



WINTER - SPRING 2010

U.S. EMBASSY IN ASHGABAT - QUATERLY NEWSLETTER

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CHRISTMAS FAIRYTALES IN AMERICAN CORNERS



Turkmenabat Christmas Celebration

Christmas is a magical time when dreams come true, and people forgive each other so all can be happy.

I do enjoy this time when we can really believe in delightful things that are able to change our lives, filling us with precious memories that stay in our hearts. After experiencing Christmas celebrations in the United States, I was inspired to continue this tradition in my country – Turkmenistan. With the help of American Corner volunteers and alumni, we created a Christmas celebration to bring happiness to visitors at the American Corner Turkmenabat (ACT).

In order to celebrate the Christmas holiday in an American tradition I, Lachyn Italmazova '09, Ali Hamrayev '09, Sabina Saburova '09, and AC volunteers organized an entertainment program which was full of dances, plays, games and fun on December 26 at the American Corner Turkmenabat. The theme of Christmas party was Ball-Masquerade for which a classic style of clothing was requested. Thus, everyone could feel another American tradition when gentlemen wore nice tuxedo and ladies wore beautiful dresses. More than seventy visitors came to the celebration, and Kachara Beshimova '09, Maksat Aliyev '09, Bahar Altieyeva '09, Ena Yagmurova '07 presented as well.

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Merry Mary Christmas

Through the work of the alumni of the Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX) in the Mary American Corner, the Turkmen community is getting involved and is learning about American culture and traditions via community service activities of the Mary American Corner.

In recent years, volunteers contributed by being part of Let's Make a Difference Club, AC in Action Club, Do Something Club. Their names keep changing, but the concepts revolve around one goal: to benefit to the community. Turkmen alumni arranged visits to the Senior House, the Orphanage, the Disabled People's House,

and local kindergartens. The Mary American Corner and FLEX alumni created clubs and classes for kids and teenagers, collected donations, and organized clean ups, educational projects and summer camps among other projects.

On Christmas Eve, five alumni from the Mary region organized an American holiday celebration at the Mary American Corner. Rozalina Akopyan '09, Aleksey Koval '09, Sadap Rahmanova '09, Merjen Sopiyeva '09 and Jennet Berdiyeva '09, helped 35 visitors to experience a Christmas Celebration based on the personal experiences and new ideas of FLEX alumni. Entering the room

See MARY, page 2

CHRISTMAS FAIRYTALES IN AMERICAN CORNERS

MARY

Continued from page 1

students viewed sparkling and shining decorations, some of which were made by the members of the Handmade Club. Throughout two previous months, a Theater Club was conducted for the purpose of arranging a small musical, "Elf," based on the movie. Eleven Mary American Corner volunteers acted out short skits: "Santa in the Turkmen Chimney" and "Exotic Christmas Celebration." One week before the party, the alumni announced a contest for the best handmade Christmas stocking. The winner was recognized by independent judges. The most entertaining part of the evening was playing games and exchanging presents. Everybody was kneeling down under the Christmas tree, "stealing" one another's presents. Everyone was happy about spending time together in such happy and interesting community.



Rozalina Akopyan '09 and Jennet Berdiyeva '09 are sorting out donated Christmas presents and juices for Senior House and Orphanage

The Christmas celebration was fun and educational, and it also was a time when new visitors could come to the American Corner and learn about our community service programs.

Every month visitors to the Mary American Corner increases. Performing community service inspires and encourages youth. Therefore, alumni, along with

approximately fifteen American Corner volunteers organized a double-drive-juice and sweets among six local schools and American Corner visitors. The target of the month was to have gifts for 160 children from the local orphanage, for people from Handicapped People and for Senior House for Christmas and New Year holidays. For two weeks AC in Ca-

tion Club students were distributing information on the donation opportunity in high schools, and they hung up a big poster in the American Corner hallway, where visitors could put their donations. Mary American Corner collected 215 juice boxes and 70 chocolate bars, 14 kilograms of fruit, 15 kilograms of sweets, 80 packets of presents, and three big cakes.

While visiting the Senior House, volunteers performed a dance, shared Christmas stories and played games with kids in the orphanage.

In connection and cooperation with alumni living farther from the city, students from the rural regions visited the Disabled People's House and performed a Christmas play.

The best way to improve personality and individualism is by being a part of progressive society.

Rozalina Akopyan,
FLEX '09

TURKMENABAT

Continued from page 1

At the beginning of the program, Alexander Kazakov and I opened the Christmas party narrating Christmas traditions and then announced the first performance. The participants performed a classic charmed dance, "Time to Say Goodbye," with music by Andrea Bocelli. The group had been practicing for two months. Everyone was engrossed by seeing how calmly and gracefully the dance was performed. After that was the Christmas play, "How Nick Became a Saint," which was funny and inspirational story about a man who discovered happiness on Christmas. The play demonstrated a good lesson for everyone on how to value vital things and to realize the meaning of true happiness. There were several entertaining modern dances by AC volunteers which were pleasant as well.

Ali Hamrayev '09, held a quiz with questions concerning Christmas, and whoever answered the most received gifts. After the performances, I announced the actors of the play, who were awarded with gifts and applause. We played several games, such as "Love Story," best dance, and best singer during the celebration. One of them was my favorite which, I think, everybody played with pleasure.

In this game the winner was the person who read the most sincere love poem. The end of Christmas Celebration was a unique moment of choosing the Christmas King and Queen, and it was definitely a pleasant and fun time. After counting the votes, Lyudmila and Boris were proclaimed Christmas Queen and King. Afterward, all couples danced to classic music. Of course, in our Christmas celebration was Santa Claus who appeared at the end of all performances. Everyone had an opportunity to take pictures with Santa and to tell him their wishes which he promised to grant. Santa Claus



Christmas Performance in Turkmenabat American Corners



Juice Drive to the Local Orphanage, Mary

was so active and energetic during the Christmas party that he even started to dance the Macarena, and then everybody joined him.

So that was how we celebrated Christmas, and I do hope that you have enjoyed reading about it, because it was one of the best times I have ever had. The celebration brought a lot of positive moments into our lives. One visitor, Ramazan Mirzoyev, said; "My favorite part of Christmas was Santa dancing Macarena. Generally everything was awesome, thanks to everyone who did it." After the celebration, we created a poster of pictures taken from Christmas party in order to save all our memories, and that's how we will preserve the tradition for next year.

Lachyn Italmazova,
FLEX '09

CHRISTMAS FAIRYTALES IN AMERICAN CORNERS

Dashoguz Fairytale

What does Christmas mean to you? Christmas for us signifies family and friends getting together, dreams coming true, miracles happening, snow falling, coffee and pancakes' baking... hmmm... yummy!

We are happy to share with you the way we celebrated the Christmas Holiday, here in Dashoguz. A week before the holiday, "Living Newspaper" and "Santa's Mail Box" were put by the FLEX Alumni and Leadership Development Team at the Dashoguz American Corner, so daily visitors could express their congratulations, wishes, and messages to their friends and acquaintances from American Corner. Our Christmas started on December 25, early in the morning. FLEX Alumni: Tatiana Djiganshina '05, Muhammet Hanov '09, Ahmed Hojayev '03, Vatan Hojayev '05, Alisa Ilyasova '07, and Anahan Seytmedova '08, organized a Christmas Breakfast at the Dashoguz American Corner for volunteers and visitors. FLEX Alumni baked pancakes for



Play by FLEX alumni "Morozko Remix", Ashgabat

a potluck, and watched the movie *Home Alone* together. This is just how our Christmas Holiday started. The celebration continued at four o'clock, the purpose of which was to express empathy between the Christmas Holiday that is celebrated in U.S. and the New Year in Turkmenistan. Fifty six interested visitors attended this big event. Entertaining games, activities, and contests took place, such as "Best Christmas and New

Year's Song", "Best Poem and Congratulations" and "Best Christmas and New Year Collage". During the celebration, American Corner activist Alexander Ibragimov and Muhammet Hanov '09 organized "BRAIN RING" – an intellectual game for attendees; all questions for "BRAIN RING" were related to the Christmas and New Year themes. On January 13, miracles continued happening. Anahan Seytmedova, Dashoguz American

Corner Alumni Assistant, organized an opening ceremony of the "Santa's Mail Box", the letters and messages were distributed to the addressees. This is how we celebrated Christmas 2009. We invite you to our next Celebration, and to our St. Valentine's Day Celebration, planned for February 12, 2010 at the Dashoguz American Corner.

Anahan Seytmedova, FLEX '08



"Snowflakes dance", Ashgabat

Celebrating seasonal holidays in Ashgabat

On January 8th, 2010 over 35 FLEX alumni organized a concert dedicated to winter holidays.

Over 200 people came to the concert which was called "New Year Dreams". The concert was opened by Carter Johnson (Director of ACCELS) who congratulated with holiday season all public and wished FLEX alumni to continue working with community. The main goal

of this event was to spread the holiday spirit into community and raise people's awareness of blind school. The event included several New Year dances, plays and the raffle. Visitors had a chance to listen to songs such as: "Change the game", "Christmas party" and "Happy New Year". During the event, a donation box was passed around where money was collected from the general public to go to the blind children school in the city of Ashgabat and by the end of the event a total of \$ 100 USD was raised. (The average salary in Turkmenistan is \$200 USD).

Kristina Kalinka, FLEX '07



Dashoguz Love Story

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

~1 Cor 13:4-7~

Every February, across the world, candy, flowers, and gifts are exchanged between lovers, all in the name of St. Valentine. That is also what we do here, in Dashoguz. On February 12, Anahan Seytmedova, Dashoguz American Corner Alumni Assistant, together with FLEX Alumni and Leadership Development Team, organized a St. Valentine's Day Celebration. The big event was held at the Dashoguz American Corner for 14 couples and 20 other interested visitors. A week before the event, group of FLEX Alumni and Leadership Development Team prepared for the celebration by decorating the American Corner, organizing a schedule of the celebration events, distributing tickets, and putting the "Love Box 2010" at the Dashoguz American Corner. Each couple that was invited to the celebration had to act out the part of a famous pair of lovers. For example, our couples played Cleopatra and Caesar, Aladdin and Jasmine, Tristan and Isold, Napoleon and Josephine, Shrek and Fiona, etc. The God of Love, Cupid, was invited to the celebration as well. The main goal of the celebration was to introduce Dashoguz Youth with the individual

ST. VALENTINE'S DAY

way of celebration St. Valentine's Day through involving them in activities and contests. First of all, FLEX Alumni, Anahan Seytmedova '08 and Muhammet Hanov '09 introduced audience with history background of St. Valentine's Day. The celebration consisted many interesting and entertaining activities, performances, and big contests such as "The Best Declaration of Love", "The Best Performance", "The Best St. Valentine's Day Costume", and "The King and Queen". All winners received prizes. In addition, entertaining games, and dances happened. The most anticipated activity of the celebration was the opening ceremony regarding the "Love Box 2010". Addressees received their letters. At the end, Cupid thanked everybody who came to this celebration of Love. We want to say that no matter who are you, an Alumni or a volunteer, no matter where are you, in U.S. or in Turkmenistan... Do not be afraid to show your attention and feeling to each other.

Anahan Seytmedova,
FLEX '08



Valentine's Day at Mary

It was Valentine's Day - the holiday which most English speaking countries, including the United States of America, celebrate on February 14.

Three FLEX Alumni of 2009: Merjen Sopyyeva, Rozalina Akopyan, and Jennet Berdiyeva, drawing upon their own experiences in America, organized the Winter Ball for visitors at the Mary American Corner. Two weeks before Valentine's Day, a heart-shaped Love Box was put in Mary American Corner. Anyone could put an anonymous letter or card expressing

love and appreciation for another in the box. Cards were given out by show leaders on day of the event. The ball opened with "Val's Dance," organized by Jennet Amanova, the leader of the Mary American Corner. She served as a community volunteer during the Dance Club. In previous months the American Corner held a Theatre Club. Jennet Berdiyeva '09 conducted this club. She directed and produced a small musical, based on a high school love story about American teenagers. At the beginning of the month, the contest for King and Queen of the Ball was announced. Candidates had to make a short presentation or give a performance, so other guests could vote their preferences. All of them did a great job. Jeiran Shafiyeva made a skit, where she sang a song and showed her acting and writing skills by creating a fairy-tale story, Selbi Shamuradova danced; Gowher sang her favorite song dedicated to all loving couples, Batyr Gurbansahedov read his own poem devoted to the ones he cares about. Mihail Rodin sang a RAP song that he wrote himself. Berdi... demonstrated his special talent-making rhythms for RAP music; Azim Halnepesov read funny jokes about his first attempts at dating. Shanazar Chariyev sang a song about love, and Nuryagdy Pirsyanov acted out a short, funny skit. To make the evening lively, everyone watched and cheered. Alumni offered up some public activities, such as: Apple Couple game, ABC Match game, and a group soul dance. People without partners could meet new friends. Along with visitors presenting talents, Mary FLEX alumni participated actively by showing personal special skills as well. For example, Nazar Agajanov '09 sang fresh-created song by the catguts of guitar.

Merjen Sopyyeva,
FLEX '09

St. Valentine's Celebration in Turkmenabat

On February 12 was celebrated one of the international holidays - St. Valentine at American Corner Turkmenabat.

Sabina Saburova '09 and Lachyn Italmazova '09, the organizers of celebration, with the help of AC volunteers prepared different games, romantic poems and dances in order to commemorate the upcoming St. Valentine's Day. Ali Hamrayev '09, Madina Alieva '06, Kachara Beshimova '09, Dovran

Balyshov '07 and about fifty visitors came on the holiday. At first Sabina Saburova '09 narrated the legend about St. Valentine and why people celebrate it. Then AC volunteers presented the ball-dance for the audience. Furthermore, visitors could play various games, exchanging gifts and post-cards for St. Valentine's Day. During the event the best couple for successful participation in all activities was chosen and was awarded with souvenirs. Thus, everyone could enjoy some time and to meet the lovely holiday of many people.



Lachyn Italmazova,
FLEX '09

Valentines' couple dances,
American Corner Turkmenabat

ALUMNI SUCCESS STORY

What does “volunteering” means to me

One of my favorite words is “volunteering.” The definition of this word is: consisting of or proceeding from an exercise of free will.

In simple words it means spending your free time helping your community for free. I know what volunteering means: I was a counselor at the camp for disabled kids, and I cleaned streets, but that was only during summer breaks. During my year in the United States. I actually understood what volunteering

means. At our first meeting with our local volunteer coordinator, she told us about an opportunity for the year: we could get an award from the President of the United States if we would do over one hundred hours of community work. At that moment I decided that that was the award I wanted to get.

My host mom worked at the Catholic Church, so when I got to the U.S., the first place I went was the office of this church. I had a couple of weeks before school got started, and I didn't want to spend this time sitting in the house and doing nothing. I remembered my coordinator's words, and I did community service at the church.

That wasn't my only experience doing volunteer work. I helped at the church, even being a part of the youth

group, where they always had something to do. At school I volunteered in my classes when we had opportunities to do community service such as charity car washes. At my FFA class (Future Farmers of America) we had different projects where we worked with kids. I also was a member of the Key Club on the campus. Our coordinator always found different things for us: to help at the carnival for little kids, to be interpreters at the International Agriculture Exposition, to put flags out on Memorial day, to help at the symphony theatre and so on.

Also one of the most interesting experiences doing volunteering was being a counselor at Camp KEEP, an educational camp for fifth and six graders. At that camp we had to look after kids while they were going

on hikes. It was very interesting. We were there for five days. We went to Mud Flats, to the ocean side, to the forest, and to the bay. I saw so much, and I enjoyed it a lot.

At the end of my experience I had over five hundred hours of community work. I reached my goal; I earned the award with the signature of President Barack Obama. I was so proud. While doing volunteer work it didn't feel like five hundred hours; it wasn't hard work for me. I totally enjoyed every moment of it, and I found a lot of new friends while doing it. It was just awesome. I think this is a little success which I reached and this is my alumni success story.

Kachara Beshimova, FLEX '09

VOLUNTEERING IN THE UNITED STATES

The United States has a strong tradition of volunteerism. Young people are encouraged, from a young age, to find ways to help their communities. Across the United States, colleges and universities provide opportunities for students to participate in voluntary service projects. Sometimes students get academic credit for their work, but quite often their reward is simply the satisfaction of helping someone—and of realizing that, even as young people, they can make a difference.

About 63.4 million people, or 26.8 percent of the population, volunteered through or for an organization at least once between September 2008 and September 2009. By age, 35- to 44-year olds and 45- to 54-year olds were the most likely to volunteer. Their volunteer rates were 31.5 percent and 30.8 percent, respectively, in 2009. Volunteer rates were lowest among persons in their early twenties and those age 65 and over.

Individuals with higher levels of educational attainment were more likely to volunteer than were those with less education. Among persons age 25 and over, 42.8 percent of college graduates volunteered, compared with 18.8 percent of high school graduates and 8.6 percent

of those with less than a high school diploma. Most volunteers were involved with either one or two organizations. Individuals with higher educational attainment were more likely to volunteer for multiple organizations than were those with less education. Parents with children under age 18 also were somewhat more likely to volunteer for more than one organization than were persons without children under 18. In 2009, the main orga-



Volunteers sort clothing at Germantown High School in Philadelphia

nization—the organization for which the volunteer worked the most hours during the year—was most frequently religious, followed by educational or youth service related. Another 13.9 percent of volunteers performed activities mainly for social or community service organizations.

The main activity volunteers performed for their main organization was most frequently fundraising, followed by collecting, preparing, distributing, or serving food. Men and women often engaged in different main activities. Men who volunteered were most likely to engage in general labor; coach, referee, or supervise sports teams; provide professional or management assistance; or fundraise. Female volunteers were most likely to fundraise; collect, prepare, distribute, or serve food; or tutor or teach.

About 44.0 percent of volunteers became involved with their main organization after being asked to volunteer, most often by someone in the organization. A slightly smaller proportion, 40.9 percent, became involved on their own initiative; that is, they approached the organization.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department Labor; <http://www.bls.gov>

Read more about volunteering at www.america.gov

Azat Myradov, Muskie '99

Volunteers by Age, September 2005 through September 2009				
	September 2005		September 2009	
	Percent	Number of population	Percent	Number of population
Total, 16 years and over	65,357	28.8	63,361	26.8
16 to 24 years	8,955	24.4	8,290	22.0
25 to 34 years	9,881	25.3	9,511	23.5
35 to 44 years	14,809	34.5	12,835	31.5
45 to 54 years	13,826	32.7	13,703	30.8
55 to 64 years	9,173	30.2	9,894	28.3
65 years and over	8,712	24.8	9,129	23.9

Numbers in thousands

GLOBAL YOUTH SERVICE DAY

Global Youth Service Day in Mary

To celebrate GYSD two alumni from Mary Bahar Nokerova '07 and Rozalina Akopyan '09 gave an idea of organizing a chain of clubs devoted to ecology and preservation of the environment at three American Corners in Turkmenistan for the period of March-half April and then on the Global Youth Service Day meet together at the Mary American Corner for the final event.

The main goals of this project are to educate students on environment and ecology, share gained skills and knowledge, improve problem solving issues on Turkmen ecological preservation, develop public speaking skills, increase unity between the regions and celebrate Global Youth Service Day.

Prior to the project alumni leaders from four regions picked up materials and made researches on 4 life elements- Earth, Air, Water, Fire. Approximately 18 participants- alumni

and activists were involved in the final Event at the Mary American Corner.

Dashoguz team informed about the conflicts in Central Asia regarding water and its importance to survival. The participants informed Mary community on what water is valid for drinking, difference between home crane leaking water around the regions. Attendees appreciated the importance of boiled water after watching a video of the scientific experiment.

Mary alumni presented the importance of knowing fire prevention methods, as well as visitors aware of forest bush fires, some reasons of fire being friend and meanwhile dreadful enemy. A guest speaker from the Mary Fire Department made a presentation on prevention and suppression of fire as in buildings and from people. Volunteers made a presentation on Turkmenistan's Darvaza oil exploding hole, a place in the country that is full of gas and oil, which is extremely dangerous, thus the participants could carefully respond to the riches of the land. Team members created the model of volcano, which processed the eruption of a chemical reaction.



Mary alumni and American Corner volunteers taking a clean up action for the Earth Day (Mary)

The other group spoke about earthquakes and the reasons they occur. They also raised the question how we can save the planet from pollution by the opened discussion on the ways of preventing the planet from garbage load.

Lebap's theme was air, in which students discussed pollution of air. Turkmenabat team introduced the model of future factories for cleaning air pollution; their presentation included the plan of work, objectives and ambitions of the business.

As a result, participants- became more integrated by organizing one club per each American Corner, increased work force be-

tween the regions by contacting occasionally, learnt information on the topic, which was represented during the GYSD, improved public speaking and team building skills, visited and explored the sights and community of the Mary region.

Attendees of the "In Touch With Nature" projects became aware of the Global Youth Service Day and community service among the youth, increased knowledge on the four living elements, and demanded extraordinary attention, viewed scientific experiments and met guests from the regions of Turkmenistan.

GYSD in Ashgabat

On April 25, 2010 alumni of various exchange programs and visitors from ACCELS and IREX visited Chuli (45 km west of Ashgabat) to organize a clean up dedicated to Global Youth Service Day. Aygul Ovezliyeva, FLEX'09 received a grant from FLEX grants and democracy outreach alumni grant to conduct this project; total 87 people went to Chuli to clean up. The main goal of the project was to unite alumni and volunteers for a clean up and this was an example for all of the participants how to act in the community and how to make a change. As the result of the project 50 trash bags were collected at Chuli area, 87 people were acknowledged with Global Youth Service Day.



Group Picture - GYSD Chuli Clean up 2010

GRANT WRITING TRAINING FOR DISABLED PEOPLE.

Within the project "Medical and social factors of successful self-realization of youth-invalids" conducted by Humphrey'09 alumna, Bibi Hundaykuliyeva, on January 17th, alumni gathered at the Central Physical Sports Club for Disabled people of Turkmenistan where 25 participants attended the training on how to write grants.

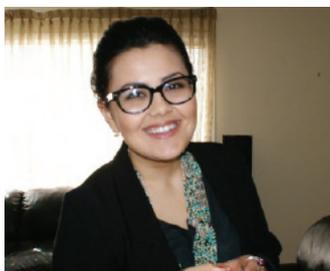
The purpose of training was to train participants how to plan projects and how it can be efficiently



Opening remarks by the head of the Central Physical Sports Club for Disabled people of Turkmenistan

implemented in our community. Guncha Komekova, Grants Coordinator at PAS, of the U.S. Embassy gave a speech on how to fill out applications and Oleg Guychgeldiyev, Muskie fellow explained the ways to define of the purposes and problems of the project, development of the working plan and the budget. FLEX alumni also shared their experience on how to implement projects. After this seminar, participants were encouraged to write grants and conduct projects at their community.

ALUMNI SUCCESS STORY



Being an alumna of several exchange programs, including Future Leaders Exchange program (FLEX) along with the Undergraduate Exchange Program (UGRAD) I have always stayed engaged to causes that enhance humanity, promote understanding, and intellectual growth as supported by these programs.

Every year I find myself embarking on new journeys and opening new doors. In 2009, I experienced what seemed to be one of the most exciting and educational experiences of my life. As a part of the first ever International Conference on Crisis Mapping, organized in conjunction with the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI) and John Carroll University's (JCU) Political Science Department, I partook in helping to launch one of the most prominent fields of international conflict and crisis prevention. The conference brought together over 60 leading organizations comprising the most engaged crisis-mapping practitioners,

MAYA SARYYEVA: "I HAVE ALWAYS STAYED ENGAGED TO CAUSES THAT ENHANCE HUMANITY, PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING, AND INTELLECTUAL GROWTH"

scholars and platform developers from around the world to showcase and advance the cutting edge of the Crisis Mapping field and Technology.

Having worked closely with Dr. Jennifer Ziemke, one of the leading experts and co-founders of the International Crisis Mapping Network, I was enthusiastic about contributing my time and skills to such a worthy cause. It is thanks to my exchange program experiences which required a strong

As a student, it was particularly interesting to see that Governments, the United Nations, NGOs and private sector companies began to utilize crisis mapping in their day-to-day operations, leading to a shift in how information on emergencies is reported, displayed and analyzed. Since crisis mapping is committed to a noble goal - to help save lives through the use of dynamic mapping technology, through its use the international institutions and the world can better de-

report was quickly mapped and shared with the appropriate group, resulting in 20 liters of water being delivered to the orphanage within a day. In another example, the crisis mappers learned of a clinic that needed diesel fuel in Haiti; after the clinic's location and specific needs were posted on a website called Ushahidi, the State Department and FEMA discovered the need and fuel was delivered.

Through being a part of this invigorating conference, I was able to closely observe the use of technology by combing web, Twitter feeds, by sending text messages, reading blogs and news reports to assess the needs and connect people on the ground with available resources abroad. In that sense, I hope that with the growing internet usage in Turkmenistan, the youth stays engaged in keeping up their blogs, their tweets, and facebook updates as they inadvertently help to sustain social activism and maintain communication with the rest of the world. Our lives and technology are becoming inextricably interwoven, and this is our chance more than ever to add a human element to technology and to move forward in helping our world become a better place for everyone.



Maya on Crisis Mapping Conference

sense of perseverance, commitment and orientation, I was able to coordinate over twenty volunteer staff, manage the design and layout of the TED style ignite talks, and serve as the liaison between JCU and HHI.

tect, and therefore respond faster to patterns of atrocities and catastrophes.

As an example, a group of volunteers of crisis mapping was able to early report an SOS from an orphanage in Haiti with no water. The



Iyera Askerova, FLEX'04/TASP'06



Судьба

«Мы на войне, невидимой войне»

За что ж проклятье то на мне?
В невидимые закована я цепи...
И жизнь не наяву – как будто бы во сне
Беспомощны мы – осужденные, как дети.

Ни вздоха без отчаянья и боли,
От страха закружится голова.
И так живем мы сдерживая стоны,
И ждем, что нас помилует судьба.

Надежда каждый день все убывает,
Изматывает нас война с невидимым врагом.
Никто ни с кем не спорит, и не убивает,
Но победить удастся нам с трудом...

На свете жизнь бежит неугомонно,
А мы застряли в лете, навсегда.
А слухи переключком многозвонным
С улыбкой отвечают «не беда!»

И в прошлом, позади, пришлось оставить:
Любовь и ненависть, усталость и печаль.
Сердце вновь чувствовать я не могу заставить
И отпустить мечты несбывшиеся жаль.

И жаль, что губы никогда не будут
В рассветах и закатах, с именем твоим.
Я ведь солдат, пусть поневоле служим
В войне жизнь не понять, увы, другим.

И все пойдет своей дорогой, знаю,
И ты встретишь ту самую любовь...
Но не залечит время эту рану -
Мечты мои, мои надежды разрушая вновь.

POETRY CORNER

И не посмею я тебе признаться,
Что до начала этой роковой войны.
Решила я, что хватит мне скитаться,
Что целью моей жизни станешь ты.

Но жизнь, увы, решила по-другому,
И вот, я в клетке умирать осуждена.
Нет, не готова я была к такому,
Надеялась что это грезы, что проснусь от сна

Так тяжело отдать тебя без боя,
Ведь я солдат – такой написана моя судьба.
Лишь бы тебя увидеть снова...
И лишь об этом каждый день мольба.

Ты как спасенье, ты – как солнца луч,
И без тебя победу мне не одержать,
Но надо мной уже так много туч...
И светлую надежду мне одной не удержать.

Так помоги же, я молю, скорее,
Скажи, что я тебе еще нужна...
Пусть и неправда это, я поверю,
И будет ложью жизнь моя сохранена.

Да, я смирюсь с непостижимой болью
Ради того лишь чтоб спасти себя...
Я знаю, что не стану никогда твоей судьбою
Но на войне я буду жить тобой, любя...

• • •



• • •

Ты молчишь и я не знаю что сказать
Я все разрушила и нет пути назад.
Отчаянье меня заставит закричать,
Но, подавив крик, улыбнусь и посмотрю в твои глаза.

Уж не осталось сил бороться, да и нет нужды.
Тебе ведь так свободно и легко живется без меня.
Не плачу больше, не кричу, кому мои истерики
нужны?



Лишь сон спасает, оттого люблю я ночь
сильнее дня.

Ну а сильнее ночи, жизни, я люблю тебя
Тебе же, не нужна любовь моя такая
чистая, глубокая.
Я лишь молюсь, чтоб Бог благословлял
тебя, храня.
Но знал бы ты, как жить устала я,
измученная, одинокая.

Не знаю что и думать, у меня нет
больше мыслей.
Не понимаю, почему же нам не
суждено?
Все наши разговоры, в них просто нету
смысла.
За что же мне судьба в слезах отведена?

Еще немного и с ума сойду, я это точно
знаю.
Я не могу начать все с нового листа с
другим.
За это мой любимый, я тебя так
ненавижу, презираю.
Ну а еще за то, что никогда не быть тебе
опять моим.

Я понимаю все, но вновь и вновь
надежда воскресает.
Отчаянье сдушив, и мне позволив жить
недолго.
Это когда ты рядом мое сердце словно
оживает.
Ну а потом, как камень вновь... в
котором боли столько...

• • •

Солнце скрылось. Неба нет.
Ночь и плач. Вопрос. Ответ.
Тишина и грусть.
Сквозь слезы: «Ну и пусть!»

Нет жизни, нет улыбки без любви.
Молюсь. Прошу.
Вернись...

Телефон.
Гудки.
(сама себе) «Не злись»

Подушка. Ночь.
И снова плач...
И одиночество - палач и лучший друг.
Пусто вокруг. Лишь сердца стук. (тук
тук)
Отчаянье. Молчание.
Подруга тишина.
«Опять одна»...

ALUMNI SUCCESS STORY

Article reprinted from
Alumni Boom - Summer '08



**Oleg Ponyatov,
Gastroenterologist,
Fulbright Alumnus,
2006 – 2007.**

In July of this year, Oleg Ponyatov returned from the USA with another award – the World Association of Gastroenterologists awarded him the Cook Medical Don Wilson Award.

We also learned that he demonstrated heroism during this trip which was publicized in American newspapers.

One day, while he was surfing, he spotted a drowning girl, around 12-13 years old. Her sister, stranded help called out to Oleg. He quickly realized what was happening and dove in to save the girl.

The report was recounted in the

INTERNATIONAL AWARD GIVEN TO TURKMENISTAN DOCTOR

local newspaper La Jolla, which publicized the heroic exploit of this Turkmen citizen. It seems that a doctor's instinct to save lives never leaves Oleg, even in the water.

As is well known, there are three fatal ailments against which modern medicine has no cure – cancer, diabetes and AIDS. Anyone who could find a panacea, a cure for these ill, is guaranteed a Nobel Prize.

The history of scientific undertaking and particularly medicine is full of those who battle tirelessly against the most dreadful illnesses, utilizing the scientific methods and all the available tools.

One such person lives and works in Ashgabat. This is the Fulbright Alumnus Oleg Ponyatov, gastroenterologist at the Curiosity, attentiveness, inquisitiveness, and a desire to help people these are the treatment-and-Consultation Center of

Turkmenistan named after Niyazov.

Qualities that set apart a doctor from ordinary medical work. Restoring people to health. Our doctor began to notice patterns, common traits among people suffering from esophagus or stomach problems. He began to collect and analyze data from his patients.

He continued his clinical practice on a higher level in Munich, where he was part of an exchange program between Germany and Turkmenistan. His work interested Professor Classen Meinhard at the University of Munich. German doctors are the premier specialists on esophagus and stomach problems.

Oleg traveled to Germany twice to continue his research. Professor Meinhard recommended him to participate in the US Fulbright exchange program. Ponyatov studied and worked at the University of San

Diego in California throughout 2006-2007. During that period, Oleg joined the World Association of Gastroenterologists.

Upon returning home to Ashgabat, he continued his clinical practice. He discussed the results of early detection of esophageal cancer with his Association colleagues in scientific journals. Studying the risk-factor of endocrine sickness, Oleg developed a special table that his colleagues named "Ponyatov-form". For this discovery and for his work in new preventive measures against esophageal cancer, Oleg Ponyatov received the annual World Association of Gastroenterologist Award, shared by him and his Canadian colleague.

The Cook Medical Don Wilson Award provides advanced fellows or junior faculty with the opportunity to train outside of their home country with a premier GI endoscopist or group to advance their training. The Award was named to honor Don Wilson, who was a strong advocate and supporter of international education and training in GI endoscopy. The Award is supported by a grant from Cook Medical.

In his spare time, Oleg enjoys surfing and diving. In his interview in our newsletter he recounted how he received great joy from swimming in the Pacific Ocean.

By Sona Chuli Kuli



Oleg Ponyatov receiving the Cook Medical Don Wilson Award

DEAR ALL, WE BRING TO YOUR NOTICE CASE STUDY
DONE BY OLEG PONYATOV!

Two cases of foreign bodies in the upper – GI tract

Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

Background: Reports on endoscopic management of ingested foreign bodies (FB) of the upper-GI tract in Turkmenistan are scarce. The diagnosis and treatment of FB is challenging.

Objective: To describe and quantify the endoscopic findings, to report our experience and outcome in the management of FBs in Turkmen patients.

Design: Observational case series.

Setting: Tertiary-care center.

Patients: Two elder patients diagnosed with FB.

Interventions: All patients underwent endoscopic procedures after admission.

Main Outcome Measurement: Clinical resolution, types, location of FBs and associated upper-GI diseases.

Results: Upper endoscopy (UE) was performed successfully in all

patients. Rapid improvement in clinical status and inflammatory parameters ensued.

Limitations: Small sample size, single center experience.

Conclusion: To our knowledge, this is the first report and the largest series that studied endoscopic management of FB in Turkmenistan, Central Asia region.

Upper endoscopy is widely used for the "foreign body" diagnosis and considered the standard in particularly important management of it in gastrointestinal (GI) tract. Reports from 1990s indicate that FB endoscopic data included associated upper-GI diseases in some cases. Few data describe its involvement in gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and hiatal hernia (HH). Therefore we report the studied endoscopic management of FB in Turkmenistan, Central Asia region.

Secondly, GERD and HH remain an interesting but incompletely understood entity. The current understanding of GERD symptoms includes typical (heartburn, regurgitation, dysphasia) and atypical symptoms (i.e. globus sensation, FB feeling). Among the big variety of typical GERD symptoms very often we deal with its atypical manifestation which interfere on differential diagnostics of FB. The development of instruments and technology allows physicians to

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Two cases of foreign bodies in the upper – GI tract

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investigate GERD and HH more attentively. Specifically with regard to components of HH, important actions and interpretations are governed by conscious values. The combination of this research has significantly increased the possibility of investigating the risk factors for HH in clinical settings as well as diagnostic GERD in patients with suspected FB, and thereby has modified the diagnostic and therapeutic approaches. We present two cases of FB in the upper GI tract occurring in an endoscopically normal patient and in a patient with GERD, HH. After GI endoscopy examinations successfully extracted by endoscopic forceps in both cases.

CASE 1

A 56-year-old Turkmen man appeared with a history of FB in the esophagus in the GI endoscopy department. He was diagnosed with FB in the esophagus 30 minutes earlier by X-ray examination. The X-ray overview showed to specify FB as presence of bone shadow density in size of 1.2 on 0.3cm in the area of the level between 7th neck vertebra and 1st thorax vertebra (C7-Th1) of esophagus projection. (Fig1). Because of FB in the esophagus, the patient was taken urgently to GI endoscopy. A relevant endoscopic finding was detected. Topical pharyngeal anaesthesia was very well tolerated by the patient. An ulcerated esophageal mucosa and fish bone occurred in the proximal esophagus, at which point the FB pulled through into the distal esophageal cavity (Fig2A). UE was performed and revealed fish bone throughout the proximal esophagus (Fig2B). No active bleeding was seen. The esophageal ulcerated mucosa was associated with inflammatory changes consistent with FB compression. The patient was maintained on once-a-day proton pump inhibitor. He was subsequently discharged and was doing well when seen in a 1 month follow-up exam after the event.

CASE 2

A 29-year-old Turkmen man with a history of FB in the GI tract presented in our department urgently to undergo an UE. He underwent an X-ray examination for a suspicion of FB in the GI tract because of an FB feeling in esophagus associated with epigastralgia. A chest and abdominal X-ray film showed the swelling of descending colon loops, in particular area of a projection left spleen flexure was marked. There is a high left standing of diaphragmatic dome due to spleen flexure. The X-ray overview has not shown to specify FB (Fig3). During endoscopy examination, esophagus, stomach, duodenum were inspected. Topical oropharyngeal anaesthesia was well tolerated for the patient and safe for office-based endoscopy. With his technique, the diagnosis of FB was confirmed. At endoscopy, sewing needle was located in the area of the lesser gastric curvature projection in the depth of antrum. The gastric lumen was washed endoscopically to determine the eye of the needle, the only visible part that was 1cm long (Fig 4A). Presence of HH, inflammation of the tubular esophagus and traumatic alteration of the esophageal mucosa was observed. Reflux intensity included: mucosal edema, endoscopically visible erosive mucosa in the distal esophagus of 3 cm in length. Inflammation of esophageal mucosa was assessed according to the Los Angeles Classification, which was indicative for GERD. In addition, the degree of the traumatic damage by FB which was located an average third of the esophagus was similar to the dotted erosion. HH was classified as a large because its size was found endoscopically more than 4 cm and its protrusion into esophagus was observed. FB removal was done in 3 stages, beginning of which was fixing its visible part (Fig4B). Evidence – based appraisal of endoscopic management for types of FB and their location provided to withdraw directly visible part of FB from gastric wall by using flexible endoscopic forceps (Fig4C). To avoid traumatic damage, a perforation in the GI tract, the FB was turned 45 degrees in the gastric cavity and successfully extracted through the esophageal cavity and mouth (Fig4D).

A follow-up UE obtained 3 days later showed GERD. There was no

evidence for prior traumatic alteration which was caused by FB. The small HH was seen endoscopically only in retroflexion view. The post-operative period was favorable and the patient was released from the hospital on day 3 without any complications.

DISCUSSION

Despite endoscopic and surgical advances, FB in GI tract continues to be a clinically significant problem. In our experience, endoscopic removal of FBs under topical anesthesia is an effective and safe method in endoscopically normal and patients with GERD, HH. Management of patients with FB begins with a care history to look for upper GI symptoms and alarm symptoms. The FB database provides a unique opportunity to study the characteristics of patients with esophageal abnormalities and the practice patterns used in the management of these common endoscopic findings.

The incidence of esophageal FB is rising with the growth of carpet weaving (when sewing needles are held in the mouth) and careless eating of sturgeons in Turkmenistan. Thus, ingestion of FB is a common clinic problem in this region. To our knowledge, this is the first report and the largest series that studied endoscopic management of FB in Turkmenistan, Central Asia region.

These findings were consistent with GERD, HH and FB alterations in GI tract. In this case pathologic findings were observed endoscopically before and after removal of FB. These findings raise questions about HH and its size, which was observed between UE. We suggest that the esophagus responds not only to intraluminal stimuli such as inflammation of esophageal mucosa, but also to FB in the GI tract. FB can be applied to distribution of HH risk factors. The diagnostic UE was significantly higher compared with the X-ray overview. This method also prevents erosion and perforation of the GI tract.

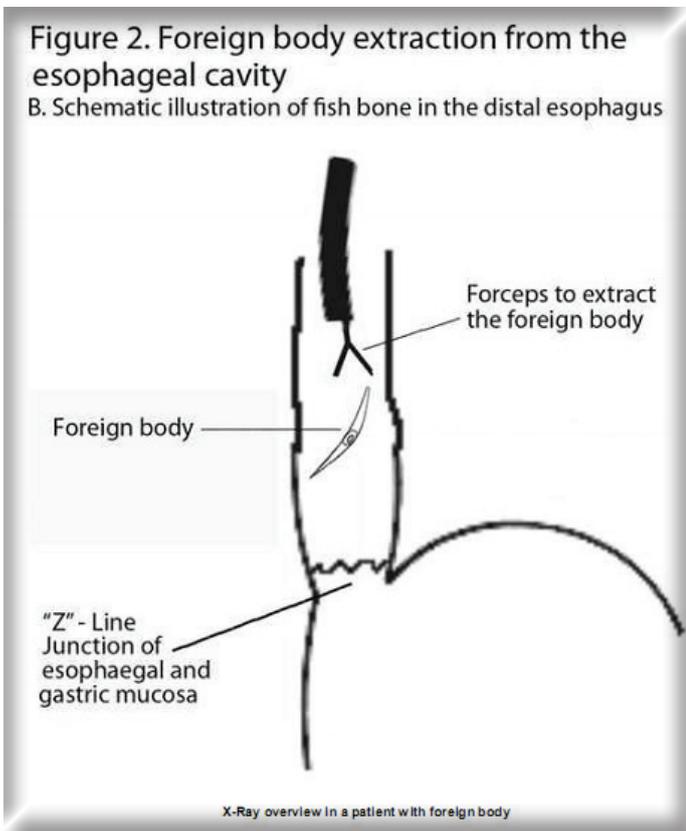
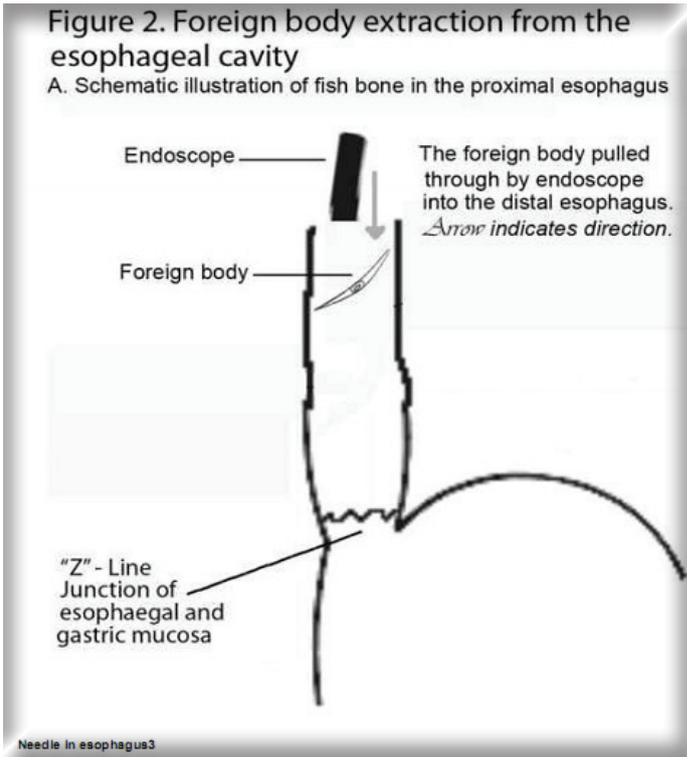
DISCLOSURE

The authors have no commercial associations that might be a conflict of interest in relation to his article.

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Schematic illustration of saving needle in the gastric lumen

Figure 4. Foreign body extraction from stomach
A. Schematic illustration of saving needle in the gastric lumen

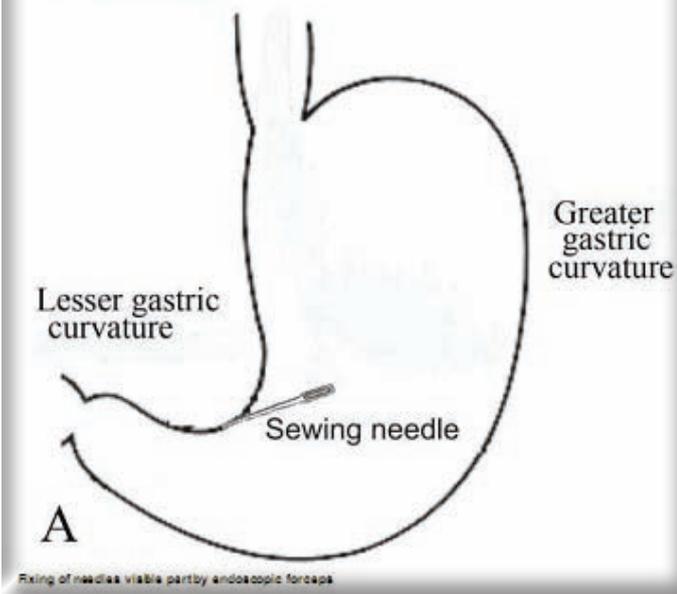


Figure 4. Foreign body extraction from stomach
B. Fixing of needle's visible part by endoscopic forceps

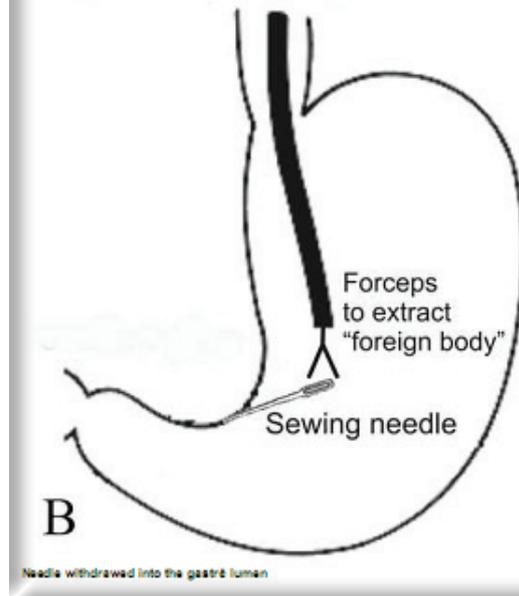


Figure 4. Foreign body extraction from stomach
C. Needle withdrawn into the gastric lumen

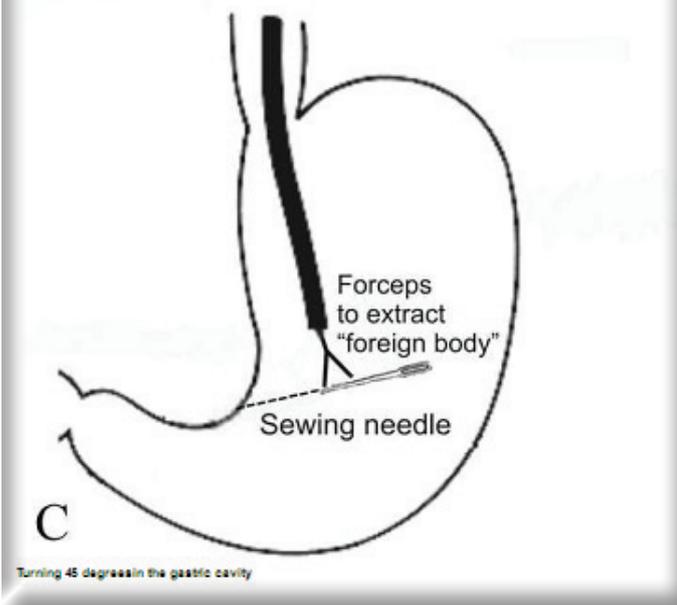
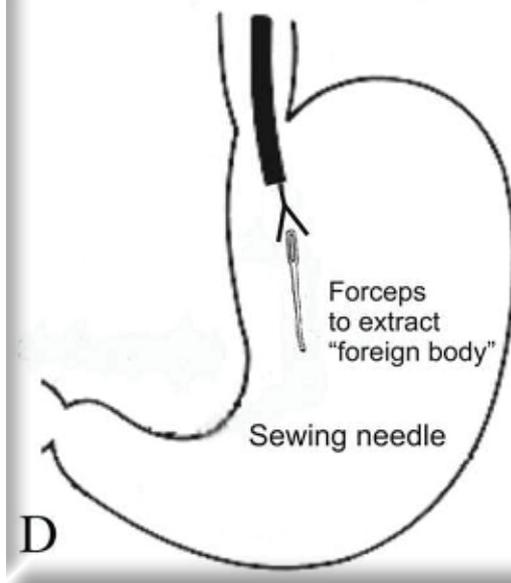


Figure 4. Foreign body extraction from stomach
D. Turning 45 degrees in the gastric cavity



ALUMNI OF THE SEASON

ROZALINA AKOPYAN



Every season the most active alumna/us will be recognized by Public Affairs Section, the U.S. Embassy for his/her outstanding volunteer work for Turkmen community. For spring season, Rozalina Akopyan, FLEX'09, Mary American Corner Alumni Assistant is awarded with Alumni of the season title.

After coming back and residing a year in Delaware state, Rozalina have been actively involved into the community service and volunteering activities. Although she received a job position at the Mary American Corner, it did not stop her from implementing only work.

Positive character traits of the alumna have helped her to be a leader. As a leader, Rozalina not only enhances personal knowledge by being involved in the life of the American Corner, but willing to bring difference in daily routine of high school students.

Thank you, Rozalina for your outstanding work and keep up the good work!

Rozalina has organized several clubs and classes for teenagers visiting American Corner. Starting from the Girls' Development Club, World News Club, Human Physiology, Essay Writing Class, Newsletter Club, and 50 States Club she was trying to input all the information gained in the United States and was aimed to learn as well as organize events.

For this period Rozalina has received two community grants (Seasonal MAC World Newsletter Publishing, From Sisters to Brother Project) that were thoroughly and beneficially accomplished, and which still carry positive fluids among the community.

As an alumni assistant, Rozalina occasionally organizes alumni roundtables, that help to gather Mary alumni together for accomplishing goals of the activism and multicultural sharing. Along the work happy hours and informal meetings organized in purpose of spending time as a FLEX family and strengthening the alumni community.



State Alumni – Your Global Community

Benefits to register at the

www.alumni.state.gov

- The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) carries out international exchanges that include more than 40,000 individuals on an annual basis.
- There are more than 1,000,000 alumni worldwide.
- These alumni are extraordinary people including more than 330 heads of state, 47 Nobel Laureates, CEO's, leading academics, and citizens committed to improving their local communities.

What is State Alumni?

- Interactive, dynamic and password-protected, alumni.state.gov provides a central place for members to meet, share, learn, and collaborate.

What does State Alumni offer?

State Alumni is a global community with more than 55,000 members.

All members are verified. Once members, alumni can:

- Network with alumni from other exchange programs

- Find grant and job opportunities
- Access free periodicals, newspapers and more
- Find the latest research in their field, plus career enhancing information
- Participate in Q&A Live discussions with experts
- Share their experience with a global audience
- Read alumni success stories, perspectives and ideas
- Stay involved through a local alumni association

Benefits of being member of

State Alumni Community:

- Connect with others in their hometown or country.
- Share photos.
- Network and engage with other alumni from around the world.

- Free access to more than 20,000 periodicals, newspapers and journals—including abstracts, full-text articles and multimedia.

- New job and grant opportunities around the world are posted daily!

- Free access to more than \$33 billion in grants and funding opportunities.

- Join top officials and experts to discuss a variety of topics in Q&A LiveWeb chats

- Suggest a guest or a topic for a Q&A Live discussion

- State Alumni hosts more than 40 communities. These communities function as websites within a website under the larger umbrella of State Alumni.

- Alumni can join an alumni association and actively participate in events, volunteer activities and projects!