



## A-SMYLE Newsletter

### American Serbia and Montenegro Youth Leadership Exchange Program

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## A-SMYLE Students Participate in National FFA Convention and Leadership Workshops

On October 22-25, 50,000 FFA members from around the country attended the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana. Amongst them were A-SMYLErs Stefan Nikolic, Milan Andrejevic, Iva Filipovic, Miljana Kosovac, Nevena Manic, and Ildikó Zsoldos.

The convention included leadership workshops, business sessions, competitions, and a career show. During the convention, Tom Zupancic, Indianapolis Colts senior vice president of sales and marketing, spoke about being a champion in life and advised, "You've got to have goals, plan for the future, and be willing to work."

Said Ildikó Zsoldos about the conference, "It was a good opportunity to build our friendships with different kids. Every time we are together with the exchange students, I feel like we are a family."

Zsoldos was particularly impressed by the many practical activities offered at the convention, like a trip to a local landfill to study ecology and humans' impact on the environment. Commenting on what the city of Indianapolis is doing to reduce its impact, Zsoldos stated, "It was good to understand the method they use there. They had a greenhouse next to the landfill so that they can use the gases [that] come from the landfill."

Curt Stutzman, the president of World Link—the students' Placement Organization—had this to say of his time at the convention: "It is a great experience for international students to be a part of such a big, student-run organization and see what is possible if young people work together."

The FFA mission is to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education.



*World Link students at the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana in October 2008*

## All-Alumni Conference

Dear Alumni,

American Councils is planning an alumni conference for mid-May. This conference will be open to alumni from all generations of A-SMYLE, and we hope that many of you will attend. And the fun part is that we need YOUR help to plan it.

To tell us your views, please take our Alumni Summit Questionnaire by visiting American Councils' alumni page at [www.ac-see.org/alumni/A-SMYLE/news.htm](http://www.ac-see.org/alumni/A-SMYLE/news.htm).

This survey will help us examine what activities you are interested in participating in during the conference so that we can make it as effective as possible.

Please complete the survey by February 28. It takes *less than 5 minutes* to complete, so you really have no excuse.



We look forward hearing your ideas for the conference!

*Thanks!*  
American Councils



*Milena Koprivica and Milica Djukanovic (left) present to a class while Jelena Jezdimirovic takes a moment to pose near a sign announcing her upcoming presentation.*



## A-SMYLEers Take International Education Week by Storm

International Education Week (IEW) this year proved to be quite...well, educational for the many privileged enough to know an A-SMYLE student. From November 17-21, 2008, roughly 9,100 Americans walked away from a cultural presentation with a much better knowledge of Montenegro, Serbia, and, in some cases, the history of the entire Balkan region!

A-SMYLE students gave a combined total of 293 presentations, averaging nearly 6 per person. Some, like Stefan Trajkovic, gave more, however. The town of Matthews, North Carolina (population 22,127, according to the 2000 US Census) got Trajkovic's presentation 19 times, making it likely the most knowledgeable town on the subject of Serbia per capita in the entire southeast region of the United States.

He wrote of the experience: "I was surprised indeed!!! Students were amazed by the presentation and Serbia. Teachers even asked me to give some more presentations to their classes. It is remarkable how Americans are interested in other cultures and lifestyles. Both teachers and students liked the way I presented my country, and some students said that they wanted to visit Serbia! I think that I will continue giving presentations until the end of the school year!"

Some A-SMYLE students, like Daniela Kurfis, were not the only international students in their school to give IEW presentations. "International Education Week was awesome!!!" Kurfis exclaimed. "In my school there are five exchange students, from China, Germany, Slovakia, Serbia, and Mexico. Between November 19-20, everybody had a table, and there we showed our national food, music, and flag. [Our classmates] liked Serbian music, especially the rap. I also brought from home teenage magazines, and I showed them too, and American kids really liked it."

Back at home, A-SMYLE alumni took part in IEW activities as well. In Montenegro, Alumni Coordinator,

Ivan Vuksanovic organized an essay competition for 8th graders in the town of Kolasin on the subject of "Why the United States is Known as the Land of Opportunity".

To hand out the prizes—English books with handwritten notes from the US Ambassador to Montenegro, H.E. Roderick Moore—two representatives from the US Embassy in Podgorica attended an awards ceremony. There they listened to the competition winners read their essays. They also gave a presentation to the audience on the educational opportunities in America available to Montenegrin students. See the US Embassy's website for details on the event: [http://podgorica.usembassy.gov/kolasin\\_essay.html](http://podgorica.usembassy.gov/kolasin_essay.html)

All in all, it appears international education was well-represented this year. Way to go, everyone!



*Young Iowa students learning about the break-up of Yugoslavia during IEW from Ildikó Zsoldos*



## A-SMYLE Student Takes Top Prize

On October 11, 2008, Nikola Vitas walked into Regis Jesuit High School in Denver, Colorado—along with over fifty of his classmates from Boulder High School—to attend the state’s first Model United Nations Conference of the new school year. Later that day, he walked out with a first-place award. Vitas and his teammate, James, won best delegation for their efforts in representing Russia at the conference.

Model United Nations (Model UN for short) is a simulation of the real United Nations, and it is organized at both the high school and college level by The United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA), a non-profit organization. Various Model UN conferences are held throughout the year, each with a different theme on which participants debate. The themes of this conference were illicit arms trafficking and maritime security.

Said Vitas about his experience thus far with Model UN, “I feel that [Model

UN] is improving my skills as a public speaker and my debating skills as well as expanding my vocabulary immensely. For each MUN conference, students are supposed to conduct individual research in order to successfully present the views of their selected countries. Although one might not always agree with the views of the selected country, that only helps students adjust to compromises and critical thinking.”

Serious debate was not all Vitas took from his time in Denver, however. “I got to meet a lot of people, and that is the best thing [about] conferences and one of the main points: bringing people together,” he said about his experience.

Fresh off his win, Vitas began preparing for the next conference, on November 8th, where he and his MUN partner James represented the country of Libya. He was undeterred, however, by the prospect of playing the part of a country that had its own real-life confrontations with the United Nations in the early



*The Russian Delegation: Nikola Vitas (right) and his teammate, James.*

1990s over the country’s part in the 1988 Lockerbie bombing: “That is another great thing: people get to represent various countries’ opinions regardless of what their opinions are. It is great role-playing and really improves one’s debating capabilities. I only hope that I will get to represent Serbia in one of these conferences.”

*For more information on UNA-USA, visit [www.unausa.org](http://www.unausa.org).*



that we made for each one of them,” reported Vastag.

The project was co-organized by “Phoenix”, a group founded by Vastag and her friends, and the local Malteser Organization. Both groups work on similar projects: helping people with special needs, such as the homeless, elderly, and other vulnerable groups in Zrenjanin, like children.

While the kids of “Djordje Jovanovic” were well-entertained by their visitors, as it always happens, it was actually Vastag, Jovanovic, and their band of merry-makers who walked away from the experience feeling thankful and imbibed with the Christmas spirit.

Said Vastag of the experience, “My friends never thought that being a volunteer can be so fun...This was a very nice project, and when I say that we had so much fun and that we made some new friends, I know that I speak for all of my friends.”

## A Reversal of Roles for Two Alumni and Their Friends



In an effort to hit the city of Zrenjanin, Serbia with the one-two punch of Thanksgiving and Christmas, often acutely felt in the United States, alumni Tea Vastag and Boris Jovanovic and their friends organized a day of merriment for the children in Zrenjanin’s hospital “Djordje Jovanovic”.

“For this day we dressed up as fairy tale characters [and] gave them a short play of Cinderella. We painted, made angels, and played with toys. They all had a chance to paint their angel and put it on a Christmas tree. At the end we gave them presents



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FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION  
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ADVANCING EDUCATION SINCE 1974

1776 Massachusetts Ave, NW #700  
Washington, DC 20036  
Tel: 202-833-7522  
Fax 202-833-7523  
www.americancouncils.org  
swallace@americancouncils.org

A-SMYLE Blog  
a-smyle.blogspot.com



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Check out ECA's great new ways  
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<http://connect.state.gov>  
<https://alumni.state.gov/landing-page>

## OVERSEAS CONTACTS

<http://www.ac-see.org/>

### American Councils—Belgrade Office

Kraljice Natalije 68/8  
Belgrade, Serbia 11000  
Tel: +381 11 2657 354  
Tel: +381 11 2657 362  
Fax: +381 11 2646 025

[www.americancouncils.org.yu/belgrade.php](http://www.americancouncils.org.yu/belgrade.php)  
[cassandra@americancouncilssee.org](mailto:cassandra@americancouncilssee.org)  
[elizabeth@americancouncilssee.org](mailto:elizabeth@americancouncilssee.org)  
[sanja@americancouncilssee.org](mailto:sanja@americancouncilssee.org)  
[vesna@americancouncilssee.org](mailto:vesna@americancouncilssee.org)  
[alumnisr@americancouncilssee.org](mailto:alumnisr@americancouncilssee.org)

### American Councils—Podgorica Office

Univerzitet Crne Gore - Rektorat  
Cetinjski put bb  
81 000 Podgorica  
Montenegro  
Tel: + 382 20 241 777  
Mobile: + 382 69 312 032  
Fax: + 382 20 242 301

[www.americancouncils.org.yu/podgorica.php](http://www.americancouncils.org.yu/podgorica.php)  
[podgorica@americancouncilssee.org](mailto:podgorica@americancouncilssee.org)  
[alumnimn@americancouncilssee.org](mailto:alumnimn@americancouncilssee.org)

## Small Grants Application Deadline February 28th

Another round of small grants for A-SMYLE alumni has started, so it's time to get your gears cranking and send us your fantastic ideas!

Here are the details:

- The deadline for submissions is February 28.
- Individual grant projects may be submitted for up to \$250 and group projects for up to \$3,000.
- The deadline for completion of the project is August 31.
- Application forms are available on our website: [www.ac-see.org/alumni.htm](http://www.ac-see.org/alumni.htm).

If February 28th is approaching too fast for you, but you would still like to do a project for Global Youth Service Day in April, American Councils will have another small grants round starting in March. Stay tuned for details!