



# American Corners (AC) and Cultural Centers (ACC) in Kazakhstan

## What we offer

- ◆ Books & Magazines in English
- ◆ Reference Material
- ◆ DVDs, CDs & Videos
- ◆ Clubs & Discussions
- ◆ Educational Opportunities
- ◆ Parties & Celebrations

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## 2010—another successful year for the ACK program. Plans for the future.

Another year is over, and it is high time to look back to analyze the results of completed work and to move forward to implement new exciting projects.

The year 2010 was very successful in many aspects—the American Corner in Astana was officially inaugurated in April; a very work-intensive annual regional workshop for AC coordinators took place in August in Almaty; the American Corners in Kazakhstan received a great appreciation and support from Washington this fall; and throughout the year, the government of Kazakhstan renovated a few host libraries within the frames of the national roadmap program.

We are very proud of the outstanding work of AC Coordinators which resulted in increased number of visitors to the ACs in Kazakhstan—during the period from October 2009 through September 2010, ACs welcomed 57,455 people who attended 1,235 programming events!

In fact, the programming at the ACs is very diverse: various club sessions, holiday celebrations, contests, speaker visits, movie viewing, and other diverse regular and unique programming. Many programs became possible thanks to the outstanding support from the local Peace Corps volunteers. By the way, this year, the Peace Corps celebrates its 50th

anniversary, and the American Corners will certainly organize related programming at their premises.

This year, all Corners will be able to offer Wi-Fi connection thanks to a special program support from Washington, as well as provide access to the amazing digital *Virtual Library*—a collection consisting of electronic books, journal articles from commercial databases, electronic materials that are selected and licensed, EBSCO databases, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Ebrary Public Library, Encyclopedia Britannica Public Library Edition, Popular Culture Universe and much more! In addition, all ACs in Kazakhstan received a full package of the English language learning software *Rosetta Stone* which will be greatly appreciated by those who want to learn English!

AC coordinators are using social media, and most of them have created Facebook and vKontakte pages for effective communication with the local community, while the ACK website [www.amcorners.kz](http://www.amcorners.kz) serves as a program presentation site with useful links, announcements, archive with ACK newsletters and IIP publications, as well as links to each city with AC presence.

We sincerely hope that the ACK-family will expand in the future and continue to bring Kazakhstan and USA closer!

## Where we are

- ◆ Aktobe
- ◆ Almaty
- ◆ Astana
- ◆ Atyrau
- ◆ Karaganda
- ◆ Kostanai
- ◆ Oral
- ◆ Oskemen
- ◆ Pavlodar
- ◆ Petropavlovsk
- ◆ Shymkent



### Books & Magazines

ACK offers an excellent choice of fiction and non-fiction books, various magazines in the English language, as well as online databases and free internet access.

### Reference Material

You can find high quality reference material on many subjects, including dictionaries and language test preparation books (TOEFL, GRE, etc.) for both students and teachers.

### DVDs, CDs & Videos

Classical and modern movies, documentaries, educational and reference material on DVD, CDs and video are available at the ACK.

### Clubs & Discussions

ACK organizes regular English language clubs, discussion roundtables, movie screenings, thematic programs, and also host presentations and lectures by U.S. Embassy officers and American speakers.

### Educational Opportunities

Partners such as IREX, American Councils, and EducationUSA also use ACK as a platform for delivering information about exchange programs.

### Parties & Celebrations

You can attend parties and celebrations of American holidays such as Halloween, Christmas, Thanksgiving, Earth Day, Independence Day, etc.

Access to American Corners in Kazakhstan is free and open to all interested people!



## When black cats prowl and pumpkins gleam, May luck be yours on HALLOWEEN!

**American Corner in Oral** together with Global UGRAD alumna Aisulu Utesheva organized a colorful Halloween Party for children of the Regional orphanage.

Fifteen children aged 15-17 celebrated Halloween in a friendly atmosphere of the American Corner. A group of volunteers organized the party, decorated the room and acted quite professionally! Also a young designer Ranida Vassiliyeva helped us with a thematic makeup and decoration. There were performances with vampires and witches, and students of West Kazakhstan



State University, Samal and Bakhyt, performed the *Dance of Devils*.

Children enjoyed games with balloons, and apples, and they eagerly participated in the offered games.

In conclusion, over 40 participants were very happy to learn about the origin and traditions of Halloween and to take part in its celebration!

*by Zh. Mussina  
AC Coordinator, Oral*

October is the favorite month for many visitors of the **American Corner Pavlodar**. They wait for its last days to celebrate Halloween! Pavlodar AC programming schedule was filled with Halloween events.

On October 25, a Peace Corps volunteer Karla M. Krause prepared many interesting games and activities for her club visitors: Jack-o-lantern's legend, mummy-making,

Halloween riddles, scary story telling in the dimly lit premises of the center made a "Halloween-is-coming" mood for the whole week. At the end everyone got a treat.

The kids from the boarding school for deaf children were excited to get ready carefully for this celebration, which they learnt about and enjoyed so much last year.



Ghosts' dance in self-made costumes and a carved pumpkin – all this was prepared by them in order to show to the kids from the junior class from the same boarding school—who celebrated this holiday for the first time—what a wonderful and exciting celebration Halloween was!

The AC Coordinator prepared for the kids some traditional games such as *bobbing for apples*, *find a ghost*, *a mummy*, and many others. but the most exciting part of the celebration turned out to be breaking of piñata to get the sweets!



A special event was organized for the pupils of the School-lyceum # 16 and conducted in form of an English language lesson. Pupils read stories, played *The Spider* game with the goal of finding as many words connected with the holiday as possible; they solved crosswords and shared what they knew about Halloween, its origins and its traditions, with their classmates. by the end of the "lesson" the AC Coordinator told the participants that on that day the apple

was considered to be a symbol of protection and offered pupils to "protect" themselves through getting an apple out of the water – that was a lot of fun too!

Chris Thomas, a Peace Corps volunteer, dedicated a regular Movie Club event to the celebration of Halloween and showed to the AC visitors a film *Ghostbusters*.

Also, the AC Pavlodar worked together with the members of the Pavlodar Volunteers' Association and organized Halloween celebration at the Rehabilitation Center for handicap children *Samal*. We presented kids from *Samal* a colorful decorated place, bright masks, colorful makeup, and tons of interesting games and jokes. Nuriya Sagiyeva, a student from the Pavlodar State University and one of the most active AC patrons, prepared for kids a story of Halloween and its traditions, pumpkin carving and *trick or treat* custom.



Kids learnt the phrase *Trick or Treat*, and volunteers presented everyone various treats – sweets and *bloody fingers* made of sausages with ketchup!

*by A. Gurinova  
AC Coordinator, Pavlodar*



## When black cats prowl and pumpkins gleam, May luck be yours on HALLOWEEN!

*Boys and girls of every age,  
Wouldn't you like to see something strange?  
Come with us and you will see  
This, our town of Halloween  
This is Halloween, this is Halloween  
Pumpkins scream in the dead of night  
This is Halloween, everybody make a scene  
Trick or treat till the neighbors gonna die of fright  
It's our town, everybody scream  
In this town of Halloween...*

*This is Halloween from Nightmare before Christmas  
by Tim Burton*

The Halloween Party at the **American Corner in Astana** aimed to create an entire town of Halloween—a magic place where every single citizen was frightening, scary, or, at least, funny. As AC Coordinator, I did not even expect that all readers were going to be that much interested in attending the party. Two days before the celebration, a group of readers came to help out with decoration of the place led by our active AC patron *Jack Sparrow* Saniya. Actually, we did not know much about Halloween, except from horror movies and scary stories about it.



The idea was kindly supported by a Fulbright Scholar Emily Mihalik. Emily explained the history of Halloween

celebration, its origins and customs to everybody's great joy and satisfaction.

So many people came wearing costumes—truly,

we did not expect that either! We also had several games and competitions: the spookiest presentation of a costume, traditional bobbing the apples, wrapping mummies competition.



The gifts were ensured by Emily Mihalik, everyone got a “scary tattoo” and American candies.

Afterwards, we offered *The Wizard of Oz* film screening. The film was of great interest as a sample of Hollywood classics. The main message of the film is in being hard-working and realizing the potential hidden within every person.

As a result, we learnt about history of Halloween, had fun, got acquainted with activities that Americans usually have on Halloween. Moreover, through having fun, we were on the right track of improving our English language skills.



*by N. Agzamova  
AC Coordinator, Astana*

Halloween—originally an American holiday—is celebrated today in many countries. Our country is not an exception. A number of different events devoted to this holiday took place at the **American Corner in Oskemen**.

On October 24, we held a Discussion Club devoted to the Halloween. Jaime Teijeiro, a Peace Corps volunteer, lead the discussion, and people discussed different attitudes towards this holiday.



Jaime prepared an interesting presentation and shared some funny stories from his life experience. During the week, some *Happy Halloween* media-lessons were held to 60 children from schools # 4 and the local *Brig School*. Media-lessons were followed by exciting games and activities.

In the morning of October 31, a special program was arranged for our little users. Children came dressed in beautiful costumes. Pirate Jack Sparrow, Packet Man, ghosts, Miss Germiona from “Harry Potter” and other heroes came to celebrate this holiday.

At the beginning, there was a special presentation describing a history, celebration, and special symbols of Halloween. It was of great interest for all kids. The

second part included games. Bobbing for apples is a traditional game played on Halloween. Children had lots of fun trying to grasp apples in water. The next game was “Throw out your Fears.” The children were asked to write their fears down and then rolled their papers and threw them out. Thirty-two children and their parents enjoyed the party very much.

In the evening, the Halloween party was arranged by our active grown-up patrons.



As a result, 164 people took part in the Halloween week at the AC. They got more information about the Halloween and had plenty of fun. Schoolteachers took back to their schools useful presentations and materials related to Halloween.

*by A. Zhamankulova  
AC coordinator, Oskemen*

## The 11th International Education Week—Striving for a Sustainable Future

The U.S. Embassy celebrated the 11th annual International Education Week by organizing an education fair in Astana at the Hotel Radisson on November 14, 2010.

More than 2,000 students attended the event and had the opportunity to interact with Embassy representatives, alumni associations, Education USA advisers, IREX, American Councils, and representatives from many American universities and military service academies. Jeffrey Sexton, Public Affairs Counselor, opened the fair followed by the Bolashak Scholarship Program President, the Senior specialist of the Secondary Education Department, and the President of the Astana Alumni Association.



Also, the **American Corners in Kazakhstan** Program was represented at this Education fair. ACK program had a joint presentation booth with the **Astana American Corner** and delivered information about a network of eleven ACs throughout the country, as well as about programming at the AC in the capital. AC Coordinator



Nourganym Agzamova invited a few volunteers—active AC patrons—to

help out with the organizational issues. Some 90 people signed up to receive regularly mails from the AC Astana regarding programming events and new resources, and the majority of the participants got to know the AC's resources and services.



*International Education Week is a joint initiative of the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of State. It celebrates the importance and benefits of international education in the United States and around the world.*

More about IEW on <http://iew.state.gov>



Programming dedicated to the 11th International Education Week (IEW) at the **American**

**Corner in Karaganda** consisted of a number of events through which the information regarding education in the USA was shared with the local population.

One of the highlights was a visit of the EducationUSA advisor from Almaty, Assel Mukhametzhanova, who held a presentation about American University in Bulgaria, informed about Central Asia Education Foundation Grants, and presented a FLEX program. Among the audience there were ten children from the local orphanage.

Also, a thematic Round table discussion was dedicated to the IEW, where the Peace Corps volunteers answered numerous questions from the interested youth.



Another highlight was a presentation held by a FLEX alumna Jamilya. She was a junior in Westwood high school, one the best schools in the state of Texas. Jamilya's main goal was to improve her English as much as possible, and studying in Austin gave her a good opportunity to reach this goal. As Jamilya said: *"I think that nothing can be better than to spend a year in the United States as a foreign exchange student. I'm very glad that the USG provides such a great opportunity to high school students to study abroad. It is really great, because we improve our language, see other part of the world, we share our culture, and we bring a little part of America back to Kazakhstan."*



International Education Week 2010 at the **American Corner in Oskemen** and the host Pushkin Library got off with a great start.

**Day 1:** The first day started with a *Striving for Sustainable Future* exhibition which was visited by the second-year students from a local *Kazakhstan American Free University* and 11th grade students from school #44. At the exhibition, students were introduced to a variety of



available international programs and requirements to participate in a certain program, as well as information on learning English and admission exams. In the afternoon, a lecture was held on grant programs which help students receive an American education. Almira Kustubaeva, an ACCELS representative, travelled to Oskemen from Almaty to present a thematic lecture. All in all, the week had a great start, and people were looking forward to the following informative days to come.

**Day 2:** As next IEW highlight, we invited two Peace Corps volunteers to come and talk about their own universities and about higher education in America. We welcomed groups of students from School #45, East-Kazakhstan State University, and Kazakhstan American Free University. They received the same information as the groups on the previous day, and, in addition, a great discussion led by the Peace Corps volunteers Samantha and Brodie. During the discussion students had an opportunity to learn first-hand about university culture in America and asked specific questions related to education in the USA. After visiting the exhibition students also watched a presentation about America in general and received one-on-one counseling on a variety of American universities.



by Sh. Baimurzina  
AC coordinator, Karaganda

by A. Zhamankulova  
AC coordinator, Oskemen

## The 11th International Education Week

The **American Corner in Pavlodar** organized a number of events dedicated to the International Education Week.



First, we launched a large book exhibit where we presented information about education in different countries and participation of

Kazakhstani students in a variety of educational programs that could help people learn more about studying abroad.

On November 13, three best students from three main universities of the city with a group of their supporters gathered in the premises of the AC to compete for the right to be called “the best student of English.” A Peace Corps volunteer Chris Thomas with his far from easy trivia questions on English grammar and vocabulary, literature, culture, and holidays made even



experienced English teachers and other PCVs feel nervous. As a result, a future teacher from Pavlodar State

Pedagogical Institute Talgat Artykbayev got the 1<sup>st</sup> place certificate. Chris Thomas and the AC coordinator prepared many useful gifts for the participants: dictionaries, fiction books, e-journals, and CDs “If you want to study in the United States” and “JAM Session. America’s Jazz Ambassadors Embrace the World.”

Also, a panel discussion with Peace Corps volunteers Karla M. Krause, Paul Reinhart, Susan Sumner and Valentina Cardenas, was offered where they told about American education and its basic differences from Kazakhstani schools and universities. They also answered all the questions from the audience. Shannon Huett shared her experience of being an international student in Australia.

On November 17, Karla, one FLEX alumna and other interested people continued to discuss benefits of American education and USG-sponsored programs. Also, Paul offered presentation on Business Study in the USA and Chris spoke about Colleges and Universities in America.

The week ended with a Movie Club meeting that was also dedicated to the topic of education where we watched a film “The Great Debators”.

by A. Gurinova  
AC Coordinator, Pavlodar

## Literary Contests in English at the ACK

*Poetry is queen of language,  
the sovereign of the word,  
It takes a wise man  
to extract it from the strongholds.  
Language has free will in it  
and it warms the heart,  
With the roundness  
and perfection of its form.*

Abay, Kazakh poet

The Abay Kunanbayev’s poetry contest—dedicated to his 165th anniversary and held entirely in English language at the **American Corner in Astana**—turned to be a great success. Here were 51 contestants, a dozen of teachers, some supporters and journalists from two local newspapers. The main idea of the contest was to maintain interest to the Abay’s work and to support the “trilingual society” cultural project.



The contest was initiated by the College of the University named after Konaev, National Academic Library and with the support of the U.S. Embassy. The ACK programmer from the U.S. Embassy was in the jury together with representatives from the College and Library, as well as one native speaker, a constant visitor of the



AC in Astana, Lee Sullivan, a teacher from international kindergarten MIRAS.

The contest participants were students of 9-11 grades of schools, lyceums and gymnasiums, as well as students of professional technical lyceums and colleges.

There were five nominations: *The Best Reciter* in three age groups (up to 16, 17-18 years, and over 19 years), *The Most Original Way of Translating*, *The Audience Award*. The



winners received USB-drives, books, and prizes in form of ACK promo bags, notepads, pens, IIP publications and CDs.

The host library and the U.S. Embassy agreed to host a chain of similar projects in the future at the American Corner in Astana in order to continue promote reading and English language.

by A. Kosmagambetova  
a.i. AC Coordinator, Astana

Abay Kunanbayev’s 165th anniversary was the biggest event not only for our **American Corner in Pavlodar**, but for the whole library. About 300 people gathered in the concert hall of the Library to honor the great poet of Kazakhstan and listen to his poems and *Words of Wisdom* in three languages – Kazakh, English, and Russian.



Shannon Huett, PCV, and Nuriya Sagiyeva, Pavlodar State University student—both active users of the AC—came to read their favorite parts from Abay’s *Book of Words* and share their admiration on this philosophical book. Madina Ukibai and Dilshat Nazar, students of Kazakh-Turkish lyceum, also recited Abay’s famous poems in English language.



A book exhibition, dedicated to the founder of Kazakh philosophical literature, showed a rich collection that our host library possesses.

by A. Gurinova  
AC Coordinator, Pavlodar

## ACK Program Expands Its Outreach in Karaganda Oblast Our Patrons Comment ...

**American Corner in Karaganda** and the host Gogol Regional Library undertook a new initiative, Info-Caravan, where the members of the American Corner visited other libraries throughout the Karaganda Oblast.

The purpose of these visits was to promote English language training and contribute to creating a trilingual society in Kazakhstan, that speaks Kazakh, Russian and English.



Info-Caravan visited nearby libraries in seven towns: Shakhtinsk, Saran, Abay, Temirtau, Zhezkazgan, Satpayev, and the Kievka village.

Last year, our visits brought together English teachers, local college students and librarians, reaching a total of 415 attendees.

The visits promoted libraries not only as a resource for information, but also as a center of community, international dialogue, and cultural exchange. We inspired audiences to learn English, overcome the language barrier, and to pursue a greater knowledge and experience for their professional work.

A key point of Info-Caravan was collaborating with U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs), who helped us to organize and carry out the library visits. The PCVs bring to the library's English language resources meeting with and exposure to native speakers, and a chance to understand the English language.

The Info-Caravan presentations and working groups included:  
- *American Cultural Prompts*, by Patricia Houck, PCV.

- *Interesting Classroom Activities*, by Corinne Huber, PCV.  
- *Communicative Approach and Games in the Classroom*, by Robert Brewer, PCV.  
- *Interdisciplinary Investigation of America*, by Aiman Zhamankulova, Coordinator of the American Cultural Centre, Oskemen.  
*Games in Teaching English*, by Marianne Midwinter and Jackie LaBerge, PCVs  
*English Lessons for the Library*, by Thomas Montague, PCV, and two student teachers, and by Drew Boggs, PCV, in Zhezkazgan.  
*Speaking English in the Library*, by Nick Huber, PCV, in Satpayev  
*The Role of Libraries in Our Lives*, by Blake Kent, PCV.  
*Presentation of the "InfoUSA 2007-2008 Your Guide to the USA" CD*, by Blake Kent, PCV.

The Info-Caravan taught both— English students and teachers, as well as librarians—how to improve their language and community programs. Participants learned more about the American Corner in Karaganda, about its resources and opportunities, the PCVs and their mission and work, and the benefits of collaboration with PCVs.



English teachers received a copy of the CD "InfoUSA 2007-2008," "Your Guide to the USA." Additionally, each library received a collection of roughly 50 donated books and IIP publications from the U.S. Embassy in Astana. Teachers from distant areas got information about programs and support available for promoting English from the U. S. Department of Education.

*by Sh. Baimurzina  
AC coordinator, Karaganda*

My name is Asel. I have been visiting Women English Club sessions at the **American Corner in Karaganda** every Sunday.

I want to say that it is a great pleasure for me to visit these events because they are very interesting and, at the same time, every person can improve their English language skills. Every Sunday, we choose different current themes and discuss them; we can openly express our thoughts, because we know that we will be understood by other members of the Club.

It is not just round table discussions every time, it can vary from discussions to a presentation about famous women leaders or XXI century inventions. It is very interesting for us to learn about other culture and also to introduce local American Peace Corps volunteers to our culture.

*Asel*

Мне нравится посещение английского клуба **Карагандинского Американского Уголка** при Областной библиотеке им. Н.В. Гоголя. Здесь я нахожу прекрасную возможность усовершенствовать английский язык, повысить уровень восприятия речи, изложения, произношения, расширить словарный запас, узнать что-то новое из грамматической части, сленга, игровых коммуникаций. Интересно так же узнать много нового и ближе познакомиться с культурой США.

Хочу отметить большой ассортимент литературы, периодики на английском языке. Приятно, что накануне различных праздников и мероприятий Американский уголок организует выставку художественных работ, книг фотографий.

Особо хочется отметить работу Отдела Международной Книги. Очень приятно доброжелательное и дружелюбное отношение, высококлассный сервис, оперативная работа, внимание и заботливое отношение к посетителям. Молодцы! Так держать!

*Тактарова Регина*

## Guests at the American Corners in Kazakhstan

On December 8, the **American Corner in Astana** welcomed the Head of the U.S. Diplomatic Mission to Kazakhstan, His Excellency Ambassador Richard E. Hoagland. He was invited by the Astana Alumni Association for a special Discussion Club session; the topic raised was "U.S. Policy in Central Asia." The moderator of the meeting was Asset Abdualiyev, Vice President of the Center of International Programs and a UGRAD alumnus.

The discussion was very vivid, many questions were posed about the recent OSCE summit in Astana and many other topics. Ambassador Hoagland described the summit as an important milestone in international recognition of our country and noted that the OSCE summit was covered by such leading U.S. media as *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Vanity Fair*, *BBC*, *AFR*, *Fox News*. Mr. Ambassador said that Kazakhstan plays a key role in the region, enhancing integration and cooperation between countries and emphasized the significance of Kazakhstan's membership in Shanghai Organization for Cooperation, CAREC, World Bank, and other international organizations. All those bodies bring countries and organizations together and coordinate actions "as a huge spider web."



There were a wide range of questions on media, U.S. military presence in the region, various multilateral organizations and their roles. The last question in the Q&A session was about personal development. Ambassador Hoagland gave his advice on how to obtain what we usually call "a strong personality": 1. *Education. Education. Education: you have to be aware of what and when you are learning;* 2.

*Working hard. 90% of success depends on one's diligence: nothing helps to achieve one's goals better than steady and persistent work; and 3. Believe in yourself. Be confident without turning arrogant.*

**Result:** H.E. Ambassador Hoagland was acquainted with the programming conducted at the American Corner in Astana. The American Corner won many new patrons—graduates of various exchange programs—who would be willing to participate and help with AC programming in the future.

Moreover, prior to the event, Ambassador Hoagland met and greeted library directors from various cities in Kazakhstan, who represent partners of the American Corners Program and host ACs in seven Kazakhstani libraries. Ambassador expressed his gratitude for the successful partnership and emphasized the importance of the AC program in strengthening mutual understanding between people of Kazakhstan and United States. Librarians greatly appreciated the warm words from the Ambassador.

*by N. Agzamova  
AC Coordinator, Astana*

On December 7, the **American Corner in Karaganda** organized an event *No to Drugs* and welcomed representatives from the U.S. Embassy in Astana. Among speakers, there were John Dudley from the Drug Enforcement Administration Office who spoke about his working experience and American laws regarding fighting drugs. The participants of the presentation could learn about educational anti-drug programs and projects that are conducted at American schools and colleges. Marko Velikonja, Director of the Office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL), presented some printed materials on the theme which were issued and printed in Russian and Kazakh languages with the help from the U.S. Embassy in Kazakhstan. Participants could take some copies home.

As the presentation took place on the eve of the Human Rights Day, Elena Beskrovnaya, INL program manager,

told us about fighting trafficking in persons and presented some statistics that impressed young minds.



In a following Q&A session one of the teachers said: "What a great theme—speaking about programs that fight drugs, and about anti-drug related projects for the youth."

Over 40 people attended the presentation, among them USG-alumni, teachers and students from the local colleges and universities.

*by Sh. Baimurzina  
AC Coordinator, Karaganda*

On December 14, a public lecture *Taking Care of the Earth: Non-Traditional Tourism* was held at the **American Corner in Oskemen**. A lecturer Andrei Urchenkov, this summer SABIT alumna, Director of the *Altai Expeditions* tourist firm, shared his impressions on the program and presented his view on development of ecological tourism in Kazakhstan.

Lately, Kazakhstan has been becoming increasingly popular among travelers from all over the world. Local travel companies have to respond to this phenomenon by expanding the range of services they offer, and working out new routes and expeditions.

The public, mostly college and high school students (about 75 people), were interested both, in perspectives of Kazakhstani tourism, and tourism business in the USA. Many questions were asked and the lecturer was invited to their home institutions to provide more information. After the lecture participants had a chance to discuss the topic at a wonderful exhibition of the alumnus photographs.



*by A. Zhamankulova  
AC coordinator, Oskemen*

## Guests at the ACK

On December 10, a big Award ceremony on the second Regional EFL teachers competition *Best Lesson Plan* took place at the **American Corner in Oskemen**. We welcomed guests from the U.S. Embassy Astana Harold Samuels, Regional Language Officer, and Olga Paterova, RELO assistant. The project was carried out by the East Kazakhstan American Corners Association and Oskemen English Teachers Association.

by A. Zhamankulova  
AC Coordinator, Oskemen

### The American Corner Astana

welcomed an important guest—Chuck Mills, an expert on entrepreneurship. Chuck Mills is a founder and CEO of Salera Capital Management, a financial services and business consulting firm.



We invited those who are interested in either running own business in Kazakhstan or taking an economics course in university in this area, along with a wish to improve spoken English. Visitors had an opportunity to learn more about both, practical and theoretical aspects of doing business in the USA, hints and tips of making small enterprise prosper. Besides visiting American Corner Astana, Mr. Mills gave a large array of presentations of developing Small Entrepreneurship in institutions of higher education, especially where they prepare specialists in the area of finance and economy.

In November, Pol/Econ Officer Karl McNamara from the U.S. Embassy made a presentation on the upcoming midterm elections in the USA at the **American Corner in Astana**.



The AC coordinator also distributed digital IIP publications in English and Russian *Elections in the USA* to the invitees. Eight people plus two AC staff attended the presentation which turned later into a Q&A round.

by N. Agzamova  
AC Coordinator, Astana

## Teaching and learning at the ACK

E-journals “See You in the USA,” “World Youth. Building a Future,” “Choosing a Career,” “Campus Connections,” CDs “US Info” and “If You Want to Study in the United States” were a great help in organizing a discussion *Studying in United States* at the **American Corner in Pavlodar**.



“*Cultural Shock*”—a discussion with this title was held on December 12. Students of a local pedagogical college were offered to watch a short video about a girl from African country that had come across some difficulties while studying in the American community college. Then they discussed the differences between Kazakhstani and American education systems and learned about the USG-exchange programs.

by A. Gurinova  
AC Coordinator, Pavlodar

In October, EFL teachers from city schools gathered for a workshop at the **American Corner in Oskemen**. Nataliya Patalitcina, alumna TEA-10, presented *New Opportunities with TEA* to colleagues. Natalia performed the program in February at the University of South Florida. She made a lively presentation and shared her impressions on her stay in America. Training part included explanation on TEA program requirements and the application form. Natalia gave some useful tips and encouraged everyone to participate. She used as a sample several attempts she had taken, and was selected for the program.

Twenty-four teachers were present at the meeting, asked questions and discussed the opportunities of TEA. “*Face to face meetings with participants of the educational program shows us we have the chance and inspire to participate*”, N. Kazansteva expressed the teachers’ opinion and gratitude.



In October, the Reader’s Club took its first step at the **American Corner in Oskemen**. The main aim of this club is calling people to read more books in English and improve English language skills trough reading, translating new words, and working on pronunciation. The meeting was run by Alexander Nikiforov who presented two books to discuss – *Vanish* and *Apprentice* by Tess Gerritsen.

*English Access Microscholarship Program* is a successful project of the U.S. Department of State round the world and provides a foundation of English language skills to talented 14-to 18-year-olds from disadvantaged sectors. This year, the **American Corner in Oskemen** became a provider of this program in our city. In November, we placed a test arranged for local schools’ students, where 85 students passed it and only 20 students with higher scores got the chance to participate in the program. The first English class started on

December 3 . The students have 4 hours of English and 3 hours of ICT during the week after classes.



In December, we created a new club for young students to help them develop early English language skills, as well as forming a better understanding of the world around them through the study of cultures. This club is for pupils of the 2 through the 5th grades.



Each student has a personal passport in which they fill out information about the different

countries and where they receive a stamp when they are able to answer simple questions in English about the country. Through fun activities students learn how to communicate in English. These clubs are conducted by a Peace Corps volunteer Meriah Cory.

by A. Zhamankulova  
AC Coordinator, Oskemen

## Teaching and learning at the American Corners

The **American Corner in Petropavlovsk** organized Day of Information called *Educational Innovations* for local and rural school teachers, teachers of lyceums and colleges. Nowadays, we cannot imagine modern education without information technologies—electronic courses, electronic libraries, newest methods of teaching and technologies of giving knowledge. So, that seminar was dedicated to the newest methods of



teaching and learning. Teachers were introduced to articles of periodic publications of magazines and newspapers such as “English,” “Foreign language at school,” “Speak out,” and “Method of teaching of foreign language.”

In November, the **AC Petropavlovsk** organized Round Table discussion on the important theme *Educational programs USA*. AC coordinator gave a short



overview of USG-sponsored educational programs. Evgenij Tetuhin, University lecturer and a champion of Paralympics, an active participant of educational and sport programs, together with his students-alumni shared their experiences with college local students while having tea with candies. Also, with a great support from the Peace Corps volunteers and local volunteers



(among them Sidd Muherji and Svetlana Zhexembeyeva), the AC offers regular English language classes for beginners, intermediate, and advance group of students, as well as for an adult group.

by *L. Temenova*  
AC Coordinator, *Petropavlovsk*

Thanks to the educational projects which we hold, more and more members of **American Corner in Kostanai** are feeling ready to go to the USA targeting different goals like work, internship, scholarship and fellowship programs, and language development. We provide our patrons with an opportunity to develop their language skills and get to know more about the United States through English Club sessions on culture, music, and history. We are very proud of the system we have created in English language learning. AC becomes more and more known for having an outstanding system allowing a person to come and start learning language from the very beginning and go through the course designed for Beginners, then Pre- and –Intermediate learners course, and finish being a member of the Regular English Club led by native speakers—Peace Corps volunteers. This is the way we also guarantee the regular growing number of people who are able to use our books of fiction and professional literature, on literature and history, politics exercise public speaking or just watch DVDs in English.



We are trying these days to develop a well organized block of shelves for people lacking language skills, suggesting them using self-study manuals, grammar books and charts, audio books in addition to the course we offer. All this serves to the main purpose—people come to the American Corner and come back regularly.

by *A. Blyum*  
AC Coordinator, *Kostanai*

The **American Corner in Astana** welcomed the leaders of OpenFaculty who, in cooperation with Astana Alumni Association, conducted a seminar for those who are interested in pursuing a teaching career. The presentation was led by Director of National school of State policy and Dean of the Faculty of Economy of the Kazakh-British Technical University Vilmur Auken.



The training was attended by more than 50 professionals in the area of teaching. The training was particularly useful for university professors of the established local universities and institutes. Mr. Auken shared his knowledge with audience during the presentation and Q&A sessions.

Also, in November, the Astana Alumni Association headed by Samat Panov, implemented a project for some 50 students of Kunayev college and college of management and business at the **American Corner in Astana**. The goals and tasks of training included but were not limited to learning how to make one’s communication with people more effective, to analyze non-operational communication strategies and develop new ones, helping to achieve mutual understanding, to get used to using the best skills during interview, to learn hearing and listening, to learn how to express one’s thoughts clearly and freely, to learn to build effective dialogue, and to learn putting questions that allow to obtain the maximal result from a dialogue.



by *N. Agzamova*  
AC Coordinator, *Astana*

## Celebrating Thanksgiving at the ACK

**American Corner in Oskemen** celebrated Thanksgiving Day, an American holiday, with newly arrived Peace Corps volunteers. On November 26, we arranged a dastarkhan (set the table) with a traditional meal – a roasted turkey. A group of nine people enjoyed the food and had a lively conversation.



Volunteers told about the ways of celebrating Thanksgiving Day in their own families. And it appeared that there are different traditions and customs in every family of America. Generally, the families cook the turkey, make presents for relatives, go to parades, and etc. But most Americans just arrange a family gathering, have dinner and a chat with each other. The party lasted for more than two hours, and all participants were very much pleased with the event.

*by A. Zhamankulova  
AC Coordinator, Oskemen*

On November 26, the **American Corner in Karaganda** organized a Thanksgiving event. The participants brought with them some traditional food—pumpkin pie, black beans, apples, grapes, although the turkey was only on the picture.

FLEX alumna Jamilya, a high school student, made a presentation about Thanksgiving. She showed photos of her American host family and explained the audience the history and the tradition of the Thanksgiving celebration.



We had tea with pumpkin pie and cookies. Some patrons even came with their children.

We discussed the offered presentation and had fun while searching for Thanksgiving-related words in the word search games which we received from the Embassy.

The atmosphere of the regular Round table dedicated to Thanksgiving became like one in a big family. I realized that we became not just the librarian and American Corner users, but good friends interested in American culture and values.



*by Sh. Baimurzina  
AC Coordinator, Karaganda*

On November 27, the **American Corner in Oral** organized an event *Thanksgiving Day* instead of a regular discussion club session.

We discussed the origin of this bright holiday and some peculiar features of the Thanksgiving in the United States.



We offered tea and sweets, and in a friendly atmosphere, each participant of this event made a toast "To whom am I Grateful." There were really interesting wishes, and one student from Kazakh-Turkish lyceum, Galymzhan, expressed his congratulations in Turkish and English. Some activists received presents and everybody enjoyed the Thanksgiving celebration.

*by Zh. Mussina  
AC Coordinator, Oral*



Thanksgiving Day was celebrated on November 25 at the **American Corner in Pavlodar**.



A short discussion about the tradition of Thanksgiving celebration was followed by a read-aloud play about origin of the holiday.



But what can be better than a taste of a holiday? A pumpkin pie with tea made everyone feel it would become their favorite holiday!

*by A. Gurinova  
AC Coordinator, Pavlodar*

### Thanksgiving Poem

**T** is for the trust the pilgrims had so many years ago  
**H** is for the harvest the settlers learnt to grow  
**A** is for America, the land in which we live  
**N** is for nature and beauty which she gives  
**K** is for kindness, gentle words, thoughtful deeds  
**S** is for smiles, the sunshine everyone needs  
**G** is for gratitude... our blessings big and small  
**I** is for ideas, letting wisdom grow tall  
**V** is for voices, singing, laughing, always caring  
**I** is for Indians, who taught them about sharing  
**N** is for neighbors, across the street, over the sea  
**G** is for giving of myself to make a better me.

*by Judith.A. Lindberg*

*Source: www.thanksgiving-day.org*

## Merry Christmas and Happy new Year!

On December 26, the traditional *Christmas Party* was held at the **American Corner in Oskemen**. This day, there were two celebrations devoted to this holiday.

First celebration was arranged for the kids from the *Children's Sector*. Such heroes as Little Princesses, Native Americans, Scream, Fox, Butterfly, and Latin American visited our celebration. Honorable guests were Santa Claus and Rabbit, a symbol of the *New Year 2011*.



They played interesting games with kids, and Santa gave presents for those who recited a poem for him. All together they sang "Jingle Bells" and "Merry Christmas." Children and their parents enjoyed the party and took pictures near the beautiful Christmas tree.

*The Snow Queen* story was taken as a plot of the second party for our Discussion Club participants. Snow Queen has stolen Kai from Gerda, and to bring him back the brave girl had to overcome a number of obstacles and solve puzzles she faced on her way. The adventure involved PCVs Matt, Melissa and Brodie cast as Santa, Snow Queen and Autumn, and Valya, Zarina and Olzhas played Gerda, Summer and Kai, and, of course all participants helping Gerda to overcome all difficulties and find her Kai.

The happy end was marked by singing "Last Christmas" and congratulating everybody with Christmas and upcoming New Year!

The **AC Oskemen also organized charity action** "Actions speak louder than words." Under this motto ACC organized the second charity event. This time it was school #21 for children with learning disorders. Twenty-four kids

from 6-7 grades visited the National Museum of Natural History by Smithsonian-Institution book. Madina and Marzhan, AC staffers, were the guides of this wonderful trip within which kids could see Egyptian Cat Mummy, Dinosaurs, The Hope Diamond, Flying Reptile and other beautiful animals. After that children got their own coloring books, felt-tip pens and wax pencils to color the page they liked more. In 30 minutes black-and-white pages turned to be bright and beautiful pictures made by children's own hands. All of them also got some sweets.



*"It is real happiness to realize that you made kids' life more interesting and brighter, even by this small action. To see their happy eyes and gratitude makes me smile and I encourage people to be more charitable and helpful", - said Marzhan.*

The teachers in both schools found the AC charity program interesting and innovative and told they would be happy to have other events and programs. The AC plans to organize next visits in March with lessons in applied arts.

*by A. Zhamankulova  
AC Coordinator, Oskemen*

On Christmas Day, three new groups of *English Access Microsolarship Program* students were invited to the premises of **American Corner in Pavlodar**.



Having studied the language only for a couple of months, the students demonstrated

great knowledge: they recited poems, sang songs, and tried their best at saying tongue-twisters in English.



Students were happy to talk to a native speaker, a Peace Corps volunteer Shannon Huett, who told them about celebrating Christmas in the United States. The AC coordinator showed the children a presentation about New Year traditions in different countries.

*by A. Gurinova  
AC Coordinator, Pavlodar*

On December 25, the **American corner staff in Karaganda** visited "Assem", a family type orphanage.

Children from three to eight years live there under the supervision of tutors. In collaboration with NGO "MediaLife" we decided to bring them Christmas presents. AC prepared colorful books for children in three languages: English, Kazakh, and Russian. Elder children and teenagers got business books and many other useful things. "MediaLife" bought special clay for modeling. AC patrons visited "Assem" many times presenting soft toys.



On December 26, the AC Karaganda hosted a Christmas Party. *Toastmasters Club* had a presentation on Christmas traditions. We had tea and a nice event with Santa Claus.



*by Sh. Baimurzina  
AC Coordinator, Karaganda*

