

U.S. Fulbright Graduate Students in Ukraine



Suzahna Poliwska

As an avid urbanite, Suzahna Poliwska has had the good fortune to spend half of her grant in Lviv and the other in Kyiv. In Lviv, she learned about the history of Ukrainian architecture and urban development by attending classes and meeting with professors at the Lviv Polytechnical University's Architecture Department. She was also fortunate enough to learn Lviv's famously beautiful streets with the City Historian, an insightful woman with endless knowledge of every crevice of the city. In Kyiv, under the guidance of Larysa Skoryk, she developed an urban design proposal appropriate for an environmentally sensitive underdeveloped site that is centrally located and deserves higher-density transit-oriented development. Through a closer look at current construction industry trends, planning and land privatization processes, she found real possibilities for encouraging environmentally and socially responsible community design in Kyiv. Suzahna visited other major Ukrainian cities, including Odesa and Kharkiv.

Gregory Adams

Gregory Adams came to Ukraine from the University of Massachusetts where he is a research associate at the Social and Demographic Research Institute and a doctoral candidate. With long-standing interests in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, Gregory gathered data on drug abuse for use in his dissertation. He was affiliated with the National University "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy" and spent most of his time at the Ukrainian Scientific Research Hospital for Social and Judicial Psychiatry, commonly known as the Pavlov Hospital, where he interviewed patients enrolled in the drug rehabilitation program. Gregory used the results of patient interviews to develop and test a survey instrument designed specifically to measure social

correlates of drug addiction in Ukraine. "I was surprised to see how little data had been collected on the social forces affecting drug use here. Many prevention programs have already been established in hopes of curbing the spread of AIDS, but little had been done to understand how the social experiences and circumstances among drug users might differ from those in the west. I believe that the cooperation I received from the Ministry of Health is a reflection of the necessity of this work." Gregory enjoyed speaking with Ukrainian students and faculty alike. He held talks at the Mechnykov Odesa National University, the University of Economics and Law in Dnipropetrovsk, the Humanities University and the Slavonic University in Zaporizhia, the Karamzin National University in Kharkiv;



and the Petro-Mohyla Humanities University in Mykolaiv. "The need for change here is great," Gregory said, "And I haven't met any Ukrainian scholars who disagree on this point. More than anything, I was impressed with the passion with which Ukrainian Fulbright Scholars engaged one another on the problems facing the Ukrainian University. The participatory process itself gives me hope for a more optimistic future of higher education in Ukraine."

Peter Steciuk

Peter Steciuk spent his 2003-2004 Fulbright year at the Ivan Franko Lviv National University. His project was an analysis of the effectiveness of varying levels of Ukrainian Diaspora involvement in non-governmental organizations in Ukraine, which involved working with several Lviv NGOs on a variety of projects. As Peter writes, "The project that stands out in my mind most was a Saint Nicholas event for children from Lviv region internaty (schools for children with disabilities, orphans, and others)... I visited with three NGOs: the Maltese Aid Society, Plast National Scouting Organization of Ukraine, and the Lviv Student Brotherhood.



We helped the children write letters to Saint Nicholas, gathered presents, and assembled a gift package for each child... Afterwards we invited some of the neediest children to Lviv for a weekend... We were able to coordinate fundraisers in the United States to finance the weekend outing, as well as many of the gifts distributed on Saint Nicholas Day." While not working on his Fulbright project, Peter cultivated his nascent acting abilities, taking part in a staged play and participating in a traveling nativity scene ("I played Death — with an American accent"). He also honed his snowboarding skills on the steep slopes of the Carpathians.



Joseph Sywenkyj

Joseph Sywenkyj graduated with Honors with a Bachelor's of Fine Arts Degree in Photography from the New York School of Visual Arts in 2002. He has been pursuing a project titled Verses of Faith and Disease for several years, a photographic story on faith. His intention was to interpret

faith as a form of hope by searching for a person's faith or lack of in the face of illness. In doing so he has repeatedly returned to Ukraine, the land of his ancestors, to photograph people in hospitals, orphanages and homes throughout the country. Sywenkyj spent much of his time in Lviv photographing a story on human trafficking and in Odesa, a port city on the Black Sea. In Odesa, he has been photographing a family he met three years ago. The parents, Sasha and Ira, are both HIV-positive and have six children. Masha, their three-year-old daughter is also HIV-positive (Ukraine has the highest number of cases of HIV/AIDS in Europe with

approximately 1% of the population infected). Sasha and Ira have started a free anti-retroviral treatment program administered by Medecins sans Frontieres (Doctors without Borders). Ira had their sixth child, Genik, in early June of this year and at this point both seem to be doing well. Sywenkyj spends weeks at a time photographing the family almost daily. He has gained the families trust and in turn trusts them. Sywenkyj recently said about this family, "The line between the photographer and his subject matter has been completely blurred. I feel that this is not simply my project anymore, it has changed over time into a collaborative effort between

myself and the family. We simply have come to view each other as friends." Sywenkyj's approach to photographing people in Ukraine has changed since being awarded a Fulbright. Instead of spending only one day photographing in a particular hospital or orphanage in different parts of the country, he has focused on several specific stories. In doing so, he hopes to capture intimate moments of family life over a long period of time. This will be a report that not only raises awareness of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Ukraine, but also gives insight into the lives of the people he photographs.



Orysia Kulick

Orysia Kulick is affiliated with the department of Political Science at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. The Mohylyanka, as it is affectionately called, was an excellent choice for a host research institution both in terms of faculty support and access to students. The level

of political activism among students from the Mohylyanka is high, which prompted her to redirect her research towards the networks that support political activism. In the last three months, one moment in particular was significant for her research - the mayoral by-elections in Mukachevo on April 18. These elections were hailed in the press as a

litmus test for the state of democracy in Ukraine and a precursor to the upcoming presidential elections earmarked for October 31, 2004. As an international observer accredited by the Central Election Commission, Orysia witnessed journalists being barred access to sites and meetings related to the election. There also was harass-

ment of voters and election committee members reportedly by criminal elements, brawls, the physical expulsion of deputies, observers and journalists from polling stations - and ultimately the outright falsification of the election results. On a more positive note, she had already decided to shift the focus of her research to the work of young activists and their presence in Mukachevo substantiated this decision. Collectively, they worked to raise voter consciousness and monitored the conduct of the election campaign, balloting, and the voting process in its entirety. Ultimately, Orysia hopes to have gathered enough material to write her master's thesis and through her research to have made a contribution to a fuller understanding of the way elections function in this critical moment for Ukraine.