

# STATE

## Creole Connection

Cajun Band Connects with  
Seychelles Residents

## Graffiti Mural

Artists Decorate  
Consulate in Frankfurt

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September 2014

# MAGAZINE

## THE RIGHT MOVES

Blind Foreign Service officer  
competes at world chess tourney



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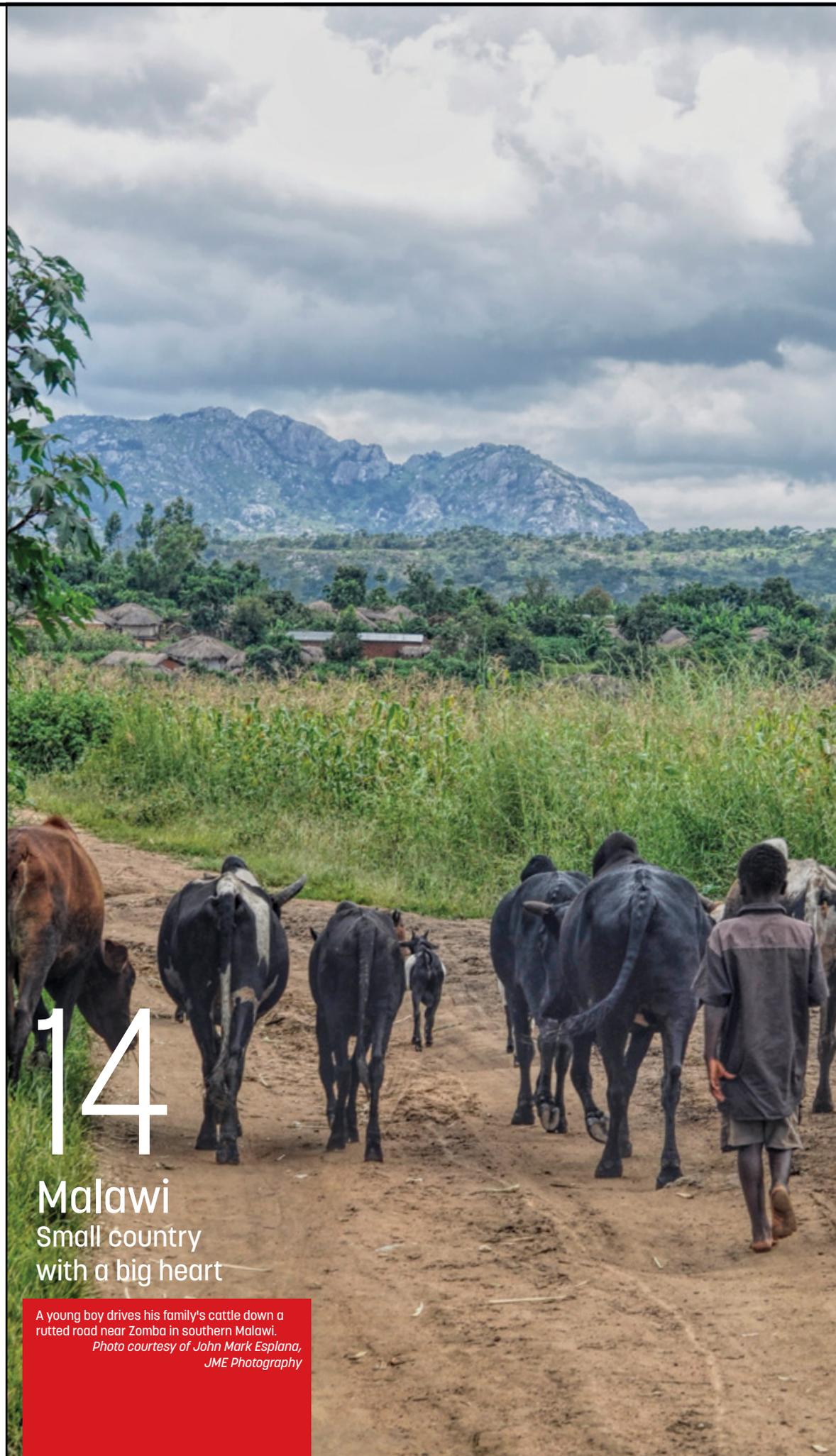
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# 14

## Malawi Small country with a big heart

A young boy drives his family's cattle down a rutted road near Zomba in southern Malawi.  
*Photo courtesy of John Mark Esplana,  
JME Photography*

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## On The Cover

Political officer Alex Barrasso uses a special Braille chess board during a friendly match in Prague.  
*Photo by Tarek Abu Sham*

# In the News

## LGBT Advocate Tours Japan

June was LGBT Pride Month, and to support LGBT rights, Mission Japan turned to American actor George Takei, formerly of the Star Trek TV series. Now an LGBT advocate, Takei used his State Department-sponsored speaking tour of Japan to promote reconciliation and LGBT rights.

Takei, who with his family spent World War II in Japanese-American internment camps, described his childhood to audiences in Okinawa, Osaka, Tokyo and Sendai. "I went to school, and we started the school day with the pledge of allegiance to the flag," he recalled. "I could see the barbed wire fence and the sentry tower right outside my schoolhouse window as I recited the words 'with liberty and justice for all.'"

Takei said the U.S. government and Japanese-American community moved beyond one of the worst injustices in U.S. history by, on the one side, admitting mistakes and, on the other, being willing to accept an apology.

Takei became an activist for civil rights for African-Americans and reparations for internment camp victims. Then, in his 60s, he became a spokesperson for the LGBT community. "As a kid, I was excited by boys rather than girls," he said during one of his numerous press interviews during his five-day tour.

To fit in, he said he "learned how to act like I was part of them [his friends]." Later, to pursue his acting career, he lived a double life, "going with beautiful women to parties and later at night [going] to a gay bar."

When Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed California's Marriage Equality Bill in 2005, Takei came out publicly as a gay man.

Takei, who is fluent in Japanese and holds a medal from the Emperor



George Takei and Ambassador Caroline Kennedy, center, join Akie Abe, wife of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, in a toast at the U.S. Embassy's LGBT Pride Month reception June 5.

Photo by Embassy Tokyo

of Japan for his work strengthening U.S.-Japan relations, told reporters that he understood that the LGBT civil rights movement was having difficulty gaining momentum in "a very conformist and collectivist society." But Takei, who met with LGBT groups in every city on his tour, also noted that the wife of Japan's prime minister recently marched in a gay rights parade and spoke at a reception for Takei hosted by Ambassador Caroline Kennedy.

"I think that Japan can change, and already I see the signs of changing," he said. "People organizing is the first step." ■

## Embassy Ottawa Opens its Doors

On June 7, the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa opened its doors to 425 public visitors for guided tours as part of its fourth annual participation in the City of Ottawa's "Doors Open" celebration, which provides public access to more than 150 sites, many not normally open to the public. Embassy Ottawa is always a top draw. For security reasons, advance registration is required and the tours are usually fully booked in days.

When visitors arrive, they can view informational videos and printed displays about the United States before being organized into tour groups by embassy volunteers. The 20-minute tour highlights architectural design elements of the building and its artwork. The building is architecturally distinctive for its alternating exterior designs, which blend harmoniously with the 19th-century character of the neighborhood, the nearby National Arts Center and Major's Hill Park across the street. At the tour's end, visitors can have their pictures taken with cardboard cutouts of the U.S. president and first lady and purchase embassy-themed souvenirs.

Accommodating the high volume of visitors requires extensive coordination among the Regional Security Office, General Services Office, Information Management Office, Community Liaison Office and



Embassy Ottawa hosted more than 400 visitors during the Doors Open event.

Photo by Mike Papineau

Executive Office. Economic Officer Tom Pajusi, the embassy's coordinator for the event, worked closely with city officials, and the CLO was instrumental in scheduling more than 50 embassy volunteers as greeters, ID checkers, escorts and tour guides. ■

## Cook Promotes Entrepreneurship in Pakistan

When Chef Mary Sue Milliken visited Pakistan in June under the embassy's auspices, her formula for success was: one mango festival, two famous chefs (including Milliken), 20 unique recipes, three culinary competitions, four cooking classes and 15 shooting locations for the resulting documentary.

The documentary by Pakistan's Dawn News was done for the Pakistani TV mini-series "In Search of Flavor," scheduled to air in September. Chef Shai Qazi, a Pakistani food fusion specialist, is the show's host and was Milliken's guide as she met restaurateurs, farmers and food entrepreneurs.

A restaurant owner, cookbook author and star of Bravo TV's "Top Chef Masters," Milliken has unique credentials that enabled Mission Pakistan to reach new audiences.

"I was thrilled to not only showcase the very best of American culinary traditions, but also learn about Pakistan's culinary heritage," Milliken said. "Love of food is something we all have in common."

The first two episodes focus on how sharing culinary traditions can strengthen ties between the United States and Pakistan. Episode one will include footage from the chefs' visit to local markets to learn about Pakistani cuisine and highlight fusion recipes Milliken and Qazi created together at a Punjabi restaurant owned by an alumnus of the Culinary Institute of America. The second episode will showcase Milliken's exploration of Pashtun culinary culture with her visit to a Pashtun heritage site, a U.S.-Pashtun fusion cooking demonstration and a dinner hosted by a Pashtun musical celebrity.

The third and fourth episodes of the program will focus on entrepre-



Chef Shai, left, shares a laugh with Chef Milliken on the set of "Zaiqay ki Talaash" in June.

Photo by Jen McAndrew

neurship and nutrition. The entrepreneurship episode will broadcast a master class Milliken taught for 50 young culinary professionals, featuring American recipes and business tips, and an entrepreneurship talk Milliken gave to 30 culinary entrepreneurs and caterers, sharing best practices for how to run a restaurant. The final episode will highlight a fusion cooking class Milliken and Qazi taught for 150 attendees, primarily young mothers, in which they demonstrated healthy recipes and discussed the importance of nutrition. It will also cover Milliken's visit to a local farm and mango festival, where she judged a cooking competition featuring mango dishes.

"The program effectively supported Mission Pakistan's goals of promoting entrepreneurship, empowering women and highlighting positive messages about nutrition and healthy food choices," said Assistant Cultural Attaché Jen McAndrew.

The Department's Diplomatic Culinary Partnership was established in 2012 by the Office of the Chief of Protocol, IIP and ECA with the James Beard Foundation. Traveling under IIP's U.S. Speaker Program, Milliken is the first member of the American Chef Corps to visit Pakistan. ■

## Flag Day Focus: Native Americans

On June 12, the U.S. Embassy in Bucharest hosted its ninth annual Flag Day celebration, in which five Romanian public schools compete on a research project as part of a public diplomacy outreach to motivate high school students to learn about the United States.

The students have in the past researched popular landmarks, famous people and environmental initiatives. For 2014, they looked at Native American cultures, working in teams for one month to create a project that represented the Native Americans who lived or still live in each state. They used a variety of materials and resources, including large sculptures, interactive games, dioramas, costumes and posters. Miruna Iordanescu, a teacher from one of the participating high schools, said the experience taught teamwork. She added that it was rare to see her students so enthusiastic about a research project.

A panel of seven judges, all embassy volunteers, chose the winners, in such categories as most artistic, most creative and most informative. Participants voted on their favorite project, choosing the one depicting Native American life in Alaska. Representatives of the Romanian U.S. Fulbright Commission and the Educational Advising Center provided students with information on studying in the United States.



One of the volunteer judges takes notes during the presentation of Team Missouri.

Photo by Lucian Crusoveanu

Jessica Martin, one of the judges and an embassy summer intern, said, "I was pleasantly surprised at just how thoroughly these kids did their research. As easy as it would have been for them to assume that every tribe is about tipis and totem poles, they understood that each tribe has its own individual culture." ■

# In the News

## Mission Spain Reaches Out to LGBT Community

Mission Spain, under the leadership of Ambassador James Costos, developed an LGBT outreach plan culminating in several events to celebrate Pride month.

At a discussion at the U.S. Consulate General in Barcelona, one of the most gay-friendly cities in the world, Ambassador Costos and his partner, Michael Smith, met with 16 members of the region's LGBT community, including entrepreneurs, journalists, designers, lawyers, academics and a mayoral candidate. They discussed topics ranging from same-sex marriage and adoption to workplace rights. Those who work for larger companies said the professional climate has become more accepting in recent years, especially in more urban areas, and several agreed that there has been a generational change, although the transgender community still suffers from discrimination.

The next day, Consul General Tanya Anderson toured a Pride Village, organized as part of Barcelona's weeklong Pridefest celebration. A representative of the Association for Gay and Lesbian Families gave a tour of exhibitors, including a foundation that assists LGBT citizens as they age. CG Anderson noted, "The visit was a great opportunity to connect with exhibitors representing Barcelona's active and committed LGBT community and to inform the people we met of the U.S. government's policy of support for LGBT rights."

The consulate also participated in an LGBT film festival by inviting



Consul General Tanya C. Anderson, center, and Consul Officer Ramon Menendez-Carreira, left, pose with exhibitors at the Pride Village.

*Photo by Emilio Ruiz Perez, President of Casal Lambda*

American filmmaker Alan Brown to present his work "Five Dances" and participate in other LGBT events.

In Madrid, the rainbow flag flew over the U.S. Embassy and ambassador's residence for Pride Weekend. The embassy participated in a panel discussion marking the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, placed an op-ed by Ambassador Costos on LGBT rights in a major Spanish newspaper and organized a visit by Ambassador Costos to the Madrid regional government's Office for LGBT Social Services.

The theme connecting all of these programs into a coordinated and consistent approach was that LGBT rights are human rights and advocating for LGBT rights is an integral part of U.S. foreign policy. The embassy used its social media platforms to amplify the theme, with one Twitter photo of the rainbow flag receiving 425 retweets. ■

## Embassy Assists Children Living in Landfill

On the outskirts of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, hundreds of children and their families live and work in the municipal garbage dump among the feral dogs, picking through refuse for recyclable materials to sell for two and a half cents per kilogram. On June 12, the World Day Against Child Labor, Ambassador Lisa Kubiske visited the dump with the vice mayor of Tegucigalpa and members of the U.S. Embassy community, handing out food and water.

The embassy also presented a local school that provides education, clean clothes and a safe space for the children living in the dump with a donation of clothes, shoes, toys, school supplies and first aid supplies collected from the embassy community. Community Liaison Officer Chanda Zirkelbach said, "We were overwhelmed with the amount of donations and the interest of those who desired to give back to the community in which they live and work."

The ambassador's visit aimed to raise public awareness of child labor in Honduras, where about 371,000 children work in the agricultural, industrial or service sectors, and many others work in street vending, prostitution or the sale or transport of illegal drugs. The United States is committed to partnering with Hondurans to address the causes contributing to the surge of emigration, including children, from Honduras.



Ambassador Kubiske, center, talks to AFE students who once scavenged in the Tegucigalpa trash dump.

*Photo by Edward Javier Ramirez*

The event's impact on the embassy community was reflected by employee Jennifer Chase, who brought her young daughters to assist in handing out donations. "I was so grateful to be able to share this experience with my children to help them see how other people live and understand that they live a life very different than so many people in the world," she said. ■

## U.S. Aids Nigeria Counterinsurgency Efforts

This year, the U.S. Mission in Nigeria received funding through the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Program for a multi-year, civil-military capacity building initiative. In June, the mission's Civil Military Support Element team used some of those funds when it worked with the Nigerian Army to provide medical care to 250 residents of a northern Nigeria village affected by the Boko Haram insurgency. Political-Military Officer Helaina Stein said, "Not only did this initiative and new funding source help to improve the welfare of residents in need of medical care, it also fostered an enhanced level of trust between them and the local military."

Then, in July, Mission Nigeria organized the first comprehensive Civil-Military Operations training for the Nigerian military. The Nigerian Army, the mission's Civil Military Support Element and the post's Political-Military officer collaborated to bring trainers from the U.S.-based Joint Special Operations University to conduct a seminar for approximately 40 Nigerian Army civil-military cooperation planners and staff officers.

By understanding civil-military affairs, nations' militaries can engage effectively with local populations to enhance military operations and shape regional objectives. Successful civil-military relations in Nigeria,



Sgt. First Class Frances Espinal, of Embassy Nigeria's U.S. Army Civil Military Support Element, answers a Nigerian child's question at the medical aid event.

*Photo by Sgt. First Class Brandon Lampley*

combined with the military's respect for civilians, should increase civil-military cooperation, create opportunities to interact with local populations and identify civil vulnerabilities, community sensitivities and priorities. The Nigerian military also gains more understanding of the operational environment in conflict-ridden areas. ■

## Green Race Expands in Guadalajara

In May, the U.S. Consulate General in Guadalajara took a page from the U.S. Consulate General in Monterrey's Green Race by drawing a group of runners and local community members to its own annual Green Race. The post partnered with 74 NGOs and businesses from the area on an "eco-fair" that educated and entertained more than 1,500 runners and visitors on environmental awareness and conservation.

At the eco-fair, there was information on local reforestation projects and resource conservation practices. The mascots of several local NGOs and private organizations entertained children. Racers received medals made of post-consumer materials, and many wore T-shirts partially composed of recycled X-ray films. The event helped many local businesses publicize their green initiatives to NGOs.

A reforestation day is planned at a nearby national park that attracts outdoor enthusiasts for its ambiance and fresh air. Volunteers and race sponsors will plant more than five hectares of trees. Consulate officer Dahm Choi said the organizing committee for the Green Race and Green Fair was proud to see corporations, NGOs and civic institutions "partner with us to raise over 2.1 million pesos (\$162,000) toward this event and the goal of reforestation in the Bosque de la Primavera." He added that the event shows the "tremendous interest across Mexico in investing together in healthy living, environmental awareness and a greener future."



On race day, volunteers pose for a photo.

*Photo by James "Michael" Harvey*

Using resources from the Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, the Guadalajara Green Race team is partnering with local environmental NGOs to develop environmental seminars for educational institutions, including elementary schools and colleges. These events are expected to expand the number of public and private participants in the 2015 race and fair.

Mission Mexico held similarly themed events at five different posts across the country. ■



Brick row houses stretch out across a neighborhood in Boston's Back Bay near Boylston Street.  
*Photo by Isaac D. Pacheco*

## The Key Ingredient: Equal Employment Opportunity Counselors

**W**ith a workforce of thousands of employees across the world, how can a Washington, D.C.-based Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) staff of 26 provide effective worldwide service? The key lies within our EEO Counselor Program.

The Office of Civil Rights is grateful for the work of the Department's collateral duty EEO Counselors, who not only assist the Department with meeting its regulatory EEO obligations, but also help to resolve conflict that arises in the workplace at the earliest stage possible.

There are approximately 450 EEO Counselors worldwide who serve on behalf of the Office of Civil Rights (S/OCR). The Department also has Locally Employed (LE) Staff EEO Liaisons who assist EEO Counselors in ensuring the needs of our LE Staff are met. Although LE Staff EEO Liaisons cannot serve as EEO Counselors, they are often the first point of contact for LE Staff experiencing conflict in the workplace.

To emphasize the important role played by our EEO Counselors, I would like to highlight their primary responsibilities:

**Inform Employees:** EEO Counselors are knowledgeable about the EEO process and anti-discrimination statutes. They inform employees about the various protected EEO bases, the EEO counseling process, S/OCR's Alternative Dispute Resolution program and the rights and responsibilities of a person who chooses to initiate the EEO process. EEO Counselors use their knowledge and expertise to guide parties through the EEO counseling process.

**Remain Neutral:** EEO Counselors are neutral; they do not represent employees or management throughout the EEO counseling process. EEO Counselors cannot take sides or advocate on behalf of a particular party.

**Attempt Resolution:** The goal of EEO counseling is to resolve conflict at the earliest stage. The EEO Counselor works with the parties separately to explore possible solutions to resolve the conflict. EEO Counselors resolve more than half of the cases that go through EEO counseling.

**Conduct Limited Inquiries:** When an employee or applicant for employment requests EEO counseling, the EEO Counselor conducts a limited inquiry to resolve the matter. The EEO



Counselor will talk to the management official involved as well as other relevant parties who may be able to resolve the matter. The limited inquiry helps both parties understand the source of the conflict and determine whether a solution can be agreed upon.

**Maintain EEO Program:** While the main function of an EEO Counselor is to conduct EEO counseling, they do so much more to promote an inclusive workplace. EEO Counselors also maintain an EEO program in the post or office where they work. This can include conducting training, holding "brown bag" discussions to raise EEO awareness, posting updated EEO information on their bulletin boards and intranet site, organizing commemorative month events or writing EEO newsletters.

The role of an EEO Counselor can be difficult. EEO Counselors often serve as sounding boards for employees, listening nonjudgmentally and with empathy even when the situation is emotionally charged. While EEO Counselors cannot resolve all concerns brought forth, they do a lot by simply listening and serving as a resource.

EEO Counselors help make the workplace one that respects diversity, where employees can fairly and equitably do their best work. To those who have served as EEO Counselors or LE Staff EEO Liaisons, past and present, thank you for your professionalism, hard work and dedication. ■

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John M. Robinson". The signature is fluid and cursive.



## Office of the Month



In May, Fraud Program managers from the 29 U.S. passport agencies and centers gathered in Miami to exchange information on passport fraud trends and share best practices.

Photo by Charlotte Lawrence

# On Guard

## Office works to prevent consular fraud

By Matthew Horner, consular officer, Office of Fraud Prevention Programs, Bureau of Consular Affairs

**T**he Bureau of Consular Affairs' Office of Fraud Prevention Programs (CA/FPP) enhances border security—to protect U.S. citizens at home and abroad and facilitate legitimate travel—by ensuring the integrity of consular operations. Led by Director Josh Glazeroff and staffed by a mix of Foreign Service and Civil Service employees, CA/FPP provides fraud prevention resources that allow consular adjudicators at home and overseas to make the best possible decisions regarding consular services eligibility.

The office also assesses and adjusts internal policies, procedures and practices to reduce opportunities for consular malfeasance. As Deputy Director Stephen Ashby says, "CA/FPP is a dynamic office staffed by a talented and diverse group of people. Covering the spectrum of consular operations, we deal with a vast array of issues and partners. We work hard, deliver results and have fun doing it."

CA/FPP's four divisions each focus on specific areas. The International Division, headed by Division Chief Aaron Martz, interacts with fraud prevention personnel in consular sections at posts overseas. International Division liaison officers train these personnel via consultations with

outbound consular officers, presentations at FSI and periodic visits to posts they cover. Each day, the liaisons answer questions from posts about fraud prevention tools and resources, assist with fraud cases, disseminate information on policies and fraud trends, and promote posts' fraud reporting.

The division also works with the Office of Overseas Citizens Services and the Visa Office on consular policy matters, and is the primary contact of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's (DS) Overseas Criminal Investigator program, which places DS consular fraud investigators at 92 consular sections overseas.

Finally, the division supports Operation Swift Repo, an interagency effort to identify visa applicants who are in networks that exploit the U.S. auto export industry to finance drug trafficking and terrorist organizations. The effort has led to hundreds of visa revocations and refusals.

The FPP's National Fraud Division, headed by Division

Chief Paula Ferguson, works with fraud prevention personnel at 29 U.S. passport agencies and centers, answering questions about fraud prevention tools and resources, assisting with fraud assessments, disseminating information on policies and fraud trends, and promoting agency fraud reporting. The division's annual seminar for domestic Fraud Program Managers (FPMs) is a forum to



Josh Glazeroff, the office's director, takes a phone call.

Photo by Ed Warner

discuss fraud trends and other concerns. The division's periodic Fraud Program Reviews help ensure each agency's fraud prevention program adheres to policies and procedures.

The division works closely with Passport Services on policy, and is the DS contact regarding domestic passport criminal fraud investigations. Finally, the division offers resources for passport agencies, including a passport fraud library (a repository of valid and counterfeit U.S. birth and identity documents), a SharePoint site that facilitates information sharing and reporting and the Potentially Fraudulent Birth Documents list of individuals known to have fraudulently filed U.S. birth certificates for foreign nationals.

The Analysis, Systems and Training Division, headed by Division Chief Ian Hayward, analyzes and distributes information on fraud trends, and produces the Fraud Digest, CA's monthly newsletter on fraud trends that is read by more than 4,300 consular officers, DS agents and interagency officials interested in immigration fraud. (To subscribe, send your U.S. government email address to [Fraud-Digest@state.gov](mailto:Fraud-Digest@state.gov).)

The division also helps posts conduct statistical reviews of the travel patterns of individuals issued visas and distributes exemplars of new travel documents and other resources to detect document fraud. The division's officers analyze fraud trends in specific consular benefit categories, work that often involves liaison with other agencies or law-enforcement officials. For example, its student visa fraud analyst works with the Department of Homeland Security to share information on U.S.-based schools that may be complicit in visa fraud. The division's analyses are used by the Office of Consular Systems and Technology to enhance fraud prevention technology tools, including the deployment of CA's first-ever bureau-wide fraud tracking system. Finally, the division leads CA's fraud prevention training efforts, coordinating 11 week-long courses at FSI for consular officers and Locally Employed Staff each year.

The Consular Integrity Division, headed by Division Chief Kim McDonald, is a partnership between CA and DS that serves as CA's central clearinghouse for allegations of internal consular malfeasance. The division, staffed by consular analysts and DS agents, investigates allegations of malfeasance and educates CA employees to conduct consular operations with integrity. The division analyzes information from consular systems to identify patterns that indicate vulnerabilities, employee malfeasance



International Division staffers Kim Crawford, left, and Michael Maillander chat outside Crawford's cubicle.  
*Photo by Ed Warner*

or lapses in management controls, and works with DS in investigations of malfeasance or employee misconduct. It makes recommendations to CA management to keep problems from recurring, and trains all U.S. government personnel involved in consular services on the ethical standards and rules of personal behavior in consular work. It also works with CA's Office of the Executive Director to give consular managers the tools to implement management controls, and administers the "Monitor" program, which aims to ensure that U.S. government personnel accessing passport records have legitimate business reasons.

Some of CA/FPP's initiatives are team efforts that cut across the four divisions. For example, the Passport Integrity and Internal Testing Program (PITT), jointly conducted by the Consular Integrity and National Fraud Divisions, has DS agents testing adjudication at passport agencies and centers by submitting fraudulent passport applications. PITT analysts recently used program material to create a 12-minute instructional video on how to detect counterfeit documents.

Another team effort is the "Year of the Fraud Prevention Manager" initiative, which seeks to refine guidance and provide new resources tailored for fraud prevention programs overseas. The initiative has involved all four of CA/FPP's divisions, and has produced updated guidance for the Foreign Affairs Handbook, guidance cables and an "Online FPM Toolkit."

Preventing consular fraud is of paramount importance, and requires coordination and constant vigilance. CA/FPP staff are constantly on the lookout for the next trend

or vulnerability. As Director Glazeroff puts it, "What we aim to do in CA/FPP is provide targeted analysis tools and training that lead to good decision making." ■



National Fraud Division staffer Michelle Goldbeck smiles to welcome a visitor to the office.  
*Photo by Ed Warner*

# Creative Honors

## Post hosts exciting awards events in Honduras

By Alejandra Tercero,  
human resources administrative clerk,  
U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa

Although posts' incentive awards ceremonies are often much alike—employees receive their award on stage, shake the ambassador's hand and get a photo and applause—the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa has in recent years begun offering novel awards ceremonies. In May, for instance, its Management/Human Resources (HR) team held a themed ceremony that included entertainment, decorations, refreshments and digital presentations.

The theme was kept secret until the strumming of guitars interrupted the emcee's opening remarks. A small band of Mariachis strolled onto the stage and played a few songs celebrating the triumphs of mission staff. Then, two videos honored retiring employees and those departing post, also with a Mariachi theme. After the ceremony, the Mariachis returned to serenade the audience.

Mission employees enjoyed how the celebration encouraged them to appreciate the accomplishments of their co-workers. "You made today a joyous occasion," Ambassador Lisa Kubiske said.

Mission Honduras has faced challenges in recent years, including a hiring slowdown, salary freeze and monetary award freeze. The post chose to see these challenges as an opportunity for creativity. In November 2013, it held a "Mediterranean Festival," replete with belly dancers from a local dance school. The annual Local Staff Appreciation Day was incorporated into the event.

In May, the post celebrated Honduras' and the United States' qualification for the World Cup with a soccer-themed event that included a small troupe of "batucada" dancers. The public affairs section provided equipment to record a film depicting departing officers in short soccer-related skits, offering them a fun way to say goodbye to colleagues.



Because more than 250 employees were expected to attend the event, planning started 6-8 weeks in advance. Planners brainstormed theme ideas, such as Hawaiian luau and Mardi Gras, and considered what performing talent existed among the staff. (Some are members of musical groups.)

Planners also looked at funding sources, and were glad to find that, although official funds cannot be used for entertainment, the post's American employee association supports community events such as awards events. (At other posts, the community liaison office may be able to assist in fundraising or have decorations available.) Planners also created a timeline to ensure no details were missed, and distributed tasks.

The post's HR office staff divided into committees for such aspects as entertainment (musical groups or digital presentations), refreshments, decorations, logistics (setup and preparation) and awards preparation. At weekly meetings, the committees gave updates.

The event's soccer theme was kept a surprise, but about two weeks beforehand, staff placed posters around the embassy, encouraging attendance and providing clues about the theme.

At the event, everything flowed smoothly. Employees said they loved the informality and the guests, who included members of the Honduran Soccer Federation, Honduran soccer coach Luis Suarez and one of the most famous soccer players in Honduras, Emilio Izaguirre, who plays for the Honduras national team.

When the video was shown, attendees were excited to see co-workers being silly on camera. Then, Ambassador Kubiske began

Gathered with costumed Batucada dancers are HR and management team members, from left, Martha Nuñez, Vivian Idiaquez, Mona Kuntz, Alice Castro, Laura Villanueva, Claudia Tovar, Alejandra Tercero, Miguel Escalante and Maria Marta Young.

Photo by Moises Gomez

handing out awards, but in the middle of the ceremony she asked attendees if they were hungry. American Citizens Services Chief Hannah Akinbiyi and Human Resources Assistant Miguel Escalante came out and did a take-off on comedian Ellen DeGeneres' pizza sketch from the 2014 Oscars ceremony. Then they and the ambassador delivered pizza to the crowd. After more awards came the finale, during which the batucada dancers came out dancing to loud drums and samba music.

As attendees enjoyed refreshments and music, Ambassador Kubiske called it the "best awards ceremony I've ever seen." ■



Ambassador Lisa Kubiske stands with employee Dan Kubiske as he displays his award.

Photo by Moises Gomez



The author addresses a crowded CCEP meeting.  
Photo by James Pan

# Upward Path

## Group's seminars assist newer staff

By Kevin Martin, chairman, Council for Career Entry Professionals

**T**he Council for Career Entry Professionals (CCEP) assists the Department's entry- through mid-level employees by providing guidance, professional development opportunities and resources to help them effectively navigate their careers. Also known as the CEP Council, CCEP was initially established to create avenues of employment for talented students and recent graduates, a function that has been taken over by President Obama's Pathways hiring initiative.

The repurposed CCEP has received official recognition as an employee affinity group from the Office of Civil Rights and the Diversity Governance Council.

CCEP supports career advancement of its members by hosting seminars and workshops on topics such as the Department's Flex Connect program, how to transition from intern to full-time employee and how to effectively network. Last month, CCEP held the Save Yourself Summit, which featured Department leaders who have had successful careers despite humble beginnings. The summit was organized by Chaniqua Nelson, CCEP's vice chair of Networking and a former Student Career Entry Program participant who now works as a program analyst in the Administration (A)

Bureau. Topics covered at the summit included how to take control of one's career and how to turn challenges into triumphs.

CCEP also focuses on the professional needs of Pathways students and encourages their engagement in various activities. Lindsay Kermisch is an A Bureau contract specialist who, as the Pathways officer on the CCEP leadership team, plans activities targeting Pathways students.

In April, CCEP and the Office of Career Development and Assignments hosted a seminar on the Mustang Career Mobility Program, which offers Civil Service and Foreign Service specialist employees the opportunity to work overseas in Foreign Service entry-level generalist positions. Karen Morrissey, a Board of Examiners assessor, spoke and answered questions about the program.

In January, four employees were accepted into the Mustang Program, including Crystal Sheridan, who will become a management officer at the U.S. Embassy in Lome, Togo. A former Africa program officer in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs and a Presidential Management Fellow, she credits her success to participation in employee affinity groups, such as Executive

Women at State, as well as rotational opportunities and mentoring. She advises employees to work hard and look for Civil Service opportunities.

Timothy Carpenter, a former Presidential Management Fellow and budget analyst in the Office of Budgeting and Planning, credits his success to "taking advantage of the workshops offered by organizations." He recommends that Mustang applicants focus on the Foreign Service Oral Examination, and rather than trying to get all the answers right, aim to handle various situations and "be someone you'd want to work with."

CCEP's coming seminars will cover how to change jobs, Peer-2-Peer mentoring, effective use of the Individual Development Plan and how to request assignments that may lead to greater leadership responsibility and career advancement. The seminars and advice from successful leaders will, the group hopes, encourage, inspire and empower entry- to mid-level professionals.

For more information on CCEP, email [CEPCouncil@state.gov](mailto:CEPCouncil@state.gov). Information on the Mustang Program is in 3 FAM 2216.2-3. ■



Ambassador John B. Emerson, third from right, poses with the Texas delegation at the world's biggest international tourism fair, the ITB in Berlin.  
*Photo by John Self*

# PROMOTING TRADE

Mission Germany fosters investment and exports

By Pia Buller, economic specialist, U.S. Embassy in Berlin

**M**ission Germany's efforts to promote business are bottom-up, top-down and horizontal. The U.S. Embassy in Berlin was one of 22 posts chosen for the Interagency Commercial Task Force pilot program in 2012. Since then, the mission has introduced a whole-of-government approach to supporting U.S. business in Germany.

The mission's objectives are straightforward: promoting trade policy, investment and tourism, focusing on priority and growth sectors such as high-tech or energy-intensive industries that create U.S. jobs. German companies are attracted to the United States for its business-friendly investment conditions, a huge consumer base for their products and inexpensive energy costs for their manufacturing (thanks in great part to the shale gas boom). Mission Germany focuses on identifying promising small- and medium-sized German companies because of their specialized niches geared to the global market.

Mission Germany's five consulates general (Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Leipzig and Munich) play a crucial role in this initiative. For example, when surveying CEOs of the top 50 German companies investing in the United States, the mission found only one company was in the capital of Berlin.

The mission's efforts have won praise from German trade advocates and the American Chamber of Commerce in Germany. "As the voice of transatlantic business, AmCham Germany is proud to have the U.S. Embassy as a valuable partner in advancing our mutual interests," said the organization's General Manager Andreas Povel "These include healthy German-American relations, intercultural understanding, business networking and international investment."

Thomas Herrschelmann, head of Foreign Trade Relations at the Chamber of Industry and Commerce of the region of Ostbrandenburg, Germany, was similarly

upbeat. "We are very pleased about the good cooperation we have with the U.S. Embassy in Berlin," he said. "First of all, it's a great opportunity to help our companies with information and expert knowledge about the U.S. market. Secondly, it is very important for us to exchange information on the institutional side concerning all aspects of developments in our economies."

The United States has a strong commercial and economic relationship with the Federal Republic of Germany. In 2012, the United States exported \$48.9 billion in manufactured goods to Germany while importing \$108.5 billion in goods, resulting in a bilateral trade relationship of \$157.3 billion. Automobiles, aircraft, industrial machinery and computers are major U.S. exports to Germany. The United States sold more than \$6 billion worth of motor vehicles to Germany in 2012, and BMW's factory in Spartanburg, S.C., which recently celebrated its 20th anniversary (and

announced a major expansion), is the largest U.S. exporter of passenger vehicles.

Yet, there is no time to rest. As U.S. Ambassador to Germany John B. Emerson is fond of noting, “In business, if you’re not moving forward, you’re moving backward.”

On the trade promotion front, Germany hosts more than 150 international trade fairs each year, and thousands of American companies exhibit in search of new global markets and customers. Most of these fairs are the largest events in their industry, attracting exhibitors and visitors from around the world. Germany’s strong framework of trade events gives Mission Germany’s commercial, economic and agriculture staff a unique platform for meeting with U.S. and foreign firms, and for finding U.S. opportunities within established industries and rising business subsectors.

The Medica trade show, for example, held every November in Düsseldorf, is the world’s leading exhibition for the medical device industry. Last year, 485 American companies exhibited at the show, which attracted more than 120,000 visitors, 43 percent of them from outside of Europe. U.S. companies sold approximately \$65 million as a result of their participation.

Mission Germany uses its entire resource toolbox at trade events. There are often speeches by the ambassador and consuls general, seminars and business briefings conducted by embassy officers and meetings between U.S. and foreign firms arranged by industry specialists. The mission uses the events to promote its trade, investment and policy initiatives, to leverage the economic strengths of America.

For example, at this year’s Hannover Fair, the world’s largest industrial trade event, SelectUSA organized a USA Investment Center, bringing to the event 17 economic development associations from across the United States to promote investment in their regions. Mission Germany officers and specialists, and U.S. industry specialists from U.S. posts around Europe and the U.S. Mission to the European Union, attended the event, meeting with companies and spreading the word about the importance of the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP) negotiation’s goals.

The importance of German investment to the resurgence of the U.S. economy and re-industrialization of America should not be understated. The total stock of German



investment in the United States stood at \$265.4 billion at the end of 2011, making Germany the third-largest source of foreign investment in the United States. Top sectors for Germany’s U.S. investments include automotive components, industrial machinery, equipment and tools, and software and information technology services.

U.S. affiliates of German firms employed approximately 569,600 Americans as of 2010, the latest year for which data is available. Between January 2003 and February 2013, 1,356 projects were announced that would, if they meet targets, represent a capital investment in the United States of \$28.71 billion and create 74,661 American jobs.

In addition to trade and investment promotion, Mission Germany provides the business-to-business advocacy and commercial diplomacy U.S. companies need when seeking market access or to sustain their business in Germany. Its mission-wide approach to support U.S. business dovetails with the Commercial Service’s new regional approach to the European market, further leveraging U.S. government resources on behalf of the broader regional business objectives of American business.

Since the beginning of the T-TIP negotiations, Mission Germany has

proactively engaged with U.S. and German business stakeholders. For instance, Ambassador Emerson spearheads an initiative to regularly brief the German business community on the T-TIP talks and discusses ways to move forward.

Ambassador Emerson said he has made economic statecraft a priority since his arrival, and has met with many members of the business community. “The past months have reinforced just how important economic diplomacy is and the vital role that businesses play in advancing the mutual interests of our two countries,” he said. ■

Top: An interagency task force meets with executives of the German film and music industries.

Photo by John Self

Bottom: Ambassador Emerson jams on a 60th Anniversary Edition Fender Stratocaster at Musikmesse 2014.

Photo by Dale Tasharski





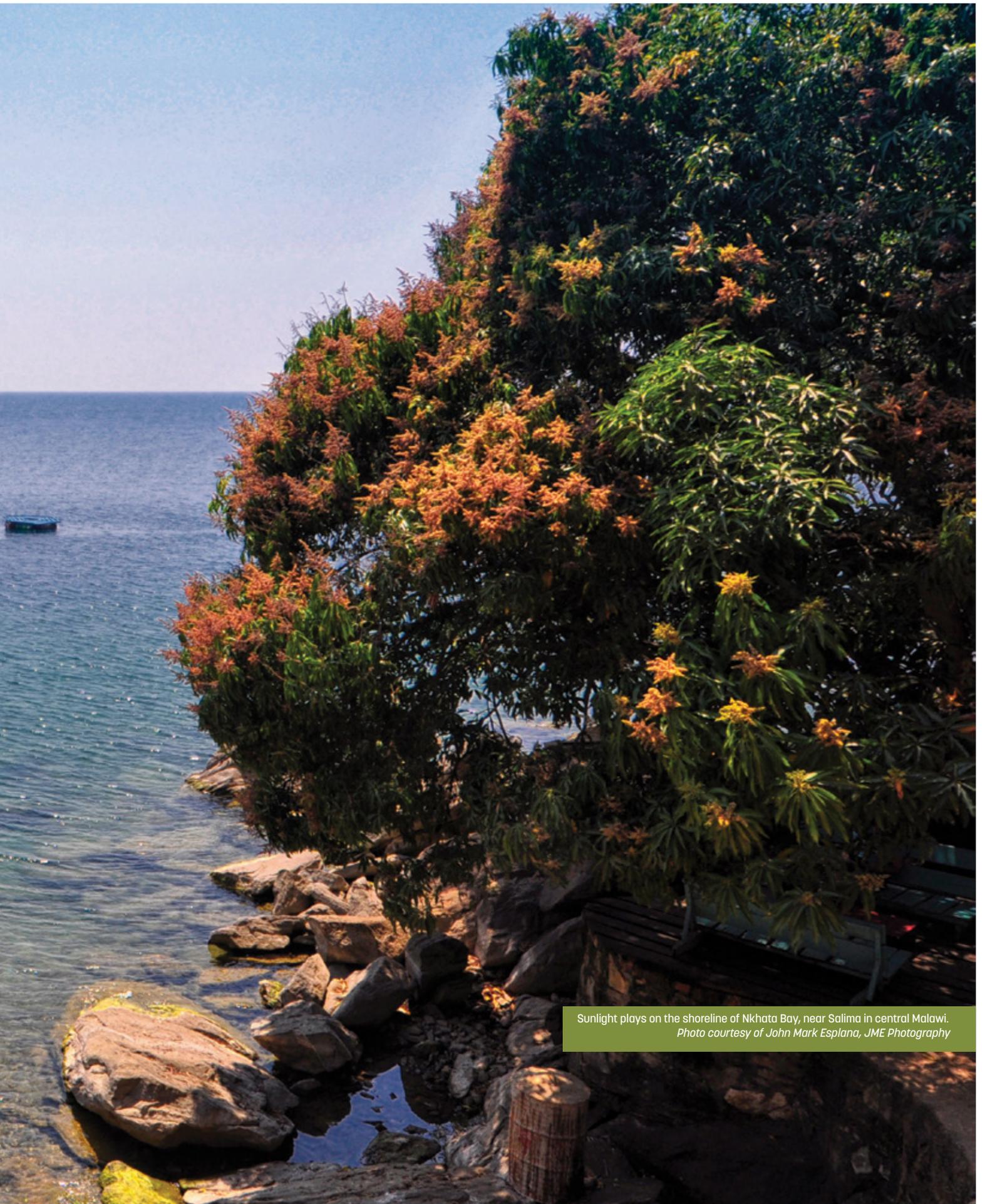
*Post of the Month*

# Malawi

**Building connections in a small country with a big heart**

by Michael C. Gonzales, deputy chief of mission, U.S. Embassy in Lilongwe





Sunlight plays on the shoreline of Nkhata Bay, near Salima in central Malawi.  
*Photo courtesy of John Mark Esplana, JME Photography*



**K**nown as the “Warm Heart of Africa,” Malawi is a bit of a secret, even within the Foreign Service. But the country’s reform agenda and commitment to development may signal the beginning of a Malawian renaissance. Malawi’s 20-year record of peaceful democratic transitions, leadership in the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and abundant potential are earning it the attention it deserves.

Inspired by this untapped potential, the United States is investing more than \$250 million in assistance annually to break Malawi’s cycle of poverty and propel the planet’s eighth poorest country onto a trajectory of sustainable development.

U.S. development assistance in Malawi starts with social services. Recognizing that a malnourished and illiterate population cannot fully seize opportunities for a brighter future, the U.S. Embassy in Lilongwe is coordinating with the Malawian government to improve the availability and quality of health and education services, invest in infrastructure and

lay the foundation for a more capable public health system.

**Health assistance**

USAID’s health program supports village clinics and community health volunteers to provide nutrition, mother and child healthcare, family planning and HIV- and malaria-related services to the rural majority of Malawi’s 16 million people.

Simultaneously, the United States is building the skills and capability of Malawi’s healthcare system to respond to public health challenges. With the Malawian Ministry of Health overwhelmed by the magnitude of needs, experts from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and USAID provide technical input to support policies and training to serve future generations. In conjunction with private groups and

universities, CDC and USAID are investing in pre-

service training of health practitioners at all levels to reduce Malawi’s 70 percent shortfall in health sector workers.

Peace Corps volunteers (PCVs) are educating communities about HIV/AIDS and malaria while teaching positive health practices in their host communities. Under a pilot program, the Peace Corps has also deployed



Embassy children Maya Thibodeau and Namaste George check out locally made toys at a roadside craft market. Photo by Gerry Gray Thibodeau



A young man walks home with his bicycle near Ncheu in southern Malawi. Photo courtesy of John Mark Esplana, JME Photography

A lone Acacia tree stands sentinel over the intersection between a local road and regional highway, near the Dedza-Salima Forest Reserve in Southern Central Malawi. Photo courtesy of John Mark Esplana, JME Photography

doctors and nurses who are teaching Malawi's next generation of healthcare workers. Through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the United States has helped Malawi reach the stage where the number of new HIV/AIDS patients beginning treatment matches the number of new infections.

While the \$153 million U.S. annual investment in the health sector is paying off, so is investment in quality education, which is equally critical to Malawi's success. Ninety percent of the nation's second graders cannot read a single word, and 67 percent of sixth graders are pre-literate. A recent spike in education funding has enabled the United States to dramatically address this stark reality. Working with Malawi's government, USAID's early grade reading activity has trained 40,000 teachers in new methods, developed culturally relevant reading materials, printed more than one million new textbooks and spurring communities to read. As elementary school students become more literate, 35 PCVs are teaching English, math and science to high school students, and upgrading libraries and training teachers to be more effective.

Embassy public affairs outreach to high school and university students and teachers

around the country is improving English teaching and raising awareness among Malawi's young adults of entrepreneurship and their roles in a democratic society.

### Improving agriculture

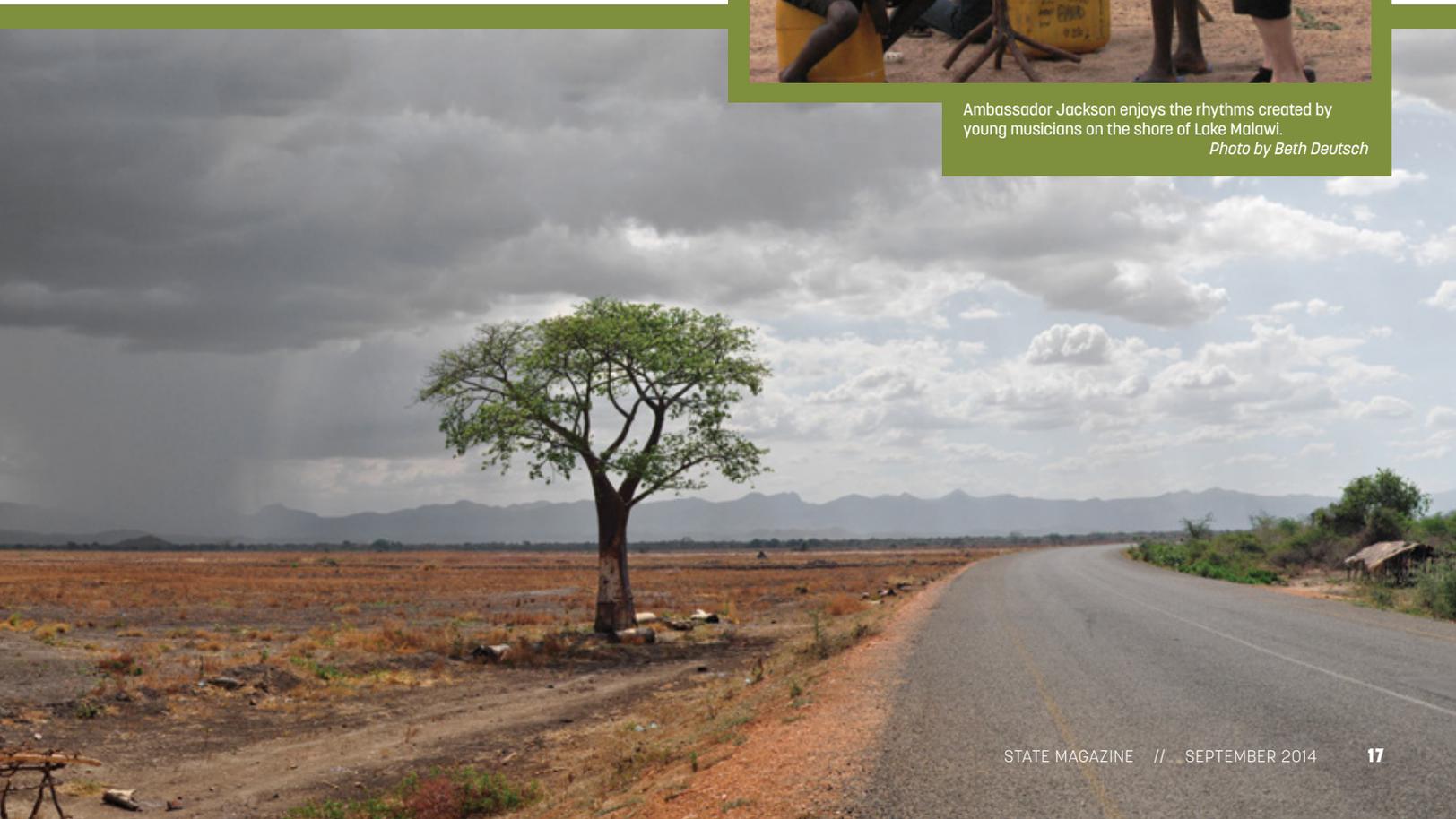
Other programs provide economic opportunities for Malawi's increasingly literate and healthy population. As agriculture is the foundation of the nation's economy, the embassy's economic growth team works with Malawians to increase yields, diversify crops and link farm production to domestic and regional markets.

Embassy Lilongwe puts a premium on integrating efforts across sectors for maximum impact. U.S. Department of Agriculture programs and USAID Feed the Future activities are diversifying crops to boost salaries and

improve household nutrition. U.S. support has resulted in more than 180,000 farmers being trained on improved agricultural practices, and this is increasing rural incomes significantly. The initiative included a text message service that provides farmers with real-time market prices. Intensive commercial advocacy by the post's economic section with local officials has resulted in Malawi's first field trials of biotech cotton. This work is complemented by PCVs' efforts to protect Malawi's natural resources,



Ambassador Jackson enjoys the rhythms created by young musicians on the shore of Lake Malawi.  
*Photo by Beth Deutsch*





improve agricultural practices and assist communities by expanding sustainable income-generating activities.

A \$350 million Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact aims to foster economic opportunity by developing the country's production and distribution of electrical power, long identified as a fundamental constraint on growth. The five-year program will rehabilitate critical electricity generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure and thereby expand access to electricity and reduce the cost of doing business in Malawi. Infrastructure investments under the compact will ensure that reliable power reaches users, while policy reforms will help attract private-sector investment. A component of the compact will counter erosion and protect watersheds near Malawi's hydroelectric power plants. These efforts complement USAID's new \$48 million Global Climate Change initiative, which will help Malawi reduce emissions levels and protect biodiversity.

Building on the strong foundation of social services and investments in economic opportunities, the third pillar of the U.S. partnership with Malawi focuses on responsive governance. Virtually every

member of the embassy team is engaged in this effort. Ambassador Jeanine Jackson and political and economic officers engage senior Malawian leaders daily on a broad range of issues. The embassy environmental advisor is building land-use oversight mechanisms at the district levels. Health advisors provide recommendations on the rollout of new World Health Organization guidelines. A USAID governance project is developing skills in local governments. The public affairs officer is training government spokespersons on best practices in government transparency. The education team is promoting parent teacher associations, so communities can provide feedback to schools and encourage their children to learn.

In recent years, there has been exponential growth in the bilateral military partnership. Most senior Malawian military officials have participated in U.S. training, and the United States has an ongoing commitment to train Malawian troops before they deploy as U.N. peacekeepers.

### **Work-life balance**

Serving in Malawi has a reputation for offering a healthy work-life balance that is great

for families, and, indeed, there is an abundance of children in the U.S. Embassy community. Lilongwe hosts two well-established 12-year international schools, one offering the International Baccalaureate program.

Recreational outlets abound as well. The crystal-clear waters of Lake Malawi, one of the world's deepest lakes and most biologically diverse marine ecosystems, offer a welcome respite just 90 minutes from Lilongwe. Snorkel, sail, kayak, water-ski or just swim, and a stunning world of aquarium fish will appear. More than 800 species of small, colorful cichlid fish live in the lake, which serves the aquarium trade worldwide.

In Lilongwe, a tightly knit community offers an abundance of invitations to social gatherings, barbecues and dinner parties, as well as opportunities for tennis, golfing, bicycling, swimming and birding. Within a few hours of Lilongwe are excellent national parks with impressive wildlife, exotic birds and stunning scenery. There are also guest houses at tea estates, hiking trails and horseback riding on high plateaus.

A small country with a big, warm heart, Malawi looks ahead, with U.S. help, to a wonderful renaissance opportunity. ■



Children of fishermen dance on the beach of Senga Bay near Salima.

*Photo courtesy of John Mark Esplana, JME Photography*



A masked dancer performs the Gule Wamkulu (Great Dance), which takes place at male initiation ceremonies, funerals and major celebrations.

Photo by Gerry Gray Thibodeau



## Post of the Month



### At a Glance

### Malawi

**Capital:** Lilongwe

**Government type:** Democracy

**Area:** 118,484 sq. km.

**Comparative area:** Slightly smaller than Pennsylvania

**Population:** 17,377,468

**Languages:** English (official)

**Religions:** Christian 82.6%, Muslim 13%, other 1.9%, none 2.5%

**GDP per capita:** \$900

**Export partners:** Canada, Zimbabwe, Germany, South Africa, Russia, U.S. and China

**Export commodities:** Tobacco, tea, sugar, cotton, coffee, peanuts, wood products and apparel

**Import partners:** South Africa, China, India, Zambia, Tanzania and U.S.

**Import commodities:** Food, petroleum products, semi-manufactures, consumer goods and transportation equipment

**Currency:** Malawian kwacha

**Internet country code:** .mw

Sources: The World Factbook



# Sharing Creole culture

Post emphasizes U.S.-host nation ties

By Priya Beegun, cultural affairs specialist, and  
Kathleen Fox, public affairs officer, U.S. Embassy in Port Louis, Mauritius



Haley and the Zydekats perform aboard the U.S. Embassy float in the Seychelles International Carnival Parade.

*Photo by Neddy Chanpin*



Singer Lisa Haley shows 10-year old Trabor Chamain how to play a Cajun rubboard at the Seychelles School of Music.  
*Photo by Neddy Chanpin*

“Et toi!” The deep baritone voice of Louisiana native Lisa Haley reverberated through the 10-deep crowd lining the streets as she and her band, the Zydekats, rolled through the town of Victoria in the Seychelles International Carnival parade. “Eta!” called back the revelers, in their own version of the Creole greeting.

More than 20,000 residents of the Seychelles Islands, nearly a quarter of its population, flocked to the normally sleepy capital in late April for three days of music and dance from around the world.

For the first time, the celebration featured American Cajun music, thanks to the Department’s Arts Envoy program.

An exquisite mix of towering mountains, golden beaches and sparkling turquoise seas, the 115 islands of the Republic of Seychelles lie some 930 miles east of mainland Africa. Like the people of their sister islands in Mauritius to the south, the Seychellois are a blend of African, French, Indian and Chinese who proudly retain their own Creole dialect and culture. The United States has long enjoyed friendly relations with both countries, but sheer distance and strong cultural links to Europe and Asia make it a challenge to connect local audiences with U.S. culture and policy.

For Ambassador Shari Villarosa and the public affairs team at the U.S. Embassy in Port Louis, the shared Creole heritage of Louisiana and these eastern outposts of Africa was an obvious starting point to connect opposite sides of the globe. Partnering with the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs, they designed a 10-day, three-island tour for Grammy-nominated recording artist Lisa Haley and the Zydekats. The tour would showcase our common history and share our Cajun traditions with local musicians and audiences.

The four-member band arrived in Seychelles to sweltering heat, torrential rains and a familiar sound. “We got off the plane and something just like Zydeco music was playing over a food stall sound system,” Haley said. “The style and rhythm, even the language, were so close to our own, we were speechless.”

Their first concert was broadcast to thousands of listeners via the islands’ only independent radio station. During the show, Haley chronicled the adversity faced by America’s French, Latino, Irish and Appalachian settlers, who created Cajun music, and discussed the African and Haitian rhythms that influenced Zydeco. Next, at the Seychelles Music School, the band got a lesson in playing the Ravanne (a goat-skin drum dating back to the times of Mauritian slavery) during a workshop and jam session with 30 students and professional musicians. Their Zydeco rubboard (one of the few instruments invented entirely in the United States) was such a hit that one young musician joined them to play it throughout their four-hour performance aboard a parade float the next day.

At the nationally televised Carnival opening show, the Zydekats brought the audience of 5,000 to their feet with their version of the classic tune “Zydeco Pas Salee,” Creole for

“the beans aren’t salty” (meaning times are hard if you don’t even have salt for your beans). “The diversity of the American experience and culture is so much easier to appreciate when you meet ambassadors like Lisa and the band in person,” raved Seychelles Minister of Tourism and Culture Alain St. Ange.

On the final day of festivities, more than 200 Seychellois children and Ambassador Villarosa joined the band in making Mardi Gras masks, followed by an outdoor concert for more than 8,000 new fans. The band’s immense energy and popularity were captured by a crew from the CNN TV show “Inside Africa,” which featured Lisa and her electric-blue violin “Louis” on a worldwide broadcast (available online).

In Mauritius, the Zydekats’ tour took a quieter turn, with an added theme: ethnic inclusion. Despite Mauritius’ highly lauded multiculturalism, poverty plagues its minority Creole community, which is of African descent and has missed out on much of Mauritius’ economic and educational success since its 1968 independence. Kreol, as the language is spelled locally, was not made an optional language in schools until 2012, although it is the mother tongue of more than 80 percent of the nearly 1.3 million inhabitants and is the sole language of poorer Mauritians.

The band shared their signature Cajun style with hundreds of disadvantaged people who would have had little chance otherwise of experiencing American culture in person. For instance, they jammed on stage with the school band at the Mauritius Institute for the Blind.

In Cité Mangalkhan, a predominantly Creole community, the band joined a workshop and Mardi Gras party for more than 150 students and teachers at a community center that uses art education to counter widespread poverty and drug abuse. “Nu envi dir zot mersi ki zot la ek nu zordi” (“We want to tell you thank you for being with us today”), yelled audience members playing recorders and homemade rubboards funded through the U.S. Ambassador’s Self-Help Fund.



The Zydekats share favorite Cajun tunes with the Mauritian band Etæe before their joint concert.  
*Photo by Neddy Chanpin*



The band joined in to play a local hit “Marye mwa, mo kontan ou” (Marry Me, I Love You), which merged Zydeco with Sega, the traditional dance music of Mauritius and Seychelles. “Their simplicity, their energy and clear love of music made a profound impression on our teachers, children and volunteers,” said the center’s director, Leslie Merven.

A crowd of 500 packed the sold-out Institut Français de Maurice for the Zydekats’ joint concert with renowned Creole band Etae, where everyone stood for the bands’ rousing Zydeco/Sega finale of “Jambalaya.” Speaking in his native tongue, Etae drummer Yannick Durhone said, “We connected like that! Et toi! Etae! It’s the same. At the end of the day, we can be far from the United States, but there is a connection here and we call it Creole culture.”

Perhaps the greatest connection of the tour came as the band traveled to the remote, often overlooked island of Rodrigues. With just 40,000 mostly Creole residents, this mountainous island calls the button accordion, not the Ravanne drum, its native instrument. David Fraser, the Zydekats’ accordion maestro, said he felt right at home when 15 aging members of Rodrigues’ Association of Accordionists joined the band before an audience of 250 young enthusiasts.

Despite, or perhaps because of its isolation, Rodrigues’ ties to American Cajun culture appear stronger than those of other parts of Mauritius and Seychelles. The island’s Biguine rhythm-centric music style fuses 19th-century French ballroom dances with African rhythms, much like Cajun does with its French parlor music roots.

“It’s amazing that this band can come from the other side of the world, and in one night we are playing their music, they are speaking our language,” said one beaming local player of the triangle, a common instrument in Cajun music. As the final concert of the tour wound down, a couple from the audience mounted the packed stage to dance the Rodriguan sega tambour, a traditional dance that mirrors the quadrilles, waltzes and Scottish reels of old.

“It brought tears to my eyes to see that we all already knew the steps—they are the same steps we do when Cajun dancing in Louisiana,” said Zydekat bassist Andy Anders. “What else could we do except join in and dance with them!” ■

# GRAFFITI CONNECTION

## 'Taggers' decorate wall on consulate grounds

By Daniel Frey, Public Affairs intern, U.S. Consulate General in Frankfurt.

The smell of spray paint filled the air and dozens of spray cans were strewn about recently as three graffiti artists set out to leave their mark on one of the outside walls of the U.S. Consulate General in Frankfurt. The world's biggest graffiti festival, the annual International Meeting of Styles, was under way in nearby Wiesbaden, so American "tagger," or graffiti artist, Mario Gonzalez, a.k.a. Zore, and his German counterparts Manuel Gerullis, a.k.a. Yours, and Sebastian Schmidt, a.k.a. RZM, brought some of the festival's atmosphere to the consulate.

The consulate's Public Affairs team has for years partnered with the festival and its artists through workshops, interviews, videos and social media coverage, to arouse young people's interest in American culture and celebrate an art form that combines the traditions of hip hop music and graffiti writing, and peacefully connects people without reference to race, religion or politics. At the festival, artists from across the globe do graffiti-related activities together, including workshops and creating a giant painting that reflects international understanding and the encounter of people and styles.

This year's event was again a great opportunity for German teens and young adults to experience a unique facet of American art that was once decried but has now emerged as an accepted form of artistic expression that can bring cultures together. Though graffiti writing originated in America, native Chicagoan Zore praised Germany for bringing hip hop and graffiti back to life during the 1980s and keeping it flourishing there today.

Although German-American friendship came naturally to Germans who lived through the Marshall Plan and Berlin Airlift, many younger Germans need cultural exchanges to appreciate the United States, which is often portrayed negatively on German television.



A break dancer busts a move at the festival.  
Photo by Kevin Russell

That's one reason Mission Germany is committed to the International Meeting of Styles. In the run-up to the Meeting, which began June 13, graffiti artists were invited to design a mural at the U.S. Consulate General Frankfurt representing German-American friendship. In the resulting mural, a German golden eagle and an American bald eagle face each other with their respective flags in the background joined by graffiti lettering.

Mission staff love the new addition. "I'm proud to work here, because we always do these amazing projects that appeal to young people and adults alike," said American Citizen Services employee Susanne Gumm. The artwork, which can be seen upon entering the consulate, is one of the first graffiti paintings decorating a Department building anywhere.

The day before the graffiti festival started, students from the Department of Defense's American Wiesbaden High School and the German Humboldt-Schule in Wiesbaden participated in a workshop organized by the consulate on the basics of graffiti at the Schlachthof cultural center in Wiesbaden, which provides free and legal wall space for sprayers. Led by Rahman Statik, another Chicago artist participating in the Meeting of Styles, the teens learned about graffiti and collaborated, exchanged ideas and became friends. Public Affairs Officer (PAO) Jeffrey Hill and Cultural Affairs Assistant Kirsten Gerstner also tried out their spraying talents during the workshop.

According to Statik, the youths were professional and engaged. "They were in their zones, helping each other and making great graffiti art, which they had never done before," he observed.

Richard, one of the German students, said,



Artists swarm a mural at the International Meeting of Styles Festival 2014 in Wiesbaden.

Photo by Kevin Russell

"It was really fun to meet some Americans and make new friends. We all helped each other paint, and it was great to work together. We all had a lot more in common than I expected."

An American student named Jackie added, "As an American living in Wiesbaden, I think it's important to make friends and interact within the city. Sometimes people have wrong ideas about Americans or about Germans, but when we come together to create art in the city we all call home, we realize that we are not so different."

One German teacher at the workshop invited American participants to spend one day at the teacher's school in Wiesbaden, to learn about their respective educational systems and continue the dialogue.

When the International Meeting of Styles opened, more than 100 graffiti and hip hop artists from around the world gathered at an

underground passage beneath rail tracks, the event's usual venue. Large crowds came to admire the artwork, the catchy rhythms of rappers and the regional food and drink.

"Youth outreach programs which involve popular culture themes such as graffiti and hip hop are great opportunities for us to reach young people in Germany, explain American culture and society and create new narratives," said Gerstner, the organizer of the graffiti outreach activities.

PAO Hill told the media that mission support for the event achieves several public diplomacy objectives. "Of these," he said, "I especially highlighted the power of art to bridge cultures, share U.S.-German and universal values and—maybe above all—show how people of all ages, backgrounds and orientations come together to celebrate diversity and freedom of expression." ■

Artists Manuel Gerullis; Mario Gonzalez, a.k.a "Zore"; and Sebastian Schmidt create the first graffiti mural on U.S. Mission Germany property.

Photo by Kevin Russell





Gathered at the celebration's opening at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna are: Front row, left to right: Sabine Crowley, Professional Associate; Alice Burton, Press Specialist; Cynthia Borys, retired Information Resource Officer; the author; Christina Stabauer, ARC Assistant; Verena Blum, Press Specialist; Michelle Peasley, PA intern; and Karin Schmid Gerlich, Cultural Specialist. In the back row, from left, are: Harald Lembacher, Program Specialist; Roman Pable, PA intern; Karin Czerny, retired Press Specialist; Jan Krc, Public Affairs Counselor; Roland Fuchs, Cultural Specialist; Tina Radler, PA intern; Alexander Slabihoud, ARC Assistant; and Eva Muhm, ARC Director.

Photo by Joshua Growney

# 175th Anniversary

## Embassy Vienna commemorates bilateral relationship

By Marlene Monfiletto Nice, desk officer for South Central European Affairs, EUR/PD

Many Austrians remember America's postwar CARE packages or its broadcasting to Austria of radio news and jazz programs, but do not know how deep the U.S.-Austrian relationship is. The 175th anniversary of the bilateral relationship in 2013-2014 provided the U.S. Embassy in Vienna an opportunity to tell this story, reach new audiences and commemorate U.S.-Austrian experiences, accomplishments and shared values.

The anniversary was pinned to the arrival of the first U.S. Envoy Henry A. Muhlenberg in Vienna, on Feb. 8, 1838. In October 1838, Austria sent Wenzel Philipp Baron de Mareschal as its first envoy to Washington, D.C.

For the commemoration, the public affairs section created the multimedia exhibit "175 Years of U.S.-Austrian Relations: Continuity and Cooperation." It highlighted historic events, people and policies that built and sustain the relationship. Dubbed "Project 175," it exemplified collaboration mission-wide and with Austrian officials, academics and Washington-based colleagues.

"The project was a powerful platform to

promote mutual understanding and allow the mission to reach diverse audiences, from high school kids to the president," said Public Affairs Counselor Jan Krc. "My favorite moment was Austrian President Heinz Fischer's speech at the gala opening. That's what this was about—the relationship, often very personal, between the Austrians and the U.S." The U.S. Embassy in Brussels had commemorated its 175th bilateral anniversary two years earlier, using an exhibit, book and video that traveled throughout Belgium. Embassy Vienna built upon this idea, creating a social media strategy, posters and an essay contest for Austrian students, in addition to a 22-panel stand-up exhibit, 100-page book (with forewords by President Fischer and then-Ambassador William C. Eacho) and 17.5-minute video. A virtual exhibit on the embassy website added material that arrived outside production deadlines and allowed visitors to the site to contribute items. A PowerPoint presentation carried the virtual exhibit to schools, clubs and universities, while embassy officials traveled throughout Austria with the stand-up exhibit and video.

The project got under way in May 2012 when the American Reference Center (ARC) staff, Information Resource Officer Cynthia Borys (now retired) and I began collecting information, photos, documents and memorabilia.

Borys also worked with Martin Manning in the State Department Archives, who located key documents, including the 1829 Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between the U.S. and Austria. Embassy staff scoured the post's photo archives and encouraged participation from every section. Two post-World War II public affairs officers, Arthur Bardos and Walter Roberts, offered photos from their own collections and recorded their memories of rebuilding the relationship.

In Austria, ARC Director Eva Muhm met with scholars, historians and directors of archives and museums.

"We learned that USIS photos had been donated to the Austrian National Library decades ago," Muhm said. "A private collector contributed photos, postcards, posters and an original passenger list from a ship that carried Austrians to America in 1895."

Staff worked with the Austrian Ministry of

Foreign Affairs, Austro-American societies, National Archives, National Film Museum, historians and professors, and shared photos and documents with the Austrian Embassy in Washington. The staff collected so much material that it took two months to sort. There were long discussions on the best way to present it.

“At the outset, it was necessary to establish a goal statement for the exhibit that could be used to guide the editorial and graphic decisions,” Borys said.

The team divided the information into thematic sections on the beginning of the relationship, building the relationship, World War I and the inter-war years, forging a new relationship and continuity and cooperation.

Since the United States and Austria fought on different sides in WWII, the post kept the commemoration’s focus on diplomacy, pasting newspaper pages from the war years onto the panels as a backdrop for the framed memorabilia. The Waldheim affair of the late 1980s was another delicate issue. In a video interview, an Austrian ambassador referred to his Washington posting in the early 1990s as the “new re-launching of bilateral relations after the very difficult years of President Kurt Waldheim.”

Public affairs section (PAS) staff conducted many more interviews with former and current U.S. and Austrian ambassadors, Austrian immigrants and military and Foreign Service officers to bring the video to life.

“We had so many hours of interviews, but had only planned a 12-minute video,” said staff member Alexander Slabihoud. “The challenge was to find only snippets, short quotes that said it all.”

PAS produced as much of the video as possible in-house, to cut costs. Borys wrote introductions on the exhibits and Krc performed the voice-over. An intern turned cutting-room-floor video footage into snippets for social media promotion. The post contracted out the final video editing, book layout and printing, as well as the framing of the materials.

Slabihoud designed the exhibit, working with facilities maintenance carpenters. “Hanging the frames on the panels was a moment we feared,” he said. “The company that sold us the display didn’t understand what we needed, but our expert carpenters found a solution to make sure the frames stayed on the panels.”



In February, Austrian President Heinz Fischer presented Ambassador William C. Eacho with a facsimile of Benjamin Franklin’s 1777 letter to the Austrian envoy in Paris, stating plans to send an American Envoy to Vienna.

*Photo by Alexander Slabihoud*

“With a project going beyond one fiscal year, we could ask for funding from Washington twice and we received it (\$25,000 in FY12 and \$20,000 in FY13),” said Harald Lembacher, PA program assistant. “I advise other posts to reach out to their contacts for funding too. We asked the Austrian government to pay for part of the gala reception (more than \$4,000) so that we didn’t use up all our representation funds.”

Ambassador William Carlton Eacho III unveiled the exhibit and video on Feb. 13, 2013, at Vienna’s Diplomatic Academy. During the event, President Fischer spoke fondly of CARE packages and jazz music from U.S.-sponsored radio programs, and of his involvement in an International Visitor Leadership Program. He then surprised Ambassador Eacho with a framed copy of a letter from Benjamin Franklin to the Austrian envoy in Paris, dated April 19, 1777, announcing U.S. plans to send an envoy to Vienna.

Ambassador Eacho made the 175th anniversary the theme for the 2013 Independence Day reception, where he highlighted the essay contest.

During 2013 and 2014, the exhibit traveled to eight of the country’s nine provinces. Ambassador Alexa Wesner, who succeeded Eacho, opened the exhibit in January in Klagenfurt and Deputy Chief of Mission Lee Brudvig presided over the final event in Burgenland in February.

In Vienna, the exhibit was shown more than a dozen times, including at the Austrian Chamber of Commerce, American

International School and Pedagogical Institute in Vienna. When not traveling, it was displayed at Amerika Haus, the embassy’s program venue, as a backdrop or focal point for other events.

“Working on this project allowed me to reach out to institutions and build relationships with individuals I had not worked with before,” said Cultural Specialist Roland Fuchs. Roland recalled working with the National Military History Museum in Vienna, where the exhibit was seen by many during Austrian National Day, and with a small cultural center in the Austrian-Croatian village of Grosswarasdorf, where folklore musicians and dancers joined in the celebration.

Through Project 175, Austrians gained a heightened awareness of the shared values and vision of peace and freedom that bind our two countries, both in official and people-to-people dimensions, despite the scars of two world wars.

DCM Brudvig said, “The exhibit captured in a visual and emotive way the historical importance and durability of U.S.-Austrian relations.”

“There were many lessons learned,” Krc said. “But for me it was that if you empower people to be creative, great things can, and did, happen.”

The exhibit’s framed documents now hang on the chancery walls, and the commemorative book remains in such demand that there will be a second printing. The project is spotlighted on the embassy’s website. ■



## FS Employees Race Atop the Great Wall

On an unseasonably cold morning in May, Foreign Service employees Monica Sendor, Kaitlin Muench and Esther McCarty ran the Great Wall Half Marathon just outside of Beijing, completing the race with times of 3:35, 3:15 and 3:04 respectively.

The U.S. Consulate General in Guangzhou employees ran the race with American flags pinned to their sleeves. Consul General Jennifer Zimdahl Galt tweeted encouragement during the race and congratulations afterward.

After a six-hour flight delay, the three arrived at their Beijing hotel around 1:30 a.m., slept for about an hour and caught the bus to the race site at 3:30 a.m., where they joined 1,748 others for a race encompassing two uphill miles, 5,164 uneven stairs of the Great Wall (roughly three miles) and eight miles through a traditional Chinese village. They said running on the up-and-down Great Wall was the most exciting part of the race. Although the race was difficult at times, the women agreed that the experience of running through China's rich history and culture was priceless.

A former U.S. ambassador to Uruguay also completed the half marathon, as did a Foreign Service colleague serving in Shenyang.



Relaxing after their Great Wall run are from left Kaitlin Muench, Monica Sendor and Esther McCarty.  
Photo courtesy of Esther McCarty



Embassy Systems Administrator June Redhead directs her team of volunteers at the cleanup.

Photo by Gabrielle Punch

## Embassy Port of Spain Mounts Park Cleanup

In June, the Green Team at the U.S. Embassy in Port of Spain engaged corporate partners and the public for its first annual cleanup of Queen's Park Savannah in commemoration of World Environment Day. The 260-acre park in the heart of Port of Spain is surrounded by the embassy, President's House, National Academy for the Performing Arts and several landmarks.

Chargé d'Affaires David Kloesel greeted hundreds of volunteers from schools, colleges, NGOs and businesses, as well as members of the diplomatic corps, and praised their spirit of volunteerism. Several recycling companies mounted displays to encourage recycling in schools, businesses and communities.

Port of Spain Deputy Mayor Keron Valentine said the initiative "added value to one of the city's best known green spaces." The principal of Queen's Royal College, David Simon, said his volunteers were "happy to be involved in such a positive event. It was important to get our young men to do something that would have positive ramifications for our country."

## Embassy Youth Wins Recipe Contest

The recipe entered by Genene Savall Wedd, 10, son of U.S. Embassy Port Louis General Services Officer Jonathan Wedd, has won an online healthy recipe contest having been chosen from among 1,500 entries from every U.S. state and territory. In July, he and his mother, Alicia Savall, joined First Lady Michelle Obama and 53 other young winners of the Healthy Lunch-time Challenge for a state dinner at the White House.

"It's fun to cook with my Mom," he said of his winning recipe for Ethiopian Kik Alitcha, a split pea stew, "it's good for my body and it reminds me of my birth country." His recipe is available with those of the other winners online at [letsmove.gov](http://letsmove.gov).



Ethiopian Kik Alitcha.

Photo courtesy of [letsmove.gov](http://letsmove.gov)

## Rio Statue Gets U.S. Colors for Fourth

The July 4 celebration at the U.S. Consulate General in Rio de Janeiro was overshadowed this year, as all attention focused on the 2014 FIFA World Cup taking place in Brazil and the Brazilian national team's quest to attain a record sixth title. But Rio Consul General John Creamer found a way to make the day special for the mission, the visiting U.S. Men's National Team and the thousands of Americans who came to Brazil as fans.

He illuminated Rio's iconic Christ the Redeemer statue in red, white and blue.

Creamer and the consulate public affairs staff worked with the Catholic Archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro and Christ the Redeemer Parish Rector Father Omar Raposo for nearly a year on the illumination project, and the lighting was set for July 4. But Brazil was to play on July 4, and when Brazil plays, the statue is bathed in yellow and green, the principal colors of the Brazilian flag.

At the last minute, all parties agreed to the illumination on July 3 instead.

"Any American who looks up and sees the Cristo in red, white and blue is going to have a special memory and a special place in his heart for the city," Creamer said.



To mark the July 4 holiday, Rio Consul General John Creamer worked with the Catholic Archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro to illuminate Rio's iconic Christ the Redeemer statue in red, white and blue.

*Photo by Mark Strah*

## Arab-American Affinity Group Formed

In May, the Department approved creation of the Arab-Americans in Foreign Affairs Agencies (AAIFAA) employee affinity group. AAIFAA Founder and Chair Jamal A. Al-Mussawi said the group is the Department's only employee-based organization concerned with the promotion, protection and utilization of the cultural, linguistic, personal and professional assets of Arab-American foreign affairs professionals.

"Given our high-priority engagements throughout the Arab world, I thought it best to take full advantage of the cultural, linguistic and other sensitivities shared commonly by Arab-Americans serving in the Department and interagency community," said Al-Mussawi, a political officer in Bratislava. "Encouraging the recruitment of Arab-Americans in our Civil and Foreign Service ranks could help increase workplace diversity, and AAIFAA will be there every step of the way, from assisting with recruitment to career development, to aid in the process of fostering greater diversity in the U.S. government."

AAIFAA is open to all Civil Service and Foreign Service employees in the Department and interagency community. More information is available from Al-Mussawi at [Al-MussawiJA@state.gov](mailto:Al-MussawiJA@state.gov).



Jamal Al-Mussawi, left, speaks with colleagues about the newly formed group Arab-Americans in Foreign Affairs Agencies.

*Photo by Brittney Austin*

## AFSA Award Winners Announced

The American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) in June announced the winners of its annual awards at an event attended by more than 250 guests at Main State. AFSA's award for constructive dissent went to Nick Pietrowicz, William O'Bryan, David Holmes and Ambassador Jonathan Addleton.

Exemplary performance award winners were Kari Osborne (for a family member), Mary Kay Cunningham (for a community liaison officer) and Carol Backman (for an office management specialist). Charles Stuart "Stu" Kennedy Jr. won the Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy award for playing the primary role in establishing and expanding the Foreign Affairs Oral History Program. Largely through his efforts, more than 1,800 oral histories are available, at [www.adst.org](http://www.adst.org).

Among the award presenters were Deputy Secretary William Burns, Under Secretary for Management Patrick Kennedy, Assistant Secretary Charles Rivkin and Ambassador Avis Bohlen. Prior winners of the Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy award attended, including ex-Senator Richard Lugar, Ambassador Joan Clark, Ambassador George Landau and Ambassador Thomas Boyatt.



Accepting AFSA's 2014 awards for constructive dissent were, from left, Raeka Safai (accepting for Nick Pietrowicz), William 'Ed' O'Bryan, Ambassador Jonathan Addleton and David Holmes.

*Photo by Joaquin Sosa/AFSA*



From left, Ryan Reynolds, who placed first among all the walkers, joins members of the winning team of walkers, including Tea Aung, Mariko Price, Apassara Kolb and Marilu Copley. (Not shown is Naoko Inoue.)

Photo by Eva Szabo

## Step Challenge Walkers Rack Up 102,000 Miles

More than 110 teams and 550 employees participated in the Office of Employee Relations' HR Step Challenge, which ran from May 5 to June 8. The competition was a low-cost, low-stress wellness pilot program that sought to make employees more active. ECA, FSI, HR, IIP, IRM and MED were invited to form teams of five. The teams—many with creative names like The Agony of de Feet, Walk'o de Mayo and Team Chris (five guys named Chris)—used pedometers to track members' daily steps as part of a virtual trek on the Pacific Crest Trail. Team and individual results were posted each week, along with a map showing the leaders' proximity to key trail landmarks such as the Bridge of the Gods, Mount Hood, Crater Lake and Lake Tahoe.

The FSI team Soyokaze-tai ("breeze troop" in Japanese) came in first, averaging 18,412 steps per day per team member, overtaking the HR Front Office's Walk the Walk team in week 4 of the competition. Ryan Reynolds, an FSO studying Thai at FSI, had the highest individual total, averaging more than 34,000 steps per day and gathering pledges of more than \$500

for a Thai orphanage on a 100,000-step day. At the event's end, Reynolds confessed, "I hate walking, but the competition got me moving. I lost over 10 pounds!"

Average daily step counts climbed each week of the competition, and 60 teams averaged more than 10,000 steps per team member per day. Collectively, participants walked more than 102,000 miles—or more than four times the circumference of the Earth.

## Baby Boom at Embassy Sarajevo

During the past year, the U.S. Embassy in Sarajevo has seen nine babies born to Foreign Service families. In two years, the number of children at post has risen more than 50 percent, said Dr. Rajesh Vyas, regional medical officer.

The babies represent nearly all major sections at post, led by the regional security office with three. The embassy has converted a small meeting space to a lactation room, with a screen, refrigerator and OpenNet computer. The post has also hired a local pediatrician for the health unit, is upgrading the health unit refrigerator to a professional vaccine refrigerator and now offers baby supplies through the post exchange. The Community Liaison Office has implemented baby playdates during lunch time.

There's also more work flexibility. "As a new mom, I had less flexibility to stay after regular work hours to finish up projects or tasks, but post approved me for mobile computing access," said Courtney Glass, assistant regional security officer. She can now leave work on time, be home to take care of her son in the evening and, if necessary, log back in and finish up any undone work.



Six of Embassy Sarajevo's recently born babies pose at the embassy's 4th of July celebration.

Photo by Ken Zurcher

## Embassy Lunch Celebrates Diversity

This year, the Locally Employed Staff Association at the U.S. Embassy in Muscat, Oman, again held an embassy-wide lunchtime celebration where LE Staff showcased their native cultures, foods and traditions. The association is comprised of Omanis, Indians, Filipinos, Sri Lankans, Jordanians, Sudanese, Egyptians, Britons and Tunisians.

The event reciprocates the American staff members' hosting of an annual traditional Thanksgiving lunch for mission employees. As the Shukran (Arabic for "thank you") lunch is held at the beginning of the summer transfer season, it also bids farewell to departing American staff and family members and welcomes new arrivals.

Since its 2012 launch, the event has grown in popularity and expanded to become a feast with delicacies from India, Sudan, Jordan and Oman. This year, employees wore traditional outfits representing different countries and cultures. Local musicians provided live Arabic music. Henna artists from Oman and Sudan tattooed attendees' hands and feet in traditional motifs. A slideshow depicted embassy events occurring over the past year.

LE Staff volunteers spent many hours planning and organizing the lunch, which helps unite the embassy community and strengthens its interactions and friendships.



Motorpool Driver Fahad Al Riyami, left, takes tea with Regional Security Officer Nick Porter.

*Photo courtesy Embassy Muscat LE Staff Association*

## Longtime Driver Retires in Singapore

In May, Chauffeur Yahya bin Rahmat, the U.S. Embassy in Singapore's longest-serving employee, retired after 43 years of service, having driven 15 ambassadors, 13 chargé d'affaires and countless VIPs around Singapore.

His brother Mohammed was chief of mission chauffeur from 1955 until he died in 1971. Ten days later, Rahmat replaced his brother as the ambassador's chauffeur. Since then, he has represented the embassy well in the local community and shared his knowledge of Singapore with embassy employees and visiting dignitaries. Previous passengers include former Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, and many Cabinet members. While in Singapore in July 2013, Vice President Joe Biden singled out Rahmat in his speech to the embassy community, thanking him for his service. At Rahmat's retirement party, hosted by the ambassador in April, several former ambassadors wished Rahmat well.

Rahmat's niece Yafaridah, Mohammed's daughter, has worked in the Financial Management Office for 20 years, which means his extended family has dedicated more than 80 years of service to the embassy.



From left, former Ambassador Ralph (Skip) Boyce, Ambassador Kirk Wagar, Yahya bin Rahmat, former Ambassador Steven Green and former Ambassador Franklin Lavin gather at the ambassador's residence in Singapore.

*Photo by Jamel Ahmed*

## Ethics Answers

**Q:** My former supervisor left the Department a month ago. This morning, she called me to discuss a problem related to a grant that her new employer received from my office. Can I talk to her?

**A:** Before discussing the grant with her, you should ask her to make sure she wouldn't be violating post-Government-employment ethics restrictions by speaking to you. (You can refer her to L/EFD if she needs guidance on this.) In this instance, it's probably OK for her to talk to you as long as she didn't personally work on this grant while a Department employee, the grant was not under her official responsibility during her last year as an employee and she was not a "senior employee" when she left the Department. ("Senior employees" are those whose base salaries exceed \$156,997.50. They are subject to a one-year "cooling off" period prohibiting them from representing others to the Department with the intent to influence official action.) Additional restrictions exist concerning advice related to trade or treaty negotiations or provided to foreign governments and political parties. Political appointees and employees involved in procurement may also face additional limitations.

Ethics Answers presents hypothetical ethical scenarios Department employees might face. For help with real ethics questions, email [ethicsattorneymailbox@state.gov](mailto:ethicsattorneymailbox@state.gov).

## FS Youths Recognized at Awards Ceremony

The annual Foreign Service Youth Awards Ceremony, held in June, honored Foreign Service children with awards for their art, essay writing, video production, community service and scholarly achievements. Children whose parents are serving or have served at an unaccompanied post were also recognized, as were awardees of the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW) Scholarship Merit Award program. The ceremony was hosted by Acting Director General Hans Klemm, the Family Liaison Office (FLO) and the Foreign Service Youth Foundation (FSYF).

Ambassador Klemm challenged awardees “to accept your awards today, not as the culmination of your efforts, but as a chance to renew your commitment to use your unique talents and life experience to build a better world.”

Winners of the FSYF Art Contest’s three age categories each received cash prizes from the State Department Federal Credit Union.

The essay contest challenged Foreign Service youths to describe, in 1,000 words or less, how being part of a Foreign Service family has affected their perspective on the world. Six winners, three in each age category, received cash prizes sponsored by McGrath Real Estate Services.

The KidVid Contest, sponsored by FSYF and the Overseas Briefing Center (OBC) of the Foreign Service Institute, asked students ages 10-18 to produce a DVD about life at an overseas post from a young person’s perspective. Winners received cash prizes. The videos become part of the OBC’s collection.

FSYF’s Community Service Contest recognizes Foreign Service youths who demonstrate outstanding volunteer efforts for their communities or peers. Two winners received cash prizes sponsored by Clements Worldwide.

FSYF also gave two high school seniors or gap-year students Academic Merit Awards, which were co-sponsored by FSYF and GEICO Federal Insurance.

Information on the FSYF and AAFSW awards programs is at FSYF.org and AAFSW.org. Since 2006, the Department has distributed medals and certificates of recognition to the children of parents serving overseas on unaccompanied assignments. To date, some 5,000 children have been recognized. Additional information about FLO’s Unaccompanied Tours program is available on the Department’s website.



FSYF awardees and contest sponsors gather with Acting Director General Hans Klemm after the ceremony.

*Photo by James Pan*

## Retirements

### Foreign Service

Ahern, Katharine.  
Alt, Eugene R.  
Barneby, Stephen A.  
Bartoletti, Marietta L.  
Boigenzahn, Betty Jean  
Boughter, Edward T.  
Bradshaw, Kevin N.  
Bultrowicz, Scott P.  
Cammer, Richard L.  
Caudill, Mark A.  
Corral, Georgette  
Demetron, Deborah F.

Edge, Diane S.  
Galloway, Thomas Lewis  
Hunter, Mark J.  
Jackson, Lee  
Lim, Tack  
Mattei, Brett Damian  
McManaway, Theresa Louise  
Perry, Jacqueline R.  
Phillips, Edward C.  
Reilly, Sharon L.  
Rutherford, Robin K.  
Smith, Charles Skipwith

### Civil Service

Armor, Joanne Graves  
Crumity, Jacqueline  
Dorsey, Wayne L.  
Farmer, Myrna Joyce-Flynt  
Field, Stephen F.  
Gates, Robert  
Gershman, Anna Schmidt  
Graham, Jacqueline M.  
Green, Royce  
Hardeman, Cynthia Ann  
Harris, Barbara Ellen  
Holloway, Mary E.  
Jenkins, Angela R.  
Jerez, Eloisa C.

Johnson, Thomas Arthur  
Krisanda, Gregory P.  
Larner, James F.  
Lemay, Rose Emma  
McDonald, Thelma B.  
Myers, Monica A.  
Nickel Jr., Jack Arthur  
Perrine, George E.  
Phillips, Mary A.  
Roach, Kenneth Leonard  
Silva, John Christian  
Verrill, Sally R.  
Vieira, Peter M.  
Walters, James M.  
Williams, Hazel L.



## Program Improves Drivers, Cuts Fatalities Overseas

By Industrial Hygienist Greg Wolfe, Office of Safety, Health and Environmental Management, Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations

In fiscal 2008, 17 posts reported 25 fatalities from government-operated vehicle (GOV) operations—nearly twice the number reported the year before. The Mishap Board Reports sent by posts to the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations' Office of Safety, Health and Environmental Management (OBO/OPS/SHEM) cited the increased risk of driving in developing countries as a cause. This was not an unreasonable assumption, given that low- and middle-income countries have fatality rates two to three times higher than the United States, according to the World Health Organization's 2013 Global Status Report

### DriveCam program

Starting in Dar es Salaam and Addis Ababa in early 2009, SHEM had VERs installed on the windshield of each GOV. The device's cameras, trained on the inside and outside of the vehicle, constantly record audio and video in a 30-second erasable loop. When the VER detects unusual force from hard braking, hard cornering, rapid acceleration or a collision, a 12-second clip is saved to the camera's internal memory, extending from eight seconds before the triggering event to four seconds after. This program, known as DriveCam, helps identify drivers who frequently follow too close, exceed the speed limit, are distracted and brake hard.

Using a set of objective safety criteria, supervisors at post screen DriveCam clips for risky behaviors by embassy drivers and other vehicles' drivers. If risky behavior is found, drivers receive coaching.

It took only a few months to see a troubling pattern. Some drivers were seen

speeding, tailgating, using cell phones, texting and not wearing seatbelts, despite safety training programs, Department and mission policies, and executive orders proscribing such behaviors.

How do such behaviors become habitual in some drivers? Part of the answer lies in the fact that risky behaviors do not always lead to collisions or other negative consequences. In fact, collisions are relatively rare compared to

risky behaviors observed at one post. Therefore, some drivers don't view these behaviors as risky and continue to practice them—until the day there is a serious collision or fatality.

To back up the supervisory review and coaching process, a safe driving award and progressive discipline policy was established at each post, helping to ensure that the right incentives are in place to encourage long-lasting changes in driving behavior.

### Cell phone risk

Some Locally Employed Staff and U.S. direct-hire drivers show multiple violations of talking and texting with cell phones. SHEM Director Dave Needham said, "Without intervention on the part of post management, we're concerned that it won't be long before one of these drivers is distracted just as a child is running across the street, and we will have another tragedy on our hands."

The DriveCam program has been expanded to 14 posts. Collectively, the posts have reduced risky driving practices by more than 65 percent. How does this translate into the Department's goal of reducing fatal crashes? In fiscal 2013, only four official vehicle fatalities were reported. The Bureau of African Affairs, with 11 posts in the program, reported no official vehicle fatalities—its first such year since 2000.

Local conditions in these countries continue to be quite challenging. U.S. government drivers, however, have changed their driving habits for the better. Addis Ababa Management Counselor Joyce Currie said, "As a manager, I feel much more in touch with what is going on since I can click on a video any time I have a question about what happened in an incident. DriveCam has become an essential part of our safety program in Addis Ababa, and the reduced number of accidents clearly indicates to me we are saving lives." ■



Embassy Addis Ababa dispatcher Ezra Fekade installs a new Video Event Recorder. Photo courtesy of SHEM

Top: Traffic jams a main street in the central business district of Dar city. Photo by Tony Naleo

on Road Safety. These countries account for 80 percent of the 1.24 million annual road fatalities, even though they have only about 50 percent of the motor vehicles.

However, closer analysis by SHEM found that 70 percent of the fatal GOV crashes occurred in just 25 posts, about 10 percent of the Department's total. Clearly, other risk factors were at play. Enter the Video Event Recorder (VER) program.

# After Hours

## Chess Master

Blind employee competes at world tourney

By Sherry Keneson-Hall, cultural affairs officer,  
U.S. Embassy in Prague

**A**lex Barrasso was 11 years old when he was first introduced to a chessboard. He was at a birthday party with friends when the conversation turned to chess. A friend was captain of the chess team, but Barrasso, completely blind since birth, had no idea what a chessboard was.

His friend's father took him into the family's house and began explaining the game and letting him feel the pieces, Barrasso recalled recently. The father then contacted the faculty advisor at Barrasso's school, who helped Barrasso locate an adapted chessboard for the blind so he could play against sighted students.

It was the start of a 30-year love affair with the game.

Chess is more than just a hobby for Barrasso. A five-time winner of the U.S. Blind Championships, he is a longtime member of the United States Braille Chess Association and a lifetime member of the United States Chess Federation. In 1990, Barrasso won first place in his rating category in the National High School Chess Championship in Kansas City. His opponents were all sighted students.

Barrasso joined the Department of State in 1999 and is currently senior political officer at the U.S. Embassy in Prague, Czech Republic. His previous tours have included Thailand, Singapore, Columbia and Brunei, where he was deputy chief of mission. No matter where he is posted, Barrasso plays chess with both American and local colleagues.

One of his regular opponents in Prague is Political-Military Affairs officer Shane Siegel. "Chess came up in conversation one day and Alex mentioned he played. I really

had to wonder, 'How does a blind guy play chess?'" Siegel recalled.

On Barrasso's special chessboard, the pieces are held on their squares with pegs so they don't get knocked over when he feels the board. The black pieces have notches on top to differentiate them from the white pieces.

"It is pretty incredible, because there are 32 pieces on a board and endless possibilities for combinations of moves," Siegel said. "Alex is just a fantastic chess player. I am an impulsive chess player, but Alex reads the literature, studies strategies and plays a very structured game. He really makes me want to play more chess so I can say some day that I fully beat him."

In May, Barrasso put his skills to the test when he became the first American in 30 years to compete in the International Braille Chess Association World Chess Championship for blind players. The competition, held every four years, took place in Katerini, Greece. He was one of 92 players from 31 countries, and

considered it an honor to be asked to represent the United States.

But he wondered how to pay for his trip and the costs for his "second," who would act as coach, trainer and guide during the tournament.

A longtime supporter of the U.S. Braille Chess Association donated \$1,000, and three other blind chess players also contributed, but more was needed. Barrasso and his wife Brenda came up with the idea of a grassroots campaign, and when it got under way, "Money was coming from a lot of different places," he said. Friends and family pitched in as well, but Barrasso was in for a real surprise when he got an offer of help from members of the embassy's Foreign Service National (FSN) Committee. The committee had read about Barrasso's coming competition in an email sent to the staff, according to committee Chairman Petr Doležel, a press assistant in the public affairs section.



Political Officers Barrasso, left, and Shane Siegel play a quick game at the embassy cafe.

Photo by Tarek Abu Sham

**"He is an amazing player with a fantastic mind. No one here could remotely play as well as Alex."**

**-Khaw Teik Kooi**



as Barrasso's wife Brenda. Brenda told Khaw her husband played chess, and Khaw, an avid chess player who has participated in many competitions, began playing against Barrasso.

They formed a lasting friendship.

"At that time, I arranged for Alex to compete in a national competition," said Khaw, the regional management and program analyst for the Transportation Safety Administration office in Singapore. "I believe it was the first time a blind chess player participated in such a competition in Singapore."

As the two played and trained together, Khaw concluded that Barrasso must rely on his photographic memory to recall the positions of the pieces on the board.

"I think that Alex is at a disadvantage because a seeing player just needs to look at the board to know all the positions of the pieces, but Alex must remember where everything is located in order to

get an overview of the board," Khaw said. "He is an amazing player with a fantastic mind. No one here could remotely play as well as Alex."

Blind players from Poland, Germany and Russia took the Gold, Silver and Bronze medals, respectively,

at the championships. Barrasso said he didn't expect to win, but he did improve his ranking.

"Though I had hoped to finish higher up in the final standings, I did not lose all my games, which according to my rating is what was supposed to happen. I got three wins and a draw," he said.

Barrasso said he was proud to represent his country at the competition and would love to compete there again. He hopes that being the first American in 30 years to compete will inspire other blind players to start training for the next international championship in 2018. "I gained experience playing at this top level of competition, which I hope will serve me and other U.S. players as we hopefully begin competing at more events like this."

Those interested in supporting competitive opportunities for blind chess players can go to [usaba.mytap.org](http://usaba.mytap.org) (link available online). ■

"Every year, the committee looks for local charities and campaigns to support, but this was the first time the FSN Committee supported an American," he said. "The committee was very enthusiastic about supporting Alex." They held a bake sale, and many local employees baked traditional Czech goods to sell. In one hour, they raised \$900.

"I was so flattered when they said they wanted to help me raise money, and then I was shocked when I found out how much they raised," Barrasso said.

Doležel said, "We were really surprised, but it was clear people wanted to help."

In Greece, Barrasso was joined by his "second," Khaw Teik Kooi, a former colleague from the U.S. Embassy in Singapore. The two met a decade ago when Barrasso was a consular officer and Khaw worked in the same section

Barrasso walks along the Vltava River in Prague.

*Photo by Tarek Abu Sham*



# Appointments

**Douglas Alan Silliman**  
U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait



**Dana Shell Smith**  
U.S. Ambassador to Qatar



**Keith M. Harper**  
U.S. Representative  
to the U.N. Human  
Rights Council



**Helen Meagher La Lime**  
U.S. Ambassador to Angola



**Mark Bradley Childress**  
U.S. Ambassador  
to Tanzania



**Brian A. Nichols**  
U.S. Ambassador  
to Peru



Check out our online magazine to watch a video message from featured ambassadors.

**Mark Bradley Childress** of Virginia is the new U.S. Ambassador to the United Republic of Tanzania. He served two terms in the White House, as President Obama's deputy chief of staff and senior counsel to President Clinton. He served in senior legal positions with the departments of Health and Human Services, Agriculture and Justice, and in multiple positions with the U.S. Congress. He also worked with nonprofit organizations and a Washington-based law firm.

**Keith M. Harper** of Maryland is the new U.S. Representative to the U.N. Human Rights Council with the rank of Ambassador. Previously, he was a partner at the law firm Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton LLP, where he was chair of the Native American Practice Group. Before that, he was a senior staff attorney for the Native American Rights Fund and Supreme Court Justice for the Poarch Band of Creek Indians. He is a member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma.

**Helen Meagher La Lime** (SFS) of the District of Columbia is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Angola. Previously, she worked on military cooperation plans in Africa as J9 director of the U.S. Africa Command in Stuttgart, Germany. Before that, she was deputy chief of mission and chargé d'affaires in South Africa. She was ambassador to Mozambique and also served in Cape Town, Rabat, N'Djamena, Zurich, Warsaw, Bern and Stuttgart.

**Brian A. Nichols** (SFS) of Rhode Island is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Peru. Previously, he was principal deputy assistant secretary and deputy assistant secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. Before that, he was deputy chief of mission in Bogotá. Other postings include director of the Office of Caribbean Affairs, Jakarta, Mexico City, San Salvador and Lima.

**Douglas Alan Silliman** (SFS) of Texas is the new U.S. Ambassador to the State of Kuwait. Previously, he was senior advisor in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs working on Iraq issues and the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit. Before that, he was deputy chief of mission and minister counselor for political affairs in Baghdad. He was DCM in Ankara and also served in Amman, Islamabad, Port-au-Prince and Tunis.

**Dana Shell Smith** (SFS) of Virginia is the new U.S. Ambassador to the State of Qatar. Previously, she was principal deputy assistant secretary for Public Affairs, and before that deputy assistant secretary for International Media. Prior to her assignments in the Bureau of Public Affairs, she was the Department's Regional Arabic Language spokesperson in Dubai. Other postings include Taipei, Amman, Tel Aviv/Gaza and Cairo.

# WHAT IS GOING THROUGH THE MIND OF POLITICAL OFFICER BOYD FLAXTON...



AGGELER 2014

# Obituaries



**Richard H. "Dick" Adams**, 89, a retired Foreign Service officer, died April 30 in San Antonio, Texas. He served in the Navy before joining the Foreign Service. His postings included London, Cape Town, Pretoria, Cairo, Beirut, Benghazi and Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. After retiring, he worked at the Defense Language Institute in San Antonio.



**Billy D. "Bill" Feely**, 60, a retired Foreign Service specialist, died May 29 in South Florida. He served in the Army in Germany before joining the Foreign Service in 1984. His postings included Thailand, the Soviet Union, Argentina, Indonesia, France, Jerusalem and the Florida Regional Center, where he worked in information management.



**Robert V. "Bob" Gildea**, 91, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Nov. 25, 2013, of Parkinson's disease at his home in Arlington, Va. He served in the Army Air Corps during World War II, and joined the U.S. Information Agency in 1954. He served in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War and Germany. He was known for his good humor and spirit of fun.



**Donald Y. Gilmore**, 90, a retired Foreign Service officer, died June 17. He lived in Concord, N.H. He served in the Navy during World War II. His postings included Senegal, Morocco, Tunisia, Belgium, India and Colombia. He also worked at VOA and as deputy assistant director of USIA. After retiring, he was an escort-interpreter for State Department cultural exchanges. He co-edited a book on archaeology, lectured on rock art of the Sahara, climbed mountains in New Hampshire and hiked in Switzerland and the Grand Canyon.



**Byron "Leo" Hudkins**, 52, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Jan. 2. He grew up in the Foreign Service and joined the Department in 1986, serving in Bogotá, Brussels, Bangkok and Tokyo. He retired in 2012 as a career development officer. He was an avid fan of Indiana University basketball and the Chicago Bears and Cubs. He enjoyed spending time with family.



**Vladimir M. Korchak**, 89, a retired Civil Service employee, died May 29 of heart failure at his home in Wilmington, N.C. Born in Russia, he came to America in 1949 and taught Russian at the Army Language School in Monterey, Calif. From 1951 to 1976, he worked as an editor on the State Department magazine *Amerika*, also known as *America Illustrated*.



**Donald Lachman**, 88, a retired Foreign Service officer, died July 6 of natural causes. He lived in San Antonio, Texas. His postings included Karachi, Nairobi and Moscow. He retired in 1986, and was active in his community of Frederick, Md., particularly with the volunteer fire department, before moving to Texas. He wrote an autobiographical book about the bombing of Pearl Harbor.



**Hallock R. Lucius**, 85, a retired Foreign Service officer, died June 6 in Arlington, Va., of dementia and complications from a fall. He lived in McLean, Va. He served in the Army Air Corps in Japan, and joined the Foreign Service in 1958. His postings included Karachi, Peshawar, Stuttgart, Lagos, Bangkok, Dar es Salaam, Dhahran, New Delhi and Toronto. After retiring, he worked for the Department's Office of the Inspector General and taught export promotion courses at FSI.



**Donald A. Mahley**, 71, a retired deputy assistant secretary, died March 1 of pancreatic cancer at his home in Vienna, Va. A retired Army colonel, he became the Department's chief nonproliferation negotiator with the rank of ambassador. He negotiated in the fields of both chemical and biological weapons. He retired in 2008, but continued to work part-time, most recently as lead negotiator of the Arms Trade Treaty. He loved animals, fantasy baseball, theater and the Chicago Cubs.



**Edward E. Masters**, 89, a retired Foreign Service officer, died March 21 at his home in Washington, D.C., of a heart attack after a long illness. He served in the Army during World War II, and joined the Department in 1950. He was ambassador to Bangladesh and Indonesia, and also served in Heidelberg, Karachi, Madras and Bangkok. After retiring in 1981, he taught at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and John Hopkins' School of Advanced International Studies. He was also president of the National Planning Association and U.S.-Indonesia Society.



**Stephanie C. Perry**, 95, a retired Department employee, died June 30 of natural causes at her home in Washington, D.C. She served with the American Red Cross in Italy during World War II, and joined the Department in 1948. She was an international relations officer specializing in Middle Eastern Affairs, and served as special assistant to Under Secretary Herbert Hoover Jr. She retired in 1979.



**George Peterson**, 90, a retired Foreign Service officer, died June 11 in Boca Raton, Fla. He served in the Army during World War II and joined the Department in 1948. His postings included Bolivia, Colombia, France, the Philippines, Venezuela, Korea, Fiji, Ireland, Ecuador, Okinawa, England, Mexico, Jamaica and Cuba. After retiring in 1987 to Boca Raton, he enjoyed sports, jazz, art, politics and writing short stories and songs.



**Mildred E. Rodstrom**, a retired Foreign Service executive secretary, died March 26 of natural causes at her home in Altadena, Calif. She served in the Women's Army Corps during World War II and joined the Department in 1956. Her postings included Guatemala, Japan, Ethiopia, Yugoslavia, Peru, Argentina, Uruguay, Nepal and Romania. After retiring in 1981, she enjoyed being a docent, traveling, reading, volunteering and donating to charitable organizations.



**Margaret Skeryo**, 87, a retired Foreign Service officer, died June 28 in Washington, Pa. She joined the Foreign Service in 1962, and served in Bonn (twice), Hong Kong, Vienna, Singapore and Nairobi. She retired in 1984 to Bethel Park, Pa., and enjoyed spending time with family, especially her great nephews and nieces.



**Elaine D. Smith**, 89, a retired Foreign Service officer, died June 6 in Potomac, Md. She joined the Department in 1947, and served in Tehran, Wellington, Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir, where she was consul general. She retired in 1982 and lived in Washington, D.C. She wrote a book on Turkey.



**Francis B. "Frank" Tenny**, 93, a retired Foreign Service officer, died April 5 in Exeter, N.H., of complications of dementia. He was a military intelligence officer during World War II, and joined USIA in 1950. His postings included Surabaya, Bangkok, Kobe and Tokyo. Later, he was executive director of the Japan-United States Friendship Commission. After retiring to Barton, Vt., in 1983, he founded the Vermont-Japan Society, farmed and translated early 20th-century Japanese novels into English.

*Questions concerning employee deaths should be directed to the Office of Casualty Assistance at (202) 736-4302. Inquiries concerning deaths of retired employees should be directed to the Office of Retirement at (202) 261-8960. For specific questions on submitting an obituary, please contact Bill Palmer at palmerwr2@state.gov or (202) 203-7114.*



Germany



Austria



# End State

## Germany Pg. 26

A boy splashes through fountains in a downtown Frankfurt plaza dedicated to German writer, artist and politician Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who was born in the city.

*Photo by Isaac D. Pacheco*

## Austria Pg. 28

The Upper Belvedere in Vienna is one of two Baroque palaces located in a building complex that historically served as the summer residence for Prince Eugene of Savoy.

*Photo by Franz Jachim*

## Japan Pg. 3

Residents, tourists, commuters and business people rush to their destinations across the intersection at Shibuya Crossing, one of Tokyo's busiest thoroughfares.

*Photo illustration by Isaac D. Pacheco*

## Romania Pg. 3

Snow-covered peaks provide a dramatic backdrop for the city of Sibiu, located in central Romania in the southern part of Transylvania.

*Photo by Camil Ghircoias*





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Bureau of Human Resources  
Washington, DC 20520

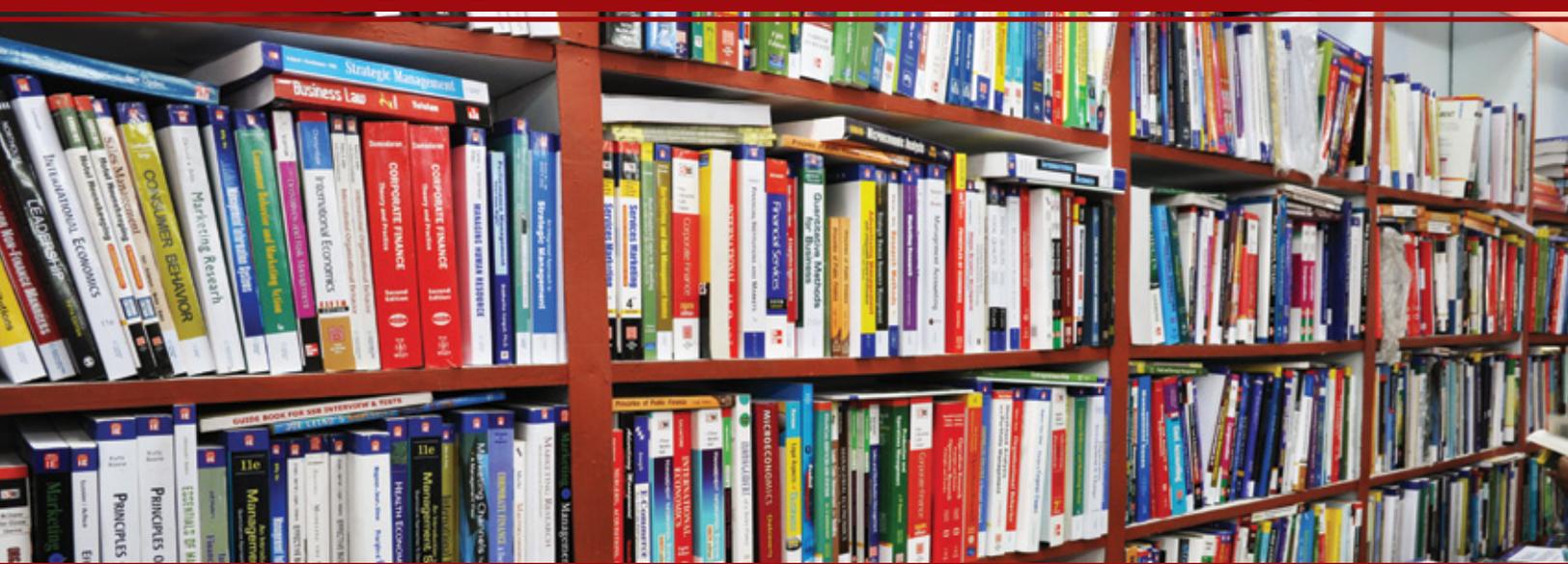
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The Art & BookFair of the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide in the Main State Exhibit Hall will offer thousands of used books, paintings, art, textiles and more.

For Department badge holders, spouses and escorted guests, BookFair will be open Oct. 10 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and on Oct. 14 through Oct. 17 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Prices are cut by half from 9:00 a.m. to noon Oct. 20.

The public is welcome on Oct. 11-12 and Oct. 18-19 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Visa, Discover, Mastercard, cash and checks will be accepted.