



A newsletter of the Albany-Tula Alliance ◦ A sister city program of Albany, New York and Tula, Russia ◦ People to People, City to City

Young Essay Contest Winners Tour Tula

An essay contest sponsored by the Albany-Tula Alliance sent two Capital Region high school students to Tula this summer. The contest asked area students to voluntarily submit a 1,500 word essay about an issue they believe U.S. President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitri Medvedev should work on together.

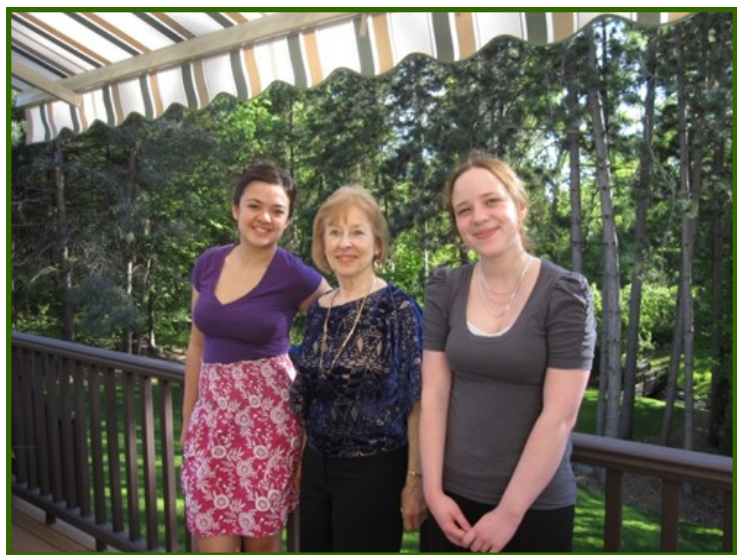
Twenty entries were received and judged by a panel of three Board Members, two of whom are educators and one a professional writer. The judges said there were many fine entries, but it finally came down to the two winners: **Charlotte Storch**, who will be a senior this year at Bethlehem Central High School, and **Rachel Augustine**, who just graduated from Shenendehowa High School.

The girls spent two weeks in Russia, staying part of the time with host families and part of the time

in a dormitory at The Lev Tolstoy Tula State Pedagogical University. They learned a lot about life in Russia, and also got a chance to travel to Moscow. They were accompanied en route to Tula and back by ATA Board Member Dawn Stuart Weinraub, a retired Russian teacher from Emma Willard School in Troy. (Both

girls have written about the trip on pages 3 and 4 of this issue).

The Alliance is grateful to all who made this contest and trip possible, and to all of the students who participated. We look forward to offering this contest again in the future.



From left-to-right, Rachel Augustine, recent Shenendehowa graduate; Dawn Stuart Weinraub, retired Russian teacher and chaperone; and, Charlotte Storch, junior Bethlehem HS. The three traveled to Russia this June through the Albany-Tula Alliance.

Joint Research Relationship Blossoming

Dr. Alexander Krupachov, a Professor from Tula State University, visited Albany again this spring to further the collaborative relationship with the UAlbany School of Public Health on air pollution research. In order to enhance continuity in proposed joint research projects, perhaps beginning with air pollution, Ed Fitzgerald, Chair of the Depart-

ment of Epidemiology and Biostatistics of the School of Public Health, plans to give a short course in sampling methods this fall in Tula. The Alliance is looking at ways to continue supporting this collaboration through its Health and Environment Committee, co-chaired by Carol Whittaker, Director of the Center for Global Health, and Dean Phil-

ip Nasca. Ideas including shaping the annual Young Scientists' competition to encourage younger science professors to engage in this area and exploring development and funding possibilities with Sergey Pukhanov, Director of International Relations at Tula State.

Schenectady Teachers Wowed by American Studies Olympiad

By Mary Emerson, Education Committee

The first Country Studies Olympiad for high school and university students was held at Tula State University during the months of March and April, 2010. The project manager, Dr. Sergey Pukhanov, Director of International Relations at Tula State University, along with Anna Zhilina, journalist and interpreter for "Russia Today" in Moscow, applied for a grant from International Research and Exchange (IREX) to finance the Olympiad.

In addition to Tula State University and the Albany-Tula Alliance, the following organizations supported the Olympiad in various ways: The English Language Office of the Press; Culture and Education Section of the US Embassy in Russia; the Open World program of the US Library of Congress; Department of Education of the Tula Region; Council for Foreign Economic Relations of the Tula City Administration and the Lev Tolstoy Tula State Pedagogical University. Twelve secondary schools in the Tula district participated.

The Albany-Tula Alliance sponsored three teachers from Schenectady High School who helped in the preparations for the Olympiad and travelled to Tula to assist in the judging. Prior to their arrival in Russia, the teachers—James Schneider, Patricia Johnson and John Spezzaferro—were deeply involved with planning tasks for the Olympiad participants. They compiled a series of questions about American history and about the Capital Region, as well as a list of

American cultural icons from which student finalists chose to prepare their final PowerPoint presentations. The teachers also offered lists of helpful websites for the students to use in their research.

Said Jim Schneider, "The beginning of the competition required much planning, coordination, and collaboration. Sergey Pukhanov and his team at Tula State University designed an online test with

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Olympiad Contestants at first American Studies Olympiad in Tula

Schenectady Teachers Wowed (Continued from page 2)

unique student registrations complete with usernames and passwords to assure integrity. Round One was a smashing success. Round Two consisted of written essay responses to American history questions in four competition categories (high school, college non-English majors, college freshman and sophomore English majors, and college junior and senior English majors). The essay responses I evaluated were superb.”

The teachers also were struck by the quality of the students’ presentations. Limited to seven minutes, they timed their presentations flawlessly and most did not have to look at their slides. Said Jim of the students’ Powerpoints, “Embedded video and sound clips along with excellent design choices made for riveting presentations and difficult judging.”

Evgeniya Istomina, a student in the Tula State University Department of Linguistics, was declared the winner of the Olympiad. She will travel to Albany in the fall 2010 for a short internship.

“I am proud of the hard work, dedication and skill demonstrated by the students from Tula, Russia,” said Jim. “In a way, I felt embarrassed that they know so much more about my country’s history and culture than I know about theirs. I have much learning ahead of me. Russia is a fascinating and interesting country. With a collaboration framework in place, it is my hope that our students will work with their Russian counterparts on authentic and enduring real-world constructivist projects.”



Evgeniya Istomina, winner of the American Studies Olympiad in Tula

Teachers Caught by Iceland Ash. Unfortunately, the end of the Olympiad also coincided with the beginning of the volcanic ash debacle that stopped air traffic in and out of Europe. But while they were delayed for five days in their return because of the ash, the teachers were treated to special care by Professor Pukhanov, his family, and the staff at Tula State, who took them under their wing. They were invited to give guest lectures, and were accommodated at the hotel at Tula State. What’s more, Sergey’s mother cooked for them every one of the extra nights.

Said teacher Patricia Johnson, “While the delay in returning home was difficult, it was offset by our hosts’ remarkable kindnesses and hospitality. Dr. Pukhanov was a great tour guide and mentor from the first moments of our arrival. But when we became

his “*dear volcano friends,*” as he referred to us, he showed his true humanity by hosting three dinners at his home, which were resplendent repasts complete with a repertoire of stories, jokes, and music. In addition, Dr. Pukhanov’s students stepped forward to entertain us during the day with tours of local museums and parks, and his staff generously lent us use of their computers so that we could correspond with our school administrators and families. I was honored to teach a class of Dr. Pukhanov’s during one of our extra days at Tula State, a great opportunity for a teacher of world and American literature like me.”

*“This trip was a chance of a lifetime for me, both as an educator and as a citizen of the world!”
...“I thank the Alliance for making it all possible.”-Patricia Johnson, Schenectady High School Participant in the Country Studies Olympiad, Tula State University*

COMING UP

Delegation Heading to Tula in October

Board Chair Jerry Shaye, Charlotte Buchanan, and Barbara Webster have been invited to the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Tula State University in October. While in Tula, they hope to meet with new city and oblast government officials and encourage their interest in the sister-city relationship, as well as conduct some meetings with businesses, educators, researchers, and private citizens who've been friends to the Alliance.

Reserve Now: Sunday September 12, Songs at Sunset

On this special evening Richard (Rich) J. Miller, Jr. Esq. will lead the performance of songs of travel at the home of Charles and Charlotte Buchanan.

Rich Miller is an attorney with Morris & McVeigh, one of the oldest law firms in New York State who practices tax, estate and trust law and represents cultural institutions in both their Albany and New York City offices. He is a fabulous tenor, who has sung with professional and amateur companies in many places from England to New York City and as a lead in Gilbert & Sullivan productions. He has entertained us in prior "Songs at Sunset" for the Albany-Tula Alliance, singing a diverse repertoire ranging from operatic arias to Broadway show tunes. Rich has recently assumed the presidency of the Metropolitan Opera Guild.

Price of admission includes cocktails and a dinner buffet. Contact the Alliance at 518-439-2627 or on our website at www.albanytula.org.

20th Anniversary Committee Formed

It's hard to believe that the Alliance will be celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2011! The development committee and others interested in our special celebration activities are working hard on plans to be unveiled soon. Helping hands are still needed who could help with:

- Artwork, writings, and other materials for an historical exhibit of the group's activities
- Grant writing
- Seeking corporate sponsorships
- Helping with publicity

If you could help in any way – small or large – contact Jan Smith at 518-312-3862, smithja@the-mandp-lab.com.



c/o Mary Williams
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