning" for English teachers by Carol Marsh, an English Language Fellow. This workshop helped participants gain skills in different types of teaching methods, activities and language games that can be practiced in classrooms, including positive and negative facts in different teaching methods. At the end, Ms. Marsh had discussions with the teachers about difficulties and challenges they face in their careers, and advised them how to overcome these issues.



Participants listened attentively to Ms. Marsh's presentation at the American Corner.

## Graduation Day for Access Students from Beruwela and Mullativu



Students singing the welcome song.

Ninety-three students from the Embassy's English Access Micro Scholarship programs in Mullaitivu and Beruwela celebrated their graduation together on April 28th. The students, accompanied by parents and teachers from both centers, collaborated on a joint ceremony held in Colombo to mark the successful completion of the 21-month course. Students impressed the crowd with their drama skits and songs in English and their performances of traditional Pooja and Bharata Navaratnam dances. Cultural Affairs Officer Dawn Suni awarded certificates and congratulated the students on their accomplishment, highlighting how they were using English as a bridge language between their communities and creating a united Sri Lanka. The students capped off the day with a visit to the Colombo Port, where they got a glimpse of ships being repaired and built in the dockyard. The highlight of the day was the chance to go onboard SLNS "Sayura".

## English Enrichment Course in Matara



Over 300 students participated in the selection test for the English Enrichment Course in Matara.

On May 11, 2014, over 300 students participated in a selection test at the MR/ Manthinda Pirivena in Matara for the English Enrichment Course being conducted by Samadhi Community Development Foundation in conjunction with the American Center. 50 students will be eligible for scholarships to follow the English Enrichment Course with an English tutor/lecturer from Ruhuna University. This 4-month course is for students from low-income families, and provides them with the opportunity enhance their English language skills as they prepare for higher studies and better job prospects.

Once this course is completed, another batch of 50 students will be sponsored by the American Center for a similar course to be conducted by the Samadhi Foundation.

## Empowering Women and Girls . . . . .

*From page 1*



The women on the Sri Lankan National Basketball Team during a practice session.



Ambassador Sison, sports envoys from the U.S. and the Samadhi Foundation teamed up to make a donation of books and basketball equipment to Anura Vidyalaya in Matara.



Envoys Tamika Williams, Edna Campbell, and Rebecca Bonner conducted training programs to empower women and girls.



The U.S. Embassy kicked started its basketball sports envoy program at the Sujatha Balika Vidyalaya, Matara on April 21.

## Fulbright Awards for 2015-16

### Fulbright Master's Student Awards for 2015-'16

The US-SLFC invites applications from qualified candidates for the Fulbright Student Program for the academic year 2015 - 2016 in the following disciplines:

- Social Sciences & Humanities
- Physical Sciences
- Biological Sciences
- Architecture and Engineering
- Commerce and Management Studies.

The awards are intended to assist a limited number of scholars, selected for their academic excellence, to do their post-graduate (master's level only) study in American universities.

Graduates who have not had extensive prior exposure to the United States are encouraged to apply.

#### Eligibility:

- Be a Sri Lankan citizen and have continuously resided in Sri Lanka for a minimum of 2 years up to the time of applying for this award.
- Possess a 4-year bachelor's degree from a Sri Lankan university. Those with degrees from non-Sri Lankan universities are welcome to apply provided they possess the equivalent of a 4-year Sri Lankan degree. Applicants with 3-year degrees from Sri Lanka and India are required to possess a relevant post-graduate qualification (for example, a post-graduate diploma in a relevant subject).
- Be committed to reside in Sri Lanka upon completion of the

- award for a minimum of 2 years.
- Possess, at a minimum, 1 year of post-qualifying experience in the proposed field of study.
- Be below the age of 35 years on the 1st of October, 2014.

*Deadline: 30th of July 2014*

### Fulbright Professional Scholar Awards for 2015-16

The US-SL Fulbright Commission invites applications from Sri Lankan professionals in the humanities, fine/performing arts such as music, theatre, writing, painting, design, photography, sports, journalism, law, sciences, paramedical services and business. They will provide grantees an opportunity to gain exposure (through a project developed by the grantee) to the latest advancements in their respective fields of work in the U.S. The awards aim to provide an opportunity to collaborate with U.S. counterparts, forge links between local and U.S. professionals, build lasting ties through their collaborations, and share the experience and learning gained in the U.S. with local counterparts.

#### Eligibility:

- Be a Sri Lankan citizen and have continuously resided in Sri Lanka for a minimum of 2 years up to the time of applying for this award.
- Demonstrate aptitude and accomplishment in the field thorough professional involvement, awards received, achievements or output.
- Have a minimum of 5 years of

experience in the area.

- Demonstrate commitment to developing this field in Sri Lanka and sharing knowledge with counterparts and the public in Sri Lanka.
- Possess a letter of invitation from a host institution in the U.S.

*Deadline: 01st of October 2014*

### Fulbright Advanced Research and Lecturing Awards 2015-'16

The US-SLFC invites applications from Sri Lankan scholars who wish to pursue postdoctoral research and/or lecturing at a U.S. university or research institution.

#### Eligibility:

- Be a Sri Lankan citizen and have continuously resided in Sri Lanka for a minimum of two years up to the time of applying for this award.
- Possess a PhD from a recognised university.
- Demonstrate a clear rationale for conducting the proposed research/ teaching in the U.S.
- While applicants from all disciplines will be considered, preference will be given to candidates in the fields of humanities and social sciences.
- Age: The age limit in force hitherto is waived. However, all things being equal, an applicant who is near retirement would not be as strong as one who is several years away.
- Possess a letter of invitation from a host institution in the U.S.

*Deadline: 01st of October 2014*

For more details on above notice visit: [www.fulbrightsrilanka.com](http://www.fulbrightsrilanka.com), or contact:  
United States - Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission,  
No.55, Abdul Caffoor Mawatha, Colombo 3  
Tel: 011 2564176 Email: [inquiries@fulbrightsrilanka.com](mailto:inquiries@fulbrightsrilanka.com)

## Monthly Photography Competition



The Information Resource Center of the U.S. Embassy Colombo conducts a monthly photography competition for school children between 12-18 years of age. Winning entries will show creativity, skill, and an ability to select a

subject based on the monthly theme. Both electronic and hard copies of photographs will be accepted. First, second and third place awards will be given in the following age categories:

- 12-14 years
- 15-16 years and
- 17-18 years

### Photography Competition – April-June 2014

Submit photographs on the theme "Beauty and Serenity of Nature" for April-June 2014 photography contest. Along with the photograph, entries must include a brief explanation of the subject and why it was selected. Please send your photograph along with the coupon given in Junior Observer of the Sunday Observer with your details certified by your school principal or the class teacher to the below address.

April/June 2014 photography Competition  
 American Center  
 44, Galle Road  
 Colombo 03

You may send your photograph electronically to the email address [amcentersl@state.gov](mailto:amcentersl@state.gov). Please

include in the e-mail your Name, Age, Contact Details, School and Name of the School Principal. Our panel of judges will assess all entries and then select first, second and third place photographs for each age category. All winners will receive a collection of American literature, a life time membership to the American Center Library and a certificate signed by the U. S. Ambassador. Winners will be invited to attend an award ceremony at the American Center in Colombo.

### Rules and Conditions

1. Submitted electronic images must be no larger than 1024 pixels width & 720 pixels in height and are not to exceed 500kb in size.
2. Photographs can be either black and white or color.
3. If sending printed photographs, the size should be at least 4"x 6".
4. All entries must be submitted on or before July 3, 2014.
5. You may only enter a maximum of 3 photographs into the competition.
6. Please do not post any photographs that are obscene, discriminatory, or which otherwise violate any local or international laws.
7. The photographer must be the sole author and owner of the photos entered in to the competition.
8. By entering this contest the photographer agrees that any winning photograph submitted may be used by the American Center/U.S. Embassy Colombo solely for the purposes of this competition or future contests and no other purpose. These uses include: displaying the entries in the American Center lobby, on the official website, Facebook, and cropping and re-sizing the image as necessary to fit pre-defined formats for the competition.

## Storytelling . . . . .

Children were invited to share their reading experiences during the reading hour as well.

Parents and members of the reading club both greatly enjoy the reading club; not only is it a chance to hear a native English speaker read in their mother tongue, but it also offers the benefit of having all members in the same room, which makes for a much more personal and intimate experience.

*From page 7*



A volunteer from Asia Foundation reads from *Max Goes to the Moon*.