

## PORTRAITS OF PARTNERSHIP

Common Vision  
Shared Values  
Joint Action



# U.S. EMBASSY SOFIA

## Letter from the Ambassador



ЦИЯ "ПОМОЩ ЗА  
ЗОРИТЕЛНА СЪСТА  
РИЯ"



The arrival of May's warm weather has allowed people across Bulgaria to enjoy parks and playgrounds and favorite spots in their neighborhoods. It has also reminded us of the importance of protecting our environment and strengthening our bonds of community.

Environmental issues were at the center of many activities this month. Peace Corps volunteers joined with children in the village of Chupene to commemorate Earth Day with a tree planting project that resulted in a "future forest" of over 200 trees. Deputy Prime Minister Kalfin was our special guest at a conference designed to promote environmentally friendly solutions to our shared energy needs. And Chris Weiss from the civil action group "Save The Planet" talked with audiences in Sofia and Plovdiv about practical steps that each of us can take to contribute to this vitally important cause.

There's no better way to accomplish a goal than working with others from throughout our communities. Proving that average people can come together and make a difference, we partnered with schools, businesses, and charitable groups to organize assistance projects. Well over a thousand individuals volunteered to do everything from trash collection, repair of park benches and playground equipment, and renovation of homes for those with special needs. It was a tremendous demonstration of just how much we can accomplish if we set our sights high and refuse to accept external limits.

The hope and optimism that were so beautifully portrayed this month on the faces of young graduates across the country are qualities too rarely seen in political settings. As Bulgaria heads into a double election for the European and national parliaments, it is essential that we all work together to reaffirm the democratic foundations of this political system and the principals of tolerance and compassion throughout society. We owe it to ourselves, to our partnership, and to future generations.

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

Visit the Ambassador's [page](#).

Visit us on [YouTube!](#)

**New!!** Watch our [Green Embassy video!](#) **New!!**

## American Companies Bring Renewable Energy Solutions to Bulgaria

Ambassador McEldowney and Bulgaria's Deputy Prime Minister Ivaylo Kalfin highlighted the need for the development of new solutions at the Renewable and Efficient Energy Conference which took place May 19. The conference brought U.S. renewable energy business experts together with their Bulgarian counterparts to explore ways of moving forward in this important field of endeavor. The Ambassador stated that the new U.S. Administration is committed "to take principled action on energy and on the environment," and she praised leading American companies like AES and IES for bringing innovative energy technologies to Bulgaria to assist the country in improving its energy efficiency record. Ambassador McEldowney also spoke about the creation of a "Green League" within the U.S. Embassy in Sofia to promote environmental and conservation awareness among Embassy staff.



## In the News

### American and British Ambassadors Support Winners of National English Olympiad



Students from all over Bulgaria gathered at the Ministry of Education in Sofia on April 30th to be recognized for their success in the National English Olympiad. American Ambassador Nancy McElDowney and British Ambassador Steve Williams sponsored the competition as honorary co-patrons. Bulgarian students took tests in March to determine regional and national winners at their school level. Fifteen students from 10 different cities were awarded first, second, and third place. Deputy Minister of Education Mukaddes Nalbant presided over the ceremony. Each student received a prize pack which included an almanac and fact books donated by the US Embassy and dictionaries donated by the British Embassy.

### The U.S. Embassy and AmCham Roll up their Sleeves in Volunteer Day 2009



Ambassador McElDowney and her family took part on Saturday, May 16 in Volunteer Day 2009 at the Sofia Zoo. This year, nearly 960 employees from about 38 companies donated their time and efforts on dozens of projects in Sofia and throughout the country to improve the living conditions at homes



for the elderly, disabled children centers, and parks by cleaning, painting, repairing, and gardening. The Embassy had its own special event repairing benches in neighboring South Park.



### Marshall Center Director Pays Special Visit to Bulgaria

On April 28, Dr. John Rose, Director of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Garmisch, Germany, gave a presentation to over 60 Bulgarian alumni of the Marshall Center. Dr. Rose explained to the audience that the Marshall Center has continued to update and reshape its curriculum in order to better address the evolving global security concerns facing all nations. Emphasizing that these global threats impact all nations directly or indirectly, Dr. Rose pointed out that international students at the Marshall Center study and live together regardless of any political problems that may exist between those countries. This underscores a fundamental principle, Dr. Rose explained, that no single country can solve global security issues by themselves. Dr. Rose congratulated the alumni for their dedication to security matters, and congratulated them for being part of over 270 Bulgarian alumni who have attended resident courses at the Marshall Center.

### Prominent Journalist Barry Hillenbrand Discusses Media Ethics in Bulgaria

Noted American journalist Barry Hillenbrand came to Bulgaria from May 11 - 14 to meet with journalists, media professionals, and students to discuss "Media Ethics" as well as the role of the media in elections. Mr. Hillenbrand gave lectures, presided over a panel discussion, and granted a variety of interviews in both Sofia and Stara Zagora where he addressed the principles of media ethics, including the role of professional journalists as the "eyes and ears" of the people by striving for objective reporting that is fair and balanced. While in Bulgaria, Mr. Hillenbrand conducted events at the American Corner in Sofia, New Bulgarian University, and the National Press Club in Stara Zagora.



## In the News: A Very Special Musical Month in Bulgaria!!!

### American Blues Guitarist Steve James in Bulgaria

One of America's most talented Blues Guitarists, Steve James visited Bulgaria as a U.S. Cultural Envoy co-sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Bulgaria and the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. Cultural Envoys are American performing and visual artists who travel abroad to work with local musicians and students in order to build and strengthen relationships between Americans and host-country citizens.



Steve James conducted a series of workshops with students, and performed numerous free concerts in Pleven, Varna, Plovdiv and Sofia. He capped off his week with a special concert at NDK in Sofia where he teamed up with "Lilly of the West" for one final set and an encore that was enjoyed by all!

See a video [here](#)

More photos [here](#)

### NATO Band and U.S. Air Force Color Guard Participate in May 6 Valor Day Parade

The 24-piece Commander Naval Forces Europe Band from Naples, Italy visited Sofia to participate in the May 6 Valor Day parade, along with the US Air Force, 31st Mission Support Group, Honor Guard from Aviano, Italy. This was the first time a US Color Guard and NATO Band marched in the parade.



While here, the band played free concerts for very appreciative crowds in Borrisova Gradina and the National Theater Gardens. The band is composed of American, Italian and British musicians.

Watch the video [here](#)



### Oscar and the World Woof Tour Make Special Stop in Sofia and South Park

As part of his world tour to promote better and safer conditions for pets, Oscar the "previously-homeless" dog visited Sofia as the 13th stop of his 33 country/5 continent world tour. In the company of his human companion Joanne Lefson, Oscar warmed hearts and brought cheers (rather, yelps) from fellow dogs and dog owners who gathered around Sofia to greet Oscar on this historic trip. In coordination with the Bulgarian Society for Animal Protection and Preservation, Oscar made visits in Sofia including the municipality, the Anglo-American School, and the American College in Sofia before wrapping up his day with a walk in South Park with his new Bulgarian friends and fans.



## In the Spotlight



### Peace Corps Volunteer Introduces Earth Day to Children in the village of Chupene

As a tribute to Earth Day, and based on his experiences with U.S. National Forest Week where he and his colleagues planted over 200 trees, Peace Corps Volunteer Kasey Liedtke saw the opportunity to introduce the children of Chupene to the concept of Earth Day. With the help of colleagues at the local primary school, Kasey launched a successful project to teach children about environmental awareness and appreciation. Combining English lessons and ecology themes, Kasey succeeded in bringing the community closer together and helped foster a better understanding of the natural world.

### Bulgarian Journalist in Afghanistan

In late April, Bulgarian journalist Momchil Indzhov joined several journalists from throughout Europe for a first-hand look at military operations and civil reconstruction and assistance projects in Afghanistan. The trip, sponsored and coordinated by the United States Mission to NATO, brought the journalists to Kabul and Qalat to visit military troops, live with a Provincial Reconstruction Team, and interview the Commander of Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan. He even met with the commander of the Bulgarian contingent in Afghanistan, and wrote a story on their work with a local school in eastern Pagan. Prior to departing for Afghanistan, the journalists received several briefings at NATO Headquarters in Brussels.



### Fulbright Graduate Student Introduces 24-hour conversation to Bulgaria

Ted Efremoff, a University of Pennsylvania graduate with a Masters Degree from the University of Connecticut, is currently enrolled as a graduate student in Fine Arts at the National Academy of Arts in Bulgaria. Ted is a multimedia artist who has performed and exhibited in shows and galleries throughout the world including New York City, Rome, Moscow, Belgrade, South Korea, and Sofia. One project, an actual 24-hour conversation, was part of the Sofia Underground Performance Festival (<http://www.justin.tv/the24hourconversation>). You can learn more about Ted through his blog located at <http://legendsofsafia.blogspot.com/>

### Special Donation to Bulgaria by the Gipson Family

In a very heartwarming gesture to the people of Bulgaria and in coordination with the American Foundation for Bulgaria, Robert Gipson and his Bulgarian-born wife Nellie donated photographic plates that recorded people and places in the Balkans from 1912 to 1913. The Gipson family purchased these plates with the intent to preserve this important piece of culture for the Bulgarian people. With great care and artistry, distinguished photographer Ivo Hadjimishev created a beautiful gallery of photos that vividly captured the life and times of Bulgaria during those years. These treasured works are on display at the National Art Gallery in Sofia for all visitors to enjoy and learn about that era in Bulgarian history. They are truly a work of art, and are now in safe hands for future generations to enjoy and appreciate.



#### Upcoming Events:

UC-Fullerton Guitar Orchestra and artist Sigal Bussel

#### Please Note:

The embassy will be closed on Friday, July 3 in observation of the July 4th U.S. Independence Day

#### Embassy of the United States of America

16, Kozyak Street, Sofia 1407, Bulgaria  
 Telephone: +359 2 937 5100  
 Fax number: +359 2 937 5320  
<http://bulgaria.usembassy.gov>  
 General E-mail Box: [sofia@usembassy.bg](mailto:sofia@usembassy.bg)

If you wish to receive the newsletter via e-mail, please fill in our [subscription form](#).