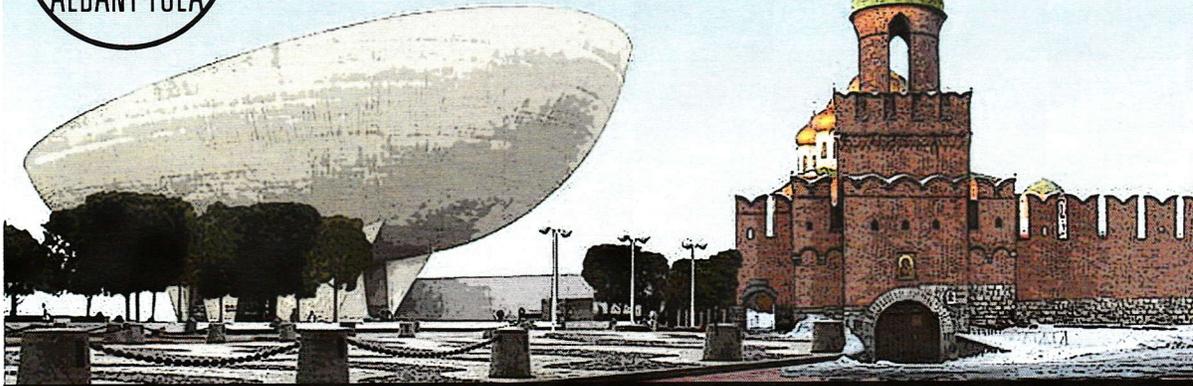




Connections



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

Fall 2017

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Environmental Health Sciences Course for Students in Tula, Russia

With funding from the Albany-Tula Alliance, the Center for Global Health and the Environmental Health Sciences Department at the UAlbany School of Public Health (SPH) collaborated on the delivery of a specially designed short-course to introduce students in Tula to hazardous agents in the environment that affect human health. The course's development and delivery was led by Dr. David Carpenter, a Professor in the Department of Environmental Health Sciences and the Director of the Institute for Health and the Environment, together with Ms. Natalia Kovalchuk, an Environmental Health Sciences doctoral student from Ukraine working at UAlbany SPH on her Ph.D.

This unique distance learning course included five one-week modules covering environmental concerns related to metals, air pollution, drinking and waste water, as well as solid and hazardous waste. Each course module consisted of lecture slides covering relevant scientific material and information and a "real time" group discussion session led by Dr. Carpenter. All the course materials were presented in Russian. Ms. Kovalchuk provided translation during the live discussions. With the support of one of the ATA's key partners in Tula, the Russia Environmental Policy and Culture Center, the course organizers recruited a total of 24 students.

Dr. Carpenter was very pleased with the engagement of the course participants and their response to the distance teaching methods used. He said, "the course was enthusiastically received by students in Tula and I was consistently impressed by the insightful and thought provoking questions they posed during the live group discussions."

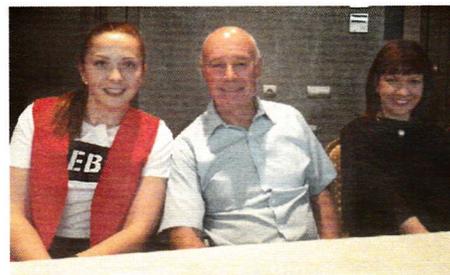
“...I was consistently impressed by the insightful and thought-provoking questions...”
—Dr. David Carpenter



ATA board member Ed Fitzgerald awards Russian students in Tula with certificates for completing the short course.

Working with Dr. Carpenter on the development of numerous Russia-specific examples and case studies incorporated into the course and on course translation was extremely rewarding for Ms. Kovalchuk. Her collaboration on this project highlighted for her the "importance of maintaining academic and scientific exchanges between countries at a time when the most critical public health and environmental challenges we face are global in their reach and impact."

Dr. Edward Fitzgerald, an O'Leary Professor in Environmental Health Sciences at the UAlbany SPH and a member of the ATA Board, recently traveled to Tula, Russia to personally meet with the course participants, present course certificates, and obtain direct feedback from the students.



A total of 24 students in Tula participated.

Dr. Fitzgerald says that he is "delighted by the very positive response to the course" and that he "sees opportunities to deliver similar courses in the

Essay Winners Celebrate Women's Suffrage

Winners of the 2017 ATA Essay Contest received cash awards at a ceremony in May at the Fort Orange Club in Albany. Students from Shaker High School in Colonie, NY, Schenectady High School and Albany High School wrote essays that celebrated the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage in New York State. The students were asked to compare women's rights movements in the United States and Russia over the past 150 years.

The top prize winner, Samantha Vatalaro from Shaker High School, did research on two women who took similar paths in very different cultures. She wrote: "Alice Paul of the U.S. and Alexandra Kollontai of Russia both battled for women's equality and made history for speaking out for what they believed in. They made a difference even if it wasn't considered well behaved or ladylike." For her essay, Vatalaro won a \$1,000 prize.

Second place winner, Kerensa Hughes from Schenectady High School, looked in-depth at the history of "Women in Science." Her comparative essay



L-to-R, Top Row: Jerry Shaye, Samantha Vatalaro, Adam Aleksic Bottom Row: Kerensa Hughes, Dawn Weinraub

of the Soviet Union and the United States concentrated on Russian Valentina Tereshkova and American Sally Ride. These were the first women in space from their respective countries and inspired female astronauts to pursue science. She wrote: "If we do not have equal footing to men in prominent careers such as STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) then we will never be seen as equal." For her essay, Kerensa won a \$500 prize.

The third place prize was awarded to Adam Aleksic from Albany High School. He chose a more unusual topic, "Sexism in Chess in Russia and America." He pointed out how women play chess in different segregated groups. He wrote: "They don't get to play better-rated people when they're in their own section and men are consistently rated higher...limiting women's rankings in the chess world." For his essay, Aleksic won a \$250 prize.

New Chair Takes Helm at Albany-Tula

September marked a changing of the guard at the Albany-Tula Alliance, the 26-year-old nonprofit organization that manages Albany's sister-city relationship with Tula, Russia. The new chair is David Smith, founder and president of LinguaLinx Inc., a Troy-based translation and localization company.

"I'm able to bring both business experience and an academic background with Russian to the chairmanship," said Smith, who received a master's degree in Russian from the University at Albany. "It's a great time to become chairman of an organization that focuses on people-to-people contacts, not politics."

Smith's goals include a new commitment to fundraising, reconnecting with old friends—and possibly meet-



Jerry Shaye (left) hands the reins over to new ATA Board Chair, David Smith.

ing new ones—with an upcoming visit to Tula, and continuing scientific, business, education and cultural exchanges with the Russians.

Outgoing chair Gerald Shaye chaired the Alliance for over a decade.

Smith takes the reins at Albany-Tula as the organization continues to ramp up its activity after a couple of slow years. The fallow period was the result of the decline in U.S. relations with Russia, which took a nosedive with Russia's invasion of Crimea in 2014.

In 2017, however, the Alliance has pursued new exchanges and projects with the Tulans. Earlier this year, the Alliance brought entrepreneurs from Tula to the Capital Region to observe local businesses, and a new project offering a University at Albany public health course to Tula students met with great success.

Three New Board Members Join Albany-Tula

Ana Galeano, Esq. is an attorney at Dowling Law, a small MWBE (minority and women-owned business enterprise) owned law firm. Galeano joined the Albany-Tula Alliance in May, 2017.



"Having obtained a minor degree in Russian language and literature from S U N Y - Binghamton and a Juris Doc-

torate in international business law from Brooklyn Law School, I have always maintained a desire to combine these skills in some manner that would assist Russian and U.S. small businesses to form mutually beneficial alliances. I could not think of a better, more sophisticated, intelligent and diverse group of people to join forces with than the Albany-Tula Alliance board of directors."

Julianne Clouthier is the Industry Engagement Manager for FuzeHub in Albany. Clouthier joined the Albany-Tula Alliance in April, 2017.

"I decided to join the Board of the Albany-Tula Alliance after listening to many great stories about the impact that the Alliance has had on the citizens of Tula, Russia. Having known the Alliance Board President for well over a year, I would often hear about the initiatives, scholarships and inter-

cultural relationships that have been developed over the past several decades. I recently spent several years volunteering with the International Student Scholar Services and Intensive English Language Program at the University at Albany, hosted foreign exchange students for three summers, and have an inherent interest in international relations. When the opportunity presented itself, I knew that I would be a good fit the Alliance.



What interests me most about the citizen-to-citizen relationship between Albany and Tula is being able to participate in dialogue as it relates

to both personal and professional development. I have always been a global minded person and I value the knowledge that is attained from interacting with persons from different cultures. The collaboration between these two cities is a catalyst to forging long term, mutually beneficial relationships and I am excited to be involved in this partnership.

My background is in Economic Development and Marketing, so my expertise could be used in a variety of functions. In terms of student exchange and educational programs, I can assist with pro-

viding connections to businesses and manufacturers for potential company visits and shadowing/mentorships for all age levels. In terms of marketing, my expertise can be used to increase awareness of the ATA across the Capital Region through social media campaigns, traditional marketing strategies and targeted content marketing relevant to current topics in US-Tula relations."

Rachel M. Augustine is a Biotech Production Specialist at Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Inc. Augustine joined the Albany-Tula Alliance in March, 2017. Her relationship with the nonprofit predates her employment at the prestigious pharmaceutical company.

As a Shenendehowa High School senior, she won the 2010 ATA Essay Contest by writing about how the United States and Russia can be more energy-



efficient. Augustine is destined to be one of the board's most energetic and pro-

gressive millennium members by working closely with the Education Committee. She is currently working on an ATA fundraiser that includes a yoga class and Moscow Mule cocktails.



2018 Essay Contest

Currently, the ATA Education Committee is busy preparing a topic and prize considerations for the 2018 Essay Contest. Please be sure to check the ATA Facebook page in January for more details. Capital Region high school students are encouraged to participate.

Professional Internships and Dr. Budenkov's Visit

Three young professional entrepreneurs from Tula, Russia got the chance to live, work and play in Albany NY during an unusually warm winter stretch this past February. Natives of Tula, Russia, Dmitry Dremlyuga, Anna Naumova, and Kira Kurakova applied for this opportunity in September. The ATA found time in February to make good on the promise to provide side-by-side training and instruction with several Capital Region businesses. Anna Naumova's husband Dmitrii and one of the ATA's closest advocates, environmentalist Mikhail Budenkov also accompanied the winners.



During the first week, the interns received mentoring opportunities with several Capital Region businesses, including the Times Union, Price Chopper, Transfinder, Lingualinx, BizLab, Gramercy Communications, and job fairs that included Monster.com.

Naumova and Kurakova work for the largest digital agency in Eastern Europe called Ingate, a company that specializes in search engine optimization, media advertising and social media. Dremlyuga owns a small computer repair business in Tula called GeekPRO. He was especially excited for the opportunity to spend time with the tech department at the Apple store in Crossgates Mall.

All said that the internships exceeded their expectations and that the guidance and support they received will improve the creativity in their own workplaces.

"I learned so much about effective business practices here in Albany," says Anna Naumova. "I especially liked that Americans focus on building relationships with their clients to grow."

Kurakova found the experience especially useful to help her grow in her own HR practices like hiring, career path, exit interviews and more. She hopes to stay in contact with several companies.

Dremlyuga admits that our "cultures are really different but there's always room for collaboration." Naumova furthered that point mentioning how trends in digital marketing in the U.S. take about a year or more to finally implement in Russia: "The process in Tula is quite different but seeing how steps are implemented here in the U.S. helps me to see the bigger picture in how to maintain current clients.



The women and Naumova's husband Dmitrii were hosted by ATA Public Relations chair, Sonja Stark while Dremlyuga and Budenkov stayed in an Airbnb rental near New Scotland Ave in Albany. On the days (and hours) that the guests had time, Stark took them

hiking at Thatcher Park, shopping at discount stores like Marshalls, historic attractions like the USS Slater and out to dinner celebrating their visit with a local brew. Stark learned quickly to have several bags of green tea on hand rather than coffee for breakfast.

Dmitrii said he "saw a lot of beautiful things, like museums and history of Albany. It was very important for me to see Albany's roots and culture." He continued by expressing that U.S. history is a part of Russia's history too.

Budenkov was able to meet with Director of Albany's School of Public Health, David Carpenter and the Direc-



tor of the UAlbany Center for Global Health, John Justino. They discussed the introduction of an annual environmental short course in the sharing of climate and sustainability research. Budenkov also met with SUNY Albany Associate Professor of Atmospheric Chemistry, Bob Keese and the staff at the Wadsworth Center to discuss air pollution issues common to US and Tula.

ATA Board Chairman, Jerry Shaye, hoped that future cultural collaborations would develop after the guests returned home, despite the tenuous political climate. Before leaving, Charlotte and Charlie Buchanan hosted a dinner at their home to let the interns know how much all of the board members enjoyed their visit.

Board Members Visit Russia in October

(Albany, N.Y.)

Leaders of the Albany-Tula Alliance have returned from a successful trip to Tula, Albany's Russian sister city.

"Having the opportunity to walk the streets of Tula with Albany-Tula Alliance colleagues, new Russian friends, and new business friends was a spectacular and humbling experience," said Melissa Bellew, an executive with the Capital District YMCA who serves as the Alliance's Vice Chair.

"I'd heard the names of many of our Tula business colleagues, but to meet and have personal connections with them was priceless. Nothing fosters citizen diplomacy like a face-to-face meeting," Bellew said.

David Smith, the newly installed chairman of the Alliance, holds master's degrees in Russian and translation from the University at Albany and worked in Russia in the 1990s, but the October trip was his first to Russia in some time.

"I was pleasantly surprised by how modern and technically up to date their society is now," Smith said. "Given this technical parity, I am enthusiastic that our efforts to promote cooperation among businesses from our respective cities are going to be even more mutually beneficial." The Albany delegation found interest among the Russians, particularly businesspeople looking for partners. They also



Creative genius Igor Molotov with David Smith, Melissa Bellew and Jerry Shaye

“Our friends demonstrated yet again that despite the political differences between our two countries, our bonds of friendship remain strong”

—Gerald Shaye

learned that Tulans who have previously worked with the Alliance still view it positively.

"Our friends demonstrated yet again that despite the political differences between our two countries, our bonds of friendship remain strong," said Gerald Shaye, who recently finished a decade chairing the Alliance. This was his 12th visit to Tula. "With David Smith and Melissa Bellew making their first visits to Tula and actively engaged in a series of positive meetings, the future of our Alliance is bright."

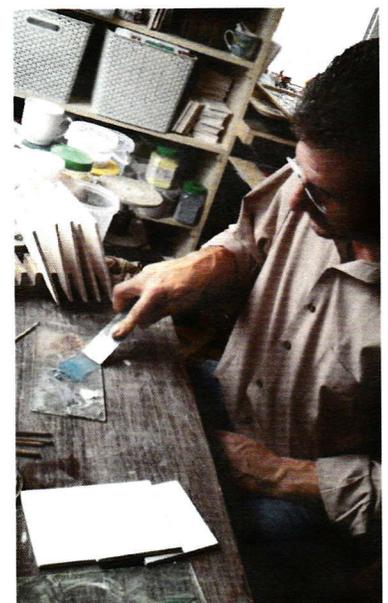
In its 26 years, the nonprofit Albany-Tula Alliance has spearheaded exchanges in the areas of business, education, health care, culture and the environment. There are scores of Alliance "alumni," in the United States, Russia and other countries. Many have built successful careers—often due, in part, to their experiences with the Alliance.

The Alliance's board of directors, friends of the Alliance and interested Albany-area residents have poured countless volunteer hours and donations of many kinds into programs: High school essay contests, art exhibits, concerts, discussion forums, lectures, social events and others.

"I am looking forward to the next stage of our growth and cooperation," Smith said.



Russian Interpreter Lisa Loseva and ATA board members visit the home of Leo Tolstoy called Yasnaya Polyana.



David Smith tries his hand at mixed art at a ceramic shop owned by Elena Palevskaya.



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Environmental Course For Students in Tula Russia

(Continued from page 1)

future.” His discussions with the Russian participants underscored for him “just how ‘hungry’ environmental health sciences specialists and students in Tula are for training experiences like this one.”

John Justino, the Director of the UAlbany Center for Global Health, says he is “confident that the Center and collaborating faculty at the UAlbany SPH can develop and deliver courses like this one in the future that are even more engaging, by leveraging some of the new distance learning tools being piloted at UAlbany.”

