

## Azerbaijani Alumni Association Reaches the Regions with Nation-wide Initiative

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BAKU, Azerbaijan -- Although the [U.S.-Educated Azerbaijani Alumni Association \(AAA\)](#) boasts over 750 active members and hosts multiple events every week, AAA continues to seek new opportunities to realize their association's core goals of increasing the role of alumni in the economic, political and cultural development of Azerbaijan. Recognizing the concentration of alumni in Baku, due to the availability of well-paying jobs and academic resources in the capital, and considering that most alumni from around the country who now reside in Baku rarely return to the country's regions, AAA launched a new initiative to better ensure the benefits and effects of the alumni association reach all the corners of Azerbaijan.

The new initiative, "**Reach the Regions**," launched in June, 2008, helps AAA reach its goals by uniting alumni in cooperation, strengthening networking skill, assisting alumni in professional development and supporting them in managing social issues that affect them, and ensures that these tasks are fulfilled, not only in Baku, but in all the regions of Azerbaijan. The short-term goal of the initiative is to augment capacity and community building in the regions of the country by expanding AAA's programs beyond Baku.

Through the "Reach the Regions" initiative, with technical and financial assistance from AAA, alumni of various exchange programs have designed and implemented a range of trainings and workshops, as well as activities to inform students about study abroad opportunities and exchange programs.

In June, 2008, [Muskie](#) alumnus and Woodrow Wilson Research Center Fellow, Chingiz Mamedov, conducted a lecture on "Nation Building in Azerbaijan" in Ganja, in western Azerbaijan. The lecture was based on the research Mamedov had conducted at the [Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars](#) in Washington, D.C. during his exchange. Mamedov used this opportunity to inform the audience about his own research, AAA and the alumni association's scope of activities, and, most importantly, about the Woodrow Wilson Center and different research opportunities that could be pursued in the U.S.

Another successful event was conducted by [Teaching Excellence and Achievement \(TEA\)](#) alumna [Aytekin Aliyeva](#). Aliyeva carried out two practical training sessions in Lankaran, in southern Azerbaijan, on time management and presentation skills.

Alumni of "[Youth Leadership on Free Expression](#)" program, Kamran Ismayilov and Mehdi Eyvazli, organized a two-day seminar in Sheki, in northern



Students in Ganja participate in a discussion.



Muskie alumnus delivers an engaging lecture in Ganja.



Young people in Sheki gather to learn about human rights and youth leadership.

Azerbaijan, in September, 2008, on youth leadership and human rights. The seminar aimed at promoting human rights and leadership endeavors among youth in a region that Azerbaijanis have historically viewed as the vanguard of freedom and independence of the country.

Also in Sheki, Geysar Gurbanov, a 2006-06 [UGRAD](#) alumnus and vice-chairman of the AAA Board, organized a workshop with fellow alumna Fidan Aliyeva on how to write resumes and cover letters in October, 2008.

Community Connections alumnus Babek Mammadov, conducted a survey and a follow-up seminar in Mingechevir with close assistance from members of local NGOs MIDEO, Youth Education Center, and "Democracy Learning" Public Association. The two-day public awareness campaign aimed at spreading information about exchange programs such as [FLEX](#), UGRAD, Muskie, TEA, and Community Connections, and contributing to the increase of applicants to these programs from Mingechevir.

With alumni organizing a number of activities across the country, "Reach the Regions" has successfully addresses various pressing social issues in the regions and AAA plans to continue the program pending continued funding. Some important topics such as the government's program for diabetic patients and the country's education System are just a few of the areas that AAA will be focusing on in its outreach in the coming months in regions throughout Azerbaijan.



AAA's "Reach the Regions" initiative has resulted in numerous activities throughout Azerbaijan.