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AH ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

Number 8 – October 2005

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INTRODUCTION

Various Comments & Observations

Ron

As Galya and others note below, we have a good group of new teachers—and things have gotten off to a good start. (All the “formal reports” from the new teachers were very positive.) We have 8 full time teachers—as opposed to the 7 full time and two part time teachers that we have had the previous several years. As Galya mentions, they have a very full teaching load. But we’ve done several things to help make it easier for them to handle that load. These include having the new teachers take an online course before their arrival in Vladimir (more on this below); putting the Teachers’ Assistant, Lena Belova, on full time; doing our best to head off “psychological problems” generated by the job’s considerable demands by, among other things, stressing the work load and basic expectations in the New Teacher Video, and by strongly encouraging the teachers to work as a team with the Russian staff. These efforts seem to be paying off. All the new teachers were especially appreciative of what they learned during orientation and the help they are getting from Lena.

As mentioned, more will be said about the online course below. Here I would like to note that we are working on a set of requests for customizing the course next year, so that it will better match up to the specifics of our program. The people at ICAL, the organization that offers the course, including the excellent tutor who worked with all of this year’s new teachers, are willing to cooperate. With any luck, the course will be even more effective at “setting the stage” in the years to come.

You will find information on this year’s teachers at: www.serendipity-russia.com/newteachers.htm

In brief, they are: Kelli Gladney and Britt Newman, returning from last year as co-Lead Teachers; Joanna Greenlee, Gordon College; Youngmee Hahn, Swarthmore College; Glen Johnson, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; Jane Keeler, University of the South; Michael Kogan, Indiana University; and Brooke Ricker, Stanford.

You’ll read below about our efforts to expand and organize our library. Books and magazines are always welcome. If any of you former teachers come across something—a book, an article, another teaching aid—that you think would be of special value, please, either ship it to the AH (or me) or let us know so that we can try to find it. (Anything that can help the new teachers learn the grammar they need to know will be particularly appreciated.)

A group of missionaries that visited the Home last June has graciously begun an effort to send us magazines on a regular basis. Duplicates will be shared with participants in our workshops and area English programs.

In this connection, we received through Alexei a request from the Foreign Languages Library at the Pedagogical University for books on contemporary American society. It seems students were complaining about the absence of current information. I was able to send a number of books with the tour group mentioned below. According to Alexei, the donation was every much appreciated.

You'll also read in this issue about our ongoing efforts to assist the wonderful jazz singer, Juliana Rogachova. If you are a jazz buff, you should be hearing about her in the years to come.

Following the comments about Juliana is an essay by Tom Murdoch about an art education program he helped organize—with assistance from the AH. Tom was one of the social studies teachers on last summer's Fulbright trip.

In addition to getting Juliana back for a second time, we were able to make arrangements for a young basketball player, Roman Mikheykin, to spend a month in Bloomington-Normal where he attended several basketball clinics, beginning with two put on by the University High School Coach who went to Vladimir in April 2000, Cal Hubbard.

Roman had a great time—and learned a lot. He stayed with two host families, both of which want him to come back. In short, he was an excellent ambassador for the youth of Vladimir.

We also are continuing work on the tourism development project. In June University of Illinois tourism specialist, Dr. Bruce Wicks, made his second trip to Vladimir. He was joined there by Marianna Strzelecka, a Polish tourism grad student at Poznan University of Economics who had studied with Dr. Wicks at the U of I. Marianna collected information for her Masters thesis and Bruce collected additional information for our project. Both of their reports have been translated into Russian and have been distributed to the key people in Vladimir. (Once again, Oxana did an excellent job of translating Bruce's report. Katya Lakshtanova, a member of our tourism development team who is originally from Moscow, commented that Bruce's report reads even better in Russian than in English. Marianna's report was translated by her mother, who is Russian—and edited by Alexei.)

With a great deal of help from Marianna and her father, we are in the process of trying to organize a trip to the Gdansk area of Poland. They have had quite a bit of success there with their tourism development efforts. We hope to be able to send a representative from the City's International Department, the Oblast Administration, and the brand new Oblast Tourist Information Center, along with Dr. Wicks.

We are continuing to work on the "tourist" web site for the City. Comments and suggestions will be very much appreciated. The URL is: www.vladimir-russia.net. There were more than 4,000 visits to this site between January and September.

We are also, at long last, getting ready to put our “history of the Vladimir region for tourists” online. Can anyone suggest a better title?

Several other specific projects connected with our tourism development efforts are also underway. This includes an October trip to Russia by a group of 8 mostly very seasoned travelers lead by Karen Hasara, former mayor of Springfield and also a member of our tourism development team. We expect this group to provide comments and suggestions. (We are planning a similar trip for next September—in case any of you know anyone who might be interested. In addition, Bruce Wicks and I are working on a trip for tourism students and faculty for this next May. Info on both trips is available on the Serendipity web site.)

Other project ideas are under consideration, including the introduction of a special program for dealing with teenage offenders. If enough interest is shown based on preliminary information that was provided in September, we will try to arrange for key people involved in the “Teen Court” program in Sarasota, Florida to travel to Vladimir (and Murom?) this next spring. They will provide a “full scale” presentation on their very successful efforts. (The program reportedly saves the State of Florida about \$80 million a year. Most important, it is a lot more effective than the juvenile court system in helping young offenders stay out of trouble in the future.)

In this connection, we organized the sixth Illinois State University “criminal justice” trip to Russia in May. It turned out to be one of the best trips to date in this series.

We are particularly pleased to announce that, thanks to generous donations from some of the participants in the summer 2004 Fulbright social studies program—and some Serendipity funds—we were able to purchase a TV and VCR combination and a DVD player for the English program at the Murom Institute. They had mentioned that they had only one classroom equipped to show video and that a small TV with a built-in VCR would make it possible for them to use video in any classroom on the campus. Also they needed a DVD player because new videos are, for the most part, no longer available on tape. (When I mentioned the Murom teachers’ request for the TV / VCR combo to Alexei, he commented that he and his colleagues could use this too. Fortunately funds were available to buy a second set for use at the Pedagogical....)

We are continuing to get things done—see the last two essays in this issue. I’m sure there will be a lot more to report in the next issue.

The New Year

Galya

As I write this, the school year has been underway for not quite one month, but I think that our new teachers already feel confident and ready for any challenge.

As Ron notes, this year our new teachers were required to take an online course from ICAL. Lena Belova, the “Teachers’ Assistant,” also took it. (See her comments below.)

This course helped prepare the teachers—as might be expected, some more than others—for the challenges they face in the classroom.

During our orientation, returning teachers Britt and Kelli and Lena did their best to help the 6 new teachers get ready for the school year and to feel comfortable in class in front of their students. All the teachers who have worked here know how time-consuming preparing for class is, especially during the first semester. This team of teachers is working really hard to be well prepared for each lesson. They spend not only week days here, but also Saturdays and Sundays looking for interesting activities, organizing their lesson plans, preparing handouts, etc. As a result of all this effort, the results from our first questionnaire turned out to be very positive. The students appreciate the teachers' readiness to answer all their questions and the structured lessons and interesting activities. I should mention that it may be at least a little bit easier for the current teachers to find materials and feel confident when they teach because this year Lena is able to work full time. She spends a lot of time with the teachers helping them with lesson planning. She also visits their classes and helps the teachers to analyze what worked and what didn't work in the lesson, which is very useful to know before planning the next class.

This year we have a "full house." This means that all 5 classrooms are in use for every period beginning at 4 p.m. All three Wednesday conversation classes are also full. For the second year we are teaching classes at the Vladimir Electro Motor plant. Last year Kelli had only one group of 7 people there. This year we have two groups with 12 students each, and 4 people from the plant come to the AH to study at our highest level. We are doing our best to help workers at this plant communicate in English with their foreign partners.

Our Saturday activities vary each year depending on the interests of the teachers. This year they have continued the tradition started by Moultrie Townsend two years ago of playing American football. Joanna is leading this activity. Glen wants to activate the music club. He plays the piano. Britt and Joanna may join him on their guitars.

Brooke is going to teach our students swing dancing. Britt would like to organize a chess tournament—and Joanna wants to organize a "spelling bee." She asked Ron to send a video documentary about the American national spelling contest. And of course we'll have our traditional parties and lectures. (Jane gave the first lecture on a cross-country trip she took just before coming to Vladimir. It was well attended and well received.)

So, this year is promising a lot of interesting things for our students and us.

Well, we just finished our first Russian lunch and are full and feeling sleepy, but tomorrow we all will be full of energy again and ready to meet the students.

I wish all the best to all our former teachers—and our Russian students and interns. We remember you (even if we can be lazy and don't write letters), and we are always glad to see you in Vladimir.

A Letter from the Top Cat

Editor's Note: Alexei relinquished his space in this issue to Gosha—who, as everyone who has spent any time at the AH knows, is really in charge of the place. David is David Johnson. He was the AH's first three-year teacher (2001-04). He is currently working for an American charitable organization in Moscow.

Dear David,

Thank you so much for your messages! I really appreciate your special attitude and would be happy to tell you, my dear friend, how it's going here. You do know whom to ask!

False modesty aside, I know what's happening at the AH far better than all its international staff with their Teacher, Director, Accountant, Office Manager, and Night Guard titles. Even the guards can't boast that they keep this Home under watch 24 hours a day. (I don't even mention the esteemed Dr. Pope who visits his Home for only a few weeks a year and must be just dying of curiosity the rest of the time.) Some not-so-wise-as-you homo sapiens may say (or if they are polite only think) that I'm not mentally advanced enough to compare myself to two-legged creatures. I forgive human beings their misplaced arrogance since I understand they are heavily influenced by stereotypes. No wonder it has never occurred to Dr. Pope to write to me. Well, let him learn from you....

I very much hope I'm not mistaken, but it does appear that I can get along with the new teachers. They look like decent creatures. They never push me off of the sofa or the chairs or say something like "Gosha plokhoi." (In the past Ron—I don't think I need to call him "Dr. Pope" since none of the rest of the Russian staff does—has referred to me as "plokhoi"—but with a tone of voice that clearly indicated that he didn't mean it. His sense of humor does take some getting used to.)

I do wish that both the new teachers and the Russian staff were more generous with their food. They hardly ever share it with me. I would of course reject their peanut butter. (You know, even some of the Russian staff is apparently growing to like this strange stuff.) I would also decline to dine on the sweet cookies and candy they have with tea practically every day. (As you know, they devour especially large quantities of harmful stuff on their birthdays and holidays. Recently they even resorted to a wedding in order to have an excuse to indulge themselves. I never would have expected this of Britt—but, clearly, love does strange things to men in particular. Don't you think offering me some peanut butter or a piece of candy would have been a friendly gesture—even though I would have declined?)

They don't bother to mark my birthday. Do you think they might celebrate my wedding? (There is a lovely young feline down the street.... But I digress.) If they did choose to celebrate my birthday, we could include Ron too. We were both born in August. This could be a rather special celebration—as long as Ron understands that I outrank him.

Without me the AH would be a house—but not a home. Whether I’m stretching myself on Oxana’s or Olya’s desk, sitting on someone’s lap, or meeting and greeting almost every visitor, I do my best to make everyone feel at home.

Now if I could only persuade even a small percentage of the hundreds of people who traipse in and out of the AH every week to offer me just a little sustenance, just think of how much better life would be!

While lying on Alexei’s desk yesterday I caught out of the corner of my eye a part of a note from Ron: “...I’m sending a small gift – a compact umbrella - for every Russian staff member...” Do you think he counted me? Had I got one I would have gladly presented it to you.

Now that you are working in Moscow, I hope to see you every now and then in Vladimir.

Take care!

Love you and miss you,
Gosha

COMMENTS FROM THE CURRENT TEACHERS

Getting off to a Great Start

Kelli Gladney and Britt Newman, this year’s co-Lead Teachers

Once again things at the American Home have started off with a bang. Granted, the bang was someone falling down the spiral-staircase-of-doom (leading to our teachers’ office), but it was a bang nonetheless. The video we made for the new teachers in the spring aimed specifically to prepare them for the often overwhelming first semester. The new teachers have all said that the video helped them to have a pretty good idea of what to expect when they got here. They particularly appreciated the honest comments from last year’s teachers regarding workload and job expectations.

This year teacher training began even before the newbies set foot on Russian soil. As Ron and Galya mention, the new teachers (and Lena) took an online EFL certification course from ICAL. The purpose of the course was to introduce them to lesson-planning and teaching techniques with the hope of easing the transition to the classroom here in Vladimir. (See Lena’s comments below.)

During orientation, a new method of using video was tried. Last year a whole class was video taped. While this obviously makes it possible to see a class from start to finish, it was not as useful for orientation when we wanted to focus on specific topics. This year we had a selection of short clips which we were able to use when we wanted to show something like how movies and songs are used in classes. We also added a set of team-

building activities. We didn't do these until later in the orientation when everyone was already pretty familiar with each other. So, perhaps in the future it would be better to try to fit something like this in the first couple of days.

The new group has come to Russia with a great desire to learn and to integrate themselves into Russian society. This is reflected in the large group that congregates in the kitchen every day at tea time.

We're expecting a great year!

What a Difference...!

Jane Keeler

When I told my friends, family and coworkers that I was leaving my cushy government job for the purpose of moving to Russia to teach English on a remarkably small salary, I didn't exactly get the most positive reaction. I'd been saying that I was going to do this for some time, although it seems that no one really believed me. Of course, when I quit my job, sold all of my furniture, drove what was left of my possessions a couple thousand miles to my Mom's house for storage, and bought a plane ticket to Moscow, people began to realize that I was serious.

"You're doing *what*?"

"Surely you're not doing *that* again?"

"Didn't you learn your lesson the *last time*?"

The *last time* was in 2001, when my best friend and I moved to South Korea for what was to be a short lived and horrific experience teaching English as a Second Language, or ESL. In short, the school in Korea was a scam where the owners blatantly ripped off both teachers and students in order to maximize their profit. However, while in Korea I realized that while I was stuck in the most miserable of jobs, many native English speakers were able to travel around the globe having wonderful experiences teaching ESL. I knew that at some point I would return to the field of ESL; I just didn't realize it would take four years....

After extensive research into the American Home, in hope of avoiding an experience such as the one I had in Korea, I applied for a teaching position. I was hired, and moved to the town of Vladimir, Russia in August. I have been here for almost two months as I write this, and so far the experience has been wonderful. For nearly my first full month in Russia, we attended seminars at the American Home (led by Lead Teachers Kelli and Britt, and our Teachers' Assistant, Lena), wherein we learned a lot about how to teach ESL at the American Home. We planned lessons and "taught" them to our coworkers, who in turn critiqued us. The weeks of practice and preparation were wonderful and helped to ease us into the reality of teaching. But we did not spend all of our first month working; we toured the historic district of Vladimir and visited the ancient and beautiful nearby town of Suzdal. We took a day trip to Moscow and spent a lazy Saturday at a dacha in the country. The first few weeks of our stay in Vladimir did not merely prepare

us to teach in the American Home; they also enabled us to have a smooth transition into life in Russia.

Classes began nearly four weeks ago. Despite the wonderful treatment by the American Home staff following my arrival, I must admit that I approached the first day of classes with trepidation. I remembered the horrors of my last time in an ESL classroom.... But I needn't have worried. My students have been wonderful, and the continuing support I have received from the staff and my American coworkers has been fantastic. I am looking forward to the remainder of the year going as smoothly as the past seven weeks.

The Sweet Taste of Triumph: A Produkti Story

Brooke Ricker

I arrived in Russia with almost no Russian language skills. I could say "please" and "thank you," and introduce myself by name, but that was about it. With daily practice and the very able assistance of the AH's Russian tutors, Tanya and Nelli, I've now gotten the hang of conjugating verbs and asking simple questions, but I'm still not very comfortable with speaking, especially speaking to strangers. The other day I took a leap forward in self-confidence. Here's how it happened.

My host family's apartment is a nice twenty-minute walk from the American Home along one of Vladimir's main streets, so I frequently walk to and from work. On my way I pass several "produkti," small stores that sell candy, cookies, bread, meat, cheese, yogurt, and the like. They are inexpensive, convenient, and really frightening. Why? In most produkti everything is kept in glass-covered cases or on shelves behind the counter, so you have to ask for what you want by name. Most things are sold in bulk as well, so you have to ask for the specific amount that you want, then when the saleslady weighs it you have to understand the price and produce the correct amount of rubles. Add to this the fact that produkti workers tend to be pretty short on patience, and you get one very intimidating shopping experience. Thus I've been doing most of my shopping at the pricey Grossmart, a Western-style grocery store near the American Home. There you can take what you want from the shelves and put it in your basket; the packaging makes it obvious what's inside. When you check out, the amount you owe shows up on the little screen at the cash register. You don't have to be able to speak—or understand—a word of Russian.

But on this particular day I really wanted to buy some cookies for the teachers' meeting. Specifically, I wanted the best cookies ever created, vaffli, a delicious kind of wafer with chocolate filling. So I stood outside the nicest-looking produkti and had a little debate with myself.

Head: "What if I don't understand the saleslady? What if she yells at me? What if I get all embarrassed and can't say anything and everyone laughs?"

Stomach: "Mmmm....chocolate..."

Head: "Good point."

I went inside, marched up to the candy counter and requested my 200 grams of vaffli with all the confidence I could muster. And the clerk understood! I didn't understand the price the first two or three times she said it; numbers are still very difficult for me, especially distinguishing between twenty and twelve, or fifty and fifteen, which are as similar in Russian as in English. But the woman was actually very nice about it; she slowed down and used her hands to get the numbers across, which many clerks won't do.

I emerged from the produkti clutching my plastic bag of vaffli with a big grin slowly spreading across my face, a grin that lasted all the way to the American Home and all the way through the teachers' meeting, where the other teachers agreed that these vaffli were specially flavored with the taste of triumph.

I came to Russia for exactly these sorts of challenges; I wanted not only to meet new people, explore a new culture, and learn a new language, but, most important, I wanted to step outside my comfort zone. Some days I don't have the energy or ambition to be brave, and my Russian is still progressing slowly. But motivated by my insatiable sweet tooth, I conquered a fear, and it feels wonderful.

From Russia, In Love...

Britt Newman

Just over a year ago, I came to Russia hoping to meet Russians and experience their culture. Boy, have I accomplished those goals! In particular, I met Alyona Lazareva, who on September 23rd became Alyona Newman, my wife.

Alyona and I met at the American Home in the fall of 2004. I was teaching a salsa dance class as my New Teacher Lecture, and she was one of the students who came to learn the dance. We're living proof that it's worth the effort to prepare a good lecture!

On our wedding day we completed all of the Russian wedding traditions, one of which is to visit your place of work after the wedding ceremony and briefly celebrate with your coworkers. Here I must say that before coming to Russia, I had never heard the term "work collective." Granted, that's mainly because it's a translation from Russian and a term that we don't use much in English. Nonetheless, my time in Vladimir hasn't just introduced me to a new phraseologism. At the American Home I really have become a part of an extraordinary group of colleagues, an exemplary work collective. Never have they been in better form than on my wedding day.

The wedding party arrived at the American Home to see *Britt* and *Alyona* spelled out in autumn leaves on the garage door. The teachers and staff stood in two lines, forming a corridor that ushered us through the house and out to the back deck, where a wonderful spread of fruit and champagne awaited. Although the champagne tasted fine to me, everyone else found it to be very "gorka" – bitter – which required the newly-weds to sweeten it up with a kiss. We had little time to enjoy the refreshments before the real entertainment began.

Two “telegrams” had arrived that morning and were read aloud to us. One was a tongue-in-cheek comment from Ron Pope, praising the day’s gains in Russian-American relations. One was a long and passionate farewell – earning me many a sharp glance from my better half – signed “Your bachelor life.” Other colleagues then offered their multi-lingual congratulations.

The celebration moved on to a hilarious song about my wife and me composed by Alexei. The full American Home company performed this masterpiece, complete with sound effects – popping balloons – worthy of Tchaikovsky, and with a shower of autumn leaves.

After the song, we continued with another contest. Lena, our Teachers’ Assistant, brought out an apple stuck with numerous toothpicks. Taking turns, Alyona and I drew out toothpicks – giving for each one a loving word about each other. This game was especially important, because by drawing the final toothpick, I supposedly won the final word in all situations in our married life. Alexei and Galya, if this turns out not to be the case, I’m going to be filing a complaint!

The champagne and food continued until finally we had to move on to the next stop in our wedding-day festivities. As we drove off from the American Home, Alyona told me that her work collective surely wouldn’t prepare anything as elaborate as mine had. A loud rattling behind the car interrupted us. Cutting away the trail of tin cans and old shoes that had been surreptitiously tied to the back of the car – a very American addition to our Russian wedding – I had to agree with her.

PREPARING THE NEW TEACHERS

Taking An Online TESL Course

Lena Belova

Beginning in June I took an ICAL online TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) course along with 5 of the new teachers. From the beginning of the American Home English program, Ron and Galya have been searching for the best way to help the new teachers prepare before going into the classroom. After one of this year’s new teachers, Jane Keeler, mentioned that she had taken an online course that she thought was helpful, it was decided to have me and all the new teachers—except for Jane—take a course with the same tutor and to share the tutor’s comments with everyone, including the returning teachers and Galya. Ron chose the ICAL course.

It should be mentioned that in the past some teachers took month long intensive TESL courses, but these cost over \$2,000, and it clearly isn’t realistic to require everyone to do this before coming to Vladimir. The \$250 cost of the ICAL course seemed much more reasonable. (If you would like more information on the ICAL program, go to: www.teacher-training.net.)

The ICAL course we took has five modules and five assignments that need to be completed and sent to the tutor for evaluation. It took us more than two months to complete the course. Most of us weren't able to finish before orientation started in August. (Next year the new teachers will need to get started earlier—and try to work more quickly.)

In addition to its affordable cost, the advantages of taking an online course include the fact that we could do the work together and learn from each other's successes and failures. Also, we had an excellent experienced tutor who had taught in Russia for about ten years I think. (His wife is Russian!) Larry provided us with a lot of good ideas and suggestions.

The primary shortcomings of the online course, from my perspective, included the fact that the readings that went with each of the five modules, while very useful for helping new teachers understand what teaching is like, including what they are going to need to do to be successful in the classroom, they didn't really prepare us to do the specific assignments. It would have been helpful if there had been more practical suggestions on how to complete each assignment.

Also, the course doesn't provide much time and opportunity to “digest” the material. For example, you are only required to develop something like 3 full lesson plans when new teachers probably need to work on ten or more plans before they can really begin to fully understand what is required.

I realize that in order to keep the course manageable—and affordable—it probably isn't possible to require the preparation of ten or more full lesson plans. But it should be possible to include more specific lesson planning components such as planning an appropriate activity designed to help teach the material in question.

In addition, it would have been very helpful if in those cases where we didn't really do a very good job we had been required to do the work over again. (Again, I realize that given the nature of the course, this may not be practical.) Larry did a very good job of encouraging us—but some times we needed more than encouragement. (I should say that the feedback I received from Larry did boost my self-confidence.)

Finally, the course doesn't cover as much grammar as our teachers need to know.

We are going to make suggestions for “customizing” the course more to our needs for next year such as focusing more on the needs of EFL students. The course is definitely worth continuing to require our teachers to take. We just need to be sure to point out to future teachers what the course can't accomplish—and to supplement it, especially with regard to grammar.

Most important, we need to make sure that during orientation we do our best to fill in the areas that the ICAL course can't cover. Specifically, we need to provide more lesson planning practice and mock teaching practice. At the same time, we need to do our best

to not forget the very good practical suggestions that the tutor makes and the insights he can provide based on his many years of practical experience, including his experience training Russian English teachers.

Ultimately, our new teachers need to understand that there is no substitute for their hard work and enthusiasm. This year's teachers have certainly approached their responsibilities with energy and excitement. It is a true pleasure to work with them. This, the School's 14th year, should be very productive.

RUSSIAN PROGRAM

NOTE: By chance, this year three PhD candidates have taken advantage of the AH's Russian instruction. Following are their comments.

Hidden Treasures in Vladimir

Marlyn Miller, PhD candidate in Russian History, Brandeis University

I found the American Home by accident. As a scholar traveling in Russia for a year on a Fulbright-Hayes Doctoral Dissertation Award, I was planning on spending several months in Vladimir with my family while I worked in the State Archive of Vladimir Oblast. This necessitated a lot of planning, of course, and so I went online to search out organizations in Vladimir that could provide me with information. Thankfully, I found the American Home.

Everyone there was incredibly gracious and extraordinarily helpful, starting with Ron Pope, the president and founder of Serendipity-Russia which built and operates the Home. The staff in Vladimir, initially Alexei and Galina Altonen, but eventually the American teachers and other staff as well, allowed me to become part of the community, which was very important to my sense of belonging in Vladimir. (As a provincial city, Vladimir can, at first, be daunting.) In this connection I particularly want to thank Alexei for taking time out to help me with a project for the Fulbright Foundation. He graciously offered space in the American Home and his expertise as I interviewed a local candidate for a Fulbright English Language Teaching Grant - I couldn't have done it without him!

But the most important members of the American Home community for me were my Russian teachers, Nelli and Tanya. Throughout my year in Russia I have had many teachers. Wherever I go I try to keep up lessons, to push my knowledge of Russian further. I was happy to hear that the American Home had a Russian for Foreign Language Learners program in place, and took advantage of it four hours a week. The first five weeks I spent with Nelli, and the second five with Tanya. There could not be two more different, or two more excellent teachers imaginable. Unlike most of the native Russian teachers I have had, neither of them scowled or yelled! That is to say, they were not at all intimidating, but each welcoming in her own way, interested in my work, and encouraging my study of Russian, which, as anyone who has tried it knows, can be a difficult business. They were both prepared to work on the things that I thought I needed.

Since I was living with a host family, at first I wanted to concentrate on everyday vocabulary, so that my host and I could understand each other. Nelli and I worked on this for five weeks, and I learned not only a tremendous amount of vocabulary, but also a lot about Russian customs and lifestyle. The wonderful thing about this work was that Nelli was always meticulously prepared, and unlike in most language classes, introduced me to living, spoken Russian - the things that I might actually hear in a home setting, rather than formulaic phrases that had no relationship to reality. By the end of the five weeks I felt that I knew what I needed to know in this area, and my conversations with my "khoziaika" went much more smoothly. Consequently, when Tanya took over, I asked her to concentrate more on my disciplines - history and religion. She, also, was always well-prepared, and I not only became more comfortable talking about my work in Russian, but I was introduced to a number of sources and concepts that are important to what I am doing, and which I probably would have missed completely if it hadn't been for Tanya. For example, she introduced me to the ritual and meaning of a number of Orthodox religious observations and, most significant for my work, explained to me the tradition of peasant girls turning to the Virgin Pokrov for help finding husbands. I have been studying Russian history for seven years, and I have never felt the immediacy of it more than in working with Tanya.

Unfortunately, I've moved on now, back to Moscow, but the American Home was not only instrumental to my success in Vladimir in a host of ways, but really is, and will always be a "home away from home" for me. I am so very grateful to everyone there who took an interest in me, my work, and my family, and who made me so welcome. I must especially thank Nelli and Tanya for THEIR hard work. They managed to combine the exacting standards of true professionals with the sort of humanity and intelligence that made them a delight to learn from. I cannot recommend them highly enough to anyone who wants to study in an authentically Russian and timelessly beautiful place like Vladimir.

NOTE: Marlyn has agreed to answer questions about her experience with the AH's Russian program. Her e-mail address is: mmiller@brandeis.edu

In Search of Russia....

Sarah Ruth Lorenz, PhD Candidate in Russian Literature, University of California at Berkeley

For my second trip to Russia, I didn't feel like going back to Moscow. I was there for several months in 1999, and now I wanted to see a different side of the country. By coming to Vladimir for the summer, I definitely got a better idea of Russia than I would have if I had stayed in Moscow. And I got exceptionally productive one-on-one language practice with Tatiana Akimova at the American Home.

What stands out about my trip? I was a regular visitor to all the used book stores in town, since I was more or less trying to buy the entire Russian literary canon—I'm a grad student in Russian literature at Berkeley and it's nearly impossible to get the good editions of Russian-language books in the U.S. The books piled up behind my bed at

my hostess' apartment. Then the lady at the friendly little post office across from the Hotel Vladimir got to know me too—I made four or five heavily laden trips there to mail the books home. As I write, they are probably floating across the Atlantic on some ship.

One of my most adventurous experiences was a bike camping trip with the Velec outdoors club. They lent me a bike and welcomed me along on their celebration of the pagan holiday Ivan Kupala. We cooked fish soup and had tug-of-war and limbo contests with the group camping next to us.

I also ate a lot of blini and borsch. My hostess justifiably prided herself on her cooking.

And I met a lot of people, particularly thanks to Tatiana and her daughter Nina. Nina would call and say, "we're meeting at eight o'clock in the center," and I'd come stroll along with her and her friends. The cafe Ozon, on the roof behind the Valentina department store, is an especially enjoyable place to sit and have a beer.

Overall, I spent a very productive two months in Vladimir. I definitely would recommend the American Home's Intensive Russian Program to anyone who wants the opportunity to significantly improve his or her Russian and at the same time to learn about life in the Russian provinces.

It's All About Russian—This Time

Chris Stroop, AH teacher 2003-04, PhD candidate in Russian History, Stanford.

As I discovered this summer, returning to the American Home after a year away is a very pleasant experience. A Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) grant from the US Department of Education, along with some Stanford grant money, made it possible for me, a former teacher, to go back and participate in the intensive Russian as a foreign language program. Although I returned in a different capacity, I still experienced the AH's generous hospitality, including a birthday party for me! It was great to see some of my old friends, both within and outside the AH, and just to be in the city of Vladimir again, a city that has come to feel like a second hometown.

Of course, not being a teacher felt a little different, and at times I got nostalgic and wished I could join the current group, especially after I met the new recruits. However, a significant advantage of being there simply to study was that I could concentrate on Russian more intensively and progress more quickly. Not having any English-related job responsibilities—or, really, any summer responsibilities beyond studying Russian—I experienced much more language immersion than I did when I was a teacher. Since I spent only one year teaching at the American Home and could not take more than one year of modern Russian at Stanford, an eight-week intensive course proved to be just what the doctor ordered in terms of improving my Russian skills. My year of modern Russian in grad school had honed those skills, but there certainly was still room to grow. I enjoyed studying with Nelli again. She is not only a Russian teacher but also a friend and confidante, and now I feel much more confident going into my second year as a Ph.D. student in Russian history. Reading literary, technical, and historical texts has become much easier, and, although I was pretty fluent in conversational Russian when I

arrived in June, I am more so now. I can also communicate more competently on a higher level. Returning to the AH was a wonderful experience overall, one with both personal and practical benefits, and one that I'll never forget.

SUPPORT FOR THE ARTS

We are continuing to do what we can to assist groups and individuals in the arts. This includes helping to find buyers for quilts; providing a very talented lacquer miniature painter with a chance to sell his wares to our tour groups (and placing orders with him for one-of-a-kind thank-you gifts); and finding music for Amadeus, the wonderful choir we've been associated with for a number of years. We wish we could do even more.

As noted in the next essay, in the case of Juliana Rogachova, we have been able to do more—a lot more.

In the following article, Tom Murdoch, one of the social studies teachers who participated in the Fulbright program last summer, discusses an art education program that the AH was able to make a significant contribution to.

Juliana (Yuliana) Singing up a Storm in California

Ron

For the second summer in a row, thanks to Michael Zisman, the Stanford Jazz Workshop offered Juliana a \$1,500 scholarship. Thanks to other generous donors—and some funds from Serendipity's tour income—Juliana was able to once again take advantage of this opportunity.

In addition to spending another two weeks at the Stanford Jazz Workshop, thanks to the efforts of Jan DeCarli, a member of the San Jose Jazz Society board of directors who first met Juliana last year, Juliana was the featured performer on the youth stage at the San Jose Jazz Festival this year. Also, thanks to Jan and her friends, there was a front page article on our jazz great-to-be in the August-September issue of the Jazz Buff Newsletter (Palo Alto, California)—see the Other Projects section on the Serendipity-Russia web site—and Juliana was invited to perform in several San Jose area jazz clubs.

In the middle of the workshop Juliana's host from last year, Terry Haugen, was injured, and we had to find a new host to look after her between the Stanford program and the Jazz Festival. Fortunately, Sudhir Chandratreya, whose daughter, Tara, was studying with Juliana in the Stanford program, agreed to look after our "orphan." This worked out very well. Tara, who is the same age as Juliana and who has an excellent opera-trained voice, shared the stage at the jazz clubs, and she and her father clearly made Juliana feel very much at home. Tara and Juliana should be life-long friends and colleagues.

As demonstrated by the response of the audience at each of her video taped performances, Juliana was very well received. In fact, according to Jan DeCarli, she not

only received “rave reviews” from the audiences, but also from the musicians with which she performed.

In his August 16 column in the *San Jose Mercury News*, Leigh Weimers wrote that Juliana’s performance at the Jazz Festival made “all feel confident about the worldwide future of jazz.” In an e-mail he wrote that he “...found [Juliana] to be quite a poised performer for someone her age. She obviously loves the music. She should have a long career.”

After the stint in California, Juliana once again spent some time with Katchie Cartwright and her family in New York—and she paid a visit to Juilliard. (Unfortunately, they still haven’t added vocal jazz to their program.) Juliana and her mother are now working in Moscow—with help from Alexei in Vladimir—to bring Dr. Cartwright over to put on a workshop under the Fulbright Senior Specialist program.

In several phone conversations while she was here in the States Juliana stressed how much she was learning this time around. Now we just need to find a way to get her back for extended training.

Bringing Traditional Russian Art to the States

Tom Murdoch, social studies teacher, Mahomet-Seymour High School, Mahomet, Illinois

Anastasia Gudkova, an instructor at the Vladimir Municipal Children’s Art Institute, spent two weeks this past summer in the U.S. teaching American students and teachers about traditional Russian art and its role in Russian culture. She conducted programs at Mahomet-Seymour High School in Mahomet, Illinois, and at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The program, entitled “Bridging Cultures Through Art,” was made possible by a grant from the Mahomet-Seymour Schools Foundation and coordinated through the American Home. The Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center at the University of Illinois provided additional support for teacher instruction.

The idea for “Bridging Cultures” was conceived by me and my fellow Mahomet-Seymour teacher Sherri Polaniecki after we both returned from Fulbright trips abroad in the summer of 2004. I visited Vladimir Oblast, where I stayed with Ms. Gudkova’s family, and Sherri Polaniecki visited areas of Japan and China. We were impressed with how the rich cultural heritage of the regions we visited had been preserved through art, and felt that American students could learn about those cultures through exposure to that art. We were successful in securing grant funding for a two-week summer program for which art teachers from Russia and China would come to Mahomet and provide instruction in the traditional art of their respective cultures. Visa difficulties prevented the Chinese artist from participating, but through the guidance and expertise of Alexei Altonen and Oxana Ustinova of The American Home, Anastasia easily obtained a visa and arrived in Illinois for her two-week stay in June.

Classes focused on traditional art such as matryoshka dolls, folk art embroidery, and painting techniques for Gzhel-style pottery and Khokhloma serving ware. Each style was introduced through an explanation of its origins, purposes, and artistic techniques. Anastasia also explained to the older students how recent changes in Russia have begun to alter traditional art. She cited the example of how, until the increased effort to sell to foreign tourists in the late 1980's, matryoshka dolls were produced in a few very distinct styles that included reds, yellows, black, and glazed natural wood colors which were used for painting traditional maidens dressed in scarves and flowered blouses and skirts. She explained that in recent years the traditional doll themes have given way to representations of fancily dressed figures, politicians, and even Western sports stars, hastily painted for the tourist trade.

In part because Americans have fewer traditional folk art themes than Europeans, students found experimenting with Russian folk art to be a rewarding experience. Students ranged in age from nine to fifteen, and came from Mahomet, Champaign, and Urbana. Five of the students were originally from Russia, and came to the classes seeking to learn more about the art of their culture of origin.

Anastasia also gave a presentation as a part of a curriculum workshop sponsored by the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center at the University of Illinois. This is a six-day program held each summer in which Social Studies and Art teachers from all over the U.S. gather to develop ideas for incorporating Russian history and culture into their curriculum. Her presentation focused on how traditional art is being taught in Russia today, but also included explanations of the origins of various forms of folk art. Teachers showed great interest in her presentation. However, as one might expect from a group of Social Studies teachers, one of the first questions was not about art, but rather, what she thought of Putin.

A four-day stay with watercolor artist Charlotte Neismith Brady and trips to Chicago and Indianapolis rounded out Anastasia's American visit. She toured the Eiteljorg Museum of Western and Native American Art in Indianapolis, where exhibits ranging from Native American ceremonial objects to works by Georgia O'Keef and C.M. Russell were on display. Brady is a well-known Midwestern artist whose work has been displayed throughout the U.S. and in Italy. She is also a former art teacher in the Mahomet-Seymour school system.

The Bridging Cultures program was a success, with those participating expressing satisfaction over their newly acquired knowledge and skills. Anastasia did an outstanding job of condensing information into the time allowed for each session, so students could get the most out of their experience. Through her efforts, Russian art now means far more to these students than just pictures in books. Anastasia's contribution to cultural instruction will continue through the large collection of instructional resources she left with the Mahomet-Seymour Schools, and through her teacher workshop. It is hoped that she will be able to return and once again share her knowledge with American students and teachers.

THE LIBRARY

Getting the Library Organized

Lena Belova

It has been almost a year since the former teacher's office was turned into a library. The books which were scattered all over the AH were carried to the basement and stacked in huge piles. Anyone who could spend some time in the library helped. Alexei put up the shelves, Olya and Oxana sorted the books into several smaller piles by categories and put them on the shelves, and I started entering the books and videos into a database. In the spring a former AH student, Layla Meshkova, volunteered to help. She managed to devote more time to this project than anyone else and has done a great job.

How a Former Student Got Involved

Layla Meshkova, former AH Student, and high school exchange student

"Hi, I was wondering if I could check out a book from the library. Do you happen to have Huxley's *Brave New World*?"

I don't remember at *whom* I directed this crucial question, but I do remember the weary look on their face and the way they led me downstairs without saying a word. Just as wordlessly they opened the library door and turned the lights on. Oh *dear*, I thought.

"Well, dear, you can certainly try to find that book. Good luck."

Oh *my*, I thought. How am I supposed to find anything in *here*? This is utter chaos!

The library resembled a book cemetery of sorts. Stacks of hardbacks buried under some more stacks of hardbacks, piles of paperbacks and magazines on the shelves, other random periodicals scattered all over the room, volume after volume of a huge encyclopedia, all seemingly dusty. A lonely tumbleweed tumbling desolately across the floor would have been appropriate. I gaped at the panorama for a moment, turned around and fled.

A couple of days later I got this idea for organizing the library. And that's how it all started, back in April or May—because, I thought, it was most unfortunate that the students could not effectively use the library, especially considering how useful its resources could be if they were all appropriately organized and easy to find.

As it later turned out, I hadn't been the first person who had found the situation unfortunate. Lena Belova had already created a special database for the books and started entering the data into it; but as she could not devote much of her time to the library the process was moving slowly. Not that I have been able to dedicate all that much time to it myself, but I'd say things are moving a bit more quickly now. I've gone through more than a thousand books and there are some 500 left. Once all the information is in the database I will start putting the books in alphabetical order by subject matter.

Soon the students will have access to the Oxford Junior Encyclopedia and Encyclopedia Britannica, various TOEFL/GRE/GMAT preparation materials, US history textbooks, English textbooks and Reader's Digest magazines. (An extensive collection! Years 1990 through 2005.) There is a small but growing collection of classic novels by the most prominent English and American authors of the 19th and the 20th centuries. A wide range of popular fiction (drama, horror, suspense, romance, fantasy) is also available, along with a variety of children's books. Those interested in religion, politics, social issues, geography, psychology or medicine and health are likely to find something worthy of their attention as well.

Another Staff Member's View

Olya Solovkina, AH Receptionist

My primary interest has always been classic literature and short stories. It is my firm belief that these are exactly what our students need. Short stories are not long enough to bore even readers who are only at the intermediate level. At the same time, novels by distinguished authors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are praised for their standard literary language. While modern novels tend to contain a lot of slang which complicates reading.

Thanks to recent donations our library can boast of books by acknowledged writers such as John Grisham, Washington Irving, Dorothy Parker, Ogden Nash, Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, (I can make this list very long).

So now each student should be able find in our library something that he or she is interested in. For example, a high school student can find information about American holidays for a report for his English class. A student in the Pedagogical University's Foreign Languages Department can find a thick classic novel to read at home. Girls can make learning fun reading women's magazines in English while boys (and undoubtedly a growing number of girls) can read Popular Mechanics.

Our library can now satisfy many reading tastes and needs. As more books and magazines are donated—or purchased by Ron—we will have even more to offer.

Some info on the video collection –Lena

We now have 33 DVDs and more than 300 video tapes. (Every classroom is now equipped with a "video player," i.e., a VCR, and four classrooms have a DVD player. Apparently we are going to have to get a new big screen TV for the meeting room before we can use a DVD player there—the multi system DVD players available in Vladimir won't work with the 31 inch American RCA TV set we now have.) We've particularly attempted to get DVD copies of the movies we use most often. This includes six movies that are regularly shown in classes. For example, low intermediate students (our A1) watch "Forrest Gump" and the high intermediate (C1) students watch "Dead Poets' Society." (The other movies used regularly are Father of the Bride, Dave, Mrs. Doubtfire, and As Good As It Gets.) Short clips from other movies are shown to illustrate grammar

and/or help the students build their vocabulary. And we continue to show complete movies on Saturdays.

We just began experimenting with the Berenstain Bears series of videos. The students have responded very positively. Contributions to this collection will be most welcome—as will as contributions of other videos. (Please contact us for a complete list of what we already have.)

ASSISTANCE TO OTHER PROJECTS

A Home Away from Home – The American Home

Norm Manzer

You never know who you will meet in an airport, but sometimes it is like finding a gold mine.

Flashback to two or three years ago, and I find myself in Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport awaiting a return flight to the U.S. We had just finished our third year of hosting a summer camp in the Vladimir Region for 100 teens from orphanages in that area. After 'being up' for two weeks to entertain the kids, our team of 18 was ready to get some sleep. One of our adult team members said, "Norm, come over here. This man heads up the American Home in Vladimir." Ron and I met face-to-face for the first and only time.

I had been going to Russia since 1992 and had become very involved in working with orphans through my Rotary club and then through our Grace Episcopal Church here in St Helena, California. It was about my 18th trip to Russia over that time period, but I had not heard of Ron's American Home. Such a well kept secret.

Ron and I exchanged some emails, and just by chance I let him know about our intent to set up a transitional home in Vladimir for orphanage "graduates". We had worked with these kids at the summer camps over the years and had come to realize the dismal prospects that were ahead of them once they were forced to leave the orphanage at age 16, or "graduate," as it is called.

Ron immediately told me about what the American Home had gone through to get established and counseled us on how to dodge the problems that could lie ahead. He even gave us a referral to the AH's legal counsel who most generously donated her services to our efforts to purchase a home.

Things did not go well in this effort to buy an apartment. In spite of the guidance we received from the AH staff and our 12 years of experience in Russia, we were not prepared for all of the details and "cultural pitfalls." Nonetheless, as I tried to maneuver through the maze of bureaucracy, I was able to retreat to the AH for solace. I likened it to a nation's embassy in a foreign land. It was a retreat from everything around me. It was like I had found my home away from home. The combination of the assistance by the

AH staff and the ambiance of the American environment made it possible for me to maintain my sanity.

It turned out that we walked away from the impending purchase, and I left Russia feeling defeated. Perhaps I would never return again.

Soon thereafter, our church contacted Children's Hope Chest out of Colorado, and found out that they were trying to do the same thing that we were trying to do – except they already had an office and personnel on-site in Vladimir and could match our funds to allow for the purchase of two homes instead of just one. Here we are one year later and both homes (one in Pokrov and one in Vladimir) are up and running. One is for boys and the other for girls.

Without the moral support and advice of the AH staff, especially Valentina Spiridonova's legal counsel and Ron's practical advice, we could have easily made a mistake and gotten in over our heads

Thank you Ron Pope and the American Home staff for what you have done to help make our dream become a reality. Bless you all.

Some Additional Assistance

Ron

A faculty member in the Illinois State University Mennonite College of Nursing, Wendy Woith, needed some help getting a Russian visa for the little more than a month that she estimated she would need to collect data for her doctoral dissertation on the treatment of TB in the Vladimir region. She had taken a readings course on Russian culture from me about a year previously, and I offered the assistance of the AH with the visa. Thanks to some expedited processing, she got the visa in time. In turn she agreed to give a presentation at the AH on a topic to be chosen.

In response to articles I had been reading on the rapid spread of HIV and related matters, I suggested "Sex Education in the U.S." It is widely acknowledged that a major part of the HIV and other sexually transmitted disease problems in Russia, along with unwanted pregnancies, is a basic lack of accurate knowledge on the part of young people.

Another ISU faculty member from the Department of Sociology provided a desk copy of a "human sexuality" textbook that Wendy was able to use as a basis for her presentation.

About 30 Vladimir area educators and counselors attended the talk. There were reportedly plenty of questions. Hopefully the participants will be encouraged to "challenge" the Russian tradition of not discussing sexual issues in the schools. It's clearly better to learn about the issues involved from knowledgeable adults than to "learn" about sex only from poorly informed peers.

Wendy also did an evaluation of the needs of the Children's Trauma Hospital which treats the most severe injury cases in the region.

In addition to working with "graduate" orphans, Norm Manzer (see above) wants to try to do something to help this hospital to provide better quality care. According to Wendy, they are doing an excellent job with what they have, but they lack some basic equipment—which they don't currently have the budget to purchase. Norm has promised to do his best to raise at least some of the funds that are needed. (I'll be happy to put anyone interested in helping in touch with Norm.)

We were also able to help a couple who had run into problems trying to adopt two older children—a 12 year old boy and his 9 year old sister. After overcoming a number of obstacles, they were able to complete the adoption—and they were very grateful for the assistance provided by the AH.

Among other relatively small examples, we arranged for the fall tour group to present 8 bicycles and tricycles to the Karl Lebkenkht orphanage, and we are arranging to get some damage repaired that was done by thoughtless vandals to the playground equipment we were able to get donated to the orphanage in 1993. (A \$200 donation to help with the repair of the playground equipment has already been received....)

And we donated some fanciful children's furniture to the boarding school for children whose mothers are serving time in the women's colony near Vladimir. A substantial number of Russian organizations and individuals also made donations. Prior to the contributions, which were unveiled on "Children's Day," the school had almost nothing for the kids to play with—or eat off of. Thanks to the donors' generosity, the school is now very well equipped.

ALUMNI NOTES

Ann Mansolino, 2004-March 2005

NOTE: Ann had two run-ins with the militia last year. They claimed that she was "acting suspiciously" in both cases and that she fit the description of a potential terrorist from the Caucasus. See the comments in the previous newsletter.

In response to Ann's problems, we met with the head of the Vladimir militia, and the issue was discussed with other law enforcement authorities in June. The militia's "official position" is that the officer who questioned Ann the second time did not, as alleged, in any way mistreat her. We are not aware of anyone who in fact believes this "official position." But, having admitted no wrong, the head of the militia offered to provide all future teachers with a letter from him certifying that they work at the American Home. In short, this year's AH teachers, who have all been given this letter, shouldn't be hassled by the local militia.

Ann is currently teaching photography and writing in Singapore.

Ann's comments:

I miss a lot about Russia, and am grateful to have had the opportunity to be there, teach there, live there, despite the way everything ultimately ended for me with the militia. I have come to appreciate that more in the time that has passed since I left, I think. There's something undeniably and perpetually fascinating about Russia and its culture and people. The country is full of contradictions and frustrations, but very alive and full of feeling and intensity. Singapore, by contrast, is stiflingly dull: no emotion, no feeling, no sense of humanity. I feel the lack of this more keenly having come from Russia recently. Many people prefer Singapore, I know: it's clean and safe and efficient and prosperous. But that squeaky-clean order comes at a price: governmental micro-managed control of people's behavior is extreme, and the mindset of complacency and conformity that come with it are difficult for me to deal with. I miss the passion and intensity of the Russians. And I miss teaching ESL; I really did enjoy it. I will get what I can from this experience in Singapore; I am grateful for the job, and know that I can save up money by working here that will provide me with options to go elsewhere in the future. That may include a return to Russia at a later time; we'll see....

Glad to hear you've got a good group of teachers. I hope all goes well this year at the AH. I miss the students there too: they're much more motivated and eager to learn than the students in Singapore. The students here are very nice and well-behaved but don't care much or try hard. I had a lot of students at the AH who were really internally driven to learn and wanted to improve their lives through education and English.

Karen Kohn, 2000-01

I am still living in Philadelphia and recently began working at Arcadia University, where I am the Social Sciences Reference Librarian. Unfortunately, there's no Russian department here, but I am enjoying the job and have been practicing Russian with a group of people in the city. A former student of mine from the American Home has been in the U.S. for the summer, and I am looking forward to seeing her in October before she heads back to Vladimir. By now I've lost touch with all the teachers I worked with in Vladimir, but I would love to hear from any of you. **karenkohn00@hotmail.com**

Jeremy Wolfe, Spring and Summer 2002 (Jeremy replaced Anna Babel who had been hired for the fall term so that we could experiment with reducing the teaching load. Anna went into the Peace Corps that spring. See Alumni Notes in issue No. 7.)

I graduated from the University of South Carolina in May 2005—with an outstanding graduate award. (See <http://uscnews.sc.edu/awar099.html> or http://www.sc.edu/usctimes/articles/2005-04/sullivan_swanger.html.) I'm currently working in Washington, DC at the US Civilian Research and Development Foundation. I'm involved in science and technology development in Eurasia. This has

included recent training programs in Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Georgia. I will begin a graduate program in Security Studies at Georgetown University next fall.

Meghan Lynch, 2003-04 and **Jonathan White**, 2002-03 and Spring 2004 (Replaced a teacher who became ill.)

Jonathan and I are living in Washington, DC for the time being. Jonathan is teaching English at a local school, and I am working at an international non-governmental organization doing a little of everything. We are both eying graduate school and hoping to make our way back to Russia and Vladimir within the next year.