



A-SMYLE Newsletter

American Serbia and Montenegro Youth Leadership Exchange Program

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A-SMYLE-rs Arrive for the 2008-2009 School Year

Three groups of in-bound Serbian and Montenegrin students arrived at Dulles International Airport on August 12, 22, and 27, 2008. They are the fourth group to participate in A-SMYLE, the American Serbia and Montenegro Youth Leadership Exchange Program, funded by the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). The students spent one night in Washington, DC before heading off to settle into their new host communities.

Said Amy Schulz, Program Officer for ECA's Youth Programs Division, "I very much enjoyed meeting the incoming A-SMYLE students. We are proud of them and hope they will

get involved in their communities, make many American friends, develop their leadership skills, and share their country and culture with the Americans they meet."



Amy Schulz and former American Councils Program Officer Shanley Pinchotti meet students at Dulles International Airport on August 21, 2008.

Tilden Resident Sets to Work

The town of Tilden, Nebraska got more than it expected this year when Aleksandra Masulovic, from Montenegro, and her Host Sister, Yulduz Sabirova, an exchange student from Turk-

menistan, arrived this August. Kicking off their required thirty hours of community service, Aleksandra and Yulduz set to work painting the community's playground equipment, an act that gained them notoriety in Tilden's local newspaper.

Aleksandra, 16, is adapting well to her new environment. Coming from a city of 65,000, the town

of Tilden—population of just over 1,000—was quite an adjustment.

However, Aleksandra was optimistic. As she told The Tilden Citizen/Meadow Grove News, "The time here is running and I want to spend it in the best possible way. I want to have more friends, so when I come back home part of my life will still be here."



Aleksandra paints playground equipment in Tilden, NE





Iowa Student Meets former VP Al Gore

When Iva Filipovic arrived in Albia, Iowa from her hometown of Nis, Serbia, she didn't realize that she would have a front-row seat to the 2008 American Presidential election.

With Iowa's Lieutenant Governor for a Host Grandmother and an Albia High School government teacher and active campaigner as a Host Father, Iva has received more exposure to American politics than even most American citizens can claim, including having dinner with former Vice President Al Gore and

Iowa Senator Tom Harkin. As anyone who follows politics in the US knows, Iowa holds a special place in the Presidential race. It's here that the Democratic and Republican Parties' begin their campaigning every four years, and this fall, as the 2008 race has headed toward the finish line, Iva has had the opportunity to see why Iowa holds such a special place in American politics: its active citizens and the seriousness with which they view their role in elections and in society.



Iva riding with dignitaries to an outdoor birthday bash for Sen. Harkin in central Iowa on September 14th.



Nick squeegee-ing a window during a recent church power-wash

Community Service in Action

Twenty tires, two refrigerators, and more bottles and cans than could possibly be counted was not all that Nikola Jovanovic, placed in Altoona, Iowa, got from his experience cleaning up the recently-flooded Des Moines River with his local football team.

Reflecting on his community service, which included both the river clean-up and efforts to revive his local church grounds during a power-wash one weekend, Nick expressed satisfaction with the work he had done. "It was new and refreshing experience which made me feel very good about myself, for helping and making life easier for those people that I go to church with, for those people who lost so many things in flood."

Though mucking around in dirt and grime probably isn't most teenagers' idea of a good time, Nick enjoyed the experience.

"[What] I loved the most was the fact that I was actually having fun while I was doing my community service, and it was definitely not as boring as I thought it would be. I guess that was just an opinion I had because I lived in a place where volunteerism is not appreciated as much as it is in here."



New Alumni Coordinators

After a difficult selection process, American Councils selected two new Alumni Coordinators for A-SMYLE: Ivan Vuksanovic and Jelena Jovanovic. Both ACs kicked off the new program year by attending the Alumni Coordinator Training Conference in Moscow this September.

Montenegro

AC Ivan will be responsible for organizing and activating our growing alumni network in Montenegro.

While on program from 2006-2007 in Durham, North Carolina, Ivan earned many certificates—in the fields of civic education, economics, international relations, and English language and American literature. He was an active representative of his country and worked hard to inform his community about Montenegro and learn more about the people, government, culture, and world view of the United States and its citizens.

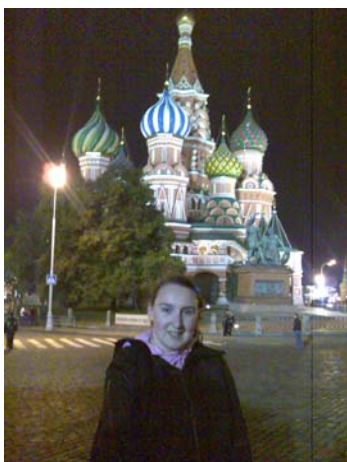
Since his return home in summer 2007, Ivan has worked with local NGOs and even volunteered his time as a translator for a local real

estate agency, which was under pressure by a large presence of foreign investors.

Ivan is currently in his last year of high school and, in addition to his responsibilities as an Alumni Coordinator, is preparing for university and a career in law and foreign affairs.



Ivan presenting his country of Montenegro at the Alumni Coordinator Training Conference.



Jelena, in front of the Kremlin, taking a break from the conference.

Serbia

Also an alumna of A-SMYLE 2006-2007, Jelena, Serbia's new Alumni Coordinator, returned to her home of Belgrade in the summer of 2007 to finish her final year of high school. She is now a student at Belgrade University and majors in security studies.

While in the US, Jelena attended various seminars and conferences on leadership and community involvement. With the support of her Host Family, she was able to accomplish a

great deal, including winning third place in a University-organized mathematics competition and participating in Future Farmers of America (FFA) and two additional, school-run organizations.

Because of her involvement in such organizations, Jelena has had a lot of experience in peer-to-peer education. She hopes to use this to her advantage as Alumni Coordinator for Serbia.



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Reception with the US Ambassador in Montenegro

On July 25th, A-SMYLE alumni in Montenegro met with the US Ambassador to the country, H.E. Roderick Moore. A special reception was hosted at his residence in Podgorica.



A-SMYLE recruits and alumni pose with the US Ambassador to Montenegro.

Ambassador Moore and his staff spoke with A-SMYLE alumni as well as with students who were preparing to leave for the US to begin the 2008-2009 school year with A-SMYLE.

The event was covered by the Montenegro Times, Montenegro's first English-language newspaper, as well as posted on the Embassy's website: http://podgorica.usembassy.gov/montenegrin_exchange_students_share_their_experience_in_the_u.s.html.