

Bringing Together The Two Georgia's

Newsletter: Summer 2011



OPEN WORLD DELEGATION OF GEORGIANS VISIT ATLANTA

In April, ATSCC proudly joined with Georgia to Georgia to host a delegation of journalists from Georgia. The theme of the delegates' visit was Accountable Governance: Transparent and Independent Media. The Georgian delegates included: Khatuna Barbakadze, General Director of Kvemo Kartli Tele-radio Company, Ketevan Berdzenishvili, Program Director for Radio Dzveli Kalaki, Khatuna Gogashvili, reporter for Hereti Broadcasting Company, Maia Ivelashvili, General Director of TV-Radio company Imperia, Tea Zibzibadze, Editor of Akhali Gazeti, and Irina Arabidze, group facilitator and Public Information Officer for the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia.

The delegates attended meetings focused on independent journalism and

media practices in the United States. The meetings included a discussion with Atlanta Commissioner Robb Pitts, touring radio stations WABE and Georgia Public Broadcasting, discussing the method of political communication with constituents with the Department of Communications and the Mayor's Office of Atlanta, meeting journalism students at the University of Georgia, discussing sustainable journalism practices at the Center for Sustainable Journalism at Kennesaw State University, exploring judicial practices through speaking to Georgia Supreme Court Justice Melton, and interviewing reporters about U.S. journalism practices at the Atlanta Journal Constitution and Global Atlanta.

Although the week was full of interesting journalism meetings, the delegates



Delegates visiting Zaza Pachulia

found time to explore a few cultural activities in Atlanta. The delegates were able to meet Georgian native Zaza Pachulia and cheer him on at a Hawks game, explore music and the gardens at Atlanta Botanical Gardens, and enjoy great food and conversation at an ATSCC volunteer dinner.

Georgia Missions Seeks Volunteers to Join team on Upcoming Trip to Georgia

Georgia Missions, based in Atlanta, has room available on a mission trip to the Imereti Region of Georgia. The team will be volunteering their time interacting with children at Georgia Missions' six orphanages in the region. Volunteers can expect to teach art, play sports, and listen to music with approximately 400 Georgian orphans in need.

The trip will be from September 22nd through October 8th, 2011.

Interested parties are welcomed to contact Lynn Banks at lynnsbanks@mindspring.com.

For more information please visit www.georgiamissions.org.



Remembering a Devoted ATSCC VOLUNTEER

Jessica Toliver, a beloved member of the ATSCC and an employee of Hall Booth Smith & Slover, passed away June 29th, 2011, in Atlanta. A devoted volunteer, Jessica spent countless hours organizing and planning Atlanta-Tbilisi Sister City Committee's many events. Her impact has been felt by everyone that has worked with ATSCC over the years. She will be greatly missed.

Friends have opened a fund on behalf of Jessica's daughter, Kimora, if you would like to make donations please do so: in care of Kimora Lewis at 1st National Bank of Wamego 7860 East US Highway 24, Manhattan KS 66502. Thank you.



Tina (Jessica's sister) & Jessica

Georgia to Georgia Foundation Awarded a gift of \$10,000

The Georgia to Georgia Foundation in July was gifted a \$ 10,000 grant for the vulnerable and at-risk children in the Imereti Region. Over 400 children are being served and cared for in 6 institutions in and around Kutaisi, Samtredia and Chiatura. Through a Sponsor-a-Child program these children & youth receive nutritional food, medical checking and medicines on an ongoing basis. The other focus of our efforts is to provide vocational training and scholarships. This grant will allow us to continue such programs as accounting,

hair-styling, bread-baking, and plumbing. We will also be able to provide scholarships for those who are accepted into vocational schools in the Samtredia region ~ such as for nursing, computer and business. Several youth at the Rioni School for the Deaf are very gifted artistically and we are now able to send them to a special Art School. This grant affords us the opportunity to provide hope for countless children. For more information about our 6 institutions and the children please visit: www.georgiamissions.org



American Friends of Georgia Announcing Inaugural Trip to Georgia

American Friends of Georgia is announcing their first 2 week trip to Georgia to see the sites and see their humanitarian work in action! American Friends of Georgia invites you to discover the unique country of Georgia from October 7-20, 2011. You will experience this fabulously beautiful and welcoming place and will also visit many of the humanitarian projects supported by American Friends of Georgia (AFG). This trip has been put together jointly by AFG and the MIR Corporation, an American tour operator

with extensive experience in this part of the world.

Begin your journey in Tbilisi with its 4th century Narikala Fortress and Sioni Cathedral sheltering the cross of St. Nino. Travel to Mtskheta, the ancient capital of the early Georgian kingdom of Iberia. Visit the wine region of Kakheti. Visit the seaside resort of Batumi and much more. Visit the Mercy Center and meet with Mother Mariam at the Convent of the Transfiguration.

For more information, please visit our website www.afgeorgia.org to download a copy of the brochure or email afgeorgia@gis.net.



Update from Georgia National Guard

TBILISI, Georgia, June 23, 2011 - Georgia Air and Army Guardsmen are providing key leadership and experience here this week as advisors and trainers in Shared Horizons 11, the first in a new series of emergency exercises in the country of Georgia.

This is just the latest in a long series of engagements conducted over the 16-year partnership between the nation and the state of Georgia. Growing out of the State Department's Partnerships for Peace program, the State Partnership Program (SPP) reflects an evolving international affairs mission for the National Guard that emphasizes its unique state-federal and civil-military characteristics.

A bilateral emergency response "tabletop" exercise, Shared Horizons 11 is designed to test the country's National Response Plan as it relates to cooperation between the Georgian Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Internal Affairs in domestic emergency response situations.

An important aspect of the exercise is to encourage and enable the two ministries - roughly analogous to the U.S. Departments of

Defense and Homeland Security - to work together more efficiently.

"The Georgia National Guard is proud to have worked closely with our counterparts for sixteen years now, as part of the State Partnership Program," said General Dudney, Director of the Joint Staff, Georgia National Guard. "Our enduring relationship with Georgia affords us the opportunity to build lasting trust, which allows us to lend our experience and expertise in many areas."



Experiences from an American Working in Georgia, by Lydia Cardona

My decision to teach English in the Country of Georgia was not a hard one to make. After graduating college, I was eager to spend some time abroad before starting my first real job and I was keen on experiencing the challenges and character of a developing country first-hand due to my interest in this area of work. After some research and a few conversations, I was set on Georgia. The five months which followed were the most unforgettable, enlightening months of my adult life.

I worked as an English teacher in the suburbs of Tbilisi, alongside five other Georgian English teachers. My work was meant to supplement the instruction of these native English teachers. Though I immediately fell in love with the school and my students, I just as quickly realized that it was not a conventional teaching job. There were many challenges implicit to my work there: communication barriers, inexperience, and structural disorganization. I often felt discouraged in the beginning left with the impression that my efforts there were futile. Yet I soon realized that my expectations were wrong all along. I was not there to make my students proficient in English in five months. Rather, coming from a different culture and background, I was there to teach those around me a different way of thinking, and in return to learn from them. The admiration and love of my students and colleagues (in addition to making me feel like a celebrity) made me realize the extent of my impact on them.

It is here I found the real character of the country. The majestic natural beauty of the country extends much further than the snow-peaked Caucasus or the colorful terraced homes of the city. These splendors are immediately evident, but true beauty must often be discovered. The great magnificence of this country lay in its people. Living with a host family, I experienced all the intricacies of a family relationship and discovered that people are essentially the same no matter where you are. One of the greatest relationships I developed was with one of my co-teachers, who became like a second mother to me. These relationships shed light on the circumstances of the Georgian people and made me feel personally invested in their prospects.

My love for the people and culture, as well as my interest in development, made me especially attune to the ongoing political changes in Georgia. The country is changing quickly and visibly, and it is clear that the government is working vigorously to align itself with the West. Before I left, the Ministry of Education resolved that students under sixth grade will no longer be taught any other language but English. After my time in Georgia and the relationships I have made, I feel deeply invested in these changes and their outcomes. I immediately think about the essays my students wrote for me about their dream for Georgia. With these faces in mind, I feel great optimism about the potential and future of the country.

4th Annual Taste of Georgia

Celebrating 25 Years of Friendship
between the State of Georgia and the Country of Georgia
ATSCC & GA2GE will host its
4th Annual Taste of Georgia
October 16th, 6PM
Atlanta City Hall, 55 Trinity Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30303.
Enjoy traditional Georgian Food, Desserts and Beverages
Proceeds benefit Georgia's Children
Suggested contribution \$50.

Please RSVP to ninat@hbss.net

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