



# AMERICAN CENTER NEWSLETTER

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American Center

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## Ambassador Sison Opens American Center's Children's Corner



Ambassador Sison cut the ribbon with kids and opened the Children's Corner.

On October 1, 2013, U.S. Ambassador Michele J. Sison opened the American Center's Children's Corner, in part to commemorate World Children's Day 2013.

Children from varied backgrounds were present at the event and had the opportunity to enjoy face painting, a thrilling magic show, receive balloon gifts and participate in several storytelling activities. Ambassador Sison introduced the children to the facilities at the bright and cozy new Children's Corner, and read *A Cat in the HAT* by Dr Seuss. In addition to the Ambassador's storytelling, two embassy staff-Lisa Hekel and Patty De Rousse-read stories as well. The children who attended were gifted books and pens, and were encouraged to visit the new Children's Corner to make the most of the activities such as bi-monthly book readings, film screenings, and

more.

*More photos on page 6*



## "Shades of Living Wilds"

The American Center in Colombo is currently holding an art exhibition featuring the work of Sujeewa Chandana and Indu Jayasooriya. The exhibition is now open to the public and will run until the end of December. Entrance is free!

## Upcoming Events . . . . .

### December 2, 2013, 5:30 pm

The American Center will commemorate *16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence* by screening an award winning documentary film 'Saving Face' followed by a panel discussion.

### November 25, 2013, 4:00 pm

The American Center will host a web-chat

on "Internet Entrepreneurship with Ambassador Matthew Barzun".

### November 23, 2013, 2:30 pm

Monthly storytelling program at the American Center Auditorium. The story 'A Christmas Carol' will be read by a storyteller.

### November 29, 2013

A workshop on "Mind and Motion" will be held at the US-Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission Auditorium. Call 011 2564176 for more details.

For more details on any program please visit our facebook page: [www.facebook.com/usembassycolombosl](http://www.facebook.com/usembassycolombosl) or call 011 2498100.

## Panel Discussion on *Write to Reconcile* Anthology



Nifraas Rifaz giving an insight into his experience, working with other young writers from different ethnicities.

On September 24, 2013 the American Center hosted a panel discussion with young writers from the 'Write to Reconcile Anthology', a project sponsored by the U.S. Embassy and Royal

Norwegian Embassy in partnership with National Peace Council and with internationally renowned author Shyam Selvadurai, who served as the Project Director. The writers, Vindhya Buthpitiya, Nifraz Rifaz, Saambavi Sivaji, and Sonali Wanigabaduge shared their experiences during this 11-month project which culminated in the anthology, and read excerpts from their writings.

Cultural Affairs Officer Dawn Suni introduced the panelists and led an interactive Q&A session; the enthusiastic audience expressed interest in the anthology and suggested it be translated into Sinhala and Tamil for wider reach.

Among the participants were university students, academics, journalists, youth activists and the public.

## Volunteerism: Virtual Q&A

On September 12, American Center Colombo hosted a Q&A web discussion chat about volunteerism with Omowale Ogunrinde, Executive Director of Foundation for Skills Development in Nigeria, and Korvi Rakshand, Founder of the JAAGO Foundation in Bangladesh. U.S. Speaker Allison Shapira, founder of Global Public Speaking, moderated the discussion.

Ms. Ogunrinde and Mr. Rakshand engaged with an audience of over 450 participants from 34 countries, including Sri Lanka. Drawing from their past experiences, they described volunteerism challenges and provided a sense of hope before opening the discussion up for questions. Audience members were curious about how they might get involved in their communities, volunteerism in impoverished countries, and best methods of retaining skilled volunteers.

In Colombo, the audience shared their experience and challenges as volunteers, and after the web chat, networked with other volunteers.



Cultural Affairs Officer, Dawn Suni moderating the web chat in Colombo.



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<http://www.facebook.com/usembassycolombosl>

## DynEd Awards Ceremony



Students and Principal of *Gokulam Children's Home* with Ambassador Sison.

On September 30, Ambassador Michele Sison met and awarded online English course certificates to a group of students from Gokulam-Bhaktivedanta Children's Home; these students recently completed the DynEd online English course. With the help of teachers from the Headway School of Languages, students participated in this six-month computer-based English course, and got the opportunity to further develop their English language skills + grow their confidence in communicating in the language.

To the delight of the Ambassador, the students demonstrated their communication skills by performing skits, and enthusiastically expressed interest in continuing to participate in English-language based programs at the American Center.

## Embassy Officials Visit Access Center in Beruwela

On September 18, Public Affairs Officer Christopher Teal and Office Management Specialist Kam Wong of the U.S. Embassy Colombo visited the Access center in Beruwela. Mr. Teal met the students and their teachers, and talked about the benefits of the English Access Program, and the importance of learning English. Afterwards, everyone participated in an English-language activity. The students were also given an opportunity to talk about the different teaching methods and the benefits of the program from their perspective.



U.S. Embassy officials posed for a photo with Beruwela Access center students.

## Access Center Students in Beruwela Conduct Beach Clean-up Program



The U.S. Embassy's Beruwela Access Center organized a beach clean-up at the Aluthgama beach on September 19, 2013. The Access students designed and put up awareness posters around the community in the run up to the clean-up, to attract the local community's contribution to maintaining a cleaner beach for everyone to enjoy. Many students came together and participated in the all-day clean-up effort, with the support of the local Police as well. The Access program is an Embassy sponsored English micro-scholarship program which teaches English to disadvantaged students.

There are 12 Access centers operating island-wide successfully.

## “Connecting the Dots” Photo Exhibition goes to Kandy and Jaffna

On September 13, the American Corner in Kandy launched “Connecting the Dots: Celebrating the Beauty in Sri Lanka’s Diversity” - an exhibition of photographs by Chris Elms, former Press and Information Officer of the U.S. Embassy Colombo. Mrs. Muwandeniya, Acting Librarian of the D.S. Senanayake Public Library opened the photo exhibition, which was attended by Youth Club members and patrons of the American Corner, university students and the public.



Mrs. Muwandeniya, Acting Librarian of the D.S. Senanayake Public Library opened the photo exhibition held in Kandy.

The exhibition was held in Kandy until October 13<sup>th</sup> at the American Corner.

The American Corner in Jaffna launched the exhibition for the public on September 25, with the participation of Dr (Mrs.) G. Bavani, Gynecologist and President of the Jaffna Social Action Center as the chief guest. Event attendees included American Corner Youth Club members, English course students, university students, academics and the public. The exhibition was held until October 24<sup>th</sup> at the American Corner.



Many people visited the exhibition held in Jaffna.

## U.S. Embassy participating in the *Adyapana* Education and Career Exhibition



The U.S. Embassy Colombo, in collaboration with US-Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission, participated in the *Adyapana* exhibition from October 4 – 6, 2013 at the BMICH. Many school and university students, young professionals, teachers and the public visited the Embassy stall to gain understanding on higher

education opportunities in the US. Cultural Affairs Officer Dawn Suni and US-SL Fulbright staff were on hand to explain the process of applying to universities and colleges in the U.S., and distributed brochures to students interested in higher education.

This was also an opportunity to promote American Center activities to many youth who visited the stall.



## Discussion on American Literature at the University of Sri Jayawardenepura



Mr. Christopher Teal was introduced by Ms. Deepthi Siriwardana, lecturer, English Department.

On November 1, 2013, Mr. Christopher Teal, Director of the American Center, was invited by the University of Sri Jayawardenepura to deliver a talk on "American Literature" to third year students in the English Department.

Mr. Teal's talk covered 19th century literature to modern literature, and he discussed satirical writings highlighting racial issues which had an impact on American society, much to the interest of the students. He donated books and DVDs on writing skills for student use and encouraged them to visit the American Center library for resources that would help them in their research and study of American Literature.

## Access Students Celebrate Halloween

The U.S. Embassy's English Access Microscholarship Program in Tangalle recently celebrated Halloween so the teenagers could learn about this popular holiday in the United States. The students were tasked with designing their own masks which they wore for the Halloween party. As proof that kids around the world have a lot in common, being treated to candy was their favorite part of the celebration.

Over 600 students across Sri Lanka receive free English language classes through the Access Program.



## Panel discussion on *Write to Reconcile Anthology* in Jaffna



Canista Arthie Denicius, Pathum Punchihewa, Lavanya Paramanathan, and Sarmatha Santhirasegaram, shared their experiences.

On October 29, 2013 the American Corner Jaffna hosted a panel discussion with young writers from the 'Write to Reconcile Anthology' moderated by Mr. Christopher Teal, Director of the American Center. The writers, Canista Arthie Denicius, Pathum Punchihewa, Lavanya Paramanathan, and Sarmatha Santhirasegaram, shared their experience during this 11-month project which culminated in the anthology. They read excerpts from their writings after briefly introducing the main character. Mr. Teal introduced the panelists and led an interactive Q&A session engaging the audience.

Many in the audience requested the book, which can be downloaded for free via:  
<http://www.writetoreconcile.com/index.php>

## Photos from American Center's Children's Corner opening . . .



The children had a fun time.  
Some kids got to participate in magic show.



Ambassador Sison talks to kids who came for the opening.

## Winners of the Photography Competition

Winners of the photography competition held in June-August on the theme "Celebrate World Environment Day".

### 12-14 years

1st place: A. M. Thilina Alagiyawanna  
Richmonda College, Galle

2nd Place: T. Aarthiepan  
Eastern International College, Batticaloa

3rd Place: S. Sajith Madushanka  
Sri Vimalabudhdhi Maha Vidyalyaya, Seenigama

### 15-16 years

1st Place: Anagi Shakya Kottahachchi  
Devi Balika Vidyalyaya, Colombo

2nd Place: Shenal Anthony Fernando  
St. Joseph's College, Colombo

3rd Place: Tilan Perera  
St. Joseph's College, Colombo

### 17-18 years

1st Place: Supun Wijenayake  
Not mentioned

2nd Place: Shabnam Muhseen  
Loyal Ladies College, Polgolla

3rd Place: Sachin Kaveesha Fernando  
Lyceum International School, Panadura

## Embassy Speakers Program at Al Arafat Muslim MV, Moratuwa



Mr. Hoover interacts with the students as part of English language conversation.

On October 29th, 2013 Mr. Gerald Hoover, Deputy Executive of USAID, was invited as a guest speaker by Al Arafat Muslim MV school in Moratuwa to conduct 'English Language Conversation' to improve English communication skills among the students. Over 60 students - both boys and girls from grade 8 to 13 - attended the event and engaged in conversation with Mr. Hoover. The students enjoyed the interactive session conducted in English, which included indoor games to make it lively. They received information leaflets on eLibraryUSA and American Center brochures at the end of the event. A set of books were also donated for the school library. This is a regular monthly event conducted by the U.S. Embassy at the invitation of a school to engage with students in English and provide an American experience by a diplomat who volunteers his or her time.

## USAID Celebrates Birthday

On November 1, The US Agency for International Development celebrated its 52nd birthday. For more than 50 years, USAID assistance has been at work, helping Sri Lankans build better lives.



USAID introduced hand-operated water pumps to rural communities in the 1980s.



Women and children benefited from USAID funded food supplements and feeding programs in the 1970s.



USAID funded reconstruction of the Arugam Bay Bridge after tsunami.



Local farmers received good quality fertilizer from USAID to improve their yields in the 1960s.



USAID is addressing needs of resettling communities.

## Film Screenings at the American Center

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### December 2013 (Theme: Overcoming Disability)

#### **December 3 - Beyond Silence** (109 minutes)

Acclaimed by critics and audiences everywhere, *Beyond Silence* is the powerful story of a young woman's battle for independence and her deaf parents' struggle to understand her gift for music. Given a clarinet by her free-spirited aunt, Lara is immediately consumed by a new passion her parents cannot begin to fully comprehend. Determined to follow her dreams, Lara's ongoing pursuit of music creates an ever-widening rift that eventually threatens to tear apart her once close-knit family.

#### **December 10 - A Beautiful Mind** (136 minutes)

*A Beautiful Mind* manages to twist enough pathos out of John Nash's incredible life story to redeem an at-times goofy portrayal of schizophrenia. Russell Crowe tackles the role with characteristic fervor, playing the Nobel prize-winning mathematician from his days at Princeton, where he developed a groundbreaking economic theory, to his meteoric rise to the cover of Forbes magazine and an MIT professorship, and on through to his eventual dismissal due to schizophrenic delusions. Of course, it is the delusions that fascinate director Ron Howard and, predictably, go astray. Nash's other world, populated as it is by a maniacal Department of Defense agent (Ed Harris), an imagined college roommate who seems straight out of Dead Poets Society, and an orphaned girl, is so fluid and script like as to make the viewer wonder if schizophrenia is really as slick as depicted. Crowe's physical intensity drags us along as he works admirably to carry the film on his considerable shoulders. No doubt the story of Nash's amazing will to recover his life without the aid of medication is a worthy one, his eventual triumph heartening.

#### **December 17 - Born on the Fourth of July** (145 minutes)

Tom Cruise delivers a riveting and unforgettable portrayal of Vietnam veteran Ron Kovic in Oliver Stone's Academy Award winning masterpiece. Based on a true story, the acclaimed film follows the young Kovic from a zealous teen who eagerly volunteered for the Vietnam War, to an embittered veteran paralyzed from the mid-chest down. Deeply in love with his country, Kovic returned to an environment vastly different from the one he left, and struggled before emerging as a brave new voice for the disenfranchised.

Movies start promptly at 6:00 pm every Tuesday. Seating is limited and is first-come, first-served. Please contact the American Center at [amcentersl@state.gov](mailto:amcentersl@state.gov) or at (11) 249-8146 with any questions. Entrance free!

