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Highlights of My Trip to Albany

by Elena Molchanova

This trip made it possible for me to learn a lot about the American legal system. Most importantly, I'm now able to share my knowledge with the students at Tula State University. I'm eternally grateful to Charlotte Buchanan for this rare opportunity.

There were a lot of highlights that made this trip very special but two things impressed me most of all – the quality of teaching and learning at Albany Law School and the hospitality, constant attention and care provided to me by my American friends. I even celebrated my birthday at Charlotte's beautiful home in the company of my dear friends from the USA and Russia which was incredibly memorable. I'd like to thank the Albany-Tula Alliance, including PR Committee Chair, Sonja Stark and her great family who "tolerated" me for two weeks in her home, and all the ATA members, in particular

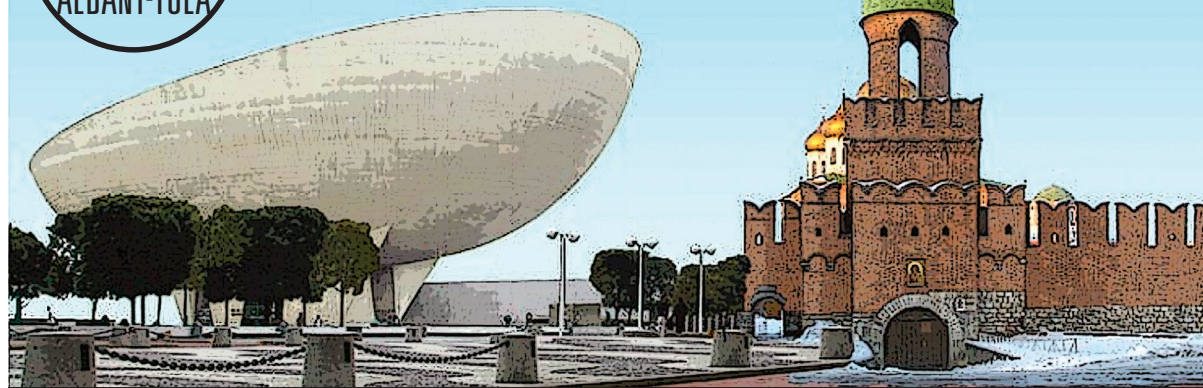
my dear old and new friends: Gerald Shaye, the Chair; Vera Dordick, the Vice Chair; Peter Thomas, Nina Reich, Jack Aernecke, and Dawn Weinraub.

Thank you to the many Albany Law School professors who let me sit at their lectures and patiently answered my questions - Professor Reyhan (Business Organizations), Professor Redwood (Securities), Professor Chung (Contracts), Professor Seita (Contracts, and Anti-Trust Laws) and Professor Pratt (Trusts and Estates, and Taxation), and thank you to the President and Dean Professor Ouellette. And lastly, thank you to experts and other professionals who took time out of their busy schedules to meet with me and answer even more questions like Honorable Rachel Kretser of the Albany City Criminal Court, Honorable Victoria A. Grafefo, formerly Associate Judge at the Court of Appeals, New York's highest



L-to-R: Tanya Klimova, Elena Molchanova, Charlotte Buchanan, Tommy and Valentin Labzin. All enjoy Elena's birthday gathering at Charlotte's home.

court, and now an attorney with Harris Beach, and Vincent L. Valenza, Managing Principal in the law firm of McNamree, Lochner, Titus & Williams, and thank you to my American colleagues who generously shared their expertise and knowledge of translation industry in the USA like Sabine H. Seiler, Owner of Columbia Translators & Editors, and David Smith, President and Owner of LinguaLinx. I'm totally grateful to all of you and to others who made my stay both beneficial and pleasant.



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

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Songs At Sunset 2015 Summary

by Jack Aernecke

As the song from the 1945 musical "State Fair" says, "It was a Grand Night for Singing" and it was a grand night for listening to the music of the Great White Way through the decades. The Albany Tula Alliance held its annual Songs at Sunset fundraiser September 13th at the stately Fort Orange Club in Albany.

After a wonderful dinner buffet and lively conversation, guests were entertained by the Musicians at Ma'alwyck including Director and Violinist Ann-Marie Barker Schwartz, Baritone C.F. Schwartz, Soprano Tess McCarthy and Pianist Maria Riccio Bryce. Guests were serenaded with the music of Gershwin, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Kurt Weill and many more. It was wonderful entertainment from some very talented musicians and singers.

Among the notables in attendance were Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan, Congressman Paul Tonko, former assemblyman and current congressional candidate John Faso and New York State Supreme Court candidate Christina Ryba.

A highlight of the evening was the ATA board's special recognition of Barbara Jancar Webster, the longstanding chair of ATA's Education Committee who resigned recently for health reasons. For many years Barbara commuted from her home in Chestertown to Alliance meetings in Albany. Her tireless efforts led to many significant relationships between educational institutions in Tula and educational institutions in the Albany area. Those have led to meaningful exchanges and visits among educators and students traveling between Albany and Tula resulting in an increased understanding between peoples.

In this time of strained relationships between the governments of the United States and Russia the Albany Tula Alliance believes in the strength of citizen diplomacy, continuing to strengthen and expand the relationships that have developed through the years between the people of Albany and Tula. The funds raised during Songs at Sunset will continue those efforts.

The Albany Tula Alliance thanks everyone who supported this years Songs at Sunset. If you're interested in attending the 2016 Songs at Sunset fundraiser, please review the Events page on the Albany Tula website: www.albanytula.org.



Barbara Webster (with husband John) received a special recognition of her dedication to the ATA.



An Tula Med Student Visits the Capital Region

The Albany-Tula Alliance sponsored an internship for Lydia Kashintseva from April 20 to May 27, 2015. Lydia is a medical student at Tula State University. She worked as a student intern at the University at Albany. Her mentors were Ed Fitzgerald, Professor at the School of Public Health and Bob Keese, Associate Professor at the Department of Atmospheric and Environmental Sciences. Fitzgerald is the ATA Health Committee Chair while Keene's daughter was an ATA Olympiad winner in 2013.

Kashintseva's internship was an interdisciplinary program about the affects of air pollution on human health. She worked with Dr. Keese studying, measuring and monitoring hazardous toxins specifically a chemical element called Vanadium. The metal is an environmental contaminant and poses a concern in the Tula region. Dr. Fitzgerald showed the attentive intern how epidemiology and biostatistics are used to study the connections between air pollution and disease in human populations.

Kashintseva lived, in part, with Dr. Keese and his family and with student friends near the Albany campus. Her program also included an active cultural component including American history, literature, and music. She attended a Cap Rep performance of *Hamlet*, visited NYC and Boston, and of course visited popular sites throughout Albany. As expected, she enjoyed discount shopping at area malls and big box retailers like Marshalls.

ATA PR Committee Chair, Sonja Stark, introduced Kashintseva to the Adirondacks with a day spent hiking Sleeping Beauty mountain. Here's a short excerpt from the blog she wrote for the TU newspaper:

Reviewing other entries in the hiking registry, I was excited to think that Lydia might be the first hiker from Russia to ever climb Sleeping Beauty. It was a beautiful Saturday morning and we parked in advance of dozens more at the Hogtown trailhead. The gate to

Dacy Clearing was locked adding another 3 miles to the roundtrip.

While walking the winding road Lydia pointed to buckets hanging from the trees. Unlike the Catskill range overnighting is allowed in the Adirondacks. Hungry bears feast at night so campers are encouraged to hoist their food into the trees. Lydia's eyes widened at the thought.

After Dacy Clearing, the trail narrowed and became a triumph of soft pine needles and huge slabs of flat rock. The trail zig-zagged up a very short incline with a few fun switchbacks. Among the pines and hemlock, a patch of blooming Lady Slippers caught our sight. The rare orchid wildflower propagates very poorly and takes years to mature. Lydia wasn't famil-



by Ed Fitzgerald and Sonja Stark



iar with the flower.

Finally, after several water breaks and slow moments, we reached the top. Lydia let out a huge sigh of relief followed up with a gasp of joy. Her eyes widened as she scanned the beautiful, endless horizon. I knew at that moment she was hooked. We sought out a peaceful spot to enjoy lunch overlooking a panorama of little blue dots and expansive summits. I cursed that I forgot the flask of vodka.

A Dream Come True

by Lydia Kashintseva

My dream of visiting the USA came true. In the Spring of 2015, I was lucky enough to visit, study and play in America. It was a great experience for me. I learned a lot of things that changed my life. Moreover, I am still applying what I learned in America to things I do here in Russia.

For example, I try to maintain a healthy lifestyle by following the same American food recipes and staying in shape. Americans have a great respect for nature and animals and the environment is always so clean and tidy. I was able to experience the Albany Tulip Festival where the grass was so fresh and green. And climbing a mountain was spectacular.

I especially enjoying meeting Isaac Smith. He invited me for family dinner. I met his parents. He showed me his beautiful house and garden. He told about his family, their traditions, hobbies and even played the violin for me.



Of course, I loved his pet dog. I was touched by their love.

I left Albany with such a huge feeling of positivity thanks to the many people who made my visit so memorable. Americans are so open minded and kind. Even strangers were helpful and especially open to meeting a new face from Russia.

I am very grateful to the Alliance "Tula-Ol bani" for the chance to experience American traditions and cultures. Thank you for everything.

Hosting, Hiking and Homemade Borscht with Elena

by Sonja Stark

Have you ever met somebody and immediately felt a bond with them? Like you've known that person all your life? Maybe it's in their smile or tone of voice or warm, uncomplicated manner but, whatever it is, they feel like family. That's how Elena Molchanova makes others feel. That's how you feel when you're with her. And that's why I agreed, no, rather enthusiastically volunteered, to host her for two weeks in February.



A little bit about Ms. Molchanova, the Albany-Tula Alliance has depended on her Russian-English translation prowess and skill since February 2002. The 44-year-old professional lives and works in Albany's sister city, Tula, Russia, as a translation agency manager and part-

time translation and interpretation tutor at Tula State University. She's provided countless visitors from Albany, many baffled by the Cyrillic language, assistance to navigate and embrace cultural differences with confidence. She's helped the ATA with every aspect of trip planning including overnight accommodations, transportation and sight-seeing, she's definitely our favorite walking, talking guidebook!

So, no surprise, I insisted on providing Ms. Molchanova with a similar experience during her visit to Albany. Elena seized on that opportunity agreeing to forego sleep in exchange for watching documentaries and iconic sitcoms, sipping cocktails at cozy bars, indulging in spicy foods at dining hot spots and hiking past beautiful panoramic views of the Capital Region at Thatcher State park.

One weekend, we found time to escape to the rocky coastline of North Boston in a town called Swampscott. We stayed with Elena's newly emigrated Russian friends, Tanya, Igor and their precocious five year old. We got



up early to marvel at the most perfect midwinter sunrise over Natant Bay from Lynn Shore Drive. Elena fell in love with the fresh, salty air repeating how the ocean stirs her heart and imagination.

We enjoyed sightseeing the infamous, port town of Salem with visits to Nathaniel Hawthorne's House of Seven Gables, the Witch Museum and other historic maritime buildings. At the popular Oyster Bar, Elena enjoyed her first bowl of New England clam chowder followed by the legendary lobster pizza-topped with jalapeños, of course!

Our weekend culminated with Elena's friend Tanya giving us a tour of Northeastern University, a campus she's proud to call her own, taking weekly classes in computer and information sciences until she earns her bachelors degree.

Close to the end of Elena's time in Albany, she volunteered to make a big vat of beetroot soup called Borscht. When I took her shopping for the ingredients she was tickled pink by the variety of food retailers in the Capital Region, from affordable choices, like Aldi's and Trader Joe's, to more decadent options like Whole Foods. We savored her homemade specialty for days after Elena returned to Tula. Thank you Elena. You're welcome back anytime!

Essay Contest 2016

Judging for winners of the annual 2016 Essay Contest commences this May. Several students submitted well-written essays. We asked Capital Region students to identify and discuss ways in which Russia and the United States have worked together successfully to solve mutual problems and how they can continue to work on partnerships to create a more harmonious world. The writer of the winning essay will win \$1,000, second prize is \$500 and third prize is \$250. Winners will be announced in May.

