

# V E S T I

## Қ А 3 А Қ С Т А Н

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## THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE BUDGET

Let us start with the not-so-good. It has been a rough year for Peace Corps finances. Here's a quote from a recent article in the Washington Post. Old news, really.

*Peace Corps, which has a budget of \$330.8 million, is facing an anticipated shortfall of about \$18 million this fiscal year and next, officials say. Much of the gap can be attributed to the declining value of the dollar overseas and the rising cost of energy and other commodities, officials said. That inflates expenses for overseas leases, volunteer living costs and salaries for staff abroad, most of whom are paid in local currencies.*

*Those factors "have materially reduced our available resources and spending power," Peace Corps Director Ronald A. Tschetter wrote in a July 22 letter to Rep. Betty McCollum (D-Minn.), a member of the House Appropriations subcommittee that funds the program. "Tough budgetary decisions must be made now in order to ensure a financially healthy agency next fiscal year," he added.*

Even our lost Newsweeks made the paper:

*Managers at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington have been asked to cut their budgets by 15.5 percent. The agency even plans to stop providing copies of Newsweek magazine to volunteers in the field, something it has done since the 1980s. (Newsweek is owned by The Washington Post Co., parent company of The Washington Post.)*

*"It just seemed like an extravagance," Beck said. "Everything is under consideration, including the director's travel."*



I would not call the Newsweeks an extravagance, but when you're cutting the budget by 15.5%, I can see how it would be on the list. Cuts that deep mean staff positions will be affected. And I hate to see them cut the Director's travel. I was hoping he would visit this fall so we could show him what you all are doing and how big this place is. But those two are footnotes, really. What impacts us is how the "Tough budgetary decisions must be made" (love that passive voice) translates to our budget. What happened was, Washington told us to cut our budget for the coming year, October 2008 through September 2009, by 8.6%. *cont on page 3*



### PC - Kazakhstan

Peace Corps has been serving in Kazakhstan since 1993. Through the Education and OCAP programs 128 volunteers serve the interests of Kazakhstani schools and small businesses. Volunteers serve 2-3 years in their communities, learn the culture, help others to understand America, and help America to understand Kazakhstan. They are not married.

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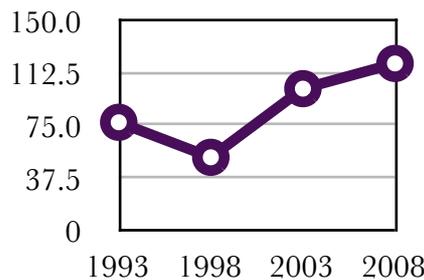
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**G**reetings all,

Parting is such sweet sorrow. Have your kids memorize that and repeat it back to you for grades before you make your way out of this expanse of a country, Kaz 18s. The moment we all dreamed of so long ago in Philadelphia, getting out, is upon us, and from what we hear, it feels pretty, pretty good.

Meanwhile, we would like to wholeheartedly welcome Kaz 20. Peace Corps Kazakhstan is one of the best programs running in the world, and we are all grateful that you are here to continue the good works that have been going on since 1993. This was the busiest summer on record in Kazakhstan (*see chart above*). This issue of the Vesti captures the action from the smallest

**Business of summer in KZ (93-08)**



summer camp to the olympic games.

Of course, this is a volunteer driven publication, and cannot exist without your submissions. Do not be shy about sharing your experiences in these pages. It might help someone to do something great.

The next deadline for Vesti will be November 1st. All submissions should be sent to [pcvesti.kz@gmail.com](mailto:pcvesti.kz@gmail.com).



**Editor's Note**

*Just a reminder that, as President Nazarbaev's hand guides Kazakhstan, the Vesti Editors also have hands. The only difference is that we use our hands for typing and tennis, whereas the President runs a country and plays tennis. Therefore we challenge President Nazarbaev to a tennis match, to be held at noon on Friday.*

Matt Turner, Mike Quinn and Tim Suchsland will continue on as Vesti editors. Any questions or concerns you have about this publication can be forwarded to them.

Thank you for letting us bring you your volunteer news on a semi-monthly basis. It has been great fun and we will surely miss it.

Sincerely,

Sven and Forrest

# DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

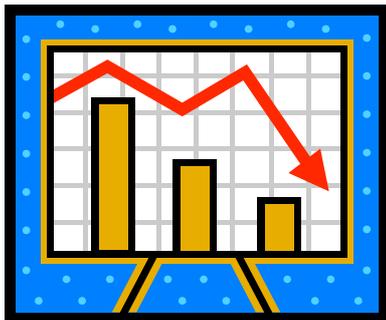
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Here are the specifics they gave us.

In order to meet budget demands, all posts are being asked to:

- (a) reduce ISTs, MSTs, etc., by a minimum of 10% next year;
- (b) reduce PSTs in FY09 by a minimum of one to two weeks. However, no post should go below a 9-week PST;
- (c) reduce two PSCs in FY09 (John's note. PSCs are Personal Service Contractors – in other words, people. Our permanent staff)
- (d) reduce TI as reflected in your BTI mark; (Our Trainee Input (TI) will be 66 next year)
- (e) identify further reductions as needed to meet your revised mark.

Bottom-line: We will cut the budget by 8.6%, or over \$220,000. And that's after the cuts we made last spring and before the inroads of inflation and rising prices on our real purchasing power – about which you know personally (more on Living Allowance later). With cuts of this magnitude, we cannot



just trim around the edges.

- We will have to reduce our personnel costs. We have no choice.
- Personnel reductions will necessitate some organization changes. We will involve VAC in the process and keep you informed.
- We will no longer have volunteers in the West Kazakhstan oblast. It's too expensive to get there by

plane and impractical by train.

- We will cut PST by one week, from 11 to 10 weeks.
- We will shorten IST slightly, but it will happen.
- We will have an MST, but it will either be short or done regionally
- We will cut other expenses where we can.

You also know that we are dropping the airport pick-ups when you come and go in the early hours. This is part of the general cost reduction program, so I don't apologize for having done it – we have to - but I hope this explanation helps you understand. I think you can see that, compared to the things I listed above, this pickup is a nice-to-have item, but it costs us a lot to have a driver on call for those trips. I have asked Aliya to write up and circulate which taxis to use and how much they should cost for a ride to PC or to downtown Almaty – and of course you are still welcome to stay in PC the night you are coming or going from those trips. I know this is going to add an expense to your trip, but it's a very small fraction of the total trip costs when you're coming and going on an airplane. It's not really a safety issue – the reputable taxis are safe, and we just can't afford to continue to provide the service. I'm sorry.

One more piece of not-so-good news. Peace Corps has changed the annual leave policy to get every country on the same basis. Jody Olsen sends her regrets and says,

*“By the way, I did talk about Kazakhstan and the issue of geographically immense countries, but getting people to agree to a global policy was not easy, given the variety of perspectives. The policy had to be rewritten because so many questions were coming from all regions of the world. This is an example of being part of a global agency.”*

Basically, the new policy makes weekends and holidays count as

leave days for leave outside Kaz – i.e. every day counts as annual leave when you are on leave outside the country, including weekends and holidays. However, and I see Jody's hand in this, for leave outside the country, your (reasonable) travel time in Kazakhstan to get to the airport or border does not count as annual leave, and your leave clock starts ticking the day after you leave Kaz. For this one, we have no choice and we will adopt the policy, just like everyone else in the world, but we will do it in January so it will not interfere with existing leave plans for the holidays. For leave inside Kaz, there will also be some changes, but I am working with VAC and I think you'll find that there is effectively little change to in-country travel. And again, do not worry about it now. The existing policies stay in effect until January.

Finally, some good news – and congratulations to those who managed to read this far without panicking. You are getting an increase in the living allowance effective with your October Living Allowance. It is too late for us to get the increase to you with the October payment, but we will catch up at mid-month or with the November payment. The amount will depend on which tier you are in and exactly how much money Washington gives us, but it will be around 7-9%. Think of this as John D.'s parting gift. He submitted this in February, with Karen and Barbara's support. We have been trying to get it finalized since April, and Carol finally convinced Washington this week. I know it won't solve everyone's problems, but it will help. And we'll do another Living Allowance Survey this winter. In the current financial environment, we would be wasting our and your time to do these twice a year, so we'll do them once and do them right and try to keep up with rising costs on a once a year basis. The Living Allowance, by the way, is done independently from all the other budget numbers, so it does not affect the rest of post's budget to get you all an increase.

# DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

And the Real News. Change can be hard. This year is going to be tough on the staff, in particular. There are going to be fewer of us, and the work load won't change. And the volunteers will feel it, too, in the ways I have discussed above, plus the reverberations from the staffing changes we have to make. I am not happy about the staff changes in particular, but I have no choice.

On the other hand, change creates opportunities to do things differently and better, so the key is how we respond. During the recent COS conferences, we were doing some practice job interviews, and I asked one of the Kaz 18s, "Can you solve problems?"— which is an example of a "bad" question, one that she was supposed to answer, rather than saying, "Ah, duh, yes," by giving me a story — an example of how she had solved a problem that would stick in the interviewer's mind. And this young woman did just that; she told the story of how

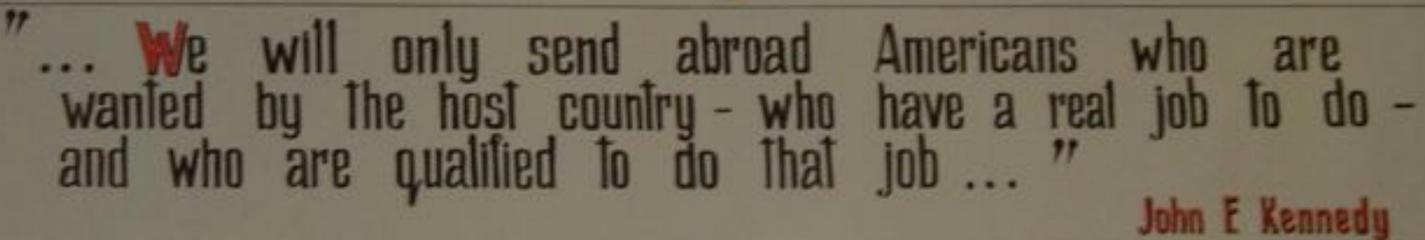
control how Peace Corps changes its out-of-country leave policy. But we can still control how we pursue the three goals of the Peace Corps in Kazakhstan. When I look at our plans, I conclude, without any hesitation, that we can continue to achieve our plans, albeit in a smaller area, with fewer volunteers, less staff and less money. Those goals, to hit the highlights, are:

- Education Program: The PC/KZ program meets the initiatives of the Ministry of Education and the President as the country adds English as the third language of communication. PCVs are placed in primary and secondary schools, colleges, universities and teacher training institutes in formal classroom assignments to teach English fluency and critical thinking to students. PCVs create and support a wide range of out of school ac-

We — the staff and I — will work with what we can control, which is our efforts to support the volunteers, and to concentrate on what is important — which is to keep the training first class, to pick good sites and partner organizations, and to support you in the field when you have problems.

The real news is that, as far as the three goals of Peace Corps, and as far as what you are doing at your sites, nothing significant has changed. Your goal should still be to provide help to Kazakhstanis who have requested it, and who are excited to have it. Your goal should continue to be to learn about Kazakhstan's complex culture and to try to understand what is going on in this fascinating time. And your goal should still be to take all that knowledge back to the US when you go, at the end of your tour, and help Americans understand what is going on over here.

So the new school year has begun, PST is going well, the Kaz 18s will



she had addressed a problem with summer camp funding, and her punch line was something like, "My method for solving problems is not to worry about what I can't control, but to work with what I can control," and then she gave her story as an example. Well, if this had been a real interview, I would have hired her on the spot. This person, I thought, in my role as interviewer, has learned something by doing it in Peace Corps, and has internalized that knowledge and attitude, and she's hired.

We cannot control the fall in value of the US dollar, or the budget cuts that are mandated by Peace Corps Washington. And we cannot con-

tivities such as English, video and other clubs, environmental awareness, ICT and teacher trainings, HIV/AIDS awareness, gender projects, etc.

- Organizational and Community Assistance Program (OCAP): PCVs build capacity, often at the grassroots level, so that local organizations can effectively offer services in targeted sectors such as HIV/AIDS, social services for women, youth at risk and the disabled, public health, economic development, and environment.

soon be finishing their fine service and going home, the Kaz 19s will be celebrating one year as PCVs and the 20s will soon be swearing in. I am looking forward to the coming year. We need to improve on the good things we are doing and think of ways to do things better — of how OCAP and Education can help each other, how Kaz 19s can help the Kaz 20s, and of what else you can accomplish at your site. Feel free to call or email if you have questions or good ideas. I am looking forward to a great year!

John

V A C

**VOLUNTEER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Meeting Minutes**

**31<sup>st</sup> July 2008, 10:30 AM**

**Peace Corps Kazakhstan Headquarters, Almaty**

In Attendance: Francesca Po, Ann Marie Diegnan, Jason Allen, Perry Teicher, Kate Munro, Victor Britcov, Carol McLaughlin, Aliya Kassenova, Karen Ramsey, John Sasser, Justin Kimmons-Gilbert (by phone), Ashley Taylor (by phone)

i. Introduction/  
Welcome to John Sasser and Carol McLaughlin! ☑

**I. PAST BUSINESS** (Outstanding and Unresolved)

**A. Approval of VAC By-laws Revisions**

1. For VAC meeting minutes to be sent immediately post-meetings out via email to PCVs.

2. For the roles and terms of VAC Archivist: The 2-meeting term of VAC Archivist be in-line with the Chair, for previous Archivist to pass all information to the next Archivist.

Conclusions: Approved

**B. Kartochkas**

From previous meeting: Barbara Vik concluded that she would have Yerkin work on these requests. [Carol?] Current PCVs must request revisions on an individual basis, but the next groups of volunteers should have the new revisions in the new Kartochkas:

1. Birthdays

2. Kazakh section grammatical mistakes

Conclusions: Ufilmalik will review the Kazakh, Lena will review the Russian. Changes will be made for the Kaz 20s. If there are problems with current kartochkas, these can be taken to Peace Corps on an individual basis.

**C. Wireless Internet Access in the PCV Lounge**



Representing our divers interests.

From previous meeting:

“An experiment is currently taking place in Azerbaijan and Belize to see how beneficial wireless internet is to Peace Corps volunteers. Jody Olsen said that we should wait until this has been completed. Peace Corps Washington will let us know what the results of the experiment are. Jody stated that to put wireless into our lounge would be \$100 for installation, as well as \$100 a month to maintain it. Peace Corps Kazakhstan needs data to show how many volunteers will actually use it. Jody said that she will gather this data by using the Peace

Corps security sign-in forms and calculating how many volunteers use the lounge per month.

“Jody Olsen will calculate how many PCVs are visiting the lounge to use internet each month.”

Conclusions: With current budget restraints, we’re not going to even discuss this issue.

**D. VAC Mid-Service Survey**

Regarding Peace Corps-wide policy issues, it was suggested in the last meeting that VAC send out a separate VAC survey to PCVs at around mid-service. Instead, can we just add the item in the mid-service survey instead of making another, less significant, survey for PCVs to fill-out? Maybe just a write-in section with the question like, “Are there any Peace Corps HQ policies that you feel should be revised?”

Conclusions: VAC will send out a 1-2 question survey to volunteers at mid-service and COS. This would go to the Regional Director of Mediterranean and Central Asia.

**E. Most recent COS data from post/regional/global**

To be emailed to PCVs. Conclusions: This was received. It was discussed how it would be released and who would create a summary of feedback. PC Administration will make the COS Survey mandatory in future, not optional. After we see the results we will make changes in

V A C

PC Kazakhstan in both the OCAP and EDU programs.

F. Mid-year Review results/statistics from Washington

To be emailed to PCVs.

Conclusions: We won't do this.

G. Site development plans

To be emailed to PCVs.

Conclusions: This is a primary concern for PCVs. PCVs will be mailed background information on sites and how PCVs are chosen for a site. The list of tentatively approved/applied schools will be emailed by programming. RMs will collaborate on sites with PCVs for the Kaz 21s. All feedback will be directed towards the RMs.

H. Grant Templates

To be posted in the PCV Lounge computers.

Conclusions: PC Administration was reminded to do this. All forms will be put on the desktop so volunteers won't have to ask staff. This information will also be put onto CDs for the Kaz 20s.

**II. NEW BUSINESS**

A. Newsweek Cancellation

We understand the Newsweek subscriptions have been cancelled. What were the reasons for this cancellation? Is it possible to appeal this?—not all PCVs have regular access to news. If it's a budget issue, is it possible to get a more limited subscription?—maybe a few issues per oblast?

Conclusions: This was a Peace Corps Washington decision.

B. Living Allowance Survey

When is the next survey being released—the one including Kaz 19s?

Many PCVs are suffering due to the recent rise in prices as well as inaccurate tier levels.

Conclusions: VAC asked why this survey was back to once a year. Carol responded that a good average estimate was only necessary once a year. Carol will review the current tier system and review the survey. She is hoping for the next survey to go out at the beginning of next year.

C. Kaz 19 MST Schedule

Kaz 19s would like to start making winter plans. Do we have dates for MST yet?

Conclusions: This is tentatively scheduled for December 8<sup>th</sup>. It will be 3-4 days, and OCAP and EDU will be together. Medical will remain in the summer, since this is one year into their service.

D. In-country Assault Alerts

PCVs in corresponding regions would like to be informed of assaults happening in their oblasts. We understand that there may be privacy concerns, but a simple alert would be appreciated.

Conclusions: This will be made more immediate. It was asked if anything has happened to a Kazakhstani PCV while traveling. Aliya's response was "no."

F. John: Budget Report and PC Financial Status

Conclusions: There is a Peace Corps Washington and Peace Corps Kazakhstan budget differentiation. There is 8.6% less money in the next fiscal year as this (which starts October 8<sup>th</sup>). This is the worst the budget in Washington has ever been due to bad money and economy.

There will be no "fly zone" next year, and Carol will be given receipts for train trips. The last 3 months of service, tutoring will not be paid for. Volunteers will also not get

travel allowance these last three months. There will be no more airport pickup. A reliable taxi number is: +7 555333.

G. John: Summer Camps/Secondary Projects

Conclusions: John believes that there are not enough secondary projects in KZ. Summer Camps should not be taking the place of secondary projects.

H. VAC Presentations and Elections  
Conclusions: Archivist: Ashley Taylor, VAC Chair: Perry Teicher

**III. ADDITIONAL ITEMS**

A. VAC Meeting Format

Conclusions: Phone Conversations are ineffective. VAC Members will document all VAC expenditures and give a financial printout to Carol.

B. Medical Reimbursements

Conclusions: Emergency situations for medical money will be taken on an individual basis. Money can be wired early in this way. PCMOs will send PCV to the clinic, then talk to Carol if it's a larger amount of money. Volunteers need to tell PCMOs if there is a money issue. The PCMOs will tell clinic amounts to volunteers before their appointments.

C. Communication with PC Staff

Conclusions: Within a set time frame there should be clarification for who to call when an RM is on vacation. Extension numbers should be given to new volunteers. If not contacted by RMs within 48 hours, volunteers should contact Karen.

# SAFETY AND SECURITY

## INDICENT REPORTS

As you probably know VAC requested that we sent out alerts with summaries of PCV incidents to all Volunteers when crimes occur. We supported this idea and from now on will be sending notifications to Volunteers when incidents take place. Summaries of incidents will be written in a way that it does not disclose any information of confidential nature. Now, if Volunteers – victims of crime will wish to write up summaries themselves for further dissemination among Volunteers, we encourage them to do so. The procedure is simple - write up a summary of the incident, the summary should answer the questions (When? Where? Who? What? How? Why?) your recommendations to others PCVs and, most importantly, lessons learned and on to SSC Aliya within two days after the incident was reported to PC. Sticking to the two days timeframe is very important in this matter, as we want to hit the main goals of this project – timely awareness and prevention. If we do not receive your summary within two days we will write up a summary ourselves and disseminate among Volunteers.

For information& awareness:  
Section 24; Article 355- Disobedience to the legal orders/ instructions and offense or threat of physical harassment towards prosecutor's office officers, police, national security officers, the Presidential security officers, financial and military police officers, customs officers, fire department officers during their course of duty.

Administrative punishment/measures: fine for up to 50 average monthly indexes or arrest for up to 15 days.

As always, whenever you find yourself in a threatening/intimidating situation do not hesitate to call me at 8 777 370 8033. -Aliya

## Incident Report: Jul-Sep 2008

Incident	Incident Description	Recommendations
Robbery in Almaty	Two or three men on the crowded bus stood close to the PCV so he couldn't react or move away and then another man lifted his wallet. All the men proceeded to run off the bus on at the bus stop.	Be aware of your surroundings and people around you in public places. Do not keep your wallets/ cell phones in your pockets when on the bus.
Aggravated Assault in Shymkent	At approximately 3:00 AM, PCV and a friend walked on the street when three men drove by in a car, then got out and attacked them and beat them up.	Try to avoid being out walking on a street at 3 AM. <b>Simply do not be there at the wrong time in the wrong place, available and accessible for a potential assailant!</b>
Unknown (Police Harassment)	At approximately 1:00 AM, PCV was standing at the side of the street waiting for the traffic to clear so that he could cross the road. While PCV was standing and waiting, a police car came over; two police officers got out of the car, and told PCV to sit in their car claiming that he was drunk.	When you think you are being harassed by police - keep cool, act confident and respectful, show them your ID, answer their questions and call SSC!!!
Theft in Astana	A young gypsy woman approached PCV on the street and suggested she would tell PCV his future. PCV agreed. The woman performed some prayers and tricks. The she asked PCV to take out his wallet to "bless" his money. PCV did so. The woman took 5,000 KZT from PCV wallet and ran off.	Do not trust gypsies on the streets!!!

## LESSONS FROM THE IRU

About one month ago I was preparing for an English Camp in the Western Kazakhstan Oblast, more affectionately known as the IRU or Independent Republic of Uralsk. I had been there once before, for a similar camp last summer. We had such a great time in 2007 that we were willing to take the 34 hour train ride from Shymkent to the magnificent city of Atyrau and then transfer onto a bus and take a comfortable 8 hour night journey into Uralsk itself. During the previous summer, Luis and I had an uneventful train ride into Atyrau. Perhaps the highlight of that trip was noticing the salt and white sand deposits that lie in between the



*He avoided an incident, but how?*

# SAFETY AND SECURITY

Aral Sea and the city. Resembling frosted dirt, the white patches of earth combined with the Chinese train's over-zealous air conditioning lead me to believe that Uralsk was still in the grips of winter. After thinking about that for one second, I realized that I'm an idiot.

**LESSON 1:** Do not assume that salt is snow.

For the long train ride, we had purchased around six thousand tenge worth of quality food from Ramstore. Like last year, we planned on eating well during the voyage and enjoying ourselves. After situating ourselves in our berths, we quickly fell asleep and dreamt of the specialty meats and cheeses we would soon consume. Sadly, upon awakening, we discovered that somebody had lifted our bag of food, leaving us with only our instant coffee.

**LESSON 2:** Do not spend around six thousand tenge on quality food from Ramstore and then travel platcart.

We arrived in Uralsk Wednesday evening and settled into David's one room apartment. Formerly Danielle's place, all of the bedding consisted of leopard spotted couches and cushions. Feeling very manly, the three of us talked about the coming camp and fell asleep. Early in the morning, I woke up with an insuppressible case of diarrhea.

**LESSON 3:** Do not eat train food.

On Thursday, we went to a club in Uralsk with one of David's local friends and her older, recently divorced cousin. Due to our great successes at the Uralsk clubs last year, Luis and I had high hopes. However, this night would turn out to be quite different from any other experience I have had in Kazakhstan. Even though the club was full, we didn't know that many other people and therefore ended up dancing in our own small group. Luis, sidelined by the lack of female options, eventually left the club earlier than David, the two girls, and me.

**LESSON 4:** Always maintain a favorable male/female ratio at clubs.

At around 3 a.m., the club started to close down and we headed for the door. Exhausted because the four of us had spent almost the entire night on the dance floor. Outside, a large crowd of locals were milling around, talking, saying goodbye, and trying to decide

where to go next. Our small group headed towards a waiting taxi, when suddenly a few guys got directly in front of us, separating us from the two girls. Already close to the idling cab, the men said a few short words to the girls before the two females hurriedly jumped inside. Before I could understand what was happening, a hard punch landed in my right eye, sending me reeling to the left. Meanwhile, numerous fists landed viciously on the front of David's face.

**LESSON 5:** Do not allow yourself to be separated while amongst a crowd of drunk local men.

Almost instantly, the taxi took off down the street while David and I started running in opposite directions. Thankfully, nobody pursued us and after a few minutes, I stopped to gauge my surroundings. I was alone in a strange city, my nose was bleeding, and I could not really feel the right side of my face. To compound matters, my cellphone was sitting on David's table and my money had been spent on the entrance fee.

**LESSON 6:** Never leave your cell phone at home simply because you don't like the way it bulges in your already too tight pants... or just lose weight.

Penniless, bloody, in shock, and alone, I tried to navigate the city back to David's apartment without attracting too much attention to myself. Unfortunately, I didn't know the city very well and it took me quite some time before I reached David's place. When I opened the door I was confronted by a very concerned group of people who had spent the last hour talking to Safety and Security in Almaty and the local police force in an effort to locate me.

**LESSON 7:** Know your location in relation to home base.

Back at the apartment, I learned what exactly had happened. Apparently, the boys who attacked us were hassling the girls about dancing with foreigners. I can only assume that they had wanted the girls to dance with them instead of with us. Therefore, in an effort to eliminate us as competition, or merely in blind hate and rage, they had attacked us, effectively expelling us from the scene.

**LESSON 8:** Do not take your local friends to a club where you might get

beaten up.

Ultimately, we had quite an eventful trip to Uralsk. David and I both suffered broken noses. David's was much more severe due to the multiple punches he received and had to be reset at a hospital, while I was left with a spectacular black eye that still has not completely receded. At the ensuing camp, we both had to answer questions and were mildly embarrassed by the newfound attention. However, one 11th form boy said that it made us look like real men. Kudos to us.

**LESSON 9 (THE FINAL ONE):** Even though facial scars might seem cool for a while, remember to stay safe whenever you go out, especially in a new city.

Micah Lemons

**M**icah pretty much summed the story up, so I will just add a few things. As many volunteers who live near a city know, a great way to solidify your local friendships is to join their ever-present disco circuit for birthdays/holidays/whatever. The recently departed Danielle Perciche and I were monthly staples at many of our local friends' shin-digs in the IRU throughout our services. It was usually us with about 10 locals. There were a few potential confrontations with local guys, but nothing that a handshake and a smile couldn't fix. The encounter Micah and I had with some friendly locals lacked some of the things that usually constituted a safe night out:

- Half of our party left and we stuck around 30 minutes longer until the place closed. This means a parking lot full of people milling around and/or waiting for taxis, and that it was really late.
- The remaining party consisted of 2 American boys and 2 Kazashkas. It doesn't look good. So...the morale of the story is to keep your party large (and predominantly local), stick with them, and pack it in a few minutes early. If you frequent discos at your site, keep it safe, or you could end up with matching nose fracture x-rays like Micah and I!

David O'Connor

# RESOURCE CENTER

## RESOURCE CENTER NEWS

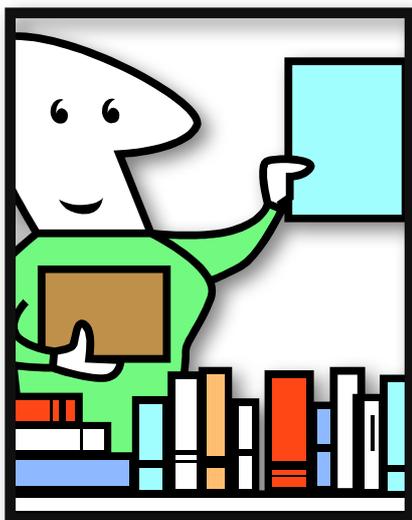
Congratulations to all teaching Volunteers on the beginning of another school year and wishes of success to all Kaz 18s and Kaz 19s.

FORUM, English Teaching Magazine Volume 46, Number 1, 2008 carries a number of articles that may be helpful to you in your work. Either a copy of the magazine or a copy of an article may be mailed to you.

- **Growing Up With TESOL** by Jack Richards. In this article the author reflects on some of the issues that have shaped the development of approaches to English language teaching.
- **A Rough Guide to Language Awareness** by James M. Bourke. The technique, when a grammatical rule is learned only if it is “noticed” by students, in other words, when it impedes comprehension, is known as Language Awareness.

The article discusses the background and rationale of language awareness, and introduces a few of the techniques that teachers can use to help students discover grammatical relationships and improve their learning of English.

- **Applying Reading Research to the Development of an Integrated Lesson Plan** by Thomas Baker. The author describes some major trends in reading instruction, including an integrated approach that brings together methods from different perspectives. The article is completed with an integrated lesson plan for reading that can be adapted to benefit students of all levels.
- **Some Suggestions for Academic Writing Instruction at English Teacher Training Colleges** by Magdalena Ozarska. Teaching writing skills in English is no easy job. It’s a time-consuming process full of tremendous challenges. Hopefully, there are resources and ideas that teacher trainers can use, and this article will offer some suggestions to make the writing process more manageable.



*Do not ding-dong-ditch your books, hand them to Galina directly. It is polite.*

• **Using Anecdotes in Language Classes** by Deniz Salli-Copur. It is well known that an anecdote is a good strategy to attract and hold audience attention. This also applies to the second language classroom; using anecdotes is an excellent technique to arouse student interest and establish a meaningful and memorable context for learning. This article aims to describe types of anecdotes, explain why anecdotes are useful in language teaching, and suggest how to use them in the classroom.

• **Lesson Plan: Exploring New York City** by Bradley Horn. This lesson plan is based on the feature article “New York, New York” and the fact sheet about New York that appears at the end of this lesson plan. The activities in this lesson are designed to give your students the opportunity to gain more detailed information about the city. The lesson is also designed to give students an opportunity to practice an important reading skill: scanning for specific information.

Regards,  
Galina

**F**or Kaz 18s who think that they can just keep all of those cool resource center books, you are way off. Here is a list of books that you may, or may not have that need to be returned:

- *The Definitive Red Dictionary*, by Kenneth Katzner.
- *Where There is No Doctor (with pictures)*, by David Werner with Carol Thuman and Jane Maxwell.
- *501 Russian Verbs*, by Thomas R. Beyer, Jr.
- *Практическая Грамматика с Упражнениями*, by И. М. Пулькина and Е. Б. Захава-Некрасова.
- *Fundamentals of English Grammar*, by Betty Schramper Azar.
- *Grammar Games*, by Mario Rinvoluceri
- *Keep Talking*, by Friederike Klippel
- *Five Minute Activities*, by Penny Ur and Andrew Wright.
- *All those books you “borrowed” from the library and planned on “donating” to local libraries.*

# HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

## INFLUENZA

**G**reetings from your Health Unit!

It seems like flu season is a long way off but it will be here before you know it. Flu shots are given out in Oct/Nov and the peak flu season is usually around Jan/Feb.

**SO WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE FALL-2008 FLU VACCINATION SEASON!**

The Influenza immunization policy changed this year. It will not be mandatory for everybody, like it was for the previous two years. However, Your Health Unit has already ordered the vaccines for all (except Kaz-18 PCVs), and will start the vaccination as soon as we get the vaccine (supposedly in October). We encourage all Kaz 19 and Kaz 20 to consider being vaccinated, because the immunization will greatly decrease your chances to get this potentially life threatening disease. Upon vaccines arrival our Medical office will prepare the immunization schedule for Kaz 20 and give the shots during PST. For Kaz 19 we hope to give the injections during the Mid-service conference at the beginning of December or when/if you come to the office for non-medical reason. .

Please note that immunization should not be done later than December, 2008. Peace Corps will not specially pay for Kaz 19 Influenza immunization travel and PCMOs will not do special site visits only for Flu immunization.

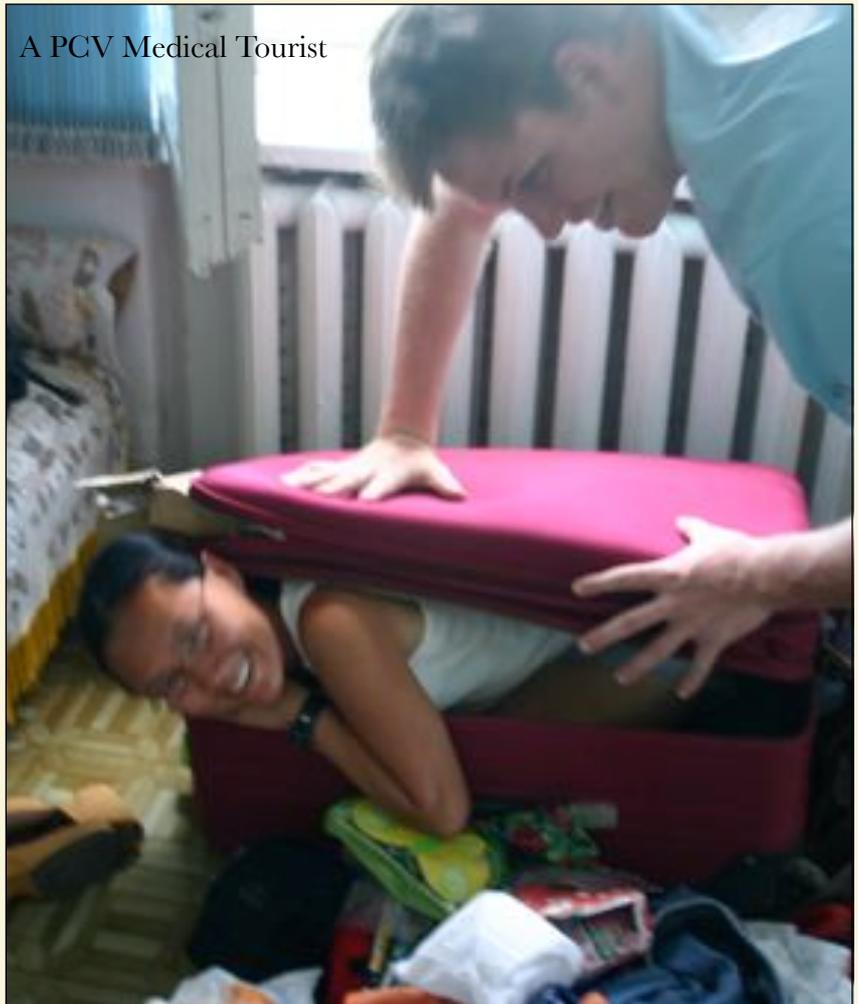
### WHO SHOULD NOT GET A FLU SHOT

- People who have a severe allergy to hens eggs
- People who have had a severe reaction to a flu shot in the past

### SHORT REMINDER – WHAT IS INFLUENZA?

Influenza, also known as ‘the flu’ is a contagious disease that is caused by the influenza virus. It attacks the respiratory tract in humans (nose, throat and lungs). The flu is different from a cold. Most people who get influenza usually recover in one to two weeks,

A PCV Medical Tourist



### Medical Tourism: Ticket to Thailand

Here are some tips to help you prepare for that winter “vacation” you so richly deserve. This advice not sanctioned by the medical staff.

1. Make sure that if you are planning on breaking a bone the hospital in your town will set it wrong. This will guarantee a “rebreak/reset” and time in the sun.
2. If you want a cool liver disease in time for Christmas in Bangkok, you better start now and be consistent (addicted).
3. If you are lucky enough to live near Ust-Kamenogorsk, take a couple laps around the Pentagon. The clear Thai waters will leave a lump in your throat, and then the doctors will remove it for you.
4. Try to avoid tooth chipping, CO poisoning, death, hernias, strange growths and pneumonia. These, while serious, will not get you much further than Almaty.
5. If you enlist your local friends to help you (great job cross-culturing, by the way), make sure to bring them back pictures and something from the duty-free shop.

Hey, you have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. Choose Thailand.

# HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

but generally people aged 65 years and older, people of any age with chronic medical conditions e.g. asthma, and very young children are more likely to get complications from influenza e.g. pneumonia.

## WHAT DO I DO WHEN I GET SICK

- Read the appropriate section/s in your Health Handbook
- Rest and drink plenty of fluids
- Take Ibuprofen 400mg 6 hourly for muscle aches
- Take note of your temperature 4-6 hourly
- Feel free to call or email your PCMO for support and guidance
- If you really feel like 'death'—take a day off work (call us before!), stay at home and 'lay low.' Remember—no-one else wants your virus thank you very much!

## DEPRESSION BEYOND THE BLUES

Everyone feels sad or encounters "the blues" now and then. But if these feelings become so troubling that they prevent you or a loved one from enjoying life or carrying out day-to-day activities, the blues may actually be depression.

Depression occurs because of imbalances in the chemistry of the brain. Sometimes the imbalances are made worse by sad or traumatic life experiences; other times imbalances occur for no identifiable reason.

Depression is seen in people of all ages, and twice as often in women as in men. Some people experience depression at certain times or in situations that remind them of an earlier loss. Often the condition goes unnoticed until a problem arises, such as malnutrition or even a suicide attempt. Recognizing and treating depression early can help speed recovery and reduce recurrences.

The signs of depression are similar across all ages and ethnic groups. Clues to depression may include such spoken or unspoken thoughts as: "Pretty soon you won't have to worry about me," or "Life isn't worth living." Unspoken signals that a person may be depressed and thinking about suicide may include paying off debts, making or changing a will, giving

belongings away, neglecting personal care, using drugs or alcohol on a daily basis or to excess in binge fashion, collecting prescription drugs and withdrawing from others.

## RISK FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO DEPRESSION

- Family History of Depression
- Drug side effects
- Physical/terminal illness
- Hormonal or brain chemistry imbalance
- Sense of loss of control over one's life
- Previous suicide attempt
- Death of a child or spouse
- Lack of meaningful social role
- Financial difficulties
- Divorce
- Relocation
- Social Isolation
- Alcohol - Daily uses or binges drinking
- Domestic Violence
- SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) - in grey wintry environments

Although depression is common and treatable - it often goes undiagnosed. Some people are embarrassed by their depression, or mistakenly see it as failing or personal weakness, so they do not ask for help.

Depression should not be confused with the sadness that we normally feel in response to losses or disappointments. These feelings do not last long and should not keep a person from functioning. Depressed people may be apathetic, anxious, or irritable rather than sad; they may experience memory loss or find it difficult to concentrate.

Depression is likely if any of the following symptoms are present most of the day and last longer than two (2) weeks:

1. Depressed mood and sadness that lasts most of the day, every day.
2. Loss of interest or pleasure in most activities.
3. Changes in sleeping habits
4. High or low activity level.

5. Loss of energy
6. Feelings of worthlessness
7. Difficulty in concentrating
8. Recurrent thoughts of suicide.

## WAYS TO LIFT YOUR MOOD

- Schedule a checkup with your healthcare provider to rule out severe depression if you are concerned.
- Engage in moderate exercise such as walking 20 minutes a day.
- Add lamps or lights in your home.
- Keep lights on during early morning and evening hours and on overcast days.
- Keep curtains and drapes open to let in natural light.
- On sunny days get outside as much as possible or sit by a sunny window.
- Paint rooms bright, warm colors.
- Put up colorful artwork or posters perhaps from a travel agency
- Wear bright colors
- Get out when possible, to a store or perhaps a library, visit friends
- Read or watch comical stories

Some of the above suggestions are very possible here in Kazakhstan. Others will need a bit of "creative thought" on your part. As we discussed in PST, journaling, writing letters to friends or family, spending time with other volunteers on a regular basis - all of these are ways to assist those "down" times.

If you feel that you or someone close to you is "at risk" in terms of depression, call us, we will be glad to be of help.

Those of you starting up with school, best wishes from the health unit. Those of you already hard at work... we're thinking of you!

*Take care.  
Your Medical Team: Nadiya, Aliya, Victor*

# В ч е р а ш н и е Н о в о с т и

## Peace Corps Volunteers in Georgia Safely Relocated to Armenia

WASHINGTON, D.C., August 11, 2008 - Peace Corps Director Ron Tschetter announced today that all Volunteers and trainees serving in the Republic of Georgia are safe, and they have been temporarily relocated to neighboring Armenia.

The decision to relocate the Volunteers is due to the ongoing conflict taking place in the South Ossetia region of Georgia and bordering areas. All 36 Peace Corps Volunteers and 49 Peace Corps Volunteer-trainees serving in Georgia are safe. Personnel from Peace Corps/Georgia, as well as Peace Corps/Armenia, are now supporting the Volunteers.

The Peace Corps/Georgia office is still open in Tbilisi, and is constantly and carefully monitoring this situation along with Peace Corps Headquarters in Washington. Peace Corps Volunteers do not serve in South Ossetia, the separatist region located in the north of Georgia along its border with Russia.

The Peace Corps program in Georgia was established in 2001. Since that time more than 275 Volunteers have served there. The 85 Volunteers and Volunteer-trainees currently serving in Georgia are working in English language education, business and social entrepreneurship programs.

Article accessed at [www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov), August 29, 2008.

## COUNSELING ON STUDENT LOANS NOW MAY EASE PAIN LATER

By Ron Lieber  
Published: September 5, 2008<sup>1</sup>

As of this week, hundreds of thousands of young men and women have taken their first big step on the road to financial adulthood: They're now on the hook for their first student loan.

No one trains college freshmen for this moment. It's not part of the standard high school curriculum, and most parents don't know enough about the process to pass on much wisdom. If they went to college, it was probably back in the day when most undergraduate degrees did not leave people with five figures of debt and multiple types of loans.

In the late 1980s, amid concern about the rising number of students who were skipping out on loan payments, the Education Department began requiring all students to undergo what it now calls "initial counseling" when they took out a federal loan, like a

Perkins or Stafford loan, for the first time.

The curriculum, which the colleges are responsible for teaching, is supposed to include information on the contract that students sign when they borrow, the consequences of not paying back the loan and some basic information on the average level of indebtedness among recent graduates and the size of their monthly loan payments. Today, some students sit in a room for their counseling while many others take a short course and quiz on a Web site.

The material should be blunt in tone, brutally honest and occasionally frightening, but it shouldn't leave students feeling powerless either. The session ought to feel like two wizened 25-year-olds are presiding: one who took on too much debt and ended up back home with a ruined credit score; the other living comfortably while still making loan payments each month. So if I were running the counseling sessions (and channeling my formerly indebted 25-year-old self), here are seven other points I'd add to the agenda.

### TREAT THIS LIKE A CLASS

## AT THE POLLS

Candidates	Party	Positives	Negatives
John McCain & Sarah Palin	Republican	December-May relationship balanced by Arizona-Alaska statelationship	Aware of Google but not sure what it does, or what a computer is, or what day it is.
Barack Obama & Joe Biden	Democrat	On paper they also appear black and white	Opposed to "N-words:" like NAFTA

<sup>1</sup> Article accessed at [www.nytimes.com/money](http://www.nytimes.com/money) September 6, 2008.

# В ч е р а ш н и е Н о в о с т и

Student loans, and the financial aid process in general, are incredibly complicated. There are several types of loans, with different terms and interest rates. You'll probably graduate with at least four, maybe twice or three times that.

But just getting through it isn't enough. You've heard about the mortgage crisis, right? Well, many people your parents' age took the "just sign the papers" approach to their home loans and ended up not understanding why their payments went up sharply a few years later.

So you need to master the basics and then keep them in your head. Did you get any printouts or glossaries during your counseling session? If not, bookmark [studentaid.ed.gov](http://studentaid.ed.gov) (the federal government's site on financial aid), [finaid.org/loans](http://finaid.org/loans) (a great independent site).

## ENLIST YOUR PARENTS

Yes, college is supposed to be a big step toward independence. But your parents can probably help you think of questions to ask about your loans that you haven't thought of, simply because they've been borrowing money and paying bills much longer than you have.

You may also need to educate them about the process, given that they may be helping you pay for college and will want an update on your borrowing. They don't have to sit for counseling, even if they're borrowing money to send you to school. "We have a lot of students who are the first to go to college in their families," said Patricia Hurley, associate dean and director of financial aid at Glendale Community College in Glendale, Calif. "The terminology around loans is new for them. It's a completely different world."

## CHECK IN ANNUALLY

Your school's single counseling session is a good start, but you should really check in with your debt at least once a

year, or every time you take out a new loan. Store all of the loan documents in a single file and keep a running total of what you've borrowed. If your e-mail or mail address has changed, let every lender know. Then, use the tool labeled "Loan Calculator (Standard and Extended Repayment)" at [finaid.org/calculators](http://finaid.org/calculators) to give you a sense of what you need to earn to make your monthly payment upon graduation.

## MAKE A FRIEND IN AID

One of the best things you can do for yourself is find people in the financial aid office who really know their stuff and then make one of them your friend for the next four years. This will also be a good person to know if you want to ask for more financial aid than the college gives you at first in this or future years. If you think you're being a pest, don't sweat it. One-on-one counseling is probably much more rewarding for them than reading financial aid forms and spreadsheets all day.

In fact, Education Department rules require that the college make someone available to answer questions right after your initial counseling is finished. If you go to a big university and are having trouble getting anyone to return your phone calls this month, it may help to write a note to the director of financial aid with a gentle reminder of the rule and a polite plea for assistance.

## BORROWING IS GETTING CHEAPER

If you qualify for subsidized Stafford loans, the kind where the federal government pays the interest while you're still in school, your interest rate on a loan issued after July 1 of this year is 6 percent. Last year it was 6.8 percent. Next school year it will be 5.6%, and the year after, it will drop to 4.5 percent. The fees you pay when you first get the loan are also falling.

While it may be too late to halt your loan for this year, the falling rates suggest that you should try as hard as you can to borrow as little as possible until later in your undergraduate education. Perhaps there's a relative who can help with a loan until then, or you can work a few more hours at a paid job.

## BE WARY OF PRIVATE LOANS

Private student loans are different from federal loans. Their interest rates are generally higher, and the rate usually isn't fixed over the life of the loan. Still, a growing number of students are using them, in part because the application process is easier. Private loans may also be the only option for students who have maxed out the eligibility on their federal loans or are getting no help from their parents or scholarships.

The Education Department doesn't require you to undergo counseling when taking out your first private loan. At Barnard College in New York City, however, the financial aid office reaches out to families who are using private loans before it will certify for the lender that the student is indeed attending. According to Alison Rabil, director of financial aid, the families are generally confused about the overall financial aid process and may not even know what interest rate they would be paying on the private loans.

As a result of what amounts to its mandatory private loan counseling, Barnard helped families get their private loan volume down to under \$400,000 from \$1.5 million in a single year.

More colleges ought to follow their lead. Until they do, however, go see your friend in financial aid before taking out any private loans. Finding a better option for paying your college bills could save you thousands of dollars over time.

# В ч е р а ш н и е Н о в о с т и

## MEETING THE SENATORS

Аяпова has tried to teach our students something about business etiquette during meals, but the dinner on Thursday, August 7<sup>th</sup> with PCVs, the US Ambassador to Kazakhstan, US senators, and their staff and military attaché showed a better example of how we interact with incoming respected guests. There was a lot of nervous standing before the senators arrived at the Uzbek restaurant, a lot of smiling and shaking of hands, and of

Schindler.

The senators, their wives, some staff, and the military representatives had stopped in Kazakhstan after similar short visits to Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, and wanted to talk with PCVs to find out a little bit more about our lives here. Most of the senators were already big fans of the PC experience, and each one had nothing but ecstatic appreciation for our service.

Upon meeting the senators, it is hard not to fall under the spell of their good-natured characters, outgoing personali-

ties, and admittedly press-corps-friendly smiles. During introductions, our female volunteers were met with exclamations of "You're beautiful! Thank you for your service! What's your name?" and the male volunteers heard, "You, son, come here - I want you to meet someone." It was all very avuncular, friendly, energetic, and encouraging

Enough cannot be said about the gratitude of the senators for our service here in Kazakhstan. Our elected



waiting till the most respected senators sat down, but there were no hamburgers and few moments of eating as quickly as possible.

There was quite the spread of impressive guests. The senators included Senator Bingaman from New Mexico, Senator Nelson from Florida, Senator Isakson from Georgia, and Senator Menendez from New Jersey, as well as the Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid from Nevada. Soon to be departing Ambassador John Ordway and his wife were in attendance, as well as KZ Peace Corps Country Director John Sasser. Also at the dinner were Rear Admiral John Eisold and military personnel. The organizers of the dinner were from the State Department, and included RELO and RPCV Andrea

ties, and admittedly press-corps-friendly smiles. During introductions, our female volunteers were met with exclamations of "You're beautiful! Thank you for your service! What's your name?" and the male volunteers heard, "You, son, come here - I want you to meet someone." It was all very avuncular, friendly, energetic, and encouraging

The PCVs and visitors were interspersed among three dinner tables, and for approximately two hours they traded stories of life both abroad and back in the USA. At our table, Leah Forlivio answered rapid-fire questions from Sen. Reid about her experience working at the university in Kokshetau, and the senator responded with anecdotes about his many trips around

officials recognize our commitment, the work we are doing for our country and for KZ, and they applaud our continuing efforts to serve this community. Mrs. Ordway even went out of her way to make chocolate chip cookies. But the senators also realize that a large portion of work still remains: to educate friends, neighbors, relatives, colleagues, and random strangers about Kazakhstan. There was much head nodding and emphatic agreement that perhaps the largest beneficiary from Peace Corps efforts abroad is America itself. Sorry, Kaz-18, you're not in the last few months of your "service" - you're really only partway through.

Chris Van Fossen (Kaz 18)  
Akkol

# Y P O 3 A

## RAMADAN

The month of Ramadan is around. This information on Ramadan will help you to explore more about Ramadan, and understand the significance of this month for Muslims.

Year 2008 (or 1429 according to Muslim Calendar Hijra)  
The first day of Ramadan is on Monday, September 1

The Islamic calendar is based on the lunar cycle. Since this occurs every 29 or 30 days, the lunar month is generally 1 or 2 days shorter than a typical month in the Gregorian calendar (the calendar used in the United States). Similarly, a lunar year is about 11 days shorter than a typical Gregorian year. As a result, dates of events in the Islamic lunar year “move forward” about 11 days every year.

The month of Ramadan which is the ninth of the twelve months begins with a combination of the sighting of the new moon and astronomical calculations. The exact time of Ramadan sometimes varies from place to place as some rely heavily on the moon sightings while others depend on science. An Imam (Muslim holy man) declares the exact time of Ramadan just prior to its commencement. The fasting period ends upon the sighting of the next new moon, which occurs after 29 or 30 days.

Ramadan is the month in which the Koran was revealed to Muhammad. According to Muslim tradition, the actual revelation occurred on the night between the 26th and 27th days of the month. On this "Night of Determination," God determines the fate of the world for the coming year.

The name Ramadan is derived from the Arabic word ‘ramida’ or ‘ar-ramad,’ denoting intense scorching heat and dryness, especially the ground. From the same word there is ‘ramdaa,’ meaning “sun-baked sand” and the famous proverb “To jump out of the frying pan into the fire.”

Muslims fast during this month from the moment when it first starts to get light until sunset.

Fasting (Oraza in Kazakh) is one of the Five Pillars of the religion of Islam and one of the highest forms of Islamic worship.

Fasting means abstinence from eating, drinking, smoking and sexual activity from dawn until dusk. Abstinence from earthly pleasures and curbing evil intentions and desires is regarded as an act of obedience and submission to God as well as atonement for sins, errors, and mistakes.

(People who are exempted from fasting: aged, sick, pregnant women, suckling women, kids, travelers, mentally retarded.)

### Fasting and sins don't go together

One should not use his eyes for seeing wrong.  
One should not use his ears to listen to wrong during the fast.  
One should not use his hands to do wrong during the fast.



Abdsattar Hajji Derbisali, Supreme Mufti of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims in Kazakhstan

### Benefits of Fasting in Islam :

- 1) God fearing nature
- 2) Afterlife Accountability
- 3) Patience
- 4) Self-control
- 5) Self-discipline
- 6) Responsibility
- 7) Obedience
- 8) Purification of soul

Y P O 3 A

One should not use his mind to think of wrong things during the fast.  
 One should not use his feet to walk on the wrong path.  
 and so on.

Fasting helps one to experience how a hungry person feels and what it is like to have an empty stomach. It teaches one to share the sufferings of the less fortunate. Muslims believe that fasting leads one to appreciate the bounties of Allah, which are usually taken for granted - until they are missed.

Throughout the day Muslims are encouraged to go out of their way to help the needy, both financially and emotionally. Some believe that a reward earned during this month is multiplied 70 times and more. For this reason, Ramadan is also known as the month of charity and generosity.

It is an essential tradition of Ramadan to read the Koran in its entirety.

Days of Ramadan : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 - God's Mercy  
 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 - God's Forgiveness  
 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 - Salvation from Hell-fire

<p><b>Oraza Ait</b>                  September 30,                  October 1-2</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

After 29 days of fasting, Muslims in Kazakhstan will start celebrating the end of Ramadan with a three-day festival of life, Oraza Ait (called Eid al-Fitr in Arabic) with prayers for peace, lavish meals and time with families and friends. This is a holiday when people are supposed to visit no less than seven dastarkhans (family-sized tables laden with food.)

During Oraza Ait, the Muslims are called on to forgive others, repent misdeeds and engage in philanthropy. Charitable acts are encouraged during this period, building on the natural generosity that is part of the national tradition.

There are approximately 8 million Muslims in Kazakhstan coming from the Kazakh, Uzbek, Tartar, Uigur, Azeri, Chechen, Ingursh and other ethnic groups.



*Above:* Preparing for Oraza Ait. An Ingursh girl helps prepare the table for guests in Shortandy, Kazakhstan.

C N O P T

**Three encounters that showed what the Games meant to China**

**BEIJING**<sup>2</sup> -- When I leave Beijing, I'll pack with my bags no single overriding memory from these Olympics. Rather, I'll take home an accretion of encounters -- day-to-day interactions with the Chinese people who yearned for the Games, banked on them, sacrificed for them, and in the end delivered on them.

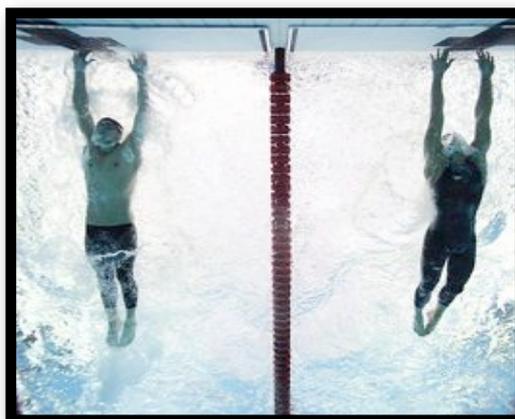
Herewith, three such encounters. Taken individually, there's nothing extraordinary about any of them. But the cumulative effect of moments like these over 17 days was a profound one. And they speak to the lodestar I've tried to follow since Sept. 11, 2001, as articulated by my colleague **Pico Iyer** in his *Time* essay "Why Travel Is Necessary." It's when the world is at its wobbliest that it's most incumbent on us to seek out other people in other places, and transact with them the business of reaffirming our essential humanity.

On the Games' opening weekend, after the U.S. defeat of China in the lidlifter of the men's basketball tournament, I holed up at the press table in the Beijing Olympic Basketball Gymnasium to pound out my story. It was 4:30 in the morning when I finally finished and filed. Packing up my gear, I turned to make my way up the stairs to leave.

At the top of the steps I saw two young women in Olympic polo shirts, volunteers still standing sentinel. "Good night, see you tomorrow!" they said in near unison as I filed past. I smiled, then turned to look around the gym. There was no one in the place but us. There had probably been no one else in the place since 2 a.m. Whereupon it occurred to me: Those two volunteers had waited seven years

**Olympic News and Notes:**

1. *The United States won more medals than any other country.*
2. *Michael Phelps, pictured below, left, won 8 gold medals and became the most medaled athlete in history.*
3. *The White Sox are in first place heading into the last month of the season. While this is not olympic news, it is important to the editors of this paper.*



to take their stations at the top of those stairs to wish me good night. They weren't going to be fazed by having to wait a few hours more to fulfill their mission.

Every time a press bus rolled through a security checkpoint, a People's Liberation Army soldier snapped off a smart salute. On the way into the Wukesong Baseball Complex one morning, the devil got hold of me. As we passed the solider standing sentry, I caught his eye, put two fingers to my eyebrow, and shot him a salute back. A smile fissured out over his face, and then we were gone.

I'm willing to bet that, in the PLA procedural manual, there's no code X, section Y, subcodicil Z, that authorizes impulsive smiling at Westerners in mid-salute. If he worked at Buckingham Palace, he'd have been sacked. But in the space of a moment he'd made my morning.

Over more than a fortnight of shadowing the Redeem Team, I got to know well a little dumpling joint just steps from where the U.S. basketball players practiced at Beijing Normal University. I parted the beaded curtain just before 2 p.m. on the final Thursday of the Games, looking forward to a plate of pork and parsley dumplings and an iced green tea.

The lunch rush had subsided and I was the only Westerner in the place -- the accidental Occidental. The restaurant staff had gathered around a TV set as CCTV looped highlights featuring the U.S. women's volleyball team, which earlier that day had defeated Cuba for a berth in the gold medal game. The camera lingered on U.S. coach **Lang Ping**, who remains the most beloved female athlete ever to play for China, as Lang fixed each of her players with a postgame hug. After a few minutes of this, one of the restaurant workers turned to meet my eye and add a nod of the head.

"Lang Ping!" I said, nodding in reply, and adding that gesture of approval, as universal in the Middle Kingdom as in Middle America: the **Sammy Davis, Jr.**, double thumbs up.

He shot me a smile and a more vigorous nod. Here we were, stand-ins for China and the U.S., the respective interests of our nations in perfect alignment, no translation necessary.

Four people down. Only 1,299,999,996 to go.

Alexander Wolff

<sup>2</sup> Accessed Sunday August 24, 2008 at [www.cnnsi.com](http://www.cnnsi.com).

## I N T E R V I E W

**BEHIND THE SCENES WITH  
"JOINTHEPEACECORPS"**

By now, many PCVs have seen the films created by the production team "JoinThePeaceCorps" (JTPC). In fact, some PCVs have been featured in one of the group's hilariously captivating videos. Their videos capture the experiences of PC service in this great nation of Kazakhstan. Film critics have even gone so far as to proclaim JTPC's work as a "tour de force" accurately depicting Peace Corps Kazakhstan within the framework of the modern *zeitgeist* of the twenty-first century world which we live." JTPC was launched this past February by three Petropavlovsk PCVs Forrest Dunbar, Phil Montgomery and Mike Mesquita, and their works have created quite a following. With four videos already released ("Ice Picnic," "English Concert/Variety Show," "Spring Break 2008," and "Return to Lake Pyostroe") and one video in production ("Camp Dostik," set to be released sometime this summer), JTPC has become a success not only with PCVs, but also with friends and family back home and with host country nationals. Though it was difficult to track down the members of JTPC during this busy summer season, the *Vesti* briefly sat down with Forrest and Phil to discuss their work.

***Vesti*: What was the motivation for creating "JoinThePeaceCorps"?**

**Forrest:** Pure narcissism. I felt the world would not be complete without a montage of Petro images, and there was a gaping hole of Kazakhstani issues that needed to be addressed.

**Phil:** We wanted to put up videos online that we (Mike, Forrest and I) had collaborated on showing our experiences in the PC. As we each had individual YouTube accounts, we decided to make another to consolidate the videos around a common theme.

**V: When was "JoinThePeaceCorps" launched?**

**P:** A while ago. Early March-ish.

**V: Whose idea was it?**

**P:** Both Forrest and I have had previous amateur film-making experience.

If I remember correctly, I mentioned the desire to start making movies, and Forrest started supplying possible ideas as well as recommending that we put them online. Mike did not really do anything.

**V: More importantly, what does "JoinThePeaceCorps" represent? What sort of message do you want to send to your viewers?**

**P:** We needed a username for the YouTube account, and we were hoping to include a variety of videos from our PC experience.

**F:** We just want people to join the Peace Corps.

**P:** We want, of course, to share a balanced view of what we're doing, but also to show that we're having a good time. For people who don't know anything about KZ, it is a glimpse into life here. For people who are interested in learning about the PC, either considering joining or preparing to join, it shows what service can be like.

**V: What was the first video?**

**F:** Ice Picnic

**P:** We went on an English Club picnic out on a frozen lake with the local University kids... in a blizzard.

**V: How was it received by your audience?**

**P:** I am not really sure. We mostly just goofed around, taking lots of footage of the fun we were having playing in the knee-deep snow, and then spent a week editing it. Most of our feedback (comments on the YouTube video page) has been from locals saying that they appreciate seeing videos from KZ online.

**F:** I think Ice picnic was received well. My mother wanted to have a copy to use it for her 8<sup>th</sup> grade class. So my audience—which consists of my mother—thought it was great.

**V: What are other videos you have created?**

**P:** Since the Ice Picnic, we have added a short clip of local students during an English concert/variety

show, a Return to Lake Pyostroe video about the picnic following the blizzard (2 months later, with persistent rain instead of snow), and a longer, more involved video from the Nauryz trip to Shymkent in March.

**V: How have they been received by your audience and by critics?**

**F:** Very well, critics widely panned Phil's rap performance in the English concert. Nevertheless, the Nauryz video received the most praise within the PC community, because more PCVs were featured in the video, and PCVs are obsessed with seeing their own face emanating from the computer screen.

**P:** I don't really know, as I don't hear a lot of the feedback, but we've heard both praise and criticisms. The main praise: "Man, you guys are awesome!" The main critique: "Man, you guys are dumb."

**V: What is the most popular video?**

**F:** Nauryz. It is the longest and most detailed. It is our *magnum opus*. It is the only time that we actually catalogued something in detail that was different. It had a wider scope than most of the videos. The other videos are shorter and less in depth.

**P:** Check the YouTube site for most viewed, but my personal favorite was the Nauryz video. It had a good mix of substantial PCV feedback about their experience and perspective, and us having a good time set to upbeat music.

**V: How many hits on YouTube has the group gotten?**

**F:** More than a 1000, with all the videos combined.

**V: Where do you get your inspiration?**

**P:** We like making videos. We like having projects outside of work that allow us to use our extensive creative abilities. We try to manage a lot of small clips of events into a short video, thereby providing the viewer with a densely packaged cinematic experience.

# I N T E R V I E W

**V: Are there any specific influences on your work?**

**P:** Not consciously. We do, however, like montages, funk music, the comedic genius of Tim Suchsland, locals eating things, slow-motion, and callbacks to previous videos.

**F:** If you watch our videos we try to structure our videos with a clear beginning, middle and end. I think that is Shakespearean in feel. Yet, at the same time we also have elements of temporal juxtaposition, which feels a little like Quentin Tarantino. Beside QT, our biggest influence is Adam Smith and *The Wealth of Nations*. His philosophy is bigger than he is given credit. If you have actually read his work there is more to it than just free trade, he talks about... (Forrest rant)...

**V: Tell us about the process of filming, editing and posting your movies.**

**P:** We start with an idea. We flesh the idea out. We make sure the camera memory card is empty and the battery charged, and we film... a lot. *Na primer*, from the Nauryz video (16 min running time) we shot 3 hours of footage (8 GB) over the course of 5 days. Then we dump all footage onto a laptop, convert the files, organize and edit using Windows Movie Maker. It takes a long time. (Just the converting of the videos for Return to Pyostroe took 2 hours.) We usually edit together, or in pairs. Once we finish it, we watch it a few times to check for mistakes and make minor adjustments. Then we post it online, which also takes a long time, given the internet connection here.

**F:** It is more time consuming than people would imagine. We spent almost an hour for every minute on the first video, but now it takes us about 30 minutes for each minute. We got

better. It's a collaborative process, but Phil and I do most of the work.

**V: What is each person's position and role in creating the films?**

**P:** Each project is different, based on whose idea, whose computer is being used, who has the most free time, etc. Most of the idea generation is done by Forrest and me. Filming is mostly done by me. On screen commentary is mostly done by Forrest and Mike. Editing is shared by all of us. Publishing online is usually done by Mike.

**F:** Phil has the best camera, and sometimes we use Meghan's camera.

Mike's computer is used for editing, but we also use Phil's. We take music from Phil and Mike. Most of the ideas are mine.



Phil is good at editing. On the Nauryz video, Phil and Mike did most of the work.

**V: What feedback have you gotten from viewers?**

**F:** People at home like it. PCVs like them because they are in it. Kazakhstanis are hit and miss. We showed it at an English club and they were not too thrilled, but Phil's host mom liked it.

**P:** Most people like it. PCVs have generally given us positive feedback, but have also given the most constructive criticism (the main one being to

include more Kaz 18s in the projects, due to their extended experience and insight). One random YouTuber rated a video of ours 2/5, but most comments and ratings are positive. From home, most people have said they just enjoy being able to see and hear what is going here, instead of just reading about it on blogs and through emails.

**V: What is your favorite video?**

**P:** "Spring Break 2008."

**F:** Our next video...

**V: What might be some future projects?**

**P:** PC Kaz Staff has approved of our Nauryz project and is considering showing it to the Kaz 20s upon arrival in August. They mentioned a desire to have similar videos regarding teaching and teacher training. We've planned to start production on something along those lines in the fall... most likely using the *Rocky* theme song. There has also been talk of videos involving interviews with locals on various themes, including a beef-butchering tutorial.

**F:** I have no idea. We will do something in August probably.

**P:** VERY IMPORTANT: We are also hoping to get videos from other volunteers across Kazakhstan, with any range of themes or production quality, given that it is appropriate to represent our organization. If you have a video that shows some aspect of local and/or PCV life, please email Phil ([dpmontgomery@gmail.com](mailto:dpmontgomery@gmail.com)) or Mike ([mike.mesquita@yahoo.com](mailto:mike.mesquita@yahoo.com)) and we will send the password for you to upload it yourself. That way we can create a central location for viewers to find common videos about our unique PC experiences.

Tim Suchsland (Kaz 19)  
Yavlenka

# VOLUNTEER WRITING

## MAN'S BEST FRIEND... SOMETIMES

Well, you talk about trouble  
I had it all my days  
Trouble, had it all my days  
Seems like trouble goin' to carry me  
to my grave

-Mississippi John Hurt

I have a dog back home and her name is Sophie. She's a Lhasa Apsa, a little white and brown furry Ewok. These dogs were ideal watchdogs in Tibet, but now they are pampered by people like my mother who love to comb their hair, take them for Sunday walks around the neighborhood, and, yes, the occasional brushing of the teeth. Sophie has no idea what it means to be a dog, especially a dog in Kazakhstan. I sometimes imagine bringing Sophie to my village and letting her walk up and down Lenin Street. I can only imagine the unspeakable crimes committed on her by the other dogs. The dogs of Avat have lost their souls a long time ago to beatings, fights with other packs, or near starvation during the harsh winters. "Haggard" is a word I would use to describe them, but even that word cannot quite define what these dogs look like. Some of them have lost chunks of hair and have scars on their faces and mouths while others walk with limps and have hoarse barks. I have never heard an owner call them by their name because I don't think most dogs in Avat have owners, and, thus, lack a name.

Lenin Street is the straightest path to my school, which was also the most horrifying for me for the first three months of my service because this is the street where most packs live. It's a 20 minute walk through a gauntlet of furry terror. There are packs ranging from 4 to 8 dogs, usually commanded by an abused mother whose multiple nipples sag almost to the ground or by some distant relative; the fathers, it seems to me, never stay

## A Parting Shot

There have been moments of gruesomeness in all of this, but it comforts me that we have already been through the worst.

Things of us that I will always remember, among many others:

- The ridiculously "long walk" in Philly looking for that mysterious club
- The Indian restaurant in Philly
- Sitting on the cliff's edge of the dried-up lake in Turgen
- Pilgrimages in Turgen
- "Get to know you" party game/surveys in Turgen
- Poop
- Experiencing fully in Shymkent: "We're in Central Asia!!!"
- Poverty Cones
- Being Fancy — not just me, you know who you are
- Magic
- Almaty dates
- All our parties (Club Sholpan, gourmet food, hookah, crunk dancing, nudity, pirates, weddings), however much I criticize them, and most especially this last New Year <3
- Playing and Laughter. Music, The Handbook Game, Do/Ditch/Marry, Highs/Lows, Truth or Dare, Jacks, Old Maid, Apples to Apples, Mad Libs...
- Anytime my '80s/ electric blue/ neon green splashed/ spray paint 1-piece swimsuit came into play



We are forever now, never to say goodbye... All I want to do is look forward to our new lives, marked with the tattoos of this country that only a few of us can ever boast. The best of my hopes for you and what your future has in store.

I love you and miss you already,  
Fancy (Kaz 18)

### ALSO IN THIS SECTION:

- PHOTOGRAPHY CAMP IN KARATAU
- PREPARATION FOR FLEX
- CAMPING (SORT OF) IN PETRO
- ARTS AND CRAFTS IN BARAVOYE
- UFC

# VOLUNTEER WRITING

long enough to know their kin. My first instinct in defending myself was to pick up a stick and carry it with me to school. This was a big mistake. Sticks just make these dogs angrier. They know what a human with a stick means and, unlike most American dogs, do not cower away in fear. No, dogs of Kazakhstan do not know or respect the rule of the stick (Jack London, you are a damn liar). I almost got bit on the heel by what looked like an overgrown rat one day I brought my stick down Lenin Street. That was the last time I carried it. My host mom had told me to pick up a handful of dirt and throw it at the dogs, specifically at their eyes. So one day I met a familiar pack of Lenin Street. They liked to hang on the corner of Lenin and Mira and were six deep. Four of them had short black fur with pointy ears while the other two were little brown ones with long, crusted fur that had seemed to be dreadlocked over the years of living without a wash. These two seemed to hang around the black dogs for scraps, scavengers in the canine hierarchy. Their strategy of terror was to circle their victim and attack from behind. They began to circle me as though they just wanted a friendly pet or touch. I knew their game, so I listened to what my host mom had said to me and knelt down to pick up some dirt. Surprisingly enough, most of them backed away, but the little dreadlocked beast sauntered a little closer. I chucked a pile of sand at it and got it in the face. It coughed an exhausted, chain-smoking cough, and then caught up with the others across the street. I had won that day, but there were plenty more to go in my service, and they knew it.

Walking along Lenin Street at night without a flashlight is, well, like being blind. The worst part is the barking dogs that you cannot see. You can only hear their pattering and panting around you, hiding in ditches, waiting to take you out. There are nights when there is no moon at all in the sky, and these are the nights that I am without my flashlight, the nights



where the packs come out to eat, fight, and propagate their game. The best thing to do during these nights is to walk in the middle of the road and hope cars come by every minute or so to light up the scene.

When dogs are not fighting with villagers, they turn on each other. Territory is vital to any animal. Without it, how can one live? Dogs are no different. Marking territory is a 24 hour a day job for an Avat dog. I have seen one fatigued old dog mark his spot and, two minutes later, another younger dog would come up and re-mark the same area. This is a pretty big insult to the old man, but what could he do? He is old and useless in this society of dogs. This guy was without a pack and probably weaker than most dogs, so he had to just walk off. Although when this happens between two dogs of the same size and age, fights usually break out. Some are pretty bloody. I have seen many dog fights in Avat and none of them seem to have any rules. I have seen one dog taken down by a pack of four, and, minutes later, he was limping and whimpering away. These packs do not stop attacking until they have claimed their territory from previous packs or defending it from intruders.

And then there are the dogs with owners. Most of these guys are stripped of any personality, broken down into angry guards at an early age and conditioned to bark at anything that moves. Most lives of a watchdog never go beyond a 7 foot radius, a tin bowl of last night's food, a doghouse, a chain, and a name. I have two watchdogs, and only one has a name: Kuzia. The other dog is still a little too young and is in the process of being broken down. As a pup he could run around without a chain, but now he has a chain and he's tied next to the garage; his

From Top to Bottom: Kuzia I, Tishka, Kuzia II, Watchdog

## VOLUNTEER WRITING

barks are a little more quiet and defeated. I used to have another watchdog (Tishka), but my host mother gave him to a neighbor because he barked at nothing. We both agreed that Tishka had lost his mind and it was time to pawn him off to someone who needed him\*. I had a dog before Tishka and his name was Kuzia also, but he died last year. He was a little orange man, who, somehow, reminded me of Joe Pesci from Casino. I had buried him next to the cabbage. I guess we could call these dogs lucky, but the look in their eyes and the quiet whimpering at nights tells me they somehow know that there is more to life than this.

My host mom had asked me one time what happens to stray dogs in America. I told her we have something like dog prisons. If dogs without collars are reported, then they are caught and put into kennels (in most American cities). People can go to these places and purchase them.

“What happens to the dogs here if the area is overpopulated?” I asked.

“They shoot them,” she responded casually.

My first reaction was that I did not believe it. My second reaction was who are they? About a year later I was coming from school. It was around 2pm and there were around five young boys in the center of the village yelling to me and telling me to come over. I asked what was going on. They said that the stray dogs are being shot today with excited anticipation. Right when they had told me this there was a dump truck with men dressed in fatigues. Two of them were in the back of the blue dump truck with rifles. The man in the passenger seat was yelling to us through a megaphone telling us to get the hell out of the way. The kids scattered, but watched with curiosity. I walked down near some apartments in the opposite direction. Soon after I heard three gun shots and one white dog race by me panting heavily. There

were blood trails all over the streets that day, and that night Avat seemed very quiet. This silence seemed to have lasted for a couple of days that, I think even the dogs of Lenin Street were a little shaken.

I do not know why, but all of these things seem to be fine with me. Maybe it could have been reading the Culture Matters book, but I think it is something else. Most dogs in Kazakhstan seem to be entirely different from most dogs in America. I think they have an acute awareness of struggle, heartbreak and mortality, which causes me to respect them a lot more than most American dogs. Maybe there will be a day when owners will be brushing the teeth of their watchdogs, or the crew on Lenin Street will be put behind bars for multiple crimes – or maybe not. I sort of do not want the dogs of Kazakhstan to be like the dogs of America or vice versa, although I did see a clothing store for dogs in Almaty the other month. I wonder if it is still there.

\* Two days after writing this article my host brother, Dima, had broke the news to me that Tishka’s throat was slit by his friend and the meat was used for shashleek.

Matt Moat (Kaz 18)  
Avat

## PHOTOGRAPHY KZ-101

Driving out of Karatau on a Wednesday morning, one of the students in our bus turned to me and asked, “Mr. Sven, you will ask Sleeping Beauty to your girlfriend?”

“Sure, where is she?”

“She right there,” he said, pointing out into nothing. As the rest of the students broke down laughing, I turned to Joella, a volunteer from Karatau, to get in on the joke.

Sleeping beauty is a foothill formation that lies on the outskirts of Karatau, a town of 16,000 that feels as if it slid across the entirety of the steppe until it was brought to rest by this unconscious temptress. She lies two hours north of Taraz, a city on the Kazakh border between Almaty and Shymkent. Two factories used to supply Karatau with work during the Soviet Union, but were long ago made redundant, along with giant housing blocks that don’t lie nearly as peacefully, but just as still as the lady holding them in.

I left my comparably air-conditioned home in the North to spend two weeks at a photography camp run by Joella Davis and Matt Turner, two volunteers from my group. Joella is the matriarch of the camp, having started it last summer with a grant that provided for cameras, film and development. She was a photography major at North Florida, where she commuted, taking care of her younger brother while her mother served in the army. Matt is from San Diego, and is more hermit crab than outdoor surfer. I stayed with Matt during camp, and after leaving felt sufficiently reintroduced to American multimedia, supersaturated with anime.

The goal of photography camp, called Karatau’s Light, is twofold. The first goal is to teach students the fundamentals of photography: light, angles, perspective, framing, focus, composition, etc. Kazakhstan is a country that loves its pictures. In the bigger cities, you can find a photoshop on almost every street. They outnumber restaurants, and in my town of Shortandy, a town with no bank, there are two. Unfortunately, much of Kazakhstan is gripped by “practicality,” meaning that most people abandon their passions, at their parents behest, in pursuit of jobs they think will pay the best such as finance and business.

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The arts many times take a back-seat to these normal aspirations, which makes this camp unique to this part of the world.

The second goal is to teach students the fundamentals of photography in English. Students are selected into the camp partly based on their English abilities. All of the lessons are given in English, and every day students are expected to talk about and describe their pictures using English, especially language specific to photography. For people trying to learn a language outside of a submerged environment, it is important to learn and develop through themes. Many volunteers use their access to original material to develop themes such as music, film, art, writing and photography to make their lessons more interesting and relevant.

This year camp ran for two weeks and involved 15 students and 5 volunteers. In addition to Joella, Matt and myself, Beth Sayles and In-Jee Lee also made the trip to the дикий (wild) South. Each day students were required to shoot one roll of film using the theme presented in class as a guide for their work. Then they would present their work the next day in class. The system would have worked fine, but



Kids with their cameras.  
Below: someone's feet.



Ludmilla, from Ludmilla's photo salon, did not take the boon to her business as seriously as she should have. An ill-scheduled vacation day put us behind by 24 hours, aside from which the camp experienced only minor blips.

After presenting work and going over new words, mostly descriptive adjectives, the students listened to a lecture about that days assignment. The tasks ranged from shooting with direct and indirect light to storytelling, each day building on the previous days work so

that by the end of two weeks students were taking purely discriminating photos. The camp also included two trips to the foothills that are the prelude to the massive mountain chains that start in Kazakhstan and extend down to Pakistan and India.

The trips introduced me to Sleeping Beauty, and the students to some of the beautiful nature that surrounds their home.

Many of the students, if they had ever left Karatau, had only been to nearby Taraz or Shimkent, larger cities in the region. There used to be trails and a steady flow of summer vacationers before the USSR collapsed. Afterwards many of the operations went into disrepair and people stopped coming. Even the local teachers who were with our group said that they had not been out into the wilderness since they were children. Both trips started with local drivers getting lost.

Traveling outside of the classroom also proved the best way to connect with the students and to have them

use their language. Being in the classroom gives students the impression that their teachers are larger than life. I remember going on field trips all the way through college where being out in the open with a teacher or

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professor made them seem more approachable, more human. So although I was larger than all of the students, I still relished the chance to be less scary than I usually am.

On our hike, the boys and I went ahead, which was fine because although I do not think Peace Corps would medically evacuate me for cooties, I would rather not risk it. Joella got herself and a local teacher involved with wild cows. The cows, despite being cooed at in three languages, were not soothed by the presence of civilization, and rebuffed their many advances. As some students and I looked down from the hilltop, some of the students couldn't help but laugh, remembering, no doubt, some of their own experiences with wild cows.

In the end I never asked out Sleeping Beauty. She could have spooned me many times over, and really tall girls kind of freak me out. All trysts aside, the camp was a success. As it came to a close, the students took their three best photographs to put into a camp portfolio. In the spirit of struggling artistry, the portfolio will serve as the future support of the camp. Prints of many of the photographs will be for sale, as well as a calendar, the proceeds of which will go for film and development costs at next years camp. It is a sustainable photo op for Sleeping Beauty in her sleepy town.

If you wish to purchase a print or calendar, you can reach Matt at [Inthehat9@gmail.com](mailto:Inthehat9@gmail.com).

Sven Stafford (Kaz 18)  
Shortandy

## STUDENTS FLEX THEIR MINDS

While Peace Corps Kazakhstan affords many different opportunities for all kinds of work outside of our pri-

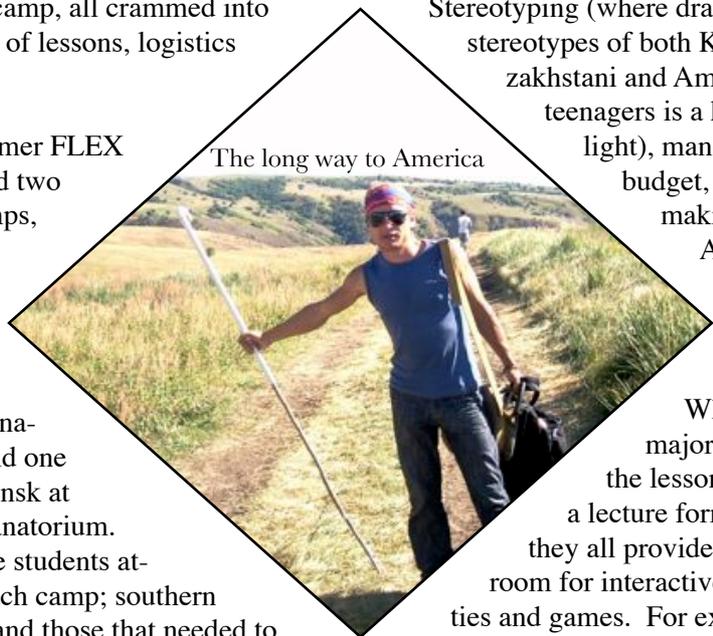
mary assignments, few are as unique as working with the Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX). Started in 1992 by the FREEDOM Support Act, FLEX sends nearly a thousand high school age students abroad from around Eurasia for an entire year of study in the United States. While Peace Corps volunteers are largely uninvolved in the recruiting, testing, and placement processes, we can play a large role in their Pre-Departure Orientations (PDO). PDOs can be described as basically a combination of Peace Corps Staging, PST, and a summer camp, all crammed into four days of lessons, logistics and fun.

This summer FLEX conducted two PDO camps, one outside Almaty at the Tau Samal Sanatorium and one in Shuchinsk at Svetlii Sanatorium. Forty-five students attended each camp; southern students and those that needed to fly into Almaty in the south, and Northern students and those traveling out of Astana in Shuchinsk. Besides a couple staff members from American Councils, who did ninety-five percent of the logistic work for the camp, three American teachers and three local teaching assistants ran the camps. These teaching assistants are all FLEX alumni themselves, offering an invaluable wealth of personal experience for students about to undertake the greatest challenge of their young lives. Even better, these TAs are living examples of the effect a positive FLEX experience can have on an individual: they become community leaders and Balashak students,

speak English as well as anyone else on the planet, and radiate confidence in everything they do.

Each PDO cycle consists of twelve lessons, covering a wide array of topics. Without a doubt, the most crucial of these concern the future students' high school. Students are taught about working with a guidance counselor, creating their own schedules, and different rules that they do not have to adhere to in Kazakhstan. Students also learn about American values, Diversity, Tolerance and

Stereotyping (where drawing stereotypes of both Kazakhstani and American teenagers is a highlight), managing a budget, and making American



The long way to America

Friends. While the majority of the lessons follow a lecture format, they all provide ample room for interactive activities and games. For example, the budgeting lesson involves students role-playing a month in America, spending monopoly money for each activity they choose to undertake.

Outside of classes, all PDOs feature an Alumni Panel and a half hour skit presented by the same Alumni. While the material presented in these two sessions differs only a little from the material covered during classes, students often find this information far more valuable and memorable as it comes from people who have already been through the FLEX experience. Alumni talk to students about life in a small town, male/female roles, what to pack, volunteerism, and the role of

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religion in the United States. While it might be shocking at first for some volunteers to hear, FLEX strongly encourages its students to be active in their families' religious lives, as it provides a good opportunity for the students to become much more involved in their community. Church, in whatever form it assumes, is presented as a social center, a hub for activities, clubs, sports and volunteerism outside of worship.

While teaching at PDOs was the hardest I have worked since coming to Kazakhstan, requiring fifteen-hour, non-stop days, it is without a doubt the most rewarding experience I have had as well. The material covered in the sessions is very interesting, especially for a currently serving Peace Corps volunteer. In many ways, it is like

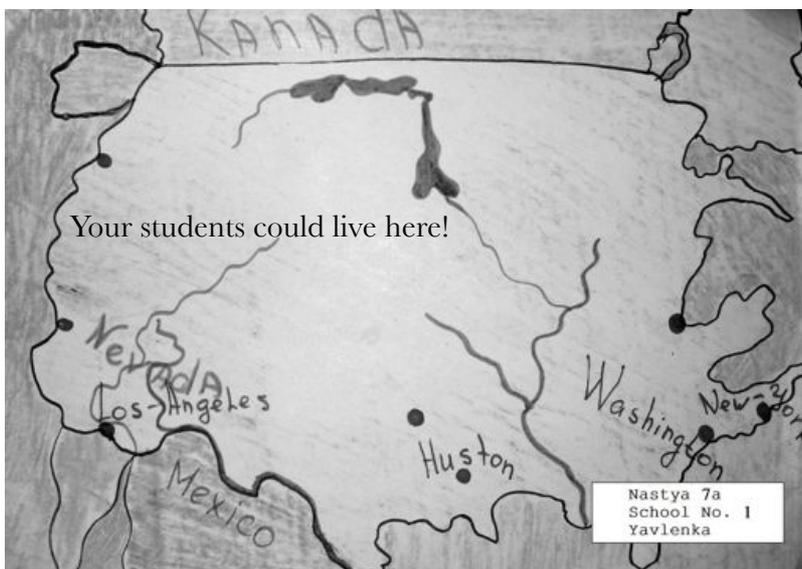
hundred best and brightest students of Kazakhstan all in one setting. FLEX made me believe in the values of the Peace Corps, and especially in English education. Many of these students worked with volunteers, or come from schools where volunteers previously worked. More than anything else, FLEX is a testament to the transformative power of education, of all the ways Education can enrich someone's life, and to the opportunities available to everyone willing to work hard enough in this country. And for that, I will definitely be applying to work there next year. So please, if you can, get your students involved with the FLEX competition, and consider applying for a teaching position yourself.

Michael Quinn (Kaz 19)  
Shuchinsk

pared to every single other thoroughfare I have travelled in this country, this road is phenomenal. Tim has not stop smiling since we left the bumpy, unlined, two lane road just south of Kokshetau, saying, "I cannot believe it. It is like we're in America!" The flat forest-speckled steppe of North Kazakhstan Oblast has transformed into rolling hills and green farms as we head south.

Along with two other PCVs, we've set up shop in the back of a nearly empty German coach bus, and the conversation winds back and forth from past to future. We talk about Pre-Service training in Almaty, our high school teachers, our study abroad experiences, and our reasons for choosing the colleges we did. We ponder the future paths ahead of each of us, returning to school to teach in the fall, going back to the States in 17 months to resume studies or venture out into the work world. I'm glad there aren't too many locals in our section of the bus, as the conversation is loud, lively and in English – three things that don't always make fellow passengers too happy. As we talk about all these transitions, I realize how little time I've had to catch my breath since summer began. Two hours away from our destination, I close my eyes and lean my head back as the conversation around me goes on.

One PCV mentions that one of his reasons for not getting a regular job right out of college was his uncertainty with his own abilities to manage different situations. College has prepared us to think independently, critically and productively, as well as to manage time and hold ourselves accountable for our own work by our own merit, but what did college teach us about leading groups, solving problems, organizing projects, finding our practical strengths and weaknesses? How could he be successful at



peering into the looking glass; everything experienced over the last year reflected back at me. FLEX has also prepared me to discuss life in America with local counterparts as well. I now have a much better understanding of how Kazakhstanis see America, and the hopes, beliefs, and assumptions they attach to our country. But most importantly, FLEX is perhaps the only opportunity a volunteer has to meet the

## MAYBE BUMPY IS BETTER

On the recently paved road from Petropavlovsk to Shuchinsk, our bus is gliding smoothly along toward a weeklong Russian camp in what is rumored to be one of the most picturesque regions of Kazakhstan. Com-

## VOLUNTEER WRITING



Crazy German buses.

a consulting firm without already knowing what his abilities and limitations are in situations that do not involve lectures and term papers? Tim agrees, noting the American Day we organized at Camp Dostik last week.

When I broke my collarbone on June 1st, I thought that our months of struggle with the local Education Department to allow five PCVs to work at a local camp were sent right down the drain. I would be lying in bed for a month while the camp went on without me. However, my body surprised me again with a relatively quick recovery. My job at camp was to teach English songs, and after flying back to Petropavlovsk (thank you, Peace Corps, for not sending me 31 hours on a train) I found that I could play guitar without much pain. Off to camp we went, quasi-prepared to lead English activities for 180 kids from age seven to sixteen.

Camp Dostik is owned by the city Education Department and organized by an agency called Planet Tourist. It is situated about thirty minutes south of Petropavlovsk, tucked in the woods between the village of Bishkul and the Ishim River which runs from Astana up into Siberia. We ar-

rived with eight local camp counselors who are third-year education students at the Pedagogical College doing their practicum. The first 36 hours were spent preparing for the next day without any campers... or food. The camp didn't inform us that the kitchen did not open until the day the kids arrive and therefore we did not bring anything to eat. After complaining about our hungry stomachs which were ever more quickly eating us from the inside out, the counselors pulled together a lunch consisting of milk, and a dinner comprised of bread. I am happy to say that we all did in fact survive the Great Famine of 2008 and things got progressively better as the week went on. As the foreigners in resident, we preformed tasks such as leading games and activities with the kids, posing for pictures, signing autographs, and even MC-ing concerts (in Russian, even). We had four rising 11th grade students from mine and Tim's school who served as Peace Corps Volunteer Assistants (PCVAs), which I admit, is pretty low on the scheme of positions one could hold – Really, who wants to be an assistant to a volunteer? – but they all four had a great time practicing their English, helping us with our Russian, and leading various English activities with the

kids. I personally taught several songs throughout our time there, including Fire and Rain, If You're Happy and You Know It, and This Land is Your Land, while the PCVAs and I wrote an original song about Camp Dostik. It was hot.

Unfortunately, we had to leave the camp five days early due to the conflict between a delayed start to the camp (cold nights and unclean water being the culprits) and our commitment to the Shuchinsk Russian camp. But, judging by the amount of tears shed (by campers and PCVAs), pleas from the director to stay and endless "photos for memory" with everyone, I can say we were a success. Of course there were things we would change given the opportunity to repeat the experience, but we taught some English, made some friends, had some fun, and gave some kids a meaningful summer experience.

In the rushed and hectic sixteen hours between arrival to Petro and departure for Shuchinsk, I realized that I will be seeing my parents in a week. Time is flying by faster than the trees outside the bus, and as the smoothness of the new road gives way to the familiar jostling of cracked pavement, I open my eyes to see the outer edges of our next destination popping up to my left and right. We start preparing our bags for our next transition, not knowing whether it will be smooth and painless like the recently paved section between Kokshetau and Shuchinsk, or perhaps a bit more unpredictable and interesting like the majority of the roads, and experiences, here in Kazakhstan.

Phil Montgomery (Kaz 19)  
Petropavlosk

## VOLUNTEER WRITING

## IN-JEE'S BABY

The 2008 Akmola Oblast Arts and Humanities Camp was a success beyond our imagination. Over thirty students from rural villages across the Oblast converged in Baravoye, August 7<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>. They were led by local teachers and alumni of State Department exchange programs, with the help of twelve Peace Corps volunteers. The setting couldn't have been better. We took full advantage of the nature. Each day, after lessons, we went swimming in one of the four lakes, played ultimate Frisbee, and went for hikes. By the end of the camp, we formed lasting friendships and put together an amazing portfolio of student work.

Three hours each day were spent working on student projects in poetry, music, mask making, painting, and dance. Students from the music group composed learned lyrics to, "Umbrella" and "Lean on Me" before striking out to compose their own songs. Poetry students created several works, in formats ranging from haiku to free verse, and practiced different styles of recitation. Painting and mask making produced many original pieces displayed and modeled at our closing ceremony, with no shortage of talent or creativity.

The camp presented students and local teachers an opportunity to hone their English. It also provided an opportunity for local alumni of US-sponsored exchange programs. Four participants from graduate level Muskie and high school FLEX (Future Leaders Exchange) programs led provided information on comparative American-Kazakhstani culture and opportunities available to Kazakhstani youth through the FLEX program. Our assistant camp director, Asiya Abitova, is a returned FLEX student.

The FLEX program is heavily oriented on community service, with each student required to participate in community service activities while in America. The camp provided them with an opportunity to continue their service at home. One purpose of the camp is to encourage underrepresented rural Kazakhstani students to strive for admission into American Council's FLEX program.

Being in Baravoy offered many cultural and educational opportunities. Each day included activities such as hiking, swimming, and trips to local attractions. The visit to the Ablai Han historical museum and the zoopark were camp favorites. With four lakes, there was plenty of scenery. The nature activities were paired with presentations of ecology and water safety, helping to keep campers safe and Baravoy beautiful. Every day also included short lectures on English language resources, education opportunities, and public health.

After a week of presentations, projects, and activities the students really shined with their performance and exhibits in the closing ceremony. We are indebted to our campers, teachers, alumni, and volunteers who helped make this camp possible. Special thanks must go to Camp Director Shinar Bekisheva, Camp Administrators In-Jee Lee and Kate Reynolds. The camp was made possible with the generous assistance of Irena Shubina of American Councils and financial assistance from US Department of State. Plans are underway to hold the camp next year.

Chris Reed Waddell (Kaz 19)  
Makinsk

## A FIGHT FAN'S LAMENT

At the beginning of July, Quentin "Rampage" Jackson, the champion, and Forrest Griffin, the obscenely popular challenger, clashed in an incredibly close and eventually controversial contest for the UFC's Light Heavyweight Championship. In a back and forth struggle that saw several knockdowns, a near submission and a WWF-style powerbomb, Griffin improbably walked away the victor and new champion by unanimous decision. Although sports writers are more than apt to laud any competitive 25 minutes that spills a reasonable amount of blood, the match could reasonably be called "the greatest championship bout in UFC history." The fact that many still believe that Rampage carried the night, with much more damaging punches that clearly

hurt Griffin on multiple occasions, only further mythologizes the match and justifies the millions of dollars it brought in. To make matters even sweeter, a rematch is basically already on the books, no doubt drawing even more Pay-per-view buys the second time around.

If the preceding paragraph was little more than gobbledygook to you, do not be discouraged. Mixed Martial Arts, although indisputably the world's fastest growing sport, is still largely a fringe activity for a relatively small number of Americans who find boxing far too slow and tame. The Ultimate Fighting Championship, the sport's flagship organization, started as little more than a barnyard bloodsport - hell, they event put on an event in Casper, Wyoming, which John McCain once appropriately called "human cockfighting." But the last few years have been more than good to Mixed Martial Arts, and the UFC especially. Changes in the rules, adding gloves, weight divisions, rounds, and judges' scoring while barring the most obvious dirty strikes, brought legitimacy and endorsement by the Nevada State Athletic Division. Acquisition of an overseas promotion doubled the UFC's roster. Spike Television began airing live fights on a monthly basis, and to top it off, CBS has signed a contract to air fights for free as well. The net result of all this has been the transformation of a once barely legal spectacle into a tightly managed, multi-million dollar organization. The New York Times recently reported that five of the seven biggest Pay-per-view draws of 2007 were UFC events (check fact, please).

For those in the know, the Light Heavyweight Division is Mixed Martial Arts premier division, chock-full of the world's most popular and feared fighters. Before being toppled by Griffin, Jackson was regarded one of the sports pound-for-pound bests. The Jackson-Griffin fight was also the culmination of another season of the UFC's extremely popular reality television show *The Ultimate Fighter*, whose first iteration Griffin won, in the process bringing the sport further into the mainstream than most could have ever imagined. Besides being a great card, UFC 86 was likely the biggest Mixed Martial Arts event of

## VOLUNTEER WRITING

the year. I know for a fact that my family and friends all gathered together that Saturday night to see the show, just like millions of other families around the US.

And yet, here I sit in Kazakhstan, more than ocean and continent away from all of this. To be perfectly honest, I have not seen the Jackson-Griffin fight in its entirety, and probably will not until my next opportunity scoop a pirated copy of UFC 86 at the green bazaar. Most of the first paragraph comes from “blow-by-blow reporting” on a website called Sherdog.com, which I’m not embarrassed to say is the only thing online that I check every time. The closest thing to live fighting available in Kazakhstan is Russian Бой без Правил, which pales in all ways to the slick production that the UFC puts on every month. Of course, there are those tantalizing DVDs nestled into the green bazaar - back corner just past a fruit stand in case you are interested, but they, unfortunately, are something I have been unable to get a hold of at site. Cut it one way or another, my ability to keep UFC in my life is constantly hindered by my current living situation.

In fact, the UFC is best described as my most glaring piece of cultural baggage. If your memory stretches far enough back, and remains sharp enough in the process, you may remember a small role play about blue and yellow tinted sunglasses from Staging. Or if you happen to teach that sort of thing here as well, this may also sound familiar. In short, no matter how hard we try, no matter how accustomed to a certain culture we may become, it is impossible for us to shake the beliefs and habits we acquired in our native country. These deep-held beliefs are often keys to understanding differences we may encounter in another culture. While often simple and seemingly trivial,

asking for “a little food” politely (which engenders the result of a Russian taking you very literally), they more than often reveal huge swaths of our character, especially the values and modes of expression that make up a considerable portion of our own self-images.

For me, the UFC is first and foremost an oral history, which I am able to recite in a disturbingly shamanistic fashion. Although largely a long string of build-ups, matches and results, this history is largely supplemented with personal details about fighters gleaned from the UFC’s own

While Griffin-Jackson will undoubtedly be added to my chronicle of the UFC’s history like one more totem atop the pole, the circumstances of how I maintained connected and seemingly involved with this ongoing saga will eventually be woven in as well. Because as much as we claim to be integrating and adapting to the culture around us, we all go to great lengths preserve our sense of selves in conditions that are constantly pressuring us to change. While often beneficial to the community around us, by way of fresh ways of accomplishing a familiar task, personal quirks that

flush out a presentation or task, interests that become the basis of some club or camp, little gifts from home to share with our host families and friends, these aspects of our personality will inevitably keep us separated from our community in the long run. They come in the form of hours of phone conversations with people hundreds or thousands miles away, afternoons spent hunting for the newest Spiderman at the bazaar, issues of the Economist poured over, and all of the other little things we do to just keep our-

selves sane. To ignore the aspects of ourselves that separate us from Kazakhstan is to ignore one of the most substantial aspects of the Peace Corps experience: one way or the other, we all will eventually go home. Perhaps when we get there we will go through great lengths to preserve our “Kazakhstan selves,” perhaps not. I just hope I am home in time to share one more night of fights, maybe even Griffin-Jackson III, with all the people I love.

Michael Quinn (Kaz 19)  
Shuchinsk



This stuff is serious.

hype machine and the internet. This history has a very intimate relationship with story of my life as well. I am reminded of one of my last nights in the states, sitting with my best friend Sean next to me, spitting obscenities at the television while Randy Couture captured the Heavyweight Championship for the third time. I am reminded about settling into a couch with a beer in my right hand, throwing dollars onto the floor while everyone around was throwing out predictions of the next fight. I am reminded of my little sister’s soccer coach showing me how throwing an uppercut while stepping outside an opponent’s stance makes it laughably easy to split someone’s guard. I am reminded of wrestling on my dad’s floor, learning to do a sit out and finish a double leg for the first time.

## L A N G U A G E

## LANGUAGE 9/08

**Абай Құнанбайұлы**

Abay Ibrahim Qunanbayuli (Kazakh: Абай (Ибрагим) Құнанбайұлы, Russian: Абай Ибрагим Қуна́нбаев.) (August 10, 1845 - July 5, 1904) was a Kazakh poet, composer, and philosopher. He was also a cultural reformer toward European and Russian cultures on the basis of enlightened liberal Islam. His name is also translated as Abai Kunanbaev.

Abay was born on Shinghis Mountain (in today's East Kazakhstan Province), the son of Qunanbay and Uljan, Qunanbay's second wife. They named him Ibrahim, but because of his brightness, he soon was given the nickname "Abay", (meaning "careful") a name that stuck for the rest of his life. His father's economic status enabled the boy to attend a Russian school in his youth, but only after he had already spent some years studying at a madrasah under Mullah Ahmet Ryza. At his school in Semipalatinsk, Abai encountered the writings of Mikhail Lermontov and Aleksandr Pushkin.

Abay's main contribution to Kazakh culture and folklore lies in his poetry. Before him, most Kazakh poetry was oral, echoing the nomadic habits of the people of the Kazakh steppes. During Abay's lifetime, however, a number of important sociopolitical and socioeconomic changes occurred. Russian influence continued to grow in Kazakhstan, resulting in greater educational possibilities as well as exposure to a number of different philosophies, whether Russian, Western, or Asian. Abay Qunanbayuli steeped himself in the cultural and philosophical history of these newly-opened geographies. In this sense, Abay's creative poetry affected the philosophical thinking of educated Kazakhs.

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Contemporary Kazakh images of Abay generally depict him in full traditional dress, holding a dombra, the Kazakh national instrument. Today, Kazakhs revere Abai as one of the first folk heroes to enter into the national consciousness of his people. Kazakh State University in Almaty is named after Abai, so is one of the main avenues in the city.

Statues of him have been erected in many cities of Kazakhstan as well as in Moscow.

A film on the life of Abay was taken in 1983 titled Abay made by Kazakhfilm. He is also the subject of a novel by Mukhtar Auezov.

## Book of words

Abay's "Book of Words" is a deeply meaningful way to truth... It reminds us that humans have the greatest value in the world, and that they should be beautiful and harmoniously perfect.

### WORD FIFTEEN / ОН БЕСІНШІ СӨЗ (English translation is available upon request)

Ақылды кісі мен ақылсыз кісінің, менің білуімше, бір белгілі парқын көрдім.

Әуелі - пенде адам болып жаратылған соң, дүниеде ешбір нәрсені қызық көрмей жүре алмайды. Сол қызықты нәрсесін іздеген кезі өмірінің ең қызықты уақыты болып ойында қалады. Сонда есті адам, орынды іске қызығып, құмарланып іздейді екен дағы, күнінде айтса құлақ, ойланса көңіл сүйсінгендей болады екен. Оған бұл өткен өмірдің өкініші де жоқ болады екен.

Есер кісі орнын таппай, не болса сол бір баянсыз, бағасыз нәрсеге қызығып, құмар болып, өмірінің қызықты, қымбатты шағын итқорлықпен өткізіп алады екен дағы, күнінде өкінгені пайда болмай-ды екен. Жастықта бұл қызықтан соң және бір қызық тауып алатын кісімсіп, жастығы тозбастай, буыны босамастай көріп жүріп, бірер қызықты қуғанда-ақ мойны қатып, буыны құрып, екінші талапқа қайрат қылуға жарамай қалады екен.

Үшінші - әрбір нәрсеге қызықпақтық. Ол өзі бойға құмарлық пайда қылатын нәрсе екен. Әрбір құмарлық өзіне бір дерт болады екен, әртүрлі құмар болған нәрсеге жеткенде, яки әне-міне, жетер-жетпес болып жүргенде, бір түрлі мастық пайда болады екен. Әрбір мастық бойдан оғатты көп шығарып, ақылдың көзін байлап, төңіректегі қараушылардың көзін ашып, «ананы-мынаны» дегізіп, бойды сынататұғын нәрсе екен. Сол уақытта есті кісілер үлкен есі шықпай, ақылды қолдан жібермей, бойын сынатпай жүріп ізденеді екен. Есер кісілер ер-тоқымын тастап, бөркі түсіп қалып, етегі атының к...н жауып кетіп, екі көзі аспанда, жынды кісіше шаба беруді біледі екен, соны көрдім. Егерде есті кісілердің қатарында болғың келсе, күнінде бір мәртебе, болмаса жұмасында бір, ең болмаса айында бір, өзіңнен өзің есеп ал! Сол алдыңғы есеп алғаннан бергі өмірді қалай өткіздің екен, не білімге, не ахиретке, не дүниеге жарамды, күнінде өзің өкінбестей қылықпен өткізіппісің? Жоқ, болмаса, не қылып өткізгенінді өзің де білмей қалыппысың?

### ЖИЫРМА СЕГІЗІНШІ СӨЗ

Ей, мұсылмандар! Біреу бай болса, біреу кедей болса, біреу ауру, біреу сау болса, біреу есті, біреу есер болса, біреудің көңілі жақсылыққа мейілді, біреудің көңілі жаманшылыққа мейілді - бұлар неліктен десе біреу, сіздер айтасыздар: құдай тағаланың жаратуынан яки бұйрығынша болған іс деп. Жә, олай болса, біз құдай тағаланы айыбы жоқ, міні жоқ, өзі әділ деп иман келтіріп едік. Енді құдай тағала бір

## L A N G U A G E

антұрғанға еңбексіз мал береді екен. Бір құдайдан тілеп, адал еңбек қылып, пайда іздеген кісінің еңбегін жандырмай, қатын-баласын жөндеп асырарлық та қылмай, кедей қылады екен. Ешкімге залалсыз бір момынды ауру қылып, қор қылады екен. Қайда бір ұры, залымның денін сау қылады екен. Әке-шешесі бір екі баланың бірін есті, бірін есер қылады екен. Тамам жұртқа бұзық болма, түзік бол деп жарлық шашып, жол салады екен. Түзікті бейішке шығарамын деп, бұзықты тозаққа саламын деп айта тұра, пендесінің біреуін жақсылыққа мейілдендіріп, біреуін жаманшылыққа мейілдендіріп, өзі құдайлық құдіретімен біреуін жақсылыққа бұрып, біреуін жамандылыққа бұрып жіберіп тұрады екен. Осының бәрі құдай тағаланың айыпсыз, мінсіз ғафур рахимдығына, әділдігіне лайық келе ме? Жұрт та, мүлік те - бәрі құдайдың өзінікі. Бұл қылғанын не дей аламыз? Өз мүлкін өзі не қылса қыла береді. Оны айыпты болады дей алмаймыз десен, ол сөзің құдай тағаланың айыбы, міні жоқ емес, толып жатыр, бірақ айтуға бата алмаймыз дегенің емес пе? Олай болғанда, пенде өз тырысқандығыменен не табады? Бәрін қылушыға қылдырушы өзі екен. Пенде пендеге өкпелейтұғын ешнәрсе жоқ. Кім жақсылық, кім жамандық қылса дағы құдайдан келген жарлықты қылып жүр екен дейміз бе?

Құдай тағала әрбір ақылы бар кісіге иман парыз, әрбір иманы бар кісіге ғибадат парыз деген екен. Және де әрбір рас іс ақылдан қорықпаса керек. Жә, біз енді ақылды еркіне жібермесек, құдай тағаланың ақылы бар кісіге иман парыз дегені қайда қалады? «Мені таныған ақылменен таныр» дегені қайда қалады? Дініміздің бір жасырын тұрған жалғаны жоқ болса, ақылды, оны ойлама дегенімізге пенде бола ма? Ақыл тоқтамаған соң, діннің өзі неден болады. Әуелі иманды түзетпей жатып, қылған ғибадат не болады? Жоқ, сен жақсылық, жамандықты жаратқан - құдай, бірақ қылдырған құдай емес, ауруды жаратқан - құдай, ауыртқан құдай емес, байлықты, кедейлікті жаратқан - құдай, бай қылған, кедей қылған құдай емес деп, нанып ұқсаң болар, әйтпесе - жоқ.

## False friends between Russian and English

**Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary** defines the word “false friend” as a word in a foreign language that looks similar to a word in your own language, but has a different meaning. For instance, in Russian, **familiya** means *last name*, not *family*, and **magazin** means *store*, not *magazine*. Sometimes, the differences are more subtle. For example, **student** means *university student*, not *high school* or *elementary school student*.

The problem with many of these words is that Russian borrowed them from the same source as English borrowed them from, but in many cases Russian kept closer to the original meaning.

Thus, the word **chef** was borrowed from French into English with more specific meaning of “chief cook”, while it was, and still is, the original meaning in French. Thus, *chef* is a false friend between both English and French and English and Russian, but a true friend “between French and Russian. The same is true about many other words.

A vivid example of a serious mistake which led to misunderstanding by one English journalist occurred in 1996, just before the Russian presidential elections. On being told that Boris Yeltsin was unavailable because he was suffering from анги́на (*angina*), the unfortunate journalist reported that the presidential candidate had a heart condition, when all he had was tonsillitis. Words can be very slippery sometimes but they help to keep us alert.

# L A N G U A G E

False friends can cause difficulty for students learning a foreign language, particularly those that are related to their native language, because the students are likely to misidentify the words due to language interference. Since false friends are a common problem for language learners, teachers sometimes compile lists of false friends in order to help their students to avoid the usage mistakes.

Russian word	English false friend	Translations
аккура́тный	accurate	tidy
анги́на	angina	tonsillitis
фа́брика	fabric	factory
стул	stool	chair
гениа́льный	genial	brilliant, great, of genius
смо́кинг	smoking	dinner jacket
ока́зия	occasion	opportunity
ко́нкурс	concourse	competition
шеф	chef	boss
луна́тик	lunatic	sleep-walker
симпати́чный	sympathetic	likable, nice, attractive
эксстравага́нтный	extravagant	eccentric, bizarre, preposterous
интелиге́нтный	intelligent	cultured, educated
магази́н	magazine	shop
гимна́зия	gymnasium	grammar school or gymnasia
каби́нет	cabinet	study, office
декора́ция	decoration	scenery, décor
реце́пт	receipt	recipe, prescription
балл	ball	point
клей	clay	glue
инструме́нты	instruments	tools
лист	list	leaf
ма́рка	mark	stamp
спекта́кль	spectacle	performance, play, show
вельве́т	velvet	corduroy

There is no doubt that this list is incomplete, I invite you to contribute to make further listings. The bad news is that there are thousands of false friends lurking out there waiting to trip us up. But the good news is that they can all be learnt.

## L A N G U A G E

## GRAMMAR POLICE

It is understood that all Peace Corps Volunteers want to save the Kazakh children, but do the Kazakh children understand us? By this time in my service, I have figured out what my strengths and weaknesses are when it comes to language skills.

Russian and Kazakh have played large roles in our lives in Kazakhstan. Maybe your role is sometimes more Jerry the Mouse than Gene Kelly (Anchors Aweigh, 1945), but at least you are not in silent films anymore, right?

I regret to say that my language level is not as high as I had wanted it to be. My only accomplishment is gaining the reputation of being the Grammar Police, and for two reasons. The first is that I am enough of a jerk to correct your imperfect Russian with my own imperfect Russian. And the second reason is that I have taken a liking to obscure rules of Russian language, even if I cannot always use them correctly in speech.

For two years, I have had the pleasure of hanging out with PCVs, drinking in their language skills, swirling them around in my mouth, and later spitting them all over the cold, dirty sidewalk. Because Kazakhstan will soon suffer the rather tragic loss of my person, I wanted to share with you some rules of language that may or may not improve your speaking. These guidelines are applicable to both Kazakh and Russian, but none will be the type with which I engage in my lusty, late-night trysts of grammatical Kama Sutra. If you want that sort of puissant stimulation, pick up a book and head off to your room for some private time. Maybe you can be a deputy for the Grammar Police if you study real hard.

Where to start? Volume. Volume is a two-edged sword, though more like a claymore and less like a scimitar. Here's Rule 1: You are talking too loudly.

While this is probably true in English as well, the fact is that your Russian does not need to be that loud. Nor will a native forgive you for it, unless you're speaking into a mobile phone. Here is the catch - our accents garble words, so you have to speak clearly, especially if you're not going to bother to learn grammar rules. But "clearly" and "murderously loud" are not synonyms. Please, throw off the burden of your lazy American mouth, open it wider to accommodate the maladroitness shapes of Russian letters, and try not to talk louder than the person next to you.

Moving on. We've been taught the Russian fillers: вот, ну, and так.

Rule 2: A вот in the hand is worth a ну in the bush. In other words, stop saying Russian fillers.

It is tempting, I know, but do not use these words except for particular clauses. Open up a dictionary and you will find plenty of "так как, как так, вот так, ну и что?" and so on. These are lovely. You can even use the word ну to mean "yeah, and?" as in the following dialogue:

Chris: Hey, Sven, I heard you got a grade of Beginner Low Deficient Minus on your Russian test.

Sven: ну...?

But if you are using "вот" to substitute every other word because you think you sound more like a native speaker, then you never learned the mantra of the Grammar Police, which is this: "I will never be a native speaker, so I should try to be understood and not native." Please repeat this one mil-

liard times.

If you want to be a Russian badass, consider learning how to conjugate your это fillers:

Я был в этом - "I was in that one thing..."

Я ездил без этого - "I went without that one thing..."

Я кушал эти - "I was eating those one things..."

Я ходил к этому - "I walked towards that one thing..."

Then you are demonstrating grammar proficiency, you will be understood, and someone will probably fill in the correct word for you (a word which you may not have even known in the first place). Bonus!

As a side note, I did date a girl once who loved shashlik. She would pick out her individual pieces of meat on the sticks in a manner which sounded something like "вот, вот это вот." I can only assume she meant something like "That piece of meat, exactly right there there there!" But she was a



## L A N G U A G E

native, and I am not. And neither are you, so please consider removing your fillers.

The next GP rule of Russian is probably the most important for us non-autochthons. If Major Henry M. Robert had written about Russian grammar instead of parliamentary procedure, you would have a huge red book in your room, and the page with all the dog-ears and pencil marks would have this written on it:

Rule 3: In and throughout those cases as such where the presence of pronouns is required and ascertained, you should best get your silly face to use the correct one!

Seriously, pronouns are über-important for conversational competence. Learn them. I will box the ears of the next person who says, “Он нравится гулять.” If the speaker is trying to be abstract, is super drunk, and/or didn’t pass third class in school, then maybe that could mean “Walking likes him” but it certainly does not mean “He likes

to walk.” Get out your “emy” and the rest of your dative pronouns, stick them in your grammar pipe, and smoke it for a couple days. Make sure to switch in your accusative, genitive, instrumental, and prepositional pronouns as applicable.

The next rule was relentlessly debated for 40 days and nights by all two members of the Grammar Police, but we have finally come to an understanding on attempting a local accent:

Rule 4: Accents are cool and acceptable, as long as you don’t break rules 1-3.

Sometimes we have to jump into accents. It helps us form the correct letter shapes and sounds, and adds the benefit of humor to our conversation, a positive thing even in a situation where humor normally would not be of use. Accents help when yelling at unruly children, when threatening stray cats and dogs, when teasing boyfriends and girlfriends, and when forming mental rebuttals to

past conversations that play in our heads. You want an accent? Go for it, the GP 2008 edition allows it.

There are literally thousands of things that can help you with your Russian and Kazakh skills. You can make wall charts, flash cards, and verb lists (though GP recommends going for phrases and not just single words). You can work with your tutors, make local friends, and stay in a host family. You can finish your beginning and intermediate language workbooks. You can even learn songs, act in plays, or watch movies. But these all require work. The Grammar Police’s Language Rules 1-4 require surprisingly little work, and can make your conversation attempts 240% more understandable. That’s a proven statistic, right there. Go out, change the world, and try to speak some comprehensible Russian and Kazakh while you are at it.

Chris Van Fossen (Kaz 18)

Akkol



Did you say “меня” or “мне?” How sure are you?

## F L E X

## F L E X

**D**ear Kaz 18s and 19s!

I want to inform you about a wonderful opportunity for Kazakhstani high school students to study in America free of charge. The Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program is fully funded by the U.S. government through the Department of State and has been administered by American Councils (ACCELS) since 1992. In that time, nearly 20,000 students from all over the former USSR have participated, living in American host families and studying at American high schools for one academic year. This program gives students a unique opportunity to learn more about American culture and share information about their own cultures in their host communities in the U.S.

Approximately 100 finalists are chosen from across Kazakhstan based on their performance in an open, merit-based competition that consists of three rounds of testing. Rounds 1 and 2 test for knowledge of English (grammar, reading, listening, and writing) and will be held from early September through mid-October in many regional centers (we should have a testing schedule by early August). Note that we do not come to every regional center, so interested students from cities where testing is not offered need to determine the testing center closest to their place of residence and take the test there (i.e. – Shymkent students will test in Taraz, Kokshetau students will test in Astana, etc.). Round 3 candidates will be determined and contacted to return to the testing center at a later date (ranging from mid-October through early December) to write essays and sit for a 15 minute interview in English and Russian or Kazakh.

We would especially like to see more students from rural areas where many PCVs are working turn out for testing this year and, more importantly, make it to the 3<sup>rd</sup> round. If any of your students are interested in participating in testing, please encourage them to come. You can help them do well by working with them on grammar usage, reading and listening comprehension, and essay writing skills.

FLEX 08-09 program participant requirements are expected to be as follows:

- Is a citizen of Kazakhstan;
- Born between **1 January, 1992** and **15 July, 1994**;
- Study in **9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grades or first-year students of colleges who entered following 9<sup>th</sup> grade** at the time of testing (in the Fall);
- Has not lived in the U.S. for more than 3 months over the past 5 years and their parents has not applied or made plans to immigrate to the U.S. (including applying for the “green card lottery”);
- Is in good academic standing with their local school;
- Has a good knowledge of English, including conversational skills

The program is also open to high school students with disabilities and special accommodations can be made for testing these students. If they are invited to take part in the program, disabled FLEX finalists will be involved in special meetings and activities designed specifically for them. Over 200 students with disabilities have already studied in the U.S. on this program. If you know of any disabled students currently studying in **8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> grades** please call our office for more information. Also note that these students are evaluated separately from other candidates, so their English skills do not necessarily need to be as advanced as other applicants.

If you have any questions, please give us a call at 7(727)272-08-03 or e-mail me at [crissnorris@americancouncils-kz.com](mailto:crissnorris@americancouncils-kz.com). We look forward to seeing you at testing this fall!

Criss Norris (Kaz 16)  
FLEX Program Associate  
Almaty, KZ

# П о с л е д н е е С л о в о

## LAST WORD:

### AMAR BAKSHI

Amar Bakshi has seen more in one year than many people see in their whole life. A young journalist working for the Washington Post, he recently traveled to - \*deep breath\*- England, Turkey, Lebanon, Israel, Pakistan, India, South Korea, the Philippines, Mexico, and Venezuela while writing for the self-explanatory project "How the World Sees America". You can see the results for your self at <http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/postglobal/america/>. Amar generously agreed to speak with the Vesti; here are his comments:

**Vesti: First, could you briefly describe the project "How the World Sees America", and how it came into being.**

Bakshi: After graduating college in '06, I started editing Post-Global at its launch, basically connecting top journalists and thinkers from around the world to debate foreign affairs issues twice per week. I was back home in DC, itching to get out, and eager to put a human face on a lot of the big issues that I heard pundits debating, but rarely got a sense of what ordinary folk on the ground thought about them -- from farmers to rebels to students. Also, I loved video and thought that it was a rich way of bringing people into far away places, and getting young folks interested in international affairs. So I started pitching ideas to Fareed Zakaria and David Ignatius about ways to do some multimedia project that could carry me to different countries. The idea of How the World Sees America stuck, and they agreed to fund the project.

**What has been your biggest surprise as you have traveled around the globe?**

I was surprised by how eager people were around the world to share their life experiences, and their views of America, with an American audi-



ence. There is a broad sense of not being listened to by a country that impacts their lives concretely, and the chance to engage in dialog with Americans excited people from Kashmir to Venezuela. I was also surprised by how personally America impacted lives around the globe, to its most rural reaches. It's not just reactions to Bush or Guantanamo, but much longer-term relationships that have been built up over generations and codified in evocative national narratives, that influence what people feel toward the U.S.

**In one post you talked about Indian Communists decrying "American Imperialism". How much credence do you think those views still have? In which country did you find "anti-Americanism" the strongest?**

I think objections to "American Imperialism" defined differently by different people are very real and salient, but are often more complicated than that facile epithet suggests. Arguing against "American Imperialism" can include anything from anger at the Iraq War, to fear of U.S. invasion, to a feeling that modernization is distorting their way of life or value systems. Anti-Americanism is not all about America, and the ideas of imperialism seem antiquated to many U.S. citizens, but its important to listen closely and realize that when people use these catch phrases, they usually mean something much more specific. It's important not to lump all "anti-Americanism" together.

Pakistan is a country with strong

anti-American sentiment, most notable because across the political, economic and ideological sphere, people object to U.S. interference in Pakistan, and its propping up of a military government. Hardcore Islamic youth who want to impose religious law, and liberal drag queens alike feel that the U.S. is keeping them from true self-determination, and even democracy in whatever form they imagine it taking.

**Do you have any plans to come to Central Asia?**

I will certainly come to Central Asia in 08, or early 09, as part of a project to turn this year on the road into a book. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, I can't wait. [Editor's note: shortly before publication, Amar made a brief visit to Kyrgyzstan].

**If so, what do you expect to find here?**

I expect to find more pro-American sentiment quite often than what I got in Pakistan, but also a reluctance to be a pawn in a game between super-powers. I think Central Asia, like countries around the world, want to forge a common future, grow, and prosper their own way, and value the U.S. to the extent that it can help, but fear being used in the process.

**What is next for you? Do you hope to continue with this project in some fashion, or do you have some other plans?**

I plan to turn what I've done into a short documentary and a book, traveling through Central Asia, Russia and China to flesh it out further. I've been giving talks about anti-Americanism, which has put me in touch with interesting people across the political spectrum in the U.S. and abroad. After finishing this project, I'll consider graduate school or public service work.