



# U.S. EMBASSY DUSHANBE ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

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## Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Of State Pamela Spratlen Meets With U.S. Government Program Alumni

On April 1 Amb. Jacobson hosted a reception for a cross-section of USG alumni to meet Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Pamela Spratlen. Spratlen's remarks focused on the importance of our exchanges and urged alumni to form an independent association in Tajikistan. Alumni of the different U.S. Government programs participated in this event and shared their U.S. experiences.

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## Embassy Upcoming Events

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August 13, 2008

The Moth Performs at the Padida Theater: The Moth is a New York-based nonprofit organization that conducts live storytelling events. The evening will feature Tajik and American storytellers.

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## Welcome Breakfast For JFDP



On May 23, Embassy Cultural Affairs Officer Anne Benjaminson hosted a breakfast to welcome back this year's JFDP returnees and introduce them to recent alumni. Returnees, who had arrived that morning, described their experiences and brainstormed follow-on activities. CAO encouraged all alumni to apply for this year's JFDP alumni grants.



## May There Always Be Smile On Childrens' Faces

Mukhlisa Parpieva (UGRAD '07) spent a year at Lees Macrae College in North Carolina. She is the only UGRAD alumni in Isfara and she still finds time to be involved in her community. On June 1, Mukhlisa organized a trip for 14 children from high-risk families to the Isfara central park. The UGRAD alumna described her experience: *"when I went to their houses to invite them to the event, it seemed to me that they all had fearful looks, and indeed some of them even cried.. I guess they have experienced enough cruelty in their lives, which makes them isolate themselves from society."* Mukhlisa took the children for a walk in the park and for carousel rides, brunch and a free concert. At the end of the day Mukhlisa brought the children home and delivered food to those who were the neediest. Mukhlisa described her time with one girl in particular who had cried and initially was afraid to go to the park. The girl's father was in jail and her classmates and teachers had been so insulting to her that she left school after the first grade. *"When I asked her if she would want to study at school where nobody sneers at her and where the teachers are very nice, she responded that she would attend for sure, and that she wanted to be a respectable person in the future."* Mukhlisa concluded: *"To be honest, that day was one of the most memorable days of my life. That day, I realized that I can do something for my community, something that makes somebody smile and hope for a better future."*



## Round Table On Women's Issues



On March 12 Mukhbirakhon Kazimova (UGRAD '06) organized a roundtable discussion about women's issues in Khujand. Mukhbira invited Bihojal Rahimova to present at the roundtable. Bihojal, a well-known women's activist in Tajikistan, was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005. She currently works for UNIFEM in Khujand. In addition to USG program alumni, local students also attended the roundtable. Bihojal and the students discussed a variety of issues, including the social and economic status of

women in Tajikistan and the potential for women leaders in Tajikistan.

## Muskie Alumna Opens Library For The Blind



On May 24 Nisso Rahmonova-Stanley (Muskie '02) officially opened a library that she had renovated at a boarding school for blind and visually impaired children. Nisso used an IREX alumni grant and private donations to purchase Braille children's books, children's books and educational games, as well as furniture and stereo equipment. Nisso also helped the school refurbish its intercom system to allow the children to hear the recorded fairy tales before falling asleep at night.

The opening ceremony was attended by government and embassy officials as well as NGO representatives and U.S. Department of State program alumni.

Cultural Affairs Officer Anne Benjaminson and the school director cut the ribbon to officially open the library. The library is now an inviting space for children to read books in braille. Afterwards, FLEX alumni read fairy tales to 200 children. The project not only has had a significant impact on the children attending the school but it has opened

it has opened new perspectives for other alumni in implementing small grants. More than anything, Nisso proved that while obstacles do arise, there are good people in Tajikistan who want nothing more than to make Tajikistan a better place to live for all of its citizens.



## Khorog Alumni Planning Event

On June 13 UGRAD and TEA alumni and current fellows met at the Delhi Darbar restaurant in Khorog to discuss potential alumni events in Khorog. Participants in the evening's event included Nazira Vali (TEA '07), Gulnora Kamolova (TEA '07), Bakhibegim Balkhova (TEA '08), Husnoro Zikilbekova (UGRAD '04), Mekhrafruz Jonmamadova (UGRAD '05), Rayhon Jonbekova (UGRAD '06), Nilufar Shukhrikhudoeva (UGRAD '08) and Nisso Jonmamadova (UGRAD '08). The alumni discussed a variety of ideas including setting up movie nights, trainings and a spelling bee in Khorog.

Alumni decided to meet on a continuous basis and involve others. It is planned that slowly they might establish a club which will serve as a solid and transparent basis for future alumni events. Following this event, Mekhrafruz Jonmamadova (UGRAD '05) gave a presentation at the University of Central Asia on her U.S. program and encouraged others to apply for such educational programs to improve their own community as well as to contribute to the socio-economic development of Tajikistan.

## Former Nevada Tourism Commissioner Thomas Tait Meets With Alumni



On May 27, former Nevada Tourism Commissioner Tom Tait met with USG alumni to discuss Tajikistan's ecotourism prospects. Many of the alumni had traveled to the U.S. under the Open World program and met Tait there. Tait provided an honest assessment of the current tourism infrastructure and strategies for tourism development.

## Alumni Roundtable on Consumer Protection Law and Education in Tajikistan



On June 17 IREX staff organized a roundtable event for U.S. State Department alumni in Dushanbe. The event was attended by Muskie and UGRAD alumni as well as university students and representatives of the NGO community. Bakhodur Khabibov, Executive Director of the Consumer's Union of Tajikistan led the

discussion. Khabibov's organization is responsible for developing and promoting Tajikistan's Consumer Protection Law and is the first-ever consumer protection organization in Tajikistan. Participants learned about the history of consumer protection legislation in Tajikistan and how knowledge of this law can help people protect themselves and their purchases.

## SPORTS AND LEADERSHIP DAY FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE COME INTO CONFLICT WITH THE LAW



On June 14 the Public Diplomacy section cooperated with the Embassy Marine Security Guard detachment, Regional Security Office and the Children's Legal Center to host sports and leadership activities for 30 children participating in criminal rehabilitation programs. The Marines played soccer with participants, while FLEX, UGRAD and Muskie alumni organized games and activities. U.S. Ambassador Tracey Ann Jacobson presented trophies to participants.

## EARTH DAY TREE PLANTING

On April 26, alumni from multiple USG programs traveled to an orphanage for deaf children in the south of Dushanbe to plant 100 rosebushes and a dozen fruit trees. This event was to mark Earth Day. In addition to planting, alumni played with kids providing a nurturing environment. It gave these kids more confidence, thus, contributing to a friendly relationship. Alumni showed respect and love towards these kids and helped them realize that they are not forgotten and have a say in this challenging world.

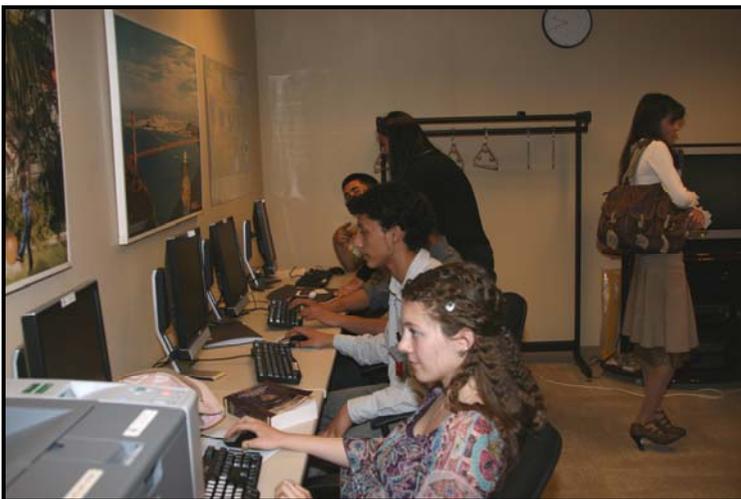


## Project Smile Brings A Smile To Those Who Need It



On March 25, Bakhtiyor Isoev (UGRAD '06) and several volunteers gave their time to 20 outstanding 6th to 11th grade students from a local boarding school for orphans in Chakalovsk. Supported by an IREX alumni grant, the students were taken for a day-long fieldtrip to a historic mosque in a scenic location near Khujand. After exploring the Mosque and the surrounding area the students gathered together and were given materials to color "the biggest, funniest and most attractive smile." The students eagerly drew different smiles and later presented their smiles to the rest of the group. The orphans then hung their smiles all over the mosque and the surrounding area. Prizes were given to all participants and the group finished the trip with ice cream and a visit to a nearby museum. Isoev remarked that the most important result of the day was giving himself and the volunteers, as well as the orphans, "a feeling of belonging to a community."

### Alumni Professional Development Workshop



On April 2 the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy hosted a joint professional development workshop IREX for alumni of various USG programs, including UGRAD, Humphrey and FLEX. CAO Anne Benjaminson led workshops on resume writing and interview skills. Attorney Program Assistant Catherine Ricker hosted

an "Effective Internet Searches" workshop that included a visit to the IRC and various USG websites. Participants toured the Embassy and met with DCM Tom Hushek, as well as representatives from other Embassy sections. IREX co-sponsored and organized the event.

### Round Table On Exchange Programs In Tajikistan



On May 7, IREX organized a roundtable event attended by over 15 students and USG alumni from the Sogd region who are interested in educational opportunities in Tajikistan. The roundtable was led by IREX staff member and UGRAD alumnus, Bakhtiyor Isoev as well

as UGRAD alumna Mukhbira Kazimova (UGRAD '06). Isoev gave presentations on the UGRAD and Muskie programs as well as other exchange program opportunities and organizations active in the region. He continued with sessions on how to correctly complete applications and write well-organized essays. The event concluded with an opportunity to network and ice cream for UGRAD and FLEX alumni and finalists.

### Alumni In Tajikistan Clean Up Victory Park



On April 19, IREX and ACCELS alumni attended a joint event organized by IREX in honor of Earth Day. Nearly 40 UGRAD, FLEX and Muskie alumni gathered together to clean up a popular park overlooking the city of Dushanbe. Upon arriving at the park IREX staff handed out gloves and trash bags and the alumni began cleaning up the park and the surrounding area.

The alumni cleaned the entire area of the park, gathering over 20 big bags full of trash. In addition to cleaning the park, alumni had the opportunity to catch up and enjoy the famous BBQ skills of IREX's security guard. Familiar faces like Malika Baimatova (Muskie '06) and Bakhtiyor Isoev

(UGRAD '05) joined newer additions such as Ibodullo Naridinov (UGRAD '04) and Umed Sultanov (UGRAD '04). After finishing off the chicken and beef shashlik the alumni ended the day with a game of frisbee and many ideas for future joint events.

## **The Fulbright Program Is A Bridge From The United States To The Entire World**

*By Muhamadsho Kukaniev, Fulbright, 2007*



My name is Muhamadsho Kukaniev and I am a Professor of Chemistry at Nikitin Institute of Chemistry of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan. In 2007, I received a Fulbright Visiting Scholar award to do my research work at Florida Atlantic University. For eight months, I have been actively working on a number of projects related to fluoride-organic compounds. It has been my life's dream since I began a chemist, when Tajikistan was part of the Soviet Union, and I was engaged in making chlorine-, bromine-, nitro-organic compounds. I dreamed about working with fluoride-organic compounds which was impossible at that time.

The driving force for this interest was the ability to produce drugs using fluoride-organic compounds, which are highly used today.

My research was possible only with the continuous help and support from Dr. Parkanyi of Florida Atlantic University, Florida. Dr. Parkanyi, his colleagues, and the university administration helped to raise \$7,000 for reagents to start work on my project. The Fulbright Program does not cover costs for this type of research work. Currently, my research is going well and has already produced fruitful results, although I have faced some challenges, which is to be expected. I have written some articles about it and hope to write more about this. Life in the U.S. has showed me that American people are very open and friendly. Americans extend their help to everybody, no matter what religion, education and economic status one has. Also, the greatest thing about it is that people and animals have the same rights. Animals can be everywhere, fed by people and live with people. This underpins Darwin's statement about people and animals coming from the same roots.

In general, I admire Florida and enjoy my stay in the States. I hope the government of Tajikistan continues its fruitful cooperation with the United States of America and uses this opportunity as a way to develop a new democratic and pluralistic society.

### **TRAINING OF TRAINERS COURSE FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS**

Supported by an IREX small grant, on June 6 Nazira Vali (TEA '07) and Gulnora Kamolova (TEA '07) held a training of trainers course for English and social studies teachers at the Aga Khan Lyceum in Khorog. While the seminar covered a wide range of topics, the most significant portion of the training focused on identifying problems in schools and coming up

with creative solutions, as well as developing electronic “portfolios” that laid out innovations and plans for each teacher for the upcoming year. The seminar was interactive, with alumni first explaining new methodologies and then challenging teachers to find solutions to problems that they faced using the new concepts. The teachers discussed many interesting ideas, including developing a stronger basis for cooperation between teachers and parents, implementing new teaching methods as well as engaging the government in order to implement changes in the educational system. The final days of the seminar were spent in the computer lab with the teachers developing individualized, electronic portfolios that encompassed the ideas and concepts that they had covered during the seminar. The portfolios included three new teaching strategies that each of the teachers had learned during the seminar, detailed sample lesson plans that included new methods and an action plan to address one problem at each teacher’s school. The TEA alumni assisted the teachers not only in developing their ideas, but also in using different computer programs in order to create their electronic portfolios.

## Open World Alumna Success Story



In March 2008, Rukhshod Ashurbekova, Director of the NGO “Sano” visited Little Rock, Arkansas under the Open World exchange program. After her return from the United States, Ashurbekova conducted an informal meeting on March 29 in Khorog town with school principals, representatives of the local Khukumat and Social Union of Development Village Organizations, high school students and housewives. Ashurbekova shared her impressions of meetings with the governor of Arkansas, Board of Directors of Little Rock, culture and life of Americans. Students and representatives of the

education sector were very interested in the U.S. educational system. People asked lots of questions about Americans, their life style and attitude toward foreigners. During the meeting, Ashurbekova noted that people in the United States have high moral standards and highly value the mutual understanding between people of different nations. Ashurbekova provided detailed information on the drinking water supply system as well. “As Khorog has a big reservoir of water, people can use the water resources more effectively and rationally”, she said. All participants supported the idea of a draft development plan on the drinking water supply and promised to provide their assistance on this issue. Representatives of SUDVO were interested in economic development, taxes and salaries of American citizens and their living standards.



## Alumni News

### Sevil Alieva (UGRAD 2007)



Sevil has completed her program at the University of Louisiana in Monroe. In April, Sevil was chosen for membership in the University's chapter of Alpha Lambda Delta National Honor Society for her excellent academic performance during the past semester. As a member of ALD, she will have many opportunities to compete for honors and awards and occasions to be active in various social and service settings. Sevil and other members of the National Honor Society were awarded a certificate.

### Ibodullo Nuriddinov (UGRAD 2004)

Ibodullo moved from Khujand to Dushanbe and started a new job working for FINCA as their Internal Control Manager. On April 20th Ibodullo also became proud father of a baby boy, congratulations to Ibodullo!

### Mahfuza Sobitova (UGRAD 2007)



Mahfuza finished her one-year program at Bemidji State University in Bemidji, MN. In spring she was able to represent Tajikistan at the Bemidji State Festival of Nations. Mahfuza stated that "it was a great honor for me to represent my country of Tajikistan in this festival. I was deeply gratified to carry the flag of my country and had a chance to welcome everyone in the Tajik language."

### Lola Mukhtarova (UGRAD 2007)

Lola spent much of the summer finishing state exams and course work. Her hard work paid off, as she graduated with honors from Tajik Open University in Penjakent.

### Manzura Makhkamova (Muskie 2003) and Zarona Ismailova (Muskie 2003)

Zarona and Manzura jointly organized the participation of 10 entrepreneurs from the Sughd oblast in the USAID-sponsored Agricultural Fair held in Kunduz, Afghanistan in June. Zarona, who currently works in Afghanistan, hosted a total of 46 participants from Tajikistan.

### Pulat Isobaev (Muskie 2006)

Pulat recently received a degree in Environmental Management from Benmiji State University. While still in the U.S. Pulat applied for a PHD program in Canada and has been accepted to the University of Alberta's Department for Civil and Environmental Engineering.

**Ravshan Grezov (Muskie 2006):** Ravshan wasted little time in finding a job in Tajikistan. Before he even left the U.S., Ravshan applied for a position with the UN in Tajikistan and participated in a telephone interview. Ravshan was promptly hired and began his first day at work on June 1st at 8 AM, three hours after his plane arrived from the U.S.

**Shohin Rizoev (Muskie 2003):**

Shohin was recently hired as an Information Management Specialist for UNDP.

**Zulfiya Pirova (Muskie 2006):**

After having received a master's degree in Public Health from the State University of New York at Albany, Zulfiya has returned to work as a Maternal and Child Health Specialist for the USAID-funded Zdrav Plus project in Tajikistan.

**Salima Kasimova (Muskie 2005):**

Salima is a member of a working group, that developed the Tajik national strategy on child and adolescent health and development for 2008-2015. In June the strategy was approved by the Tajik government.

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