



# Inside U.S. Embassy Tirana

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## WELCOME!



**Ambassador  
John L. Withers II**

Welcome to the first edition of *Inside U.S. Embassy Tirana*. We wanted to bring your attention to some of the recent highlights in U.S./Albanian relations and what we as a mission are doing on the ground for the Albanian people. I personally feel that it is essential for our mission here to reach out to all segments of Albanian society. This electronic letter is just another mechanism by which we will try to keep the Albanian public apprised of our engagement here.

## April Highlights

### **The Information Resource Center is Open to the Public**



The U.S. Embassy Information Resource Center (IRC) is a research and reference service for government officials, journalists, researchers, scholars, and others with a professional interest in the United States. Its areas of expertise include: U.S. politics, society, and culture; U.S. federal and state legislation, laws, and regulations; as well as international relations, security, defense, and stability. The IRC collections include online databases, an up-to-date reference collection, recent U.S. government documents, think tank reports, and access to American periodicals.



On April 23, Political – Military Officer Tony Baird was the guest speaker at Luarasi Faculty of Law.

### **Mission Announces the New Speaker's Bureau Program**

The U.S. Mission in Albania will send an American diplomat to speak to your group, school, college or university to provide the opportunity to hear from an American first-hand on topics of interest. We want to acquaint you with American culture and values and allow you to meet Americans who live and work in Albania. The Embassy Speakers Bureau program offers audiences from all walks of life the opportunity to hear presentations and ask questions about American foreign policies, politics, and cultural life. These talks also provide an opportunity to exchange opinions with the American guest on a topic of mutual interest.



### **Embassy Donates Easter Baskets to Children with Autism**

The U.S. Embassy received a donation of Easter Baskets which was forwarded to the "Dove School" for autistic children. The children sang songs along with big smiles and some hugs. The school staff was most appreciative of the support shown.

### **Ambassador Inaugurates Art in the Embassies Exhibit**

On April 10th, Ambassador Withers and Ms. Maryruth Coleman invited guests to view the "Art in Embassies" collection at the Ambassador's residence. The very enthusiastic crowd, including the First Lady of Albania, viewed the artwork of Albanian-American artists. This was the first time that these artists were displayed as one exhibit.



### **ICITAP Donates First Aid Teaching Aids to the Police Development Center of the Albanian State Police**

On April 14th, Darrel Hart, Director of the Center for Police Development and the U. S. Department of Justice's ICITAP Program in Albania, signed documents to donate first aid training equipment to the State Police. The donations include sets of adult, child, and infant manikins, as well as first aid kits. These training aids will be used at the Center for Police Development to teach CPR and the Patrol Generalist Basic Course.



### Mission Collects Funds for Fallen Police Officers

On April 11th, Darrel Hart, head of the Department of Justice ICITAP police assistance program in Albania, appeared on the popular TV Klan show, *More Love*. Hart talked about funds collected by ICITAP staff that will go to the families of two police officers recently killed in the line of duty in northern Kukës. Hart told the show host, "There is a long tradition in the U.S. of law enforcement members having a feeling of brotherhood and that is why we decided to collect funds for the families."

### Embassy Supports Role of Women in Politics

On April 15th, Public Affairs Officer Bix Aliu, gave remarks at the launching ceremony of the "Women and Politics" project, funded by the Embassy's Democracy Commission Small Grants Program. The ceremony featured Members of the Parliament Lajla Peraska and Diana Culi. The project, dedicated to increasing women's participation in politics and decision-making, is a collaborative effort between the Women's Network and was established with the support of the NDI program in Albania.



### Public Affairs Officer Featured in Leading Variety Show

PAO Bix Aliu was the special guest of *E Diell*, which aired on April 19th. The popular variety show airs on leading national private broadcaster, Top Channel. Bix responded to a variety of questions, including those regarding his work as the first Albanian-American serving at the U.S. Embassy in Albania, how U.S. foreign policy is translated into action by embassies, and how the Public Affairs Office works to ensure that America is understood. The interview was also printed in full in the April 20th edition of the mass circulation daily, *Shqip*.



### Children of Tirana Celebrate Earth Day 2009



On April 22nd, Public Affairs Officer Bix Aliu and Deputy Mayor of Tirana Albana Dhimitri participated in the inauguration of the exhibition "Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle," an event organized in celebration of Earth Day 2009. The exhibition of children's artwork made with recycled materials is part of a Democracy Commission funded project, implemented by the EDEN Center in cooperation with the Municipality of Tirana. Bix emphasized the importance of environmental education for children and youngsters, as well as the civic responsibility for a clean and healthy environment.

### America Presents: Sean Thomas Dougherty

On April 21-23, as part of the Embassy's "America Presents" program, American Poet Sean Thomas Dougherty completed a whirlwind tour of Albania, reading his work and sharing his experiences with hundreds of students, writers, local poets, and admirers. Sean's visit culminated with a reception held by Ambassador Withers in honor of the playwright and as a tribute to Albanian poetry.



### Embassy Sponsor's Regional Model NATO Conference

Deputy Chief of Mission Stephen Cristina and Public Affairs Officer Bix Aliu participated in the closing ceremony of the first ever Regional Model NATO conference in Albania, held on April 23rd in Tirana. The conference was organized by two local organizations, Balkan Youth Link Albania and MJAFT. University students from the region (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia) came together to take part. Former Prime Minister Pandeli Majko also attended, and noted that communication among youngsters of the region is an important step for a stable and peaceful future.





### **"Miti Zoi Zaka" and "Aleksander Moisiu" High Schools Students Meet America**

On April 24th, students from "Miti Zoi Zaka" and "Aleksander Moisiu" High Schools in Kavaja and Divjakë became the latest to visit the Embassy as part of the "Meet America" program. The students had a chance to learn more about the Information Resource Center and its services as well as chat in person with Public Affairs Officer Bix Aliu and Consul Officer Abby Aronson. In addition, the students were honored to meet Ambassador John Withers, who talked to them about how much he appreciates Albanian people, the difficult road toward democracy, and the change that youngsters can bring to the country. Ambassador Withers answered questions from the students regarding the Obama presidency and the recent entry of Albania into NATO, considering both tremendous achievements for each country.

### **Embassy Supports First-Ever Breast Cancer Walk**

On April 26th, Ambassador Withers was the main speaker at the first ever "Breast Cancer Awareness Walk" in Albania. The event was organized by the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) with the support of the Public Affairs Office, Ministry of Health, Institute of Public Health, and the Municipality of Tirana. The event featured Speaker of the Parliament Jozefina Topalli, First Lady Teuta Topi, Mayor of Tirana Edi Rama, a representative of YWCA, a survivor, and a well-known medical doctor in the field. Ambassador Withers emphasized that "We cannot allow this illness to continue to spread and take the lives of our mothers, wives, and sisters." Hundreds of women, youngsters, students, professors, doctors, members of parliament, and artists joined the walk. Ultimately, the event turned out to be a very enthusiastic and informative activity with organizers distributing promotional and educational materials to the participants under the slogan "Breast cancer - Early detection, the best protection." The walk also generated very positive print and broadcast media coverage with many noting how the "Breast Cancer Event United Politics."



### **Embassy Launches Facebook Page: Become a Fan!**



U.S. Embassy Tirana announces the launch of its facebook page. New media and social networking are integral components of public outreach initiatives. This page will bring our activities to a broader audience while giving fans of our facebook page greater access to Embassy events, announcements, and forums. The U.S. page features a host of material, including: embassy contact information, events, announcements, activity updates, as well as great videos and pictures. You can find the Embassy facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Tirana-Albania/US-Embassy-Tirana/74591195837>. Become a fan today!

### **Historical Time in the Development of Albania's Democracy**

The International Consortium – a group that includes Embassies, international missions and NGOs that offer concerted development assistance in the area of law enforcement and rule of law in Albania – met for their annual plenary session on April 28th. At the session, DCM Steve Cristina highlighted that by achieving the benchmark of NATO membership, Albania “has increased both its accountability and responsibility to democratic principles and ideals” and that foremost among these is “a fully functioning rule of law arena with the independent institutions of the police, prosecutors, judges, and the courts.” Cristina also congratulated Albania's progress so far, while pointing out that “another significant and historic event is just ahead of us – the upcoming elections set for June 28th.”



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