



## U.S. Embassy Newsletter January-June 2009

# AMBASSADOR'S NEW YEAR MESSAGE



On New Year's Eve major TV stations aired a message from Ambassador Yovanovitch to the Armenian People. The message stated, in part, "2009 will be an especially challenging year for the U.S., for Armenia, and the world, but my meetings with many of you give me great hope for the future of this country. The U.S. looks forward to helping Armenians strengthen their own democracy. We want to help the economy grow and prosper, so that all citizens can have equal opportunities. We also want to help improve security and stability throughout the region. We are living in an historic moment, full of possibilities."

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## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER RECOGNIZED



In January the U.S. Embassy Yerevan held a reception to mark the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Ambassador Yovanovitch used the occasion to recognize Armenia's Helsinki Association Chairman Mikael Danielyan. The ceremony was attended by over a hundred representatives from government, opposition political parties, and human rights organizations. Recalling the recent inauguration, the Ambassador said: "President

Obama's road to the White House was paved – painstakingly -- by the sacrifice and struggle of Dr. King and countless others in the civil rights movement." In giving an award to Danielyan, the Ambassador noted that, "Over his years of dedicated work, Mikael has been shot at, beaten and harassed. His continued efforts on behalf of human rights in Armenia are an eloquent testimony to his tremendous courage and commitment."

## AMBASSADOR SPEAKS ON OBAMA INAUGURATION



Ambassador Yovanovitch appeared on Yerevan TV's program "A Glance at the World" to discuss the transition of power in Washington from one presidential administration to another and explain the significance of the inauguration of President Obama. She also discussed U.S.-Armenian relations, U.S. programs implemented in Armenia as well as future activities and interests of the new Obama Administration in the region. The program included footage on the inauguration ceremony provided by the U.S. Embassy.

## CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH



In celebration of Black History Month, the Embassy organized two lectures at Haybusak University in February. On February 12, Philip Gale received enthusiastic applause when he delivered Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. He subsequently led an active discussion which focused on African-American history and the role of Black Americans in American art and culture.

On February 19, George Zarycky, Director of the Democracy & Governance Office of USAID in Armenia, drew on his personal experiences in giving a talk entitled "The American Civil Rights Movement: An Overview." More than 50 students and faculty members learned about the struggle for change in American society in the '50s, '60s and '70s. In conjunction with the lectures, posters on the "Legacy of Martin Luther King Jr." were installed at the University.

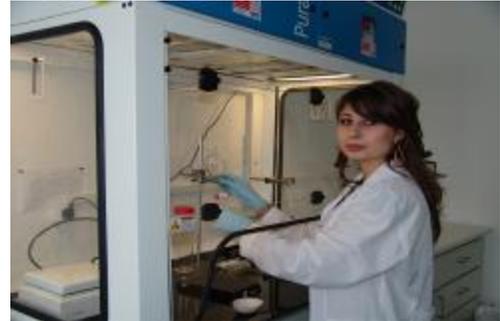


## QUALITY IN PRIMARY HEALTHCARE REFORM



On February 17, 2009, Armenia's Ministry of Health and USAID launched a nationwide Quality Assurance (QA) in Primary Health Care program. The event brought together some 200 participants, including Ministry of Health and local government officials, future coordinators of QA activities, directors of Primary Health Care facilities, representatives of medical education institutions, USAID, and implementing partners. USAID/Armenia Acting Mission Director Cynthia Pruett predicted the reforms would contribute to improved health for Armenians and lead to higher labor productivity, increased incomes and economic growth.

## U.S.FURNISHES FORENSICS LAB



*Gas chromatographs donated by the U.S. Government will provide Armenian law enforcement better analyzed evidence and a level of specificity that is currently not available in the Republic of Armenia.*

Ambassador Yovanovitch signed over equipment worth \$125,000 to the Armenian National Bureau of Expertise on January 30. The International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Section is renovating the facility and has arranged training for Bureau personnel in Armenia and abroad. Planned U.S. government expenditures over the next few years exceed two million dollars with the goal of obtaining international certification

## SAROYAN CENTIMENTAL SHOW WINS NATIONAL RECOGNITION

“Train Stories,” an adaptation of works by Armenian-American author William Saroyan, was the recipient of three Artavazd Awards, the Armenian equivalent of the American Tony Awards. President Sargsian presented the awards on national television. Directed by IVLP alumna Varduhi Rushanian, “Train Stories” won for Best Script and two other categories. PAS funded the play and other activities connected to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of William Saroyan’s birth.



*Varduhi Rushanian and her company with their award*



## ARMENIA CELEBRATES PEACE CORPS WEEK FEBRUARY 23 – MARCH 1



On February 23, Ambassador Yovanovitch and Peace Corps Armenia Director Lee Lacy launched Peace Corps Week in Armenia by recognizing and presenting certificates of appreciation to five exceptional Armenians and one Peace Corps volunteer who exhibited excellence in volunteerism and service within their communities around Armenia. This year, Peace Corps Armenia staff and volunteers will be highlighting the Peace Corps and the concept of national service and volunteerism across Armenia through a variety of events and activities designed to garner public awareness.

*The United States signed an agreement with the Republic of Armenia establishing the Peace Corps in Armenia in 1992. Since that time 600 American Peace Corps Volunteers have served in Armenian cities and villages. 80 Volunteers currently work with Armenian counterparts and organizations to improve English education, community health education, community business development, and environmental education.*



*Since 1961, the Peace Corps has shared with the world America's most precious resource – its people. Peace Corps Volunteers serve in 74 countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Central and South America, Europe, and the Middle East. Collaborating with local community members, Volunteers work in areas like education, youth outreach and community development, the environment, and information technology.*

*Coming from all walks of life and representing the rich diversity of the American people, Volunteers range in age from college students to retirees. Every Peace Corps Volunteer's experience is different. From teaching English to elementary school children in Zambia to launching a computer learning center in Moldova to promoting HIV/AIDS awareness in South Africa to working on soil conservation in Panama, Volunteers bring their skills and life experiences to where they are needed most.*

# AMERICAN JAZZ IN ARMENIA

*For the 8th year U.S. Embassy celebrates American Jazz in Armenia*

*Concert at Yerevan Youth Theater*



The U.S. Embassy showcased Alvin Atkinson and the Sound Merchants from March 9-14, 2009. The quartet performed in Armenia under the auspices of the State Department's Musical Overtures Tour. Alvin Atkinson has received numerous honors and has traveled internationally.



*Alvin Atkinson autographing for children after a concert*



*Jamming with local musicians*

He and the Sound Merchants gave seven performances in Armenia's regions. The Final performance was at the Youth Theater Hall in Yerevan on the evening of March 14. All concerts were open to the public and free of charge. This marked the 8<sup>th</sup> year that the U.S. Embassy in Armenia has featured accomplished American jazz musicians and to highlights the mutual appreciation of jazz in both countries.

# CULINARY DIPLOMACY HEATS UP IN ARMENIA



IRM information management specialist and cook extraordinaire Greg Church gave a demonstration of his award-winning chili recipe live on Armenia TV. Greg was assisted by Armenian singing sensation Hasmik Karapetian and popular TV personality Felix Khachatryan. He shared anecdotes, discussed the versatility of American cuisine, and took phone calls from an interested public. Greg's culinary outreach provided an opportunity to showcase American life in a unique (and delicious) fashion.

## AMERICA'S FIRST LADIES

On March 25, 2009, the Vanadzor American Corner organized a public lecture delivered by U.S. Embassy Assistant Public Affairs Officer Susan Bridenstine. Susan talked



about the historical roots of America's First Ladies and their different roles in American society. Susan provided anecdotes and photos of the most notable First Ladies. The First Ladies have served the

nation according to their abilities and interests and often choose important social causes for which to advocate. Susan highlighted the first official "First Lady", Julia Grant; the first to vote, Florence Harding; the first First Lady to be photographed, Julia Tyler; and one of the most notable First Ladies of all time, Eleanor Roosevelt. Susan also highlighted America's newest First Lady, Michelle Obama. A group of students from Mkhitar Gosh University attended the presentation.

## FIGHTING CORRUPTION



*Ambassador talks to staff of Advocacy and Assistance*

Ambassador Yovanovitch reiterated the U.S. Government's commitment to democratic reform and good governance in Armenia during the opening of the Advocacy and Assistance Center (AAC) in Yerevan on March 2. Funded and established through the USAID Mobilizing Action Against Corruption (MAAC) Activity, the Center will help citizens resolve corruption-related problems by providing legal advice and assistance in legal processing of complaints.

## HELP FOR IRAQI REFUGEES



On March 12, U.S. Ambassador to Armenia Marie L. Yovanovitch and the Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Armenia, Ms. Bushra Halepota presented the Armenian Red Cross-Post Trauma Rehabilitation Center (PTRC) with computers, exercise equipment and other equipment purchased by PTRC from a USD 20,000 grant from the U.S. Department of State's Taft Fund for Iraqi refugees who left Iraq to seek protection in Armenia.

## READING TO CHILDREN

On March 6, Cultural Affairs Officer Susan Bridenstine read children's stories to an audience of over 30 young students at the Armenian National Children's Library. The Officer gave an animated presentation of three popular children's books. The interaction between the speaker and the audience was very strong; the children, their teachers and parents enjoyed themselves as the storytelling became a game with illustrations and drawings which attracted the children's attention. Monthly storytelling programs will help schoolchildren become familiar with the correct pronunciation of words and encourage them to borrow American literature from the library.



*"Reading to children—and instilling in them a love of books—is one of the best ways to put them on the road to success both academically and personally." APAO Susan Bridenstine*

## JOHN DEERE ENTERS ARMENIAN MARKET

CARD AgroService will be the distributor of John Deere equipment in Armenia. Ambassador Marie L. Yovanovitch spoke on March 6 at the signing of the distributorship agreement. The Ambassador noted that John Deere is one of the largest and most respected



companies in the world in the agricultural machinery sector. This means that the world's top quality, hi-tech agricultural machinery is now available for Armenian farmers and agribusinesses.

## AMBASSADOR TALKS WITH AUA STUDENTS



On March 3, Ambassador Yovanovitch led an active roundtable discussion with 14 graduate students at the American University of Armenia. The Ambassador noted the impact of U.S. assistance to Armenia and stressed the need for continued cooperation in the areas of economic development, regional stability, and good governance. Students represented a range of fields, including public health, law, political science, and engineering.

Ambassador Yovanovitch answered questions and expressed support for participants' eagerness to make a significant contribution in their fields. Students indicated that their education in an American environment has been tremendously beneficial to their professional and personal development.

## AMBASSADOR VISITS U.S.-FUNDED PROJECTS IN REGIONS

Ambassador Yovanovitch visited Dilijan and Vanadzor on March 4, meeting with local officials in both places and reviewing U.S. government-funded projects, in particular a cheese-making company and a pasta plant. Both these companies benefited from the USAID/EBRD Business Advisory Services (BAS) program that contracted consulting firms to help them companies develop a modern tri-lingual website, expand sales by conducting market research, develop company branding strategy and promotional materials, and identify potential merchandisers and supermarket chains for product distribution. In Vanadzor, Ambassador Yovanovitch also visited the Advocacy and Assistance



Mobilizing Action Against Corruption (MAAC) program. The Center helps citizens to resolve corruption-related problems, including legal advice and assistance in processing of complaints.

## SUPPORTING VICTIMS AND PROSECUTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

On March 16 the United States Department of Justice held a conference on "Support for Victims and Successful Prosecution of Domestic Violence", which was just one of several sessions held by the U.S. Department of Justice in Yerevan to support Armenian law enforcement. U.S. Ambassador Marie L. Yovanovitch opened the conference, which was attended by three American prosecutors, one social worker, Armenian judges, prosecutors, police, and representatives from Armenian Ministries, the Civil Rights Division of the National Assembly, and international organizations such as UNICEF, OSCE and Open Society Institute Foundation in Armenia. The American and Armenian officials discussed their countries' respective approaches to **fighting** all manifestations of domestic violence. Ambassador Yovanovitch urged the Armenian authorities in attendance to do all that can be done to reduce domestic violence and care for its victims.



## YEREVAN AMERICAN CORNER REOPENED



*Ambassador and Central Library's director cut the cake*

On April 14, the U.S. Embassy marked the re-opening of the Yerevan American Corner at the City Central Library's new location. The inauguration also marks the Corner's fourth year of operations in Yerevan. In her remarks, Ambassador Yovanovitch said, "The United States has a longstanding commitment to spreading the ideas and values of American democracy, and to engaging and maintaining an open dialogue with people throughout the world." Over 35,000 people have visited the Yerevan AC.

## TALKING POLITICS AND VISAS



*Consular Officer Brian Smith and PAO Tom Mittnacht at Armenia TV*

Consular Officer Brian Smith and Public Affairs Officer Tom Mittnacht appeared on the popular morning show, "Good Morning Armenians!" to talk about travel to the United States, the diversity visa lottery, the new Obama Administration and bilateral relations. The program, broadcast live, provided an effective vehicle to highlight USG assistance programs, and convey concerns about abuses in the diversity visa lottery.

## EARTH DAY AT THE GYUMRI AMERICAN CORNER



*"Adela Renna shares books about America's national parks with Gyumri American Corner patrons."*

On April 22, 2009, the U.S. Embassy IRC and the Gyumri American Corner organized a public lecture in celebration of Earth Day. U.S. Embassy Political Section Administrative Assistant Adela Renna spoke about "U.S. National Parks" to students from the Gyumri American Corner's English Club. Ms. Renna prepared a power point presentation with a variety of pictures to illustrate the beauty of famous American national parks including Yellowstone, Yosemite, Sequoia, Mount Rainer and the Grand Canyon. Every year over 300 million people visit the parks and more than 100 people from all over the world volunteer in parks around the United States. The National Park Service is the U.S. government agency in charge of preserving natural resources.

## EMBASSY DONATES AMERICAN STUDIES TEXTBOOKS



*PAO Thomas Mittnacht shows a textbook to Armine Simonyan, head of Slavonic University's English Department*

The U.S. Embassy donated textbooks for area studies programs at the three schools. In her remarks, Ambassador Yovanovitch noted that, "Learning about other cultures is the key to ensuring mutual understanding between nations," and expressed a hope that the English-language books will be a valuable contribution to the efforts of university faculty and administrators, who are actively incorporating American Studies content into their classes.

On April 22, 2009, Ambassador Yovanovitch and representatives of Yerevan State Linguistic University named after Brusov, Russian-Armenian Slavonic University, and Yerevan State University participated in a book donation ceremony at the U.S. Embassy's Information Resource Center.



*"Learning about other cultures is the key to ensuring mutual understanding between nations." US Ambassador Marie L. Yovanovitch*

## AMBASSADOR VISITS U.S.-SUPPORTED PROJECTS IN REGIONS



As part of her regional tour to Kotayk Marz in April, U.S. Ambassador visited the USAID-supported Armenian EyeCare Project and Soup Kitchen in Charentsavan, accompanied by the town mayor. USAID has partnered with the Armenian EyeCare Project (AECP) since 2004. The project's mission is to eliminate preventable blindness and make eye care accessible to all people in Armenia.

Ambassador Yovanovitch visited the project's state-of-the-art Mobile Eye Hospital, stationed at the Charentsavan hospital, and conversed with project doctors and community members waiting for their examination or surgical treatment. The U.S. Ambassador then visited the USAID-supported Charentsavan Community Center and Soup Kitchen – one of 25 Day Centers operated across Armenia by the Mission Armenia NGO. Ambassador Yovanovitch toured the facility, joined diners for lunch and observed the eye screening and public health talk, conducted by AECP doctors for the center's visitors.



## U.S. EMBASSY CELEBRATES ARMENIAN NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK AT THE NATIONAL

In celebration of Armenian National Library Week, Cultural Affairs Officer Susan Bridenstine read illustrated stories at the National Children's Library to an audience of over 30 young students. She gave an animated presentation of three popular children's books including "Harvey Potter's Balloon Farm," "Jumanji," and "How I Became a Pirate." Teachers expressed their appreciation for the creative way in which students were able to hear spoken English and further develop their interest in English language literature. Vienna IRO Catherine Marsicek also attended the program and introduced the International Children's Digital Library Project to Library Director Rusanna Tonoyan.



## U.S. EMBASSY SUPPORTS AND OUTREACH PRODEAMS HIGHLIGHTED AT GYUMRI AMERICAN CORNER



On April 27, 2009, U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section representatives Liana Sahakyan and Lusine Mkrtychyan delivered a presentation at the Gyumri American Corner on "U.S. Embassy Programs in Armenia." The presentation covered Democracy Commission Small Grants, U.S. Government Exchange Program Alumni Outreach, the Teaching Excellence and Achievement (TEA) Program, the H. Humphrey Fellowship Program, and the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation program.

# ANNUAL WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY



*U.S. Ambassador addressing the guests*

Addressing the guests at the Embassy's World Press Freedom Day annual celebration Ambassador Yovanovitch congratulated local Mass Media representatives and underlined the importance of free media. She underlined that freedom of press is the key ingredient of strong civil society, Democracy and the fight against the corruption. Ambassador expressed her appreciation for the work of journalists in the process of Democratization and appealed to Armenians to take all the necessary steps to strengthen the free media.

## THE ECOLOGY OF LAKE SEVAN

On May 1, American Graduates Association (AGA) of Armenia initiated a project titled "Alumni in Eco Action" to mark the need for public awareness and participation in the preservation the values of strategic National and Regional significance, such as Lake Sevan. US Embassy officials, RA Ministry of Nature Protection representatives, Gegharkunik's Marzpetaran authorities and local NGO activists were at a round table together with school age children and their teachers from different parts of Sevan region. Public Affairs Officer Thomas Mittnacht welcomed the participants. The project was funded by the U.S. Department of State.



*U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Officer Thomas Mittnacht welcoming the participants*

## TREE PLANTING ON EARTH DAY



*Public Affairs Officer Thomas Mittnacht and a young participant of tree planting*

The Foundation for the Preservation of wildlife and Cultural Assets celebrated Earth Day with tree plantings in local SunChild Eco-Clubs on May 2. A large tree planting took place in Yerevan, near the church of St. Grigor Lusavorich. “Green Generation” Armenia project is supported by the U.S. Embassy, VivaCell-MTS and the Municipality of Yerevan.

## MUSKIE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM MARKS 16 YEARS IN ARMENIA

Ambassador Marie L. Yovanovitch, a number of Armenia’s ministers, IREX Armenia, and Muskie alumni commemorated the 16 year anniversary of the Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship program in the Marriott Hotel "Tigran Mets" ballroom on April 30. Remarks were delivered by Ambassador Yovanovitch, Minister of Economy Nerses Yeritsyan, and IREX Armenia director Arina Zohrabian. More than 60 alumni joined the reception to learn about various career opportunities available to them. Fifteen newly selected Muskie finalists who will embark for their U.S. studies in August 2009 were also in attendance.

*Ambassador Yovanovitch cutting the Muskie cake with Minister of Economy Nerses Yeritisan*

# AMBASSADOR YOVANOVITCH VISITS ARARAT REGION

The bird trail's educational signage was made possible in part through funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development, with the aim of developing Armenia's tourism sector.

Ambassador Marie L. Yovanovitch traveled on April 29 to Ararat Marz where she met with government officials and local businessmen to learn their views on the challenges and opportunities present in this largely agricultural region. The Ambassador also visited a Millennium Challenge Corporation - farmer training demonstration site, where she learned first-hand from Ararat Marz farmers the steps they are taking to introduce modern water management skills and technologies to increase yields and move to higher value products. The Ambassador also attended the opening ceremony of Armenia's first bird trail, located near the Armenian-Turkish border that is home to the vast majority of Armenia's 350 bird species.

## KINDERGARTENS GET AN UPGRADE



Deputy Chief of Mission Joseph Pennington, Director of Humanitarian Programs of State Department Jerry Oberndorfer, Armenian officials, NGO representatives and other guests participated in the opening ceremony of newly renovated facilities at kindergartens 5 and 3 of Kanaker-Zeytun community on May 21. As a result of this project, 168 children received new kitchen and sanitary facilities and will enjoy proper hygiene and sanitary conditions.

*DCM Joseph Pennington, Community leader Ara Kotanjian, Jerry Oberndorfer and representatives of Latter Day Saints Charities*

## ENCOURAGING “YOUTH PARTICIPATION”

On May 15, Public Affairs Officer Thomas Mittnacht participated in the presentation of a how-to manual for “Youth Participation”, which was developed and published by the Armenian Young Women’s Association with the support of US Embassy. In his speech Mittnacht mentioned the importance of youth participation and hoped that the Manual will promote on increase the level of youth participation in the Republic of Armenia. The Manual describes the problems in the field of youth participation and provides solution and recommendations.



## U.S. AMBASSADOR VISITS ARMAVIR MARZ



*Ambassador with Armavir Marz officials*

Ambassador Marie L. Yovanovitch visited Armavir Marz on May 27, 2009. She met with the Armavir Mayor Ruben Khlghatian, learned about the current social and economic situation, and discussed U.S. Government assistance programs in the region. The Ambassador toured the Nuclear Power Plant at Metsamor. Afterwards, she met with the representatives of Armavir Development Center. At the end of her visits, the Ambassador was interviewed on the local ALT TV.

# ASSISTANT SECRETARY DR. PHILIP GORDON VISITS ARMENIA



*Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs Dr. Philip Gordon during the Press Conference in the U.S. Embassy Yerevan*

Dr. Philip Gordon, Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, visited Armenia on June 9 to discuss regional and bilateral issues. During his visit, Dr. Gordon met with government officials, civil society representatives, and other local figures. Following his trip to Armenia, Gordon visited Georgia and Azerbaijan. Dr. Gordon's visit assumed office on May 15, 2009, replacing Daniel Fried. Before joining the State Department, Dr. Gordon was a Senior Fellow from 2000-2009 at the Brookings Institution, in Washington, DC, where he focused on European and U.S. foreign policy issues. Prior to joining Brookings, Dr. Gordon served as Director for European Affairs at the National Security Council in the Clinton Administration.

## BRUSOV STUDENTS QUESTION AMBASSADOR

On June 15 Ambassador Yovanovitch met with a group of 40 students of Brusov University, where she responded to students' candid questions on democracy building, regional partnership, the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan, opening of the border between Armenia and Turkey, the financial crisis, MCC, U.S. relations with Iran, and more.

The student discussion was followed by a meeting with Rector Zolyan to talk about possible areas of future cooperation.



*Ambassador Yovanovitch discussing democracy issues with students at Brusov*

# AMBASSADOR YOVANOVITCH VISITS SYUNIK MARZ

Ambassador Marie L. Yovanovitch visited Syunik Marz from May 18 to May 20. She met with the mayors of Goris, Sissian, and Kapan to learn about the current social and economic issues and to discuss U.S. Government assistance programs in the region. In Kapan, the Ambassador toured the Kapan American Corner, located in the Marz Library, where she participated in a roundtable with local women entrepreneurs. She also met with Peace Corps volunteers and representatives of the Syunik Civil Society Development Center funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). In Goris, the Ambassador held meetings with civil society representatives and Peace Corps volunteers and gave an interview to Last TV station's program "Good Evening Goris." In Sissian she met with school teachers and visited the Migration Center funded by a USAID/Eurasia Partnership grant. She toured Armen Andreasian Ltd, where she met with employees and learned about the mining operation. The Ambassador also had a lunch and roundtable discussion with NGO leaders.

