

GLOBAL YOUTH SERVICE DAY 2010 CONFERENCE

To celebrate Global Youth Service Day, A-SMYLE and SYLP (Serbia Youth Leadership Program) alumni met in Budva, Montenegro to learn about tolerance and conflict resolution, as well as strengthen the ties between their alumni networks and discuss past and future actions. Two representatives of the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade also attended: Public Affairs Officer Conrad Turner and Cultural Affairs Assistant Tijana Hrkalovic.

Forty-two A-SMYLE alumni and nine SYLP alumni participated in the three day conference. Pamela Creed, a current English Language Fellow in Belgrade, conducted a full-day training on conflict resolution and mediation, including conflict styles and conflict as a transformative process. Snezana Baclija, a trainer with the Youth Dialogue Program in Novi Sad, conducted a full-day training on tolerance and multiculturalism, including the topics of identity, stereotypes, tolerance, and living in a multi-cultural society. Mr. Turner took several opportunities during the program to discuss leadership, the importance of community activism, diplomacy, and the alumni's potential to have a significant impact on their communities and countries. Three representatives from the U.S. Embassy in Podgorica—Deputy Chief of Mission Bennett Lowenthal, Public Affairs Officer Alexander Titolo, and Public Affairs Outreach Assistant Jelena Vojnic—visited the conference to address the students, learn what they have been up to. All in all the conference was energizing, inspiring, and informative for the participants.

On the last day, the alumni played kickball in preparation of a charity kickball tournament planned for this summer in Belgrade, which will again bring together the A-SMYLE and SYLP programs. Participants were excited for the opportunity to play together and about the prospect of using this American cultural activity to bring attention to causes in their own communities.

All conference participants are active in their communities, having participated in at least one action in the past year. Many have organized actions and are active members of the Think Big Team, the recently-registered alumni-led NGO. The conference was organized and funded by American Councils for International Education.



above: alumni participate in an activity on tolerance



above:: participants listen during a session on mediation



left: Mr. Turner discusses an action with an A-SMYLE alumna.