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U.S. Embassy Oslo - Public Affairs Newsletter

Live! Learn!



Ambassador Whitney with the Embassy Public Affairs staff

Dear Readers,

We here at the U.S. Embassy have started 2009 on an exciting note. Last year was dominated by a thrilling presidential race and now we have a new President! Barack

Obama faces major challenges but has started out with record-level support from the American people. We have been in a period of transition since our previous newsletter and it is exciting now to feel the energy of a new administration. I am very pleased that I will be staying on as Ambassador to Norway until June 20, 2009. This will allow me to continue to work with you to promote US-Norwegian relations for a few more months. I am proud of the work we do here at the embassy and I look forward to serving the new President and his administration.

One of the top priorities in my time as Ambassador has

been promoting educational exchange. Numbers show that the number of Norwegian students at U.S. colleges and universities has increased by 6.1 percent this academic year compared to last year. That's good news, but there is still a lot of work to be done. The Public Affairs Section, with support from the rest of the embassy, is spearheading this effort. Over the past few months, we've held informational seminars for high school advisers in Oslo and Stavanger and hosted events for various alumni groups and high school classes. Another piece of good news is that six U.S. colleges have joined forces to simplify the application process for Norwegian students through a new initiative called the Nordic-American Learning Alliance (NALA). You can read more about all of this and our other activities in the following pages.

Happy reading!

Benson K. Whitney
Ambassador

The Ben Franklin experience continues...

The summer of 2008, the U.S Embassy sent Kenneth Sydhagen (19) from Lørenskog to the U.S. as our participant in the Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellow Summer Institute. During his 4 weeks on the program, he got to know students from both sides of the Atlantic, and this Christmas, three of them, David (U.S.), Laura (Germany) and Adrien (Belgium) came to visit him and experienced a true Norwegian Christmas. Kenneth was the perfect host and showed his guests around in the Oslo area – ice skating and a visit to Vigelandsparken were only two things on the agenda.



Kenneth with friends David (U.S.) and Laura (Germany)

[Read their Christmas greeting](#)

Important deadlines

Fulbright

[2009 Summer Institutes for Outstanding European Students](#)

[2009 Student Science Institute](#)

Deadline: April 15, 2009

Lakselaget

[Scholarship/Internship for women](#)

Deadline: April 15, 2009

American College of Norway

Deadline: May 1, 2009 [for more info](#)

Election frenzy!

For us at the Embassy, and dare we say in Norway as a whole, the 2008 presidential election was the most exciting in decades. The long campaign, fascinating candidates, new methods and technology, high citizen involvement and voter turnout, and finally an historic result with the election of America's first African-American president generated a record number of events, speaking engagements and media appearances. We're almost sad it's over...



Election Night

On election night, November 4, the U.S. Embassy partnered with the American Chamber of Commerce, the Democrats Abroad, the Republicans Abroad and the Monticello Society to organized a large election party at the Grand Hotel in Oslo. Guests were our closest political, business and cultural contacts, representatives from the media, American-Norwegians, and others who had a special interest in the U.S. election, altogether around 1,200 people.

The program for the night was varied, with remarks from Ken Burton from Republicans Abroad, Ole Olsen from Democrats Abroad and Ambassador Whitney. The

Ambassador also had a live digital video chat with the Norwegian Ambassador to the U.S., Wegger Ch. Strømme about his thoughts for the night and the future with a new American president. Entertainment was provided by Smågardistene marching band, Lucky Lips country band, comedian Steven Fletcher and the High Tune Swing Orchestra.

Surprisingly, many managed to stay up all night, until Barack Obama was finally declared the winner at around 5 a.m. A breakfast concluded the long and exciting night, summing up the race and reflecting on future U.S. developments. The president

of Stortinget Thorbjørn Jagland congratulated the American people on the democratic process and the election of the next U.S. president.



U.S. Fulbright Student Ian MacDougall dressed up as Uncle Sam for the occasion.

U.S. Elections expert Dr. James Thurber in Oslo

On September 25 and 26, Dr. James Thurber, a professor and expert on U.S. election campaigns, was invited to Norway as part of the Embassy Speaker Program.

Among other activities, Dr. Thurber spoke at the student seminar "Frokost med Bernt" at the University of Oslo. Notable Norwegian researchers also took part in this seminar, and Dr. Thurber later remarked that this was one of the best seminars he had ever participated in abroad; the other researchers who commented were very knowledgeable, and the students asked excellent questions.



Dr. James Thurber

Inauguration

On January 20, 2009, Barack Obama became the 44th president, and the first African American leader of the United States.



The Embassy celebrated the day by inviting political and cultural contacts to a wine tasting and TV viewing at Ambassador Whitney's residence.

[Read President Obama's blog about his first 100 Days in Office](#)

Find information about the new administration on WhiteHouse.gov and America.gov



Traveling to the U.S.? Register Online NOW!

Beginning January 12th, 2009, all Norwegian citizens must obtain approval through the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) prior to traveling to the United States without a visa under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). The registration has a 2-year validity. **Register on <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/>**

Student Video Diary

Follow the Embassy's Student Video Diary Project!

We have given video cameras to six Norwegian high school and university students who are spending this school year in the U.S.

[Follow the Student Video Diary on our Websites](#)

AND

[Join the 'USastudier' Facebook Group](#) where the Video Diaries will be uploaded

How can YOU interact with the Embassy?

- ◆ [Embassy website](#)
- ◆ [U.S Embassy Oslo on Facebook](#)
- ◆ **Educational Exchange through Facebook: 'USastudier' and 'USA Stories'**
- ◆ **Various USA related questions: osloIRC@state.gov**
- ◆ **Questions about U.S. Educational Exchange: osloEDU@state.gov**

Outreach & Events

The U.S. Embassy engages the Norwegian public in many different ways. Here are some of the events we organized in late 2008 and early 2009:



"Meet America" high school program – with the U.S. election in focus

Throughout the fall of 2008, the Public Affairs Office welcomed several hundred students to the Embassy through the new "Meet America" high school program. The interest in the U.S. election has been enormous, and through interactive sessions at the Embassy, students from various high schools have been able to visit us and learn more about the processes, the hot topics and the candidates of the 2008 election. The "Meet America" Program will continue in 2009, and we encourage high school classes to contact us for more information or to schedule a visit: osloIRC@state.gov. Read more about the Program [here](#).



Lillestrøm VGS has visited several times

U.S. booth at education fairs in Stavanger and Oslo

In January and February, the Embassy organized a booth on U.S. education at education fairs in Stavanger and Oslo. The U.S. information booths were set up and run in cooperation with our partners: the Fulbright Foundation, the Norway America Foundation and the American College of Norway. Hundreds of students stopped by the booths to learn more about educational exchange possibilities in the U.S., and we did our best to advise everybody that was interested. Would you like to receive information about educational exchange seminars and fairs, please contact osloEDU@state.gov.



Ambassador Whitney visits Sunnmøre

Ambassador Whitney visited the north-west coast of Norway on February 11-12, 2009, on his first official trip to the region. The Ambassador participated at Volda University College International Day and at the Career Day at Ålesund University College, and also met with the two Mayors; Ragnhild Aarflot Kalland (Sp) in Volda and Bjørn Tømmerdal (H) in Ålesund. The focus for the trip was educational exchange, but he also spoke to business students on innovation and entrepreneurship, and discussed tourism and the regional fishing industry with local stakeholders.



Ambassador Whitney with cultural advisor Line-Anne Hovdenakk in Volda (photo: Kjell Arne Steinsvik, Møre-Nytt)

New consortium formed to facilitate Norwegian study in the U.S.

On January 14, 2009, Ambassador Whitney hosted a reception in honor of the Nordic American Learning Alliance (NALA). NALA is a consortium of six U.S. colleges and universities with strong ties to Norway which have combined efforts to simplify the college search process to encourage more Norwegian students to come to their schools.

The Embassy looks forward to working closely with NALA on our common goal of encouraging Norwegian students to go to the U.S.

From left: State Secretary in the Department for Education Jens Revold, Ambassador Whitney and Fulbright Director Sonia N. Mykletun.



Read more about Embassy events and news on our website: Norway.usembassy.gov



U.S. University Alumni Initiative

Embassy mentor helps Norwegian students with application process

Rena Levin started volunteering for the embassy as both a speaker and a mentor after moving to Oslo from Arlington, Virginia in September 2008.

With assistance from the Association of Norwegian Students Abroad (ANSA), she was paired with students who wanted help with their application essays for U.S. colleges and universities. After reviewing their drafts, she met with students in person to give feedback. Levin notes that you don't have to be an expert in college admissions to review essay drafts. All you need is good English writing skills and the ability to communicate. "Working with students on their essays was the most meaningful aspect of my volunteer work this fall. The students were very appreciative. I really felt like I was making a difference," she said.

To sign up as a mentor, contact osloEDU@state.gov

U.S. alumni members gather at the Embassy "prep-meeting" for educational exchange initiatives

Late 2008 the Embassy hosted a "prep-meeting" for 60 former Norwegian students at U.S. colleges and universities who have all signed up to be part of our Speaker Bureau and Mentor Program. The goal of these programs is to spark interest and encourage students to study in the U.S., as well as ensuring that perspective students are not overwhelmed with the steps and requirements for applying to U.S. universities.

Renowned communications advisor and University of Wisconsin graduate Nils Marius Apeland spoke on how to give a good presentation using your own student experience, and American culture expert Dr. Gary Weaver from American University in Washington D.C. added a cultural perspective with his talk on American identity. The event concluded with the guests enjoying drinks and home-cooked chili at the embassy's monthly "happy hour". To sign up as a mentor/speaker contact osloEDU@state.gov

Breakfast with heads of U.S. university alumni organizations

On January 13, 2009 the Embassy organized a breakfast for the heads of U.S. universities' alumni chapters in Norway. A priority for the Embassy is to work with these alumni institutions as part of our goal to increase U.S.-Norway student exchange.



The alumni leaders shared their success stories and made plans for future efforts, and the Embassy will continue to work with them in order to encourage student exchange.



Marit Schou Hauger's life as a Fulbrighter



Marit is a Norwegian Fulbright Fellow 2008, and in the coming editions of the newsletter, she will share with us her updates from Harvard University.

"During the semester I have explored several different subjects in my Master of Public Health program.

But equally important, I have also enjoyed a unique international environment. The mix of nationalities and professional background in my class has created a very special atmosphere and classroom discussions. It has been interesting to discover the differences in values and views on health, humanitarian aid and international politics among my fellow classmates.

Sometimes it is quite challenging to break out of the regular bubble of thinking, in particular when the old paradigm is much more comfortable. Nevertheless, I highly appreciate the challenge. I think that awareness of different views and values is critical for communication, and that knowledge of national differences can make it easier to cooperate across borders future."

Contact Us

- for ideas and suggestions
- for alumni inquiries
- for school- and youth activities
- to unsubscribe

osloIRC@state.gov / 21308996

See Embassy Website on Norway.usembassy.gov

See www.USAstudier.no for student guidance

facebook

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