



GREECE: HUNDREDS OF VOLUNTEERS HELP OUT WITH REFORESTATION EFFORTS



Greek Deputy Minister of Agriculture Kiltides embraces journalist Paul Anastasi, head of the Independent Reforestation Movement. Embassy Athens DCM Tom Countryman is pictured at the far right, shovel in hand. [Paul Anastasi, U.S. Embassy Athens]

Hundreds of volunteers, including many from the United States who flew to Greece at their own expense, helped replant forests destroyed by August wildfires at the foot of historic Mount Pendeli. Thanks to the efforts of these volunteers and to the Independent Reforestation Movement and U.S. non-governmental organization, "Plant Your Roots in Greece," thousands of new

trees were planted. Greek Deputy Minister of Agriculture Costas Kiltides, the U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) Thomas Countryman, his British counterpart, and Chairman of the easyGroup company and a leader in IRM, Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou, also helped out in these important efforts.

SLOVENIA: U.S. WW II SOLDIER HONORED



U.S. Embassy Officials LTCs Redding and Vestal with Mr. Robert Plan (his RTO), January 2008. [Photo with permission from ceremony attendee]

Every year Slovenia holds a ceremony to honor the courage and bravery of an American that was killed on Slovenian soil during WWII. U.S. Embassy officials, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Redding and Defense Attaché Jeff Vestal, attended a memorial ceremony for Captain (CPT) Charles Fisher and laid a wreath in his honor. CPT Fisher was a U.S. Army Captain, killed in 1944 in Slovenia and as his monument states: he was the "leader of the American Maple mission to the fourth zone of the national liberation army of Slovenia."

Many local Slovenes turned out dressed in traditional partisan uniforms to commemorate the event. Also present were Mr. Marjan Česnik, who fought for the U.S. as a part of the OSS and Mr. Robert Plan, who was the radio telephone operator (RTO) for CPT Fisher. The military operation is described in the book "Beacons in the Night" by Colonel (R) Lindsay.

RUSSIA: U.S. ALUMNI CONTRIBUTE TO VILLAGE ORPHANAGE

U.S. Consul General to Vladivostok Thomas Armbruster greeted alumni of U.S. Government programs who generously donated toys, clothes, books, and DVDs to an orphanage located in the Primorye village of Krasnyy Yar. In his remarks, Armbruster said he was glad to witness program alumni promoting traditions of charity and sharing in their communities. The charity drive was arranged by the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) representative in Vladivostok.



Children receive New Year gifts from U.S. government program alumni, December 24, 2007. [Svetlana Demashova, IREX]

NORWAY: NORWEGIAN STUDENTS CREATE A MOCK CAUCUS



Norwegian students enact a mock caucus, January 25, 2008. [Kjersti S. Ofstad, U.S. Embassy Oslo]

High school students from western Norway became more familiar with the 2008 U.S. election by creating a mock caucus. The students were divided into groups of candidate supporters and townspeople and received briefing papers on the positions of candidates while working with U.S. Embassy in Oslo staff to understand the issues. The "concerned townspeople" group articulated areas of concern among citizens while the candidates' supporters answered "townspeople's" questions on environment, education, economy and foreign policy. The students voted by standing under their presidential candidates' posters. The program concluded with a question and answer session and an election quiz. The students did an excellent job defending their candidates and asking important questions, and had fun while

learning about the intricacies of the caucus system and current U.S. election topics.

PORTUGAL: BOOK DONATION PROVIDES MATERIALS FOR ALL ENGLISH PROGRAMS IN THE AZORES

The U.S. Consul in the Azores, Jean Manes, donated books in English to all 36 core schools on the nine islands of the Azores as part of the "Amizade" (Friendship) Book Program. Regional Secretary for Education Dr. Alamo Meneses attended the donation ceremony which was an ideal opportunity to meet with the leaders of all 36 core schools and be able to share this donation, as well as information regarding potential upcoming teacher exchanges and films. As a direct result of this donation, U.S. children's book publisher Scholastic Books is presenting a proposal to the Azores Regional Secretary for Education to provide all the materials and teacher training for all English programs in the Azores. This type of outreach is designed to work with the regional government in their efforts to increase the level of English teaching and also to enhance the relationship between the U.S. and future generations of the Azores.



Consul Jean Manes with Regional Secretary for Education Dr. Alamo Meneses and Regional Director for Education Isabel Rodrigues, January 2008. [Ana Isabel, U.S. Consul]

DENMARK: NEW HAMPSHIRE PRIMARY TOUR SHOWCASES U.S. DEMOCRACY IN ACTION



A U.S. Embassy in Copenhagen-led tour to the New Hampshire Primary enabled 23 leading Danish politicians, government advisors, and press to experience first hand, U.S. democracy in action. The tour, which included briefings by top Republican and Democratic strategists, campaign headquarter visits, and face-to-face town hall encounters with candidates, yielded universally positive feedback, as well as media coverage in Denmark.

Left : Danish journalists learn about American democracy during New Hampshire primaries, January 4-8, 2008. [Alistair Thomson, U.S. Embassy Copenhagen]

CYPRUS: RAISING AWARENESS TO REDUCE WASTE

"A single waste recycled, the world changed" was the winning slogan in a competition to raise awareness of the benefits and importance of recycling. The competition was part of a multifaceted program funded through a grant by the "Supporting Activities that Value the Environment" (SAVE) program, the Biologists Association, and a local Nicosia high school. In addition, Cypriot students and teachers visited local dump sites, participated in a series of informative seminars, and initiated a recycling program at a local high school. SAVE, which is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), supports activities that further the overall objective of protecting and promoting the island's natural and cultural heritage resources.



Reducing, separating and recycling waste can have all kinds of environmental benefits, January 2008. [USAID]

POLAND: TEACHERS LEARN MORE ABOUT "AMERICAN BACKGROUND"



U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Officer Susan Parker-Burns interacts with teachers during training course, January 2008. [Maria Brzostek, U.S. Consulate Krakow]

The U.S. Consulate in Krakow organized a two-day in-service training for secondary school teachers of English in cooperation with the Teacher Training College of Jagiellonian University. The course, entitled "American Background," was designed to help teachers include more information about U.S. history and culture in their teaching. Consulate officers gave short presentations on the U.S. elections, highlights of the civil rights movement and American English using the PBS film series, "Do You Speak American?" A list of lesson plans were made available on the internet for participants on the topics covered in the training. Teachers from all over Krakow came to the training.

U.K.: "AMERICAN VISION" PHOTO CONTEST PRIZES AWARDED

The U.S. Embassy in London held an awards ceremony for the winners of its "American Visions" photo contest. The contest invited those who received visas to travel to the United States in summer 2007 to submit images that captured for them a sense of the spirit, culture or values of the United States and the American people. The extremely varied entries captured the geographic and cultural diversity of the United States. The diversity of the winners' countries of origin also highlighted the international nature of the Embassy's work. The contest was held in partnership with the embassy's Consular Section and Visit USA, which represents U.S. travel and tourism providers in the United Kingdom.



First Place: "Strong Nation" by Priscila Perianez McBride, January 2008.

FRANCE: FULBRIGHT STAFF ENGAGE 2,000 STUDENTS

U.S. study abroad programs got a boost at the L'Etudiant International Study Fair. Over 2,000 visitors received information on studying in the U.S. from Fulbright staff, students, and interns. Over 5,000 documents were distributed over the course of two days promoting U.S. study abroad opportunities.

Right: Fulbright, Education USA and U.S. Commercial Services promote U.S. higher education, January 2008. [Lindsay Turlan, Fulbright- France]



NORWAY: AMERICA'S FIRST MUSLIM CONGRESSMAN CONFRONTS STEREOTYPES



Congressman Ellison (on the right) in dialogue with young guests, January 2008. [Kirk Samson, U.S. Embassy Oslo]

In the midst of an active visit to Norway, Congressman Keith Ellison (D-MN) presented a vigorous defense of U.S. culture to a group of young immigrant and Muslim leaders at the U.S. Embassy in Oslo. Ellison is a strong proponent of American political culture and is himself, he said, a product of voter acceptance of those of other faiths and races. Ellison, who was elected in a traditionally Norwegian-American constituency with only a 2% Muslim population, answered questions from the crowd after a short presentation, challenging attendee stereotypes on the U.S. Government towards Muslims and the views of Americans towards integration and diversity. He also touched on the importance of open and free political discourse in this election year and promoted study and travel to the U.S. as a good way to combat stereotypes and encourage intercultural dialogue.

MACEDONIA: HOORAY FOR AMERICAN CORNER TETOVO!

The newest American Corner in Macedonia opened in Tetovo to a packed house. Located in the heart of the predominantly Albanian and Muslim city, it represents the collaboration of the U.S. Embassy in Skopje, the Macedonian Government, the municipality, and a local non-governmental organization. The city's mayor told attending students, professors, and rectors of local universities that he appreciated the support of the U.S. Embassy not only for this project but also for creating a museum from a 15th century Hamam and bringing jazz musicians to perform. U.S. Ambassador to Macedonia Gillian Milovanovic presented the first member with a copy of *Huckleberry Finn* and expressed hope that this corner would be as successful as the American Corners in Skopje and Bitola in bringing people from different cultures and backgrounds together to learn, share, and grow.



Ambassador Milovanovic presents a copy of *Huckleberry Finn* to the first registered American Corner member while Director Gzim Sulejman looks on, January 2008. [Zoran Jovanovski, U. S. Embassy Skopje]

GERMANY: WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS

U.S. Ambassador to Germany William R. Timken Jr. strives to win the hearts and minds of young Muslims in Germany by communicating a positive image of America. Ambassador Timken visited Turkish centers, inviting Muslims into his home, initiating the exchange program "Windows on America," and enlisting a professional American musician to teach singing and dancing to disadvantaged youth, which led to a U.S. Embassy in Berlin-supported musical production in 2007. These activities have helped bridge communities and improve participants' attitudes toward Americans.



Minority youth breakdance at Ambassador Timken's residence during a reception honoring "The Streets of Wedding" musical participants, December 2007. [© Der Tagesspiegel]

KOSOVO: SNOW AND SUN BRING ALBANIAN AND SERB YOUTH TOGETHER



Kosovo Albanian and Serb youth in their new Patagonia gear at Prevala ski area, Kosovo, January 2008. [English Language Fellow Kirsten Mashinter]

Multi-ethnic students, part of an ACCESS English class, experienced the joys of skiing for the first time – thanks to English Language Fellow Kirsten Mashinter. Ms. Mashinter also secured a donation from Patagonia of over \$3,000 worth of outdoor clothing which allowed the students to enjoy a full day outside without getting wet or cold. The ACCESS program is the U.S. Office in Pristina's most grass-roots program for promoting Inter- ethnic cooperation in Kosovo. Through their classes and extracurricular trips like this one, students forge friendships that bridge the ethnic and linguistic divide.

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