



...Culture, arts, & heritage of Azerbaijan & the Caucasus

Azerbaijani Culture Touches Virginia Teens at Heritage Party

For Immediate Release

Contact: Kelsey King

kelsey@KarabakhFoundation.org

[202-457-1450](tel:202-457-1450)

Washington, D.C. February 13, 2012—Nearly 150 Virginia public school (middle school) students, parents, faculty, and staff experienced the joys of Azerbaijani culture amid a celebration of family heritage at the school. A feature of the National Parent-Teacher Association's (PTA's) Take Your Family to School Week,* the Heritage Party at Longfellow Middle School in Falls Church, Virginia, benefited by the involvement of the Karabakh Foundation.

Take Your Family to School Week Grant Secured by Foundation Executive Director

The program began with a presentation of a huge mock check by Lakeisha Wilson of the AXA Foundation, the organization that sponsored the National PTA's grant in support of the national program Take Your Family to School Week. The check signified a grant secured for the Longfellow Middle School PTA by Karabakh Foundation Executive Director Diana Cohen Altman; Longfellow was one of just 45 schools to receive the grant out of the 233 that applied.



Longfellow Principal Carole Kihm addressed attendees, citing the fact that 96 different countries, not to mention a vast diversity of ethnic heritages, were represented at Longfellow. Principal Kihm underscored the role of the PTA in bringing families together and in connecting the community with the school.

Heritage Party

Immediately after the presentation, families sampled foods from several continents in a potluck extravaganza. “Dish description cards” focused in on the range of heritage backgrounds represented and dramatized the diversity aspect of the evening. Azerbaijani costumes and materials from the Karabakh Foundation remained on display through the evening. Foundation staff interacted throughout the evening with community members and recorded interviews and performances.



Azerbaijani dancing provided one of the highlights of the evening. The Karabakh Foundation Dancers, made up of volunteers Ikram Celil and Delia Akhmedova, first delighted the audience with two performances of the *lezginka* dance. The grand finale came when attendees were invited onto the stage to learn Azerbaijani dancing from the Karabakh Foundation Dancers. Some 30 parents and students from all backgrounds learned the graceful basic moves of Azerbaijani dances.



Web Heritage Corner, to Follow

In the next phase of implementing the grant, the Karabakh Foundation is leading the

development of a web-based Heritage Corner for the school. The Corner, which will be geared toward the Longfellow Middle School community but accessible to all, will spotlight diversity resources and programs. Ultimately the Corner permits the school community—and others—to draw upon organizations such as the Karabakh Foundation that seek to build bridges of understanding between cultures and peoples.

Foundation Extending the Impact of Take Your Family to School Week

The Karabakh Foundation has taken the initiative to share the Take Your Family to School Week implementation, along with some supplemental suggested programming, with public school administrators throughout the United States. The Foundation's Resource Packet for the U.S. administrators includes a heritage party program plan, a compendium of cultural-diversity resources, and a plan for incorporating educational materials about Azerbaijan and the Caucasus into school programs.

The Take Your Family to School Week full program synthesizes many of the Foundation's goals by connecting U.S. students, parents, educators, and school officials with a basic understanding of Azerbaijan.

Fairfax County, Virginia

Longfellow Middle School is located in Fairfax County, Virginia, a suburb of Washington, D.C. The county is home to numerous diplomats, U.S. government officials, and others engaged in the U.S. capital's international community.

About the Karabakh Foundation

The Karabakh Foundation is a U.S. 501(c)(3) cultural charity foundation based in Washington, D.C., that seeks to increase awareness and understanding in the United States of the cultural heritage and traditions of the country of Azerbaijan, the Caucasus area, and the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. While coalescing significant artistic and scholarly talent, the Foundation is nurturing a new generation of artists and scholars toward important accomplishments. The Foundation serves as a dynamic facilitator and clearinghouse raising the public profile of Azerbaijan, its Karabakh region, and the Caucasus region in general. Main activities include preserving and disseminating cultural content via archival collecting, public programs, publications, exhibitions, speaking forums, international collaborations, scholarly exchange, artistic sponsorship, and related venues.

Foundation support comes primarily from Khazar University, the first private university in Azerbaijan and one of the country's leading institutions of higher learning. Support also comes from the U.S.-based Allaverdy Foundation. Additional information about the Karabakh Foundation may be found at www.KarabakhFoundation.org.

*** About the Take Your Family to School Week Grant**



Longfellow Middle School PTA Receives National Grant for Take Your Family to School Week, February 12-18

Falls Church, Virginia (February 13, 2012) – Longfellow Middle School from Falls Church, Virginia has 1,000 reasons to celebrate [PTA Take Your Family to School Week®](#) (February 12-18).

[National PTA®](#) awarded \$1,000 to Longfellow Middle School, one of only [45 grant recipients nationwide](#), for its efforts to help promote family engagement and support student achievement.

“Take Your Family to School Week embodies PTA’s legacy of building family-school partnerships. We’re proud of Longfellow Middle School for their efforts to ensure that our legacy lives, families are involved and students succeed,” said [Betsy Landers](#), National PTA President. “This special week also reminds us that now more than ever all families, schools and communities need to work together to increase student achievement as U.S. children are behind their counterparts around the world in English and math.”

For the seventh consecutive year, National PTA’s Take Your Family to School Week Grant program expands and enhances family engagement efforts in school across the country. Each grantee demonstrated how they will improve family engagement in their school communities and how their work will support the implementation of PTA’s [National Standards for Family-School Partnerships](#).

The timing of the week—in February—honors the day PTA was founded: February 17, 1897. The activities planned for the week feature a variety of educational themes, including preparing for college, literacy, math and other topics.

PTA’s Take Your Family to School Week is sponsored by the [AXA Foundation](#), the philanthropic arm of [AXA Equitable Life Insurance Company](#), and a Proud National Sponsor of PTA.

About National PTA

National PTA® comprises millions of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business and community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of parent involvement in schools. PTA is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit association that prides itself on being a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities, and a strong advocate for public education. Membership in PTA is open to anyone

who wants to be involved and make a difference for the education, health, and welfare of children and youth.