



# Tajikistan School Connectivity Project

## NEWS

Issue #17, May 2005

The Tajikistan School Connectivity Project for Central Asia has established 24 Internet Learning Centers (ILCs) in secondary schools across Tajikistan. The program's main goal is to increase global dialogue and educational opportunities by installing modern computer equipment with Internet access in schools, as well as developing training and learning projects for teachers and students.

**Tajikistan School Connectivity Project activities include:**

- teacher training on using computers and the Internet in classroom teaching
- US school partnerships on civic education projects and teacher exchange
- public access and programs for community members and disadvantaged groups
- development of sustainable practices for schools and communities

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Garth Willis, Tajikistan Connectivity Program Director. After 10 years in Central Asia he looks exactly the same as the people, to whom he gave a chance to see the world and to be seen by the world!  
... ok, if you can't guess he is second from the right.



### 18 months of Connectivity

"What an amazing 18 months it has been. I arrived to Tajikistan with a simple task, set up internet learning centers (ILC's) in schools across Tajikistan in regions where there has never been internet before. Then the task was to develop a system for training staff, teachers, and students to use internet for educational activities, and finally to get the community to use the ILC and be involved in the daily operation of the ILC. Simple right? Well, looking back it was simple, but only because of the amazing staff at the main office, the dedication of the staff at all of the internet learning centers, the enthusiasm of the youth that participated in our programs, and the unending support of the US State Department and Anna Mussman.

A year ago at the internet centers pupils had perhaps heard of internet, but did not know how to use it, or of the potentials it offers. Now a year and a half later these same pupils are participating in internet forums, writing to other pupils in the US, preparing and sending presentations, and finding new friends via the internet.

Many people I know were skeptics at the start of this project, saying it might be better to give basic supplies to schools. We have proven that a good mix of training, enthusiasm, education programs, and a team effort can bring great results. I hope that this project is just a beginning and that in future years Tajikistan can use technology to overcome the difficulties to development posed by its physical isolation, and mountainous terrain. Our program has led the way and I am excited for the future of Connectivity.

My personal news is that after 10 years in Central Asia I am heading to the University of Minnesota to start a PhD program in international educational development. Fortunately my topic is the development in internet for education in the mountainous regions of Central Asia – so I am sure to be back. I am looking forward to a long cooperation with RI-SOL, the State Department, and with all of the people that have been so good to me during my stay in Tajikistan. Take care everybody – and see you online!"

## Student Action Committees Making Differences in Their Community

The first Student Action Committee (SAC) was opened in 2000 with the initiation of IFES in Khujand School #4. At this moment there are 19 SAC's all around Tajikistan based in Connectivity schools.

Student Action Committee (SAC) is a group of senior students who independently define and resolve vital problems of their community. Most of them have already implemented a number of projects successfully.

For example: This year the SAC's in Tajikistan for the first time celebrated Global Youth Service Day on April. Preparation for that event started from the first days of April. In order to introduce the project groups and members of SAC's to this event special trainings were held, where important moments of this GYSD event were discussed. The first step was preparation of volunteers. Students prepared a work plan to include all details, type and place of activity, date and time, equipment, security measures and other issues. On Global Youth Service Day, project group and SAC's made a lot of contribution to their community. They planted a lot of trees, cleaned parks, visited orphanages, lead the seminars at schools and visited kindergartens. Such work brings great benefit to the community, and shows others the importance of volunteering.

Thanks to the SAC's activities and their contribution for the community, other people can watch them and act the same way, helping people and the nature around them. We will try to keep the work up and do more other useful projects involving more volunteers, this way everybody can play a big role in the prosperity of our country!!!



SAC members from Sarband School #1 got a 'Thank you' letter for their accomplishments in this passing year



## Games and Recreation - as the Way of Crosscultural Understanding

Games! A great activity for spring – Footbag Games was a great chance to get outside and have fun for Connectivity students. Youth in different countries around the world play footbag, a game where you kick a small ball without letting it touch the ground. Through footbag we can connect with the ancient cultures of China and with modern-day Americans and Tajikistanis.

Many young people like to play footbag or hacky sack (US), lyanga or chika (Tajikistan), takraw in Thailand, jegi in Korea, and temari/kemari in Japan. With almost the same concept and rules, but with different design, this game to some degree reflects how every culture is special and by creating and playing footbags our students dipped into the different cultures and saw its values.

This lesson was designed to teach students to discover information about the universality, the history, and the uses of games, to teach students how to build and play a footbag and *Tajikistani Lyanga*. Students in America were asked to build lyangas and Tajikistani students - footbags. When the schools completed their footbag, they photographed them and send the photographs to their partner schools.

When young people learn about games, they naturally want to play it themselves. This lesson culminated by playing footbags (in Tajikistan) and lyanga (in the US) this experience brought more cross cultural understanding and cultural values of two different cultures – the US and Tajikistani. Please, visit our website here: [http://www.connect-tajikistan.org/en/footbag\\_web.html](http://www.connect-tajikistan.org/en/footbag_web.html) to see our presentations and play with us!



Connectivity student - Sharipova Muhabbat from 10th grade showing her class-mates a first-class footbag game. Gulyakandoz

## 'Tajikistan Connectivity Students Payed Tribute to the World War II Veterans'

One of the most remarkable and bright events in the history of the Connectivity project was the 60th anniversary of Victory Day. 60 years have passed since the world community conjointly won in the war against fascism, and Soviet people including Tajik citizens played an important role in this war. More than 260 thousand people from such a small republic as Tajikistan participated in World War II, and 90 thousand of them never came back. On this day we tender our sincere gratitude to them and to our grandparents, parents, sisters and brothers who participated in that war.

Our schools did not stay indifferent to this significant event. On the 6th of May students from all our ILCs together with their friends from Connectivity Project for Uzbekistan had an online forum. This forum was devoted to veterans from neighboring families, villages and cities of our country who were struggling for peace in our land.

One hour before the forum students had a meeting with veterans from their region. Each ILC invited 1-3 veterans who kindly accepted the invitation to meet with young people. Unfortunately, not all of the veterans were able to come given that they are very old people and some of them are sick. But students came to see and congratulate those veterans at their home.

During the meeting veterans told the students about war, courage and fearlessness of people at that difficult time, about heroes of World War II. One of the veterans from Konibodom a woman Mariya Ivashenko has brought to the school a piece of bread that she has carefully kept since war. This piece of bread was a memory about her life during war.

Students in their turn congratulated veterans, sang songs of war time and read poems for them. At the end of the meeting on behalf of RI-SOL students gave small presents to the veterans.

At 2:00 pm the forum began. Each center had a lot of things to say about their war veterans and at the same time learn about the others. We have created a special web page <http://www.connect.tj/vov/> for veterans with their photos so that veterans from other cities or villages could get acquainted with each other or find their old friends.

According to statistics this was the most active forum over the course of Connectivity Project in Tajikistan. There were 1624 views and 184 posts that were posed within 2 hours of the forum.

Students have learnt lots of new things at this forum - about veterans from all over Tajikistan: Sughd, GBAO, Khatlon and RRS. And this is a great example of how Internet and computers are integrated into teaching and learning process at schools.



3rd grade students singing songs for World War II veterans. School #4, Khujand



Connectivity students from Gissar visited their veteran - Munira Khasanova at home



Veterans from Kanibadam telling the students about World War II

### Afghan Students Connect to International Peers

Students from two schools in Kabul experienced their very first online global activity at the end of April as they shared traditional stories from their culture with students in Bangladesh and Jordan. Using the Internet Learning Centers (ILCs) set up by RI-SOL with support from the Hewlett Foundation and the Global Catalyst Foundation, students from girls school Lycee Maryam and boys school Bibi Mehro entered the world wide web to research the stories they learned as children, and more importantly, to share these stories with their international peers.



Students from Lycee Maryam discuss the stories on the online forum. Afghanistan

In April's "Folklore" activity, students from all three countries were asked to think about, research, retell, and share a traditional story from their culture and the values it reflected.

The students, ready with their computer and Internet skills acquired by RI-SOL trainings, were eager to share their unique culture with the Bangladeshi and Jordanian students. PowerPoint presentations of traditional Afghan stories passed on from generation to generation were created and shared with pride. The Afghan students were even more excited to receive stories and learn about the other countries and cultures. After reading each others' presentations and contemplating the morals they aim to teach, students were given the opportunity to "meet" on an online forum and discuss the stories and the cultures they were created from. These new friends were able to connect by communicating via the Internet, and especially, connect by sharing and learning about each others' cultures.

Through more international activities, perhaps all students will be able to learn on a global scale, the same lesson an Afghan father once tried to relay to his seven stubborn sons: "having unity between each other, there is no problem in life we cannot face."

### News from the US

#### US School Recruitment

RI-SOL staff has been pleasantly encouraged by the amount of interest shown towards its Global Citizen and Youth Philanthropy (GCYP) programs. Past participating schools have signed up for another school year of participation, demonstrating their continuing interest and satisfaction with the programs. In addition to past participating schools, RI-SOL would like to welcome aboard the following schools to the 2005-2006 GCYP programs.

*Mountain View Alternative High School*

*Millennium Middle School*

*Davis School of Independent Study*

*Plato Academy*

*College of Staten Island High School for International Studies*

*Henry Foss High School*

*Sam Huston High School*

#### RI-SOL staff attends 2005 Y-Fest Event

On May 10<sup>th</sup>, RI-SOL staff attended San Francisco's Y-Fest. An event focused on celebrating and promoting youth philanthropy and awareness of global and local issues. RI-SOL staff focused its participation on its educational programs in Afghanistan. Students demonstrated great interest and curiosity in the topic, and repeatedly asked how they could get involved. RI-SOL staff met student's questions and interest with a "get involved" action packet, which was distributed widely at the event. The interest and passion students demonstrated throughout the day were inspiring and motivational for all attendees especially for RI-SOL staff.

*The Tajikistan School Connectivity Project for Central Asia is a project of Relief International - Schools Online's Global Citizenship & Youth Philanthropy Program and has been made possible with major funding from the United States State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Global Catalyst Foundation*



Dear Readers,

During these 18 months you were with us, following our every step, by reading our articles and news you were always informed about our activities and plans. Connectivity has grown before your eyes - day by day Connectivity team was moving towards its main goal - to give a chance to the students, teachers, and community members to see the world and to be seen by the world.

Now, 18 months of Connectivity are behind us. Ahead there are new collaborative educational activities with the students from the US, Palestine, Bangladesh, Jordan and Afghanistan and our global Connectivity team will try to make these activities more exciting, interesting, useful and fun!

In July 2005, Connectivity Tajikistan will have a new Program Director and Education Manager. We hope that our international team will help and support new team members - as we always do as a Connectivity Team - Online Community!

Next issue of Tajikistan Connectivity Newsletter will be published in early September 2005 and will tell you about Summer events and next educational year plans.

Thank you, Friends, and don't forget to pass our newsletter around. See you online!

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Editor

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