

Media Interviews and Events  
This Month by  
Ambassador McEldowney



# U.S. EMBASSY SOFIA

## Letter from the Ambassador



During the month of June we showcased American art, ingenuity, and experience in rule of law. Our intention was to share the full range of America's diversity and dynamism with Bulgarians across this country and, in doing so, to deepen our bonds of friendship.

We placed a special focus on different forms of cultural expression. World renowned American playwright Edward Albee travelled to Sofia to launch preparations for the staging of his award winning play, "Sylvia, or Who is the Goat." Critically acclaimed American artist Sigal Bussel captured our imagination with her exhibit at the National Gallery of Foreign Artists, and her workshops with Bulgarian students will influence a new generation of artists in Bulgaria. The Fullerton Guitar Orchestra, a group of exceptionally talented musicians from Fullerton University in California, spent several weeks on tour throughout Bulgaria. And the celebrated American author, Elizabeth Kostova, inspired seasoned and novice authors through a series of events for fiction writers.

We were also delighted to host one of America's most famous innovators, Mr. Jimmy Wales, founder of Wikipedia. Mr. Wales joined us for the launch of our first ever Public-Private Partnership in the area of Information Technology, a program intended to promote the development of Bulgaria's IT industry and the growth of IT entrepreneurs. Our launch was web-cast live and can be viewed on the Embassy web-page.

As Bulgarians went to the polls on June 7 to elect members of the European Parliament, we echoed their focus on rule of law by hosting one of America's most prominent judges, John J. Clifford Wallace of the Ninth Circuit Court. Judge Wallace met with Bulgarian judges, prosecutors and journalists to underscore the crucial importance of battling corruption and fostering competence and integrity throughout the judiciary.

The breadth of our agenda reflects the comprehensive nature of our partnership. For the relationship between America and Bulgaria is one that will endure over time and through the vagaries of change, both political and personal.

### "Voting for Democracy"

Statement by Ambassador McEldowney on June 26, 2009

Elections are the bedrock of democracy. They are the foundation upon which the will of the people and the strength of national institutions combine to serve public interests. As Bulgarians prepare for national elections on July 5, the United States joins with them in looking to a transparent and integral process that befits this great country. Strong competition, full participation, robust procedural clarity will ensure a win for all Bulgarians.

Visit the Ambassador's [video profile](#) to learn more.

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## The Big Choice Winner Visits the Ambassador

While the July elections will determine the future government in Bulgaria, the popular show "The Big Choice" gave audience members the chance to select their "Big Choice" for a promising Prime Minister of the future. After several weeks of grueling competition where contestants, all between the ages of 18 and 25, presented their ideas and participated in mock events in front of political leaders and analysts, one participant emerged the victor - Angelina Atanasova. By virtue of winning, she was given a trip to Brussels to learn about the European Parliament, and she was provided to opportunity to meet with and talk about a wide range of current issues with Ambassador McEldowney.



You can view the results of the interview on the following link: [\(The Big Choice news video link\)](#)

## In the News

### Jimmy Wales of Wikipedia Visits Bulgaria



During the first week of June, the embassy welcomed Jimmy Wales, co-founder of Wikipedia, to Bulgaria in a reception at the U.S. Embassy in Sofia. Both during his remarks and while meeting admirers at the accompanying reception, Jimmy Wales congratulated the attendees on the progress made with Wikipedia Bulgaria, and encouraged the guests to continue to innovate wherever possible. With a computer, Jimmy stated that the possibilities are endless for someone who is willing to work hard to transform their idea into a reality. This event coincided with the announcement of the new U.S.-Bulgarian Partnership for Information Technology and Innovation (PITI) this is co-sponsored by USAID and the Government of Bulgaria. PITI promises to be an exciting opportunity for Bulgaria, and was well-received by the guests who represented wide-ranging interests from academia, the business sector, and IT experts.

### Junior Achievement Awards Ceremony



The embassy's Development Councilor Denny Robertson congratulated hundreds of enthusiastic high school and university students at a Junior Achievement ceremony in Sofia. Student groups throughout the country wrote business plans and created small companies where they eventually competed for Junior Achievement awards based on their entrepreneurial skills and newly acquired business acumen. This program gave the students first-hand experience on the challenges and excitement of operating their own company.



### Judge Wallace Encourages Open Judiciary in Meetings with Judges, Prosecutors, and Media

Renowned U.S. Federal Judge John J. Clifford Wallace met with journalists, judges, and prosecutors where he extolled the importance of a transparent and fair judiciary. In his meeting with the "Journalists Against Corruption" Club in Sofia, Judge Wallace praised the journalists for their work, and said that in order to function effectively, a democracy must always rely on the "open, free, and uncontrolled" media. Judge Wallace also encouraged prosecutors and judges to work hard to maintain the confidence and trust of the public they serve, and to fight against corruption at all levels of the government.

### Students Honored at Biotechnology Essay Contest

The U.S. Embassy in Sofia and the Bulgarian Biotechnology Information Center to the AgroBioInstitute jointly organized the award ceremony to honor the winners of the Third National Biotechnology Essay Contest for University and high school students. Mr. Steve Adam-Smith, Acting Deputy Chief of Mission and Mr. Hoa Huynh, Agricultural Attaché, presented awards to the winners at the main aula of the Biological faculty of Sofia University. The goal of the essay contest is not only to improve the public awareness about biotechnology among young people, but also to identify weaknesses in curriculum on biology, work with teachers and school administrators and use the results of the contest for a constructive dialogue with the Bulgarian Ministry of Education.



## In the News

### Sigal Bussel Creates Art in Sofia



Bulgaria warmly embraced the talented Los Angeles-based artist Sigal Bussel who opened her solo exhibition "Conversation with Humanity" this month at the National Gallery for Foreign Art in Sofia. Creating all the works for this exhibit on-site, Sigal used common materials such as chains, bed frames, plaster, and wooden skewers and turned them into true works of art. In addition to the exhibit, Sigal was enthusiastically received as she conducted a series of workshops for children and young adults at the American Corner and the Art Academy, respectively, in Sofia. Students emerged from the workshops with a strong sense of personal artistic accomplishment, as Sigal gave personal attention and encouragement to all the artists who attended. Her exhibition at the National Gallery will run through July 17.

### David Lippeatt Discusses Economic Policy and EU



David Lippeatt, currently the Chief of the Economic Policy Unit at the U.S. Mission to the European Union in Brussels, paid a visit to Bulgaria to attend a conference on EU Accession and meet with the media to discuss a wide range of economic issues. Lippeatt emphasized the importance of Foreign Direct Investment, and he explained the benefits and importance of "Green Technology", Information Technology, and export sectors as it relates to Bulgaria and the rest of Europe. His insightful message on dealing with the economic crisis made a positive impression on his audiences, both at the conference and in the press.



### Denny Robertson and His Web Chat on Information Technology Opportunities in Bulgaria

Denny Robertson and his web chat on Information Technology  
In the prelude to the Jimmy Wales visit, the embassy's Development Counselor Denny Robertson hosted June's web chat where he answered questions on the U.S. Embassy's programs to help stimulate innovative technology in the information technology field. Denny Robertson discussed new initiatives such as the U.S.-Bulgaria Partnership that is designed to foster innovation for the IT field in Bulgaria. During this web chat, Denny provided advice and encouragement for everyone interested in this important endeavor.

## Bulgarian Energy Forum Launches Energy Portal

Ambassador McElDowney offered congratulations and support for the Bulgarian Energy Forum at the launch of their energy portal website. In her remarks to the forum staff, NGO representatives, and the energy portal (website) design team, the Ambassador underscored the importance of their work, and the need to "lift the veil of secrecy" regarding the wide range of energy-related information that should be readily available in the public domain. The website is maintained in both English and Bulgarian, and is intended to provide the latest energy information for industry members and the general public.



## In the Spotlight

### Peace Corps Volunteer Helps Protect Birds in the Danube

Beth Weiland has been in Bulgaria for 18 months, and has enjoyed here time in this country in a variety of ways. She is a volunteer with the Danube Regional Office of the Bulgarian Society of the Protection of Birds where, where she works on a project to film common local bird species (YouTube link attached). She also works with local English language teachers, she raves about the Bulgarian hospitality, and she can't seem to eat enough of the delicious Bulgarian tomatoes. Beth also contributes to the community in other ways, such as singing with the First Community Choir where she even sang the first verse of "Deck the Halls" for a Christmas variety show. Beth Wieland has definitely found friends and a home in Svishtov.



### Boyan Dobrev Opens Innovative and Captivating Art

Two-time Bulgarian Fulbright Fellow and artist Boyan Dobrev opened an innovative exhibition of student artwork entitled "Visual Semiotics" at the American Corner in Sofia. The artwork was produced by the first students to complete Dobrev's course which was inspired by his Fulbright experience. The exhibition experimented with visual images in a groundbreaking attempt to depict abstract images of concrete, or solid, objects or activities. The exhibition was open to the public, and drew admiration from observers, young and old.



The Guitar Orchestra from California State University at Fullerton toured and performed throughout Bulgaria and at the U.S. Embassy



Sigal Bussel and Student Art Workshop at the American Corner in Sofia



#### Please Note:

July 4 is U.S. Independence Day where Americans celebrate the 233rd Anniversary of the adoption of Declaration of Independence.

#### Upcoming Events:

Drummer Ralph Peterson will play with Bulgarian musicians in a free concert on at 8pm on July 10 at the Amphitheater in Smolyan  
Singer Deborah J. Carter will perform a free concert at 8pm on July 24 at the same venue; both are part of the July Jazz Festival

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