

# News



Acting Assistant Secretary for Administration Steven Rodriguez watches Secretary Hillary Clinton cut the ribbon opening the showers.

## Employee Showers Encourage Exercise

A handful of employees, including cyclists, joggers and other exercisers, gathered in the Main State parking garage in March to see Secretary of State Hillary Clinton inaugurate the Department's new employee showers.

The shower project started as a gleam in several eyes. First, Emilie Kao from the Office of International Religious Freedom asked Secretary Clinton at her June 2009 Town Hall meeting for showers, seeing them as a way to encourage biking to work or jogging.

Suggestions also appeared on The Sounding Board. Foreign Affairs officers Ed Fendley and Ivan Weinstein, who bike to work, suggested

that free showers be available to all employees.

Meantime, the Office of Facilities Management began a complimentary Bicycle Loaner Program, the Greening Diplomacy Initiative supported the showers project and the Administration said it hoped 75 percent of federal employees would participate in health and wellness initiatives this year.

"This is such a great improvement," said Budget Officer Tim Carpenter via The Sounding Board. "Small things the Department can do to encourage employee exercise and alternate forms of commuting really go a long way."

# STUDENTS LEARN FROM IRAQI VOTING IN U.S.

The Department's Diplomats in Residence and student campus coordinators assisted with the voting of U.S.-based Iraqis in Iraq's national elections in March. The DIRs organized teams of students as election observers, part of the Department's broader effort to monitor voting in the 16 countries where it was held outside Iraq.

The team's reports were included in election assessments that the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs provided to Department principals, including Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

DIRs are Senior Foreign Service officers posted at 16 U.S. universities who identify and recruit students for Department of State careers. The DIRs in Phoenix, Chicago, Los Angeles and Austin used the Iraqi elections to instruct students they mentor and work

with daily, and used students' reports on the event for discussions about what they might expect from a Department career. DIRs Amy Hyatt, Bill Stewart and Ambassador Maurice Parker accompanied students to the polls in Phoenix, Dallas and Chicago.

Campus coordinators are students and former Department interns who serve as liaisons to the Department at universities lacking DIRs. In California, campus coordinators Ryan Wu and David Diaz served as election observers.

The initiative allowed college students to witness the Iraqi election in real time, including verifying voters' citizenship and monitoring the voting process. The students said they were moved by how important it was for the thousands of Iraqis in the United States to vote to help shape their nation's next government.



Like voters, Iraqi youths display ink-stained fingers.

## New Embassy Shows U.S. Commitment to Burundi



Breaking ground for the embassy compound are, from left, Ambassador Pamela J.H. Slutz, Mayor Evrard Giswaswa and John J. Finnegan, Jr. of the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations.

In the Kigobe section of Bujumbura, the largest foreign construction project in Burundi since the 2005 end of its 12-year civil war got under way in March as ground was broken for a new U.S. embassy compound.

U.S. Ambassador to Burundi Pamela J. H. Slutz joined Bujumbura Mayor Evrard Giswaswa and John J. Finnegan Jr., acting managing director for Operations of the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, in a ceremony where traditional Burundian drummers introduced each speaker. She said the new compound symbolizes the U.S. commitment to engage with Burundians and said the U.S. would be a good neighbor that is concerned with economic growth and the neighborhood's development.

The facility will have several environmentally friendly features, including the ability to capture and recycle water. It will use photovoltaic cells to reduce dependence on locally generated electricity and have low-reflective surfaces and strategic shading to remain naturally cool.



## Consulate's Facebook Page Gains Many Fans

To launch the Facebook page of the U.S. Consulate General in Chennai, the public affairs section's staff spent a day at one of Chennai's biggest malls, getting people to become Facebook fans of the post.

Acting Public Affairs Officer Ragini Gupta said she was impressed with the teamwork, motivation, energy and coordination exhibited by the staff, who had about

a month to plan and execute the launch. The post's audiovisual team stayed up all night twice to make sure that the booth at the mall looked its best and its computers functioned flawlessly.

At the booth, banners featuring photos of film directors, musicians and journalists asked: "I'm a fan, are you?" There was a blog contest, a quiz on the United States organized

by the staff of the American Library and prize drawings for iPods. Student volunteers helped pass out the quiz forms, explain the consulate's goals and drum up excitement. The consul general and several celebrities logged in at the booth to become fans of the post.

At the end of a 12-hour day, more than 500 people had become fans of the Facebook page. Many visitors to the booth were having their first contact with the post.

"The fact that we reached out to Chennaiites on their turf to explain what we do and how they can get involved impressed a lot of people," Gupta said. "We would have signed up more fans but we had only four computers. We turned the curiosity of mall patrons into enthusiasm for becoming a part of our network."

Shortly afterward, the consulate general's Facebook page had 852 fans—and the number was growing. To become a fan, visit [www.facebook.com/chennai.usconsulate](http://www.facebook.com/chennai.usconsulate).

The consulate general's other technology outreach efforts to South Indians include Web chats and webinars, and a Short Message Service that lets Indians text questions to the consulate directly, vote in its polls and provide feedback on events.

Shoppers at a mall in Chennai take time out to become fans of the consulate's Facebook page.



## Web Site Keeps Interns Focused on the Department

Though many have returned to college, the Department's interns, including those overseas, have been keeping in touch with those they met during their internships via a Department-created, Web-based career/social networking site called INTERNational Connections.

The site, <http://careers.state.gov/internconnect>, was launched last year. It initially came from a decision of the Office of Recruitment, Examination and Employment to use networking technology to maintain a connection with Department interns, since most organizations use internship programs as a primary means to hire future talent.

The office used survey data and the positive comments of more than 750 former interns to develop INTERNational Connections, which allows interns and employees to create profiles that can include academic and employment histories, resumes, interests, photos and their regions of residence and employ-

ment. The community has grown in roughly one year to have more than 900 members, most of them interns.

The site provides a professional setting for networking and

recruiting. Unlike the social networking site Facebook, INTERNational Connections is available only to past and present Department interns. The site allows the Department's Diplomats in Residence, outreach specialists, bureau-level intern coordinators and executive directors to develop and maintain relationships with those interested in and qualified for Foreign Service and Civil Service careers.

INTERNational Connections' potential is significant, provided Department employees and interns are aware of its benefits and actively participate in the conversations. By the end of the year, the Office of Recruitment, Examination and Employment hopes departing interns will have bookmarked [careers.state.gov/internconnect](http://careers.state.gov/internconnect) so that their conversations can continue.



Consul General Donna Blair, to the right of the sign, and other employees commemorate their virtual journey.



## Consulate General Lagos Circumnavigates the Globe

In September of last year, the American staff of the U.S. Consulate General in Lagos, Nigeria, began a virtual journey in which they would collectively do enough exercise to carry them 24,901.55 miles—the exact circumference of the earth.

Christine Twining, co-coordinator of the community liaison office, said she launched the project because employees said they were having a hard time finding the motivation to exercise regularly. She tracked the weekly distances achieved by each employee in a wide variety of physical activities. For activities that did not propel them forward over a measurable distance, such as martial arts and

weight lifting, she obtained the equivalent distance travelled by comparing the calories burned with the calories that would be burned by running one mile.

She then placed a world map outside her office that displayed the consulate's progress each week and highlighted male and female mile leaders. As the program progressed, nearly all staff members participated and some began doing other exercises, such as skipping the elevators and using the stairs. A group of women who participated in a charity dance event even had their rehearsals converted into miles.

The consulate reached its goal April 11

and celebrated with a barbeque featuring dishes from around the world. All participants received awards, and special awards were given to the mile leaders.

"The journey around the world definitely motivated me to get off the couch more," said Consular Officer Wesley Mathews, who noted that high walls and steel gates at post can provide excuses not to get out and be active.

The project "got many of us together weekly for basketball, tennis matches, gym workouts and runs around our residential neighborhood," he said. "It brought together the community in a way that will last far beyond the day we circle the globe."

## Corps' Full-Time Responders Reach 100 Mark

Membership in the active component of the Civilian Response Corps has reached the 100 mark. The Civilian Response Corps brings together civilian federal employees who are specially trained and equipped to deploy rapidly to provide reconstruction and stabilization assistance to countries in crisis or emerging from conflict.

The corps leverages expertise and experience from eight federal departments and agencies, including the departments of State, Agriculture, Commerce, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Justice, and the Treasury and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The active members are full-time employees who train for, prepare and staff reconstruction, stabilization and conflict-prevention efforts. They deploy within 48 hours and focus on critical initial interagency functions such as assessment, planning, management, administration,

logistics and resource mobilization.

Supplementing the active members are standby members employed by federal departments and having expertise that can be used in reconstruction and stabilization operations. The standby component, whose members volunteer to deploy on an as-needed basis within 30 days of call-up, now has more than 700 members.

Corps members come from such specialties as planning, operations, management, rule of law, diplomacy and governance, essential services, economic recovery and security. They prepare for deployment months before departure in a program that lasts at least two weeks per year for standby members and eight weeks annually for active members.

More information on the Civilian Response Corps is at [www.CivilianResponseCorps.gov](http://www.CivilianResponseCorps.gov).





At the kick-off event, Ambassador Vilma Martinez urges the embassy to reduce its energy use.

## Buenos Aires Commits to 10 Percent Energy Savings

The U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires aims to reduce energy use in the embassy and staff residences by 10 percent this year. Its Ten in Ten campaign calls on employees to make small daily efforts to reduce energy consumption, such as turning off lights and moderating office temperatures.

The campaign began with a celebration featuring local organic product vendors and information on environment-friendly steps for the home and office. Ambassador Vilma Martinez and Deputy Chief of Mission Tom Kelly each pledged to reduce energy use in the front office and at their homes.

The embassy's "green team," which includes Argentine and U.S. staff volunteers, developed the campaign because the embassy building represents most of the embassy's carbon footprint. The team consulted with a Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations energy audit team to develop the campaign. The management section is working with OBO to replace the embassy's chillers with more energy-efficient models. A white roof that would reflect heat and lower air conditioning needs is also being considered, as are motion-sensor lights.

In the first three months of 2010, electricity use in the embassy and staff residences was down 3.8 percent from the same period in 2009. The green team will publish the campaign's results every three months, recognize "green MVPs" and post the top five residences in terms of energy reduction. Green wardens from each section are now educating their colleagues and ensuring lights and printers in their areas are turned off.

# STATE

MAGAZINE

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