

# Inside U.S. Embassy Tirana

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## **Green Spaces: Reduce Your Stress and Help the Environment**

Like most working professionals, Assistant Public Affairs Officer Leigh Rieder finds her job stressful at times. One of her favorite ways of dealing with

stress is growing flowers and herbs around her house. But creating such green space was not easy to do upon her arrival in Albania – the soil around her house was poor. The solution? Start a compost pile, in which vegetable matter decomposes over time to become rich soil. It's a convenient way to dispose of vegetable scraps from the kitchen, and it produces chemical-free soil that plants love and that is friendly to the environment. Now Leigh has plenty of flowers for stress reduction, all without using chemical fertilizers that can pollute ground water. For information on compost piles:

<http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/organics/HomeCompost/>

For information on the beneficial effects of green spaces:

<http://www.becausegreenmatters.ca/whygreenmatters/lifestyle.html>



## **DCM Presides at ICITAP Donation**

Deputy Chief of Mission Deborah Jones and the Department of Justice's ICITAP Program Manager, Gary Bullard, officiated at a donation ceremony that benefits the U.S./Albanian joint task force to apprehend fugitives wanted by both countries. The July 28 donation includes a vehicle, computers and office equipment. Interior Minister Bujar Nishani, who also attended, noted that the help of the U.S. through ICITAP functions as an important deterrent to crime and increases the ministry's capacity to strengthen its security forces. The task force has achieved some significant successes with the arrest of two Albanian fugitives wanted in the U.S. and has facilitated information exchange between the two countries. FBI Liaison Danny Harrel and Regional Security Officer Dennis San Miguel also participated in the ceremony.



## **President Obama Launches Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate**

President Obama has made it a top U.S. priority to accelerate our transformation to a clean energy economy and combat climate change and is committed to promoting and implementing clean energy technologies around the world. As a key part of this effort,

President Obama launched the Major Economies Forum (MEF) on Energy and Climate, which convened at the Leaders level in L'Aquila, Italy on July 9, 2009. The MEF brings together 17 developed and developing economies to engage in a meaningful dialogue on clean energy technology. Each country recognizes that climate change poses a clear and present danger requiring an extraordinary global response; the July 9 meeting produced a series of steps to meet this challenge head on, including plans to advance clean energy technology, establish financing mechanisms, and help poorer countries to adapt technologies to local conditions. The 17 participating countries will report action plans by November 15, 2009.



## **Inside the U.S. Embassy in Tirana**

On July 16 PAO Bix Aliu, Political Military Officer Tony Baird, Consul Abby Aronson, and the Ambassador's Executive Assistant Bridget Kissinger were special guests on Albanian Public Television's show dedicated to youth "Zik Zak". Bix talked about Public Affairs Office strategies and projects but also on his impressions of his first year in Albania. Tony

commented his experience as an election monitor in Shkoder and his section's work during Albania's NATO membership. Bridget described her work with the Ambassador's schedule as "challenging and amazing" and praised her Albanian staff for their professional work and efficiency. Abby took the opportunity to explain to the Albanians the work inside the Consular section and the rules regarding the visa procedures. The show host, Ms. Ketrin Gjonçaj, said that she was pleased to have Embassy's senior employees talk casually and openly about their work, as the Albanians are very curious of what happens beyond the Embassy's wall. "We can learn a lot from your work and your democratic values," she said while thanking the Embassy's staff for their participation.



## **USAID Director Featured in Popular Health Magazine, Vitrina Mjekësore**

USAID/Albania Mission Director, Roberta Mahoney, gave an exclusive interview for popular health magazine, Vitrina

Mjekësore, about USAID/Albania's programs that are helping Albanian women learn how to take care of their reproductive health. Coinciding with the launch of USAID's mass-media campaign, Happy Moments, the article discusses the importance of using modern contraceptives to not only protect young women and girls from unplanned pregnancies but also as an important tool to improving the overall health and well-being of young people in Albania. The program is supported by the Ministry of Health and will launch its second phase in the coming months. To read the full interview, please visit: <http://albania.usaid.gov>



### **Dr. Maryruth Coleman: A Strong Partnership Between our Two Peoples**

The July edition of the monthly magazine "Psychology" printed an exclusive interview with Ms. Maryruth Coleman as its cover story. Ambassador Withers was also featured and explained how he and Maryruth met while studying in China and noted his passion for poetry. Ms. Coleman, who shortly after the interview departed Albania for a new position at the State Department in Washington, expressed her views on the country and how she will work on continuing to foster the bilateral relationship and on shortening the distance between her and her husband, Ambassador Withers. "My husband is the shoulder on which I lean," she said. "He always finds ways to understand things." Asked to comment on how her presence helped the Ambassador's work, Ms. Coleman said that "When the partnership between two peoples is strong, than they are more sensible toward the community's needs."

### **I Will Always Treasure the Friendships of the Generous People I Have Met**



PAO's son Bled Aliu was interviewed for the July edition of the children's magazine "Pëllumbat". "We came to Albania a year ago. It was a big change, but I like everything here," he said. Bled talked also about his life in the U.S. Foreign Service, his little sister Tea, his experience in Albania so far, and about his dog, Rocco. "Traveling all over the world has been a beautiful experience for me," Bled commented. "I will always treasure the amazing landscapes and the friendships of humble and generous people I have met."



### **Public Affairs Officer Appears on Talk Show "Shqip"**

On July 13th, PAO Bix Aliu was featured as a special guest on Top Channel's talk show "Shqip," which examined the volunteerism efforts of the Forum of Free Thought. Forum members are alumni of the U.S. Embassy-sponsored International Visitor Leadership Program. Recently, the Forum established the Albanian Corps of Volunteers, which has undertaken a massive environmental clean-up campaign, especially in coastal areas of the country. During the interview, PAO Bix Aliu, a great supporter of this initiative, underlined that volunteerism and citizens' participation are vital for the development of democracy. He added that these environmental initiatives of the volunteers contribute to a clean and healthy environment that benefit the entire community. The U.S. Embassy salutes the Albanian Corps of Volunteers for setting such an excellent example of community mindedness.



### **PAO Featured on Top Radio**

On July 10, PAO Bix Aliu was a special guest on Top Albania Radio's popular radio show "Summer Time," hosted by one of Albania's most popular hosts Arbana Osmani and this year's Big Brother Albania runner-up, Adi Pojana. Bix was asked about his impressions of Albania, from the food to the hospitality. He noted "Albania's youth has made the greatest impression on me. They have cast away the complexes of the past and are equal in every way to their European counterpart. They understand the importance of civic participation and what it means to be global citizens".



### **Gardening as the New Diplomacy?**

When First Lady Michelle Obama accompanied her husband to Russia this week, public interest was more focused on her gardening skills than on her clothes and professional credentials, as had been the case in Western Europe. The weekly magazine Ogonyok ran a cover photo of her working in the White House garden with elementary school children with the headline, "The Queen of the Fields: Michelle Obama and Her Husband Can Overturn Our Understanding of America." The issue included an extensive article on gardening culture in the U.S. In a world plagued by

food shortages, pollution-tainted produce, and debates over who should shoulder the responsibility (and cost) to address climate change, people take notice when the American First Lady tends her own garden



### **Embassy Community Blood Donation Day**

On July 8, the U.S. Embassy, in collaboration with the Albanian Red Cross, organized its biannual "Blood Donation Day." Staff members donated blood in order to supplement levels in Albanian blood banks.. PAO Bix Aliu highlighted in media interviews the importance of this event and said that the Embassy's aim is to surpass the number of donations from previous years. He urged everyone to give blood. Each person who donated was named a "life saver" and received a pin and a red rose as symbolic signs of this charity event.



### **Vera Lesko Named Hero By Secretary Clinton**

On June 23, Embassy grant recipient and Woman of Courage nominee Vera Lesko, of the Vatra Center in Albania, traveled to the U.S. to meet with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton upon the release of the State Department's 2009 Trafficking in Persons Report. Ms. Lesko, a pioneer in the fight against human trafficking in Albania, was recognized as "Trafficking In Persons Hero" by the Secretary of State. After receiving her award Ms. Lesko said, "I felt like crying...12 years and literally my tears and blood have been dedicated to assisting trafficked persons...this [award] represents a crowning achievement."



### **Embassy Celebrates the 233rd Birthday of the United States**

The Ambassador invited over 1000 guests to the Embassy's celebration of the 233rd birthday of the United States on July 2nd. The President of Albania, the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the parliament and many others came to congratulate America on its Independence Day. During his address, the Ambassador noted "The United States has developed a powerful national concept: that there

is strength in our diversity. For this, we have a phrase, E Pluribus Unum: From the many, one. With these words in our hearts, we have in times of war risen in unity to protect our land. In times of peace, we have pulled together for our mutual well-being. And in a time of hope, we have bridged our differences to elect an African-American President of the United States. E Pluribus Unum. From the many, one.”



### **Ambassador Withers: “The New Government Should Belong to All the Albanians”**

On July 3 Ambassador Withers gave an interview to Voice of America, focused on the June 28 elections in Albania. Asked to comment on election standards, Withers said that he was pleased that the voting process was well-regulated but Albanians learned that they should work harder to meet the international standards as any country in the world. The Ambassador highlighted the problems that arose during the electoral process and called for the commissioners and the CEC to work professionally, calmly and with high standards. The Ambassador urged all politicians to work for the country’s best interests. “The new Government should belong to all the Albanians and not to one fraction or another,” he said. Several leading dailies printed the full transcript of the interview and some quotes were the lead story in most TV station’s newscasts.



### **PAO Crowns Miss Shqiperia**

On July 1, PAO Bix Aliu was a special featured guest and jury member at Miss Shqiperia 2009. Bix presented the awards for first and second runner up. The winner and runner-up receive a full four year scholarship to a private university in Tirana. The host introduced Bix as a diplomat who has demonstrated that cultural exchanges are important and transcend borders of language. Miss Shqiperia is a very popular cultural event in the country, dedicated to promoting cultural tourism. The show takes place in famous Albanian archeological sites in order to promote Albanian cultural heritage.