

# UMD Voice



## Andrew Peykoff II: U.S. Corporate Leader With Proud Macedonian Roots



*Jana Lozanoska:  
Another Bucharest?*



*Panayote Dimitras:  
Human Rights Hero Honored  
by UMD in Canada*



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UNITED  
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ОБЕДИНЕТА МАКЕДОНСКА ДИЈАСПОРА

Founded in 2004, United Macedonian Diaspora (UMD) is the leading international non-governmental organization addressing the interests and needs of Macedonians and Macedonian communities throughout the world.

Headquartered in Washington, D.C., UMD has an office in Melbourne, Australia and Toronto, Canada and representatives in Paris, London, Brussels, Vienna, Kiev, St. Petersburg, and Stuttgart.

UMD is a 501 (c) (3) charitable organization.

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## Letter from the President



Dear Reader:

### Season's Greetings!!!

On behalf of the United Macedonian Diaspora, I would like to wish you and your family a very joyful Holiday Season and a Happy New Year! May 2010 bring you and your family much happiness, health, safety, and prosperity!

**I cannot believe this is our 5th issue of UMD Voice!** We cannot be more proud that you are reading this excellent publication. Our team headed by Development Director Stojan Nikolov, Editor Mark Branov and Designer Nick Saveski have again set a higher standard for UMD Voice. Without these dedicated individuals and their hard work this publication would not exist. **Thank you!**

The articles in this issue truly represent the diverse character of the Macedonian Diaspora. So much is happening around us, and the challenge is how to capture all the activities of the Macedonian Diaspora. Thanks to the internet, we can learn about what other Macedonians around the world, like you and me, are doing to help Macedonia, but also society in general.

Just imagine, no matter where you are in the world, somewhere someone is working to make UMD a more effective organization. While, we are tucked away in our beds at night in the United States and Canada, our colleagues in Australia are working hard, and vice versa when they are in bed, we are working hard. Same goes for Europe depending on the time zone. **How amazing!**

**Save the Date for the 2nd UMD Global Conference!** Several attendees at our first conference said the the standard we set would be hard to beat, but we're working on it. The second, which will take place in Toronto, Canada on June 3-5, 2010 will be one terrific event. Our planning committee is already in high gear with preparations. **Bring your friends and entire family!**

None of UMD's work is possible without the numerous volunteers putting in countless hours of hard work to help the organization. This is my call to you to get involved, and help UMD, and help Macedonia. Please contact us at (202) 756-2244 or [info@umdiaspora.org](mailto:info@umdiaspora.org) if you wish to get involved in any of our activities and programs anywhere in the world.

Last but not least, **UMD needs your support.** Like other nonprofits, UMD is feeling the impact of the difficult financial times facing so many. As we reach the end of the year, we hope that you will **include UMD in your charitable giving** with a fully tax deductible contribution.\* Throughout the year, you have received updates about our **unmatched access** and **daily impact** around the globe. Now more than ever, **your support makes all the difference.** To donate now, please e-mail [info@umdiaspora.org](mailto:info@umdiaspora.org) or call (202) 756-2244. You can also donate online at <http://www.UMDiaspora.org>.

**Enjoy this issue of UMD Voice! Once again, may you have a joyful Holiday Season!**

Sincerely yours,

Metodija A. Koloski

\*UMD is currently working on obtaining charitable status in Australia and Canada. Only U.S. donations are a 100% tax-deductible at this time.

## Editorial



### ***Pulling Each Other Down: A Tradition That Must End***

By Mark Branov

*"It is probably not love that makes the world go around, but rather those mutually supportive alliances through which partners recognize their dependence on each other for the achievement of shared and private goals."*

- Fred A. Allen (1894-1956)

Canadian-born Michael J. Fox has been a beloved TV and film actor for many years, starring in Hollywood blockbusters like *Back to the Future*, and award-winning TV shows like *Family Ties*. More recently, after being afflicted by Parkinson's disease, Mr. Fox has been making headlines once again, but for an entirely different reason. He has skillfully converted his fame into a powerful movement to fund medical research into finding a cure for this debilitating disease. In less than 10 years, the Michael J. Fox Foundation has managed to collect an astounding US\$154m for Parkinson's research! I say "bravo."

Unfortunately, no good deed goes unpunished. When the Michael J. Fox Foundation recently expanded its presence into Canada, the president and CEO of the Parkinson Society of Canada openly expressed concern to the media about how the Fox foundation might hurt her organization's donations.

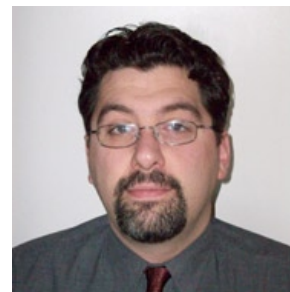
Mr. Fox deflected the criticism, saying: "Our Foundation is grateful for anybody who's involved in any facet of the journey that Parkinson's patients are on," and he emphasized his desire to work together with any group. The PSC president later clarified her remarks, and took a more conciliatory tone toward her international ally in the fight against Parkinson's, and, thankfully, the controversy dissipated.

Misguided territorialism can occur in any community, including the community of charitable organizations. Sadly, charities within the Macedonian Diaspora community are far from immune to it. Indeed, we have a long-held tradition of groups finding it difficult to work together, and this must end.

The motto of UMD is "United, We Can!" with emphasis on the word "United." In the US, Canada, Australia and Europe, UMD is working hard to respond to the collective needs of our global Diaspora for unity. Therefore, it is a UMD priority to build partnerships with any group that shares a common goal, both within the Macedonian community and beyond it. The effect of this strategy has been a new level of openness, flexibility and pragmatism, which pushes the cause forward.

In five short years, the unity approach has

proven extremely successful, particularly in areas where there was a leadership vacuum. The old proverb says: "After you burn your mouth on hot milk, you start blowing on yoghurt"... but even the most disaffected Macedonians are being attracted back to the cause by the positive message of unity from UMD.



In other places, where prestigious and essential Macedonian groups have been established for decades, UMD has reached out to those organizations in a spirit of cooperation and respect. With open communication and mutual understanding, the relationship between all Macedonian groups will become stronger, and we will all benefit. Everyone is welcome, and we are all ultimately on the same side.

No one should advocate a monopolistic approach to the greater movement, or to suggest that only one organization can work for Macedonia on any one piece of territory. Macedonians are a global community, and our cause cannot be defined by borders on a map. Similarly, no one group can monopolize the work for Macedonia in any particular sphere, be it advocacy, education, economic development, cultural development, media, charity outreach, or essential human rights work in Greece and Bulgaria. Finally, all Macedonian groups must show respect for the fundraising initiatives of other Macedonian groups, because this way we show respect for the donors. It is these donors who must ultimately decide the direction of the groups they choose to support with their hard-earned cash. It is these donors whose interests must be served. When our donors give, they expect results, and that's exactly what they should get. It should be clear, it should be obvious, and it should be transparent.

In some cases, competition is very destructive and ugly, especially when the combatants ignore their common adversaries. Those same adversaries will ultimately profit from all the wasted energy. In other cases, friendly competition can actually be cooperation in disguise: it can bring new energy to a cause, new creativity and a healthy check against apathy and stagnation. We must encourage a Macedonian movement to take on this quality – like an ancient grape vine with one thick root but many branches. Whenever a branch is cut or shrivels away, two new ones grow in its place, always reaching towards the sun, and always bearing fruit.

A diversity of opinions is not the same as divisiveness, as long as there is respect. An alternative approach is not a conflict, as long as there is brotherhood. A victory for one group is not a failure for another, as long as there is understanding and honest communication. It is time that the entire Diaspora community learns to tell the difference between these things, for all our sakes. And, as an organization, UMD must forever remain the strongest advocate for cooperation, engagement and unity in the Macedonian community.



## “Fotobuch Mazedonien”: A German Couple’s Labor of Love

By Mark Branov

Could Doris and Juergen Sieckmeyer be the latest foreigners to fall in love with Macedonia?

In a visually stunning project - reminiscent of MKLovesYou.com, by Poland-based friend of UMD Stanislaw Pigon - this German couple took an extensive journey throughout Macedonia to create Fotobuch Mazedonien, a book of stories and photography from all over Macedonia, in German, English and Macedonian language.

The book is truly beautiful and extremely high quality from cover to cover, with frank and eloquent portraits of real life in Macedonia. Anyone who knows the country well is overcome with nostalgia and memories of time well spent when flipping through the colorful pages.

The texts are also surprisingly comprehensive, covering detailed aspects of culture, food, religion, art and Macedonian tradition with precision, sensitivity and eloquence. Every Macedonian region is examined in detail. Readers take a stroll along Skopje’s historic “plostad”, tour sacred ancient monasteries, and have a peek at unique traditional scenes, like a Galicnik wedding.

For more information and ordering, please contact [sieckmeyer-foto@netcologne.de](mailto:sieckmeyer-foto@netcologne.de) ✨

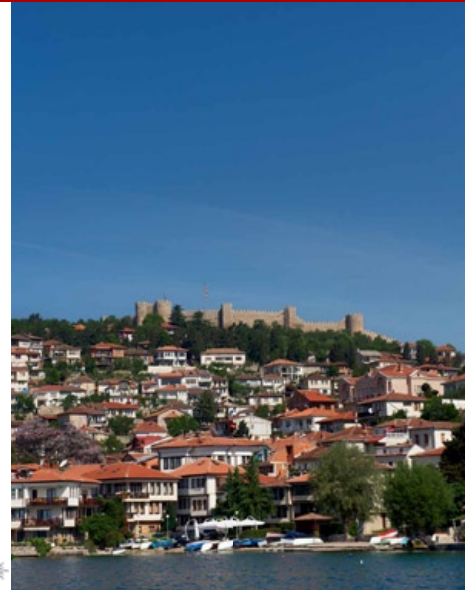


Photo courtesy of: Doris and Juergen Sieckmeyer



## Inaugural Macedonian Film Festival in Melbourne a Great Success

By Igor Zvezdanovski

United Macedonian Diaspora would like to congratulate the Macedonian Film Festival in Melbourne, Australia, for an excellent and well-organized event, held from October 30th to November 1st.

Opening with a cocktail party for sponsors and distinguished guests, there was a premiere screening of the Macedonian film “Mirage” which concluded with an after-party at a well-known club in the CBM district.

Australia’s culture capital, Melbourne was the perfect location for this kind of event, which screened some of the most popular Macedonian feature films in recent years, including: “Mirage”, “Dust”, “I am from Titov Veles”, “Bal-Can-Can” and “The Great Water”. Organizers Miki Dodevski, Nick Partalovski, Sotir Stojcevski and Igor Zvezdanovski have worked hard to start a new and exciting tradition, which should prove to be an important cultural event for promoting and sharing the Macedonian culture with mainstream Australia, and increasing the richness of Australia’s multicultural mosaic.

UMD Australia would like to thank all the sponsors – especially the Platinum sponsors – as well as the Macedonian Ministry for Culture and Embassy in Australia for their invaluable assistance towards this significant cultural event. Plans for the 2010 Macedonian Film Festival are already underway, and UMD looks forward to offering its full support for this event going forward.

To get involved in Australian-Macedonian activism, please contact [australia@umdiaspora.org](mailto:australia@umdiaspora.org). For more information about the Macedonian Film Festival in Australia, please visit the official website at [www.macedonianfilmfestival.com.au](http://www.macedonianfilmfestival.com.au). ✨



# MFF Toronto's World Premiere of "A Name Is A Name"

By Mark Branov

Photos courtesy of: anameisname.com

Amid a heightened level of buzz and anticipation, October 15 marked opening night for the 4th Annual Macedonian Film Festival in Toronto, Canada, an event that UMD was proud to sponsor. MFF '09 offered the world premiere of one of the most talked about films about Macedonia in many years: *A Name Is A Name*, by Icelandic/Norwegian director Sigurjon Einarsson. Many are describing this provocative documentary as "an instant classic" and "required viewing" for anyone who wants to understand Macedonia in the context the absurd 18-year "name dispute" against the country by the Greek government.

The story follows a Scandinavian traveler on a motorcycle journey to every corner of the Republic of Macedonia. The traveler only speaks to the audience via an English voiceover, which is provided by Sir Andrew Motion, the UK poet laureate. The soundtrack includes songs by Morten Harket, of a-ha fame, and Graham Nash, of the legendary rock band CSNY, among others. As the traveler crosses the country, we see the glorious beauty of the Macedonian countryside. At every stop along the way, we see interviews with an amazing variety of personalities about what it means to be Macedonian, from famous people, such as Archbishop Stefan of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, opera singer Boris Trajanov, and current Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, to not so famous people, such as passionate high school students, earnest fishermen, and eloquent actors and poets. One memorable old baba steals the show, and sums up the Macedonian attitude towards the name, when she says: "We will never change our name, and I don't give anyone the right to do such a thing."

"This film is truly excellent," said Virginia Evans, MFF director and founder. "Not only does it make the point beautifully, but that point is being made by an outsider. It is harder (for the Greeks) to dismiss films of this nature when objective observers such as Einarsson produce them," she said.

The world premiere showing was a packed house, with representatives of the Macedonian government, as well as the government of Iceland, Einarsson's ancestral home. Other notable attendees included American film producer Jason Miko, UMD President Metodija A. Koloski, and Canadian Macedonian Place President Marylin Trentos. The film was followed by a question and answer session with producer Miko, and a cocktail party reception.



Unfortunately, the director of *A Name Is A Name*, Sigurjon Einarsson, was unable to attend the premier due to a last-minute visa issue. But UMD Voice did catch up with him later for an exclusive interview:

**MB: Please describe your passion for filmmaking, your inspiration and your influences.**

SE: I think the arts – especially the visual arts – can help us as people to tell stories that the printed word or the audio arts cannot always tell. It is important to have a keen sense of light and time and to understand the cultures in which one works when telling the story. I hope the fact that I am a Northern European helps in adding a different perspective to telling a story like this. I think my inspiration in filmmaking has always been that I come from a nation of storytellers; the old Icelandic sagas were an inspiration to me when I was young and finding my path in life.

**MB: Please tell us about how *A Name Is A Name* came about: why this kind of film about Macedonia, and why now?**

SE: This film came about as a result of a relationship I developed with Macedonia in October of 2007. At that time, I was invited to Lake Ohrid, along with my friend and long time partner in music, Morten Harket. He was asked to speak at a conference the Government and UNESCO were hosting there on dialogue between different religions and cultures. We spent a lovely weekend at the lake and talked with many people. Although I already knew a bit about Macedonia and the name issue, I started looking into it more and more. Jason Miko came up to Oslo in May of 2008 and we spoke more about the issue. We decided that

a 'spotlight' should be put on the issue, and that the best way to do this would be to make a film about it.

**MB: What made you choose a road movie theme to tell the story?**

SE: The 'road film' format is just a good, classic way of telling a story, especially when you need to cross over land to get your story. This is not an easy story to tell in 49 minutes, but the aspect of a lone traveler motoring through the country helps to tie it all together.



**MB: When you think back to all the hours of footage you shot and edited to create this project, what part stands out for you as most memorable?**

SE: So many! We have 20 hours of digital footage, and there were so many places that stood out as memorable – the fantastic scenery, including mountains, lakes, agricultural fields, the art and architecture of the towns, villages, monasteries – but as always, it was the people we met along the way that stood out the most. The hospitality and warmth of folks along the way was deeply meaningful and greatly appreciated. One member of our crew, a Macedonian, said that next summer he would take his family around and vacation in Macedonia – traveling to the places we filmed, to re-experience the beauty of the country and hospitality of his own people.

**MB: Please tell us a bit about Jason Miko's role in making this project happen, and how the world-famous musician Morten Harket of a-ha ended up composing the main theme song.**

SE: Jason is the producer of the film and he reached out to me and Morten in the fall of 2007 to bring us down to Lake Ohrid. We stayed in touch after that and as I mentioned, he visited Oslo in May of 2008 where we conceived of this project. Also, I mentioned that Morten is a friend of mine and I have collaborated with him for 22 years on various projects. We both worked on a film about East Timor in 1995 and he wrote a song about their plight, which appeared on his first solo album Wild Seed. When we were thinking about this film and his involvement, the song A Name is a Name – from his second solo album, Letter from Egypt, just seemed so right. He didn't write the song for the film, but it fit perfectly and he is a big supporter of our efforts and Macedonia's right to its name.

**MB: How would you describe the culture of the Macedonian people you met? How is it similar, and how does it differ from the culture you grew up in?**

SE: For starters, I am from Iceland, though I have lived in Norway now for 22 years. Iceland and Macedonia are both small countries with an ancient history and both have had some type of difficulties with neighbors. In Iceland's case, the Danes and others ruled us until very recently. So both countries have that history of struggling against more powerful neighbors. Of course Macedonia is a Mediterranean country and Iceland is a Scandinavian country so there are many, many differences between the two! But that small country atmosphere is a big similarity. And I think small countries need to work together and rely on each other.

**MB: What is your sense of the general European attitude toward Macedonia's current predicament? Are the European people as tolerant of Greek hostility towards the Republic of Macedonia as some the European national governments seem to be?**

SE: Two things. First, I don't think most Europeans fully understand or appreciate this problem, which is one reason we have made this film. Secondly, it is a difficult issue for many Europeans to grasp because their names and identity are not threatened. But I do believe that by putting this spotlight on the issue and talking more about it we can begin to help the rest of Europe to see that this really is an injustice and a wrong that needs to be righted. I also hope that our more liberal-minded Greek friends – and they are definitely out there – will stand up and talk about this openly, not just in Greece, but in Europe and around the world too. There are many different ethnicities in Greece in addition to the Greek ethnicity – Albanians, Vlachs, Turks, Roma and Macedonians – and they need to be acknowledged and accorded full representation and protection under the law. Europe is going to have to help our Greek friends understand this.

**MB: What role can artists play, in order to help the situation right now, and bypass all the obstacles to cooperation that have been built up over the years?**

SE: Artists can play a big role! When we started with this project it was our intention to have the help and involvement of international artists, in addition to Morten. I am proud to say that we have a number of famous artists connected with this and their music appears in the film. Graham Nash, of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young has a song in the film, and a very beautiful one that plays during a sunset over Lake Ohrid. Two bands from my country of Iceland – Sigur Ros and Mum – have contributed equally moving songs. The up and coming band Monte Negro from California has contributed a great road song and my friend Gulli Briem from Iceland has contributed a song from his group Earth Affair. And we are pleased to have two Macedonian artists – Kiril and Tose – and we are especially thankful to both for their contributions made possible, in the case of Tose, by his Foundation. The contribution of these artists – and more will join us – helps by raising the profile of the issue and by allowing us to reach out to fans with our story and message. In the case of Gulli, he is also a member of Nelson Mandela's foundation and so there might be some synergies to be created there. Also, I encourage your readers to check out the film website [www.anameisaname.com](http://www.anameisaname.com) and to join our group on Facebook to learn more and get regular news about our work.

**MB: Obviously, Macedonians and friends of Macedonia from around the world are extremely eager to see your film, and to learn more about what you discovered on your travels. If you could send a message to all of them, what would it be?**

SE: Never give up! Always fight for what is right and be proud of who you are. ✨



## Macedonian-American Golf Scramble Celebrates a Successful Second Year

By Tom Hristovski, Macedonian Orthodox Philanthropic Society



A group of young philanthropists hosted the Second Annual Macedonian-American Golf Scramble at Cumberland Trails, Pataskala, Ohio, on August 1, 2009, raising funds for the Dormition of the Virgin Mary Macedonian Orthodox Cathedral in nearby Reynoldsburg.

With new sponsor Walmart supporting the event, participation in the 18-hole event doubled from last year. 100 golfers from around the Columbus area came together to celebrate the church and its community activities, and to fund ongoing renovations, such as painting the iconography. The event also served to bring Macedonians and Americans together from throughout the Columbus community.

With increased participation comes increased competition. This year's winning foursome, with a score of 14 under par, included John Mercurio, Terry Quested, Todd Jone and Bob Piatka. The Longest Drive contest winner, Josh Mynt, practically hit the green on the 16th Hole with a monster drive of over 315 yards. Troy Sheets sank a left-to-right 20-foot putt on the 18th Hole to win the Longest Putt contest and Jimmy

Bulakovski almost hit the pin on the 3rd Hole to win the Closest to the Pin contest.

Following the scramble, players received a complementary dinner at the Macedonian Cathedral, along with a gift package. After dinner, the raffle draw included prizes such as; restaurant gift certificates, gift cards to Golfsmith and Dicks Sporting Goods, cigars, Columbus Crew soccer tickets and Ohio State University signed memorabilia. Following the raffle, a silent auction was held, with bidding on a Columbus Crew autographed jersey, Ohio State University signed footballs, spa packages and concert tickets. Thanks to enthusiastic community involvement and the hard work of MOPS members, the raffle and silent auction raised thousands of dollars for the church.

The Dormition of the Virgin Mary Macedonian Orthodox Cathedral has been serving the greater Columbus community since 1965. The Macedonian Orthodox Philanthropic Society (MOPS) was created in 2008 by a group of young individuals who shared a common vision: to support the church and enrich the greater community. To date, MOPS has organized nearly a dozen events including sporting events, cookouts and parties. Special thanks goes out to all of the sponsors, especially to Wal-Mart, and to our great team of local Macedonian-American businesses, such as Jimmy V's Grill and Pub, Mynt Ultra Lounge, Rees Flowers and Fine Gifts, Giuseppe's Ritrovo, Jordan's Deli and Pub, and the Ohio Sinus Institute. For the second year in a row, UMD was proud to sponsor one of the 18 holes at this great event.

For more information about MOPS, or to sponsor or participate in next year's golf event, please visit [www.macedonianchurch.org](http://www.macedonianchurch.org) or contact the group directly at [MOPSofColumbus@gmail.com](mailto:MOPSofColumbus@gmail.com). ✨

## Macedonians Celebrate New Church in Germany

On September 26th, the groundbreaking ceremony was held for the first Macedonian church to be built from the ground up in Germany. The site is located in Hechtsheim, Mainz, which is in the vicinity of Frankfurt. Projected to cost 1m euro, funds are being raised by the Macedonian community in the region together with German donors.

Sveti Nikola Church President Mirce Filipovski welcomed various official guests, including: His Holiness g.g. Stefan, Met. g. Pimen, Met. g. Agatangel, a local delegation of the Catholic church, Mainz mayor Dr. Norbert Schöler, Macedonian Ambassador Dr. Gjorgji Filipov, Director of Migration Dr. Vasil Naumov and many other dignitaries. The event was quite well attended by approximately 700 members of the local Macedonian community in Mainz, and Macedonians from throughout Germany.

The event celebrated not only Sveti Nikola, but also the 15th anniversary of the MOC European Eparchy, as well. Numerous speeches were held by the official guests, touching on how Sveti Nikola is a powerful affirmation of the Macedonian community in Germany, and how the Macedonian Orthodox Church plays a vital role in preserving the Macedonian identity.

In the afternoon, guests relocated to the Mainz Fairground for entertainment by musical groups "Feniks" and "Dule i Koki." UMD representatives met with g.g. Stefan, Ambassador Filipov and the former German Ambassador to Macedonia, Dr. Hans-Lothar Steppan, author of "The Macedonian Knot", who sent special greetings to UMD and the Macedonians in America and Australia. ✨



# Andrew Peykoff II: Macedonian-American Business Leader

By Mark Branov

*In 1963, Andrew Peykoff, Sr., started bottling high-quality, low-cost water in five-gallon glass containers for home and office delivery in Southern California. By the 90s, his company Niagara Water had expanded throughout the Western US, becoming an industry leader. In 1994, after the Northridge earthquake, the company bought a blow molder, which was their first step in vertical integration and automated manufacturing. The move changed their business model forever, leading to numerous innovations in bottle and cap design.*

*In 2002, Andrew Peykoff II became President and CEO, and took the Niagara name nationwide, building it into the largest family-owned-and-operated water company, and also the 2nd largest bottled water company in the USA. Today, Niagara has about 850 employees, distribution deals with the largest retailers such as Kroger, Walmart and Costco, and a production capacity to fill 12 billion bottles of water per year. In September 2009, the company won an international award for designing and integrating the world's lightest and strongest 0.5 L bottle. This innovation saves valuable natural resources and energy, and now all other bottlers are following Niagara's lead.*

*UMD Voice had the opportunity to interview Mr. Peykoff, and get a glimpse at the keys to Niagara's success:*

**MB: Mr. Peykoff, tell us about your Macedonian background, and the influence of your parents on your life.**

AP: My grandparents were born in Macedonia and moved to Buffalo in the early 1930s. My father was first generation Macedonian-American and I'm second generation. The main influences in my life have been my parents: my dad on the business front and my mom on the personal side. Both have been amazing mentors. My father's work ethic and attention to detail is something that I began to notice and emulate as I entered adulthood. He always told me about how hard his father had worked, despite the eventual loss of both legs. So, my father was shining shoes when he was only eight years old, but he then attended university at the age of 16. Although some of his success can be attributed to his fierce intellect, I believe that the sharpest arrow in his quiver has been his



unwavering ambition and will to "get ahead." That strong will, hard-working attitude, and attention to detail - along with strict saving habits - are things that has been passed down from generation to generation on my father's side of the family. I believe those traits were born out of a culture that inspires such ambition. I consider those traits to be largely Macedonian.

**MB: What other Macedonian values did your family instill in you, which contributed to your success? Do you think that these gave you any particular advantage?**

AP: My parents taught me to have the passion to give your best effort in everything you do. This is what sets people apart and has driven the success of so many Macedonians in the United States.

**MB: Have you ever been to Macedonia? What is your assessment of the progress that Macedonia has made since independence?**

AP: I visited the village Anarakhi where my grandparents had lived, between Kostur and Kozhani. This area is currently occupied by Greece though. And that was in 1988, before Macedonia's independence.

**MB: Niagara Drinking Water is expanding rapidly. What are the prospects for you to expand your business into Macedonia?**

AP: We are currently expanding in the United States and have aspirations of expanding internationally, but first we need to conquer our own markets. From everything I've been exposed to, Macedonia seems very business friendly and eager to bring more business growth to the community. As for Niagara doing business in Macedonia, it's really a function of the market.

**MB: What do you consider your greatest achievement?**

AP: I consider my greatest achievement to be my family: a wonderful wife and two beautiful little girls all of whom love me very much. That's really what life is all about: love, shared



experiences and spiritual growth. My greatest achievement is that I've been able to replicate my father's success, both as a businessman and as a family man. To see the pure joy in Dedo's eyes when he plays with my children gives me a sense of happiness and comfort that is hard to describe.

**MB: You took a great risk expanding your manufacturing operations in a deep recession. What factors influenced your decision? Would you make a similar decision, if based in Macedonia?**

AP: Our decision was based on a market opportunity, so if the same market opportunity were available in Macedonia, then yes, we would continue to grow our operations, regardless of where we are based.

**MB: You have stated that Niagara's greatest advantage is its employees. How do you attract the best talent?**

AP: Every successful company has a great story as to what has made them successful. Ours has been a passionate desire to provide our customers with the highest quality products at the lowest possible prices. We've created a fast paced working environment focused on bringing in high caliber team members regardless of their experience level and give them meaningful opportunities very early in their careers. In many companies, people are often held back whereas we give them the opportunity to shine and make a difference.

**MB: In reducing its carbon footprint, Niagara has also lowered manufacturing costs and increased revenue. Please tell us about this initiative, and its long-term implications with regard to "greening" your industry.**

AP: We've reduced our carbon footprint by 30%. That's huge and very unique! Most people talk about eco-initiatives, but we have actually implemented real and important changes to our organization. In our efforts to always keep our customers' price competitive, we have passed on the savings in our pricing, so we aren't making any more money per case that we sell. We have enjoyed increased sales and customer loyalty. These are the results of selling a good product at a great value. Regarding other eco-initiatives, we



have made various changes including the use of solar panels and geothermal energy, manufacturing the lightest water bottles and caps in the world, and implementing numerous electricity-saving measures.

**MB: Despite initiatives like Niagara's, the industry as a whole still ships millions of plastic bottles. Have you developed an alternative to plastic containers and, if not, what would be Niagara's strategy for succeeding in an ever-greening economy?**

AP: Plastic bottles are one of the few truly 100% recyclable items that you buy at the grocery store. They are far more eco-friendly than glass or aluminum. Water bottles also use about one-third as much plastic as soda bottles or sports drink bottles, so there is definitely some consumer misinformation out there. To put it in perspective, consumption of 200 bottles of water would have roughly the same carbon footprint of using one gallon of gasoline, if you chose not to recycle them. That being said, we do realize that we are a large company and any small change we do can have a big impact, so we continue to push the technological limits towards being a greener company all the time.

**MB: What are your thoughts on the current economic crisis?**

AP: I think we may be nearing the trough but we will sit in the trough for a long while – probably 18 months or so. The US policies seem to be short term and politically motivated, as opposed to doing what's right for the long-term interest of the country. Only time will tell.

**MB: Where would you like to be in your professional and personal life 20 years from now?**

AP: I just hope that I'm blessed enough to be around in 20 years, and get to enjoy a lot of time with my family. Regarding our business, by then, maybe one of my daughters will be working with me, which would be a dream come true.

**MB: What advice would you give a young entrepreneur, committed to success in a business similar to yours?**

AP: Hire the best people you can afford and give them the opportunity to succeed. A great team can do wonders for any business. ✨

## Macedonia Steps Up At “Jewish Olympics”

Photos courtesy of: maccabimk.org



After 18 months of meticulous planning, the first-ever Macedonian delegation to the Maccabiah Games arrived in Tel Aviv, Israel this past July. It consisted of one athlete, a Macedonian swimmer named Rob Williams, who also doubled as the Head of Delegation and tripled as the Mission Organizer. More commonly known as the “Jewish Olympics”, Maccabiah offers Israeli citizens and Jews of all nationalities the opportunity to compete in Olympic-style events over 12 days in Israel. While the Macedonian delegation only comprised of one swimmer, Israel sent 2500 athletes, while the USA placed second with 1500. In total, 9000 athletes from 53 countries took part, with countries like Grenada and Ethiopia also making their debuts.

Williams, who was born in California but currently lives in London, was originally offered a spot on the British swimming delegation to Maccabiah in 2008, but declined. “It would have been a wonderful experience to be part of a big delegation” says Rob, “but I am not British; I am a Macedonian citizen. So, I thought a Macedonian representation would be an amazing opportunity for Macedonian Jewry to enter the world stage.”

Soon after, Rob set up Maccabi Macedonia and began looking not only for sponsors, but also other Macedonian Jewish athletes who would be willing to make the journey. By the end of the summer, there were leads on Macedonian-citizen athletes living in Canada (a woman rower) and Australia (a woman track & field athlete). However, after several months of attempting to cultivate these leads, distance, finances, and other intervening competitions meant that the final Macedonian delegation submitted in March 2009 included Williams alone. Then the real work began.

As the Games approached, everything started to come together. “After a long sponsorship drive, we had two large sponsors lined up, both expat Macedonians living in Europe. Everything seemed right on schedule,” Williams explained. However, just months before the Games began, both main sponsors pulled out due to the looming credit crunch, and eight weeks before the Games were due to open, the project looked doomed. Financing came through in the end, and Macedonia’s first delegation to Maccabiah 18 was confirmed.

On July 10th, the one athlete and two official supporters arrived in Tel Aviv, ready to bring Macedonia into the Maccabiah world. Opening ceremonies took place the evening of Monday July 13th, and hundreds of Macedonians

and fellow supporters watched them online as Williams proudly carried our flag into the Stadium filled of 20,000 spectators – including Macedonia’s Ambassador to Israel. “It was great to see our guy in Israel stand up and cheer when he saw me in the Parade of Nations. He and his wife looked so thrilled, and it made me so happy to have them there. I have never felt more proud to be Macedonian than at that moment. With only 200 Jews in our nation,” Williams continued, “it was a very special moment when we stand shoulder-to-shoulder with countries like the US, Canada, Australia and the UK.”

The swimming competition began six days later, which gave Rob time to put the excitement of Opening Ceremonies behind him in order to focus on his races. This included the 400 and 1500m freestyle, 200m breaststroke, and the 100 and 200m butterfly. It was an intense set of events to cover over the four days; however, Williams marked each day with repeated success, including “B” final appearances in the 100 and 200m butterfly events, as well as an 8th place and “A” final finish in the 400m freestyle. When asked about his performance overall, the swimmer responded: “I know I can go faster, but I got in there and raced the best I could! It was amazing to be in the same heats and finals with many world-class swimmers, including several Olympic medalists.”

Williams then described the future: “Maccabiah showed me that where there is a will, there is a way. The buzz of Maccabiah made me hungry for so much more over the coming three years. I just can’t wait to get back in the water and train!”

Alongside a full-time job as a Patent Attorney, Williams is also attempting to be the first Olympian in history – Macedonian or otherwise – to qualify for the Olympics in four sports at the same Games: Swimming, Open Water Swimming, Cycling and Triathlon. “It may mean competing 12 of the 16 days when the Games come to London in 2012,” says Williams, with a smile and a slight look of unease, “but I knew what carrying our flag out in Israel meant to me, and memories like that make each day and each training session more exciting than the last!” ✨

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You can contact Rob at: [rob@maccabimk.org](mailto:rob@maccabimk.org), and see videos and photos of the Games at Maccabi Macedonia: [www.maccabimk.org](http://www.maccabimk.org)





## The Lost Writings Of The Ancient Macedonians

By Aleksandar Donski

The Macedonian public knows very little about the dozens of historians that have described the history of ancient Macedonia in detail, and other states as well. Some are contained in written manuscripts, but these material proofs are not readily accessible to today's reader. Unlike many numerous works by ancient authors, Greek and others, these manuscripts are not found on the internet, nor are they easily found in libraries.

However, a good portion of original historical materials, written by ancient Macedonian historians, have been found in the private collection of the German professor, Felix Jacoby (1876 – 1959). A professor of classical philology in Kiel for 30 years, he resumed teaching at Oxford in 1939. During his career, he collected several thousand fragments from texts by ancient writers, most of which have been transmitted by successive authors. Among these are fragments of the writings of 15 ancient Macedonian historians. The Macedonian ethnic identity of these historians is evident by the attachment of the identifier, "The Macedonian", added to the writer's name, or by a particular Macedonian topographic name denoting their place of birth.

Today Prof. Jacoby's collection is accessible in a costly electronic form. Access to this material was made possible when Prof. Maria Kubaiska (in honour of her daughter Emilia Doneva Kubaiska) kindly acquired it and placed it at the disposal of the author of this article.

The initial survey of this material, containing fragments from the lost works of more than 850 ancient historians, clearly reveals the names of 15 Macedonians. Among them are: Marcia from Pela, Kriton of Pieria, Anhang the Macedonian, Antigone the Macedonian, Antioch the Aegean, Antipater the Macedonian, Marcia from Philippi, Phillip from Amphipole, Pole the Aegean, Ptolomy the son of Lag, and others. Prof. Jacoby's collection contains several hundred additional ancient historians. It is very probable that some of these writers too are ethnic Macedonians, an issue which has yet to be scientifically deciphered, since their

names have yet to be ethnically or geographically defined.

Regarding the contents of the lost works by ancient Macedonian historians, we know that Prof. Jacoby carefully compiled them from the preserved fragments of other ancient writers. These fragments provide compelling evidence that most of these writers dealt with the history of ancient Macedonia. For example, the ancient Macedonian historian Marcia from Pela, who is described as a Macedonian aristocrat, is also referred to as the one who created the "most detailed patriotic history of his time" ("The Dictionary of the History of Ideas" Electronic Text Center; University of Virginia Library, 2003).

The upcoming release of these materials to the public will illuminate new findings in Macedonian historiography. ✨



## UMD Establishes Reconstruction Fund for St. Jovan Bigorski Monastery

**WASHINGTON, D.C. – October 1, 2009** – The United Macedonian Diaspora (UMD) expressed sorrow today over a fire that severely damaged one of Macedonia's most significant cultural heritage sites, St. Jovan Bigorski Monastery. Established in the 11th century, St. Jovan Bigorski Monastery, near the city of Gostivar, is dedicated to Saint John the Baptist. It is renowned for its wood-carved iconostasis, considered one of the most beautiful throughout the Orthodox world. Damages of the fire are estimated to amount close to 5.5 million euros.

"Macedonians worldwide are saddened by the tragic fire of St. Jovan Bigorski – a treasure of Macedonia's cultural heritage and UMD has therefore established the UMD Reconstruction Fund for St. Jovan Bigorski Monastery," stated UMD President Metodija A. Koloski.

"We encourage Macedonians and friends of Macedonia to contribute to the Fund in order to help rebuild one of Macedonia's treasures so that future generations of Macedonians and friends of Macedonia can cherish the rich Macedonian cultural heritage," said Koloski.

Contributions to the UMD Reconstruction Fund for St. Jovan Bigorski Monastery can be made online through UMD's website ([www.umdiaspora.org](http://www.umdiaspora.org)) or by check made payable to "UMD Reconstruction Fund for St. Jovan Bigorski Monastery" and sent to: United Macedonian Diaspora, 1101 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, 6th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20004 ✨

# UMD Australia: Advocacy Update

By *Ordan Andreevski*

**Strengthening Relations with the Federal Government and Parliament:** Working through the Australia-Macedonia Inter-parliamentary Group, and in partnership with a number of important stakeholders, UMD organized a Forum for Advancing Australia - Macedonia Relations on 8 Sept. 2009 at Parliament House, Canberra. The event discussed how to advance Australian-Macedonian relations, and ended with a formal lunch at the Federal Members Dining Room to celebrate Macedonia's Independence Day. Eight federal members of parliament attended the lunch, including: Darren Cheeseman, Luke Simpkins, Jenny George, Bill Shorten and others. The UMD team of Ordan Andreevski, Zak Milenkovski, Igor Zvezdakoski and Lidija Neskovska later visited the Macedonian Embassy, which was hosting a function for the diplomatic corps and the Macedonian community from across Australia.



**Strengthening Relations with the State Government of Victoria:** A proposal to establish a Victorian Parliamentary Macedonia Friendship Group was sent to a carefully selected group of Victorian Parliamentarians that have significant numbers of Macedonian voters in their constituencies. Colin Brooks from the ALP has agreed to be Chair the proposed friendship group. Interest in the initiative has also been received from the Liberal Party and the Greens.

**Visit to Australia by Prime Minister Gruevski from 26-28 Oct 2009:** UMD responded to the request from Mr. Savo Sibinoski, Consul General of Macedonia in Melbourne to provide assistance in making the visit by the Prime Minister as successful as possible. Areas where UMD provided assistance include Media Relations, Government Relations and Investor Relations. UMD and the Consul General met with the State Manager of Austrade, Mr. Leith Doody and explored ways in which the trade and investment relations can be boosted.

The three-day official visit to Australia by a Macedonian delegation lead by Prime Minister Gruevski and his Foreign Minister Antonio Milososki has helped re-invigorate and strengthen bilateral relations. It has also served to enhance the close relationship of the Australian-Macedonian Diaspora with the Macedonian Government.

In Canberra, Prime Minister Gruevski and his delegation met with the Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd as well as with senior ministers and parliamentarians. They also met with the leader of the Opposition, Mr. Malcolm Turnbull and the deputy leader of the Opposition and shadow foreign minister the Hon. Julie Bishop.

The highlight of the visit was the signing of a Social Security Agreement between the two countries. This agreement will come into force in 2011 and will enable Australian Macedonians to enjoy their Australian pensions in Macedonia and vice versa.

In Sydney, Prime Minister Gruevski hosted a memorable function for friends of Macedonia as well as for the Macedonian community. Similarly, in Melbourne, Gruevski held a function at the Hilton on the Park. In his speech, Gruevski urged the Macedonian Diaspora to unite as one, irrespective of whether they have connections with Vardar, Pirin or Aegean Macedonia, given that we are all one nation. Education was mentioned as the single best investment that the Macedonia Diaspora can make in strengthening its future and its influence in Australia and Macedonian society. Young Macedonians from the Diaspora were invited to visit Macedonia and where possible assist with the development effort.

The UMD team played an important role during the official visit. The UMD forum at Parliament House in Canberra generated important contacts with parliamentarians, and a number of presentations were made to all relevant Australian Ministers, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, federal parliamentarians and the media.

On September 25th, UMD sent out detailed briefing notes on the benefits of closer Australian engagement with South Eastern Europe. These briefing notes were carefully distributed to all the important decision-makers in the country.

UMD's proposals to hold a public lecture at the Lowy Institute of Foreign Policy on 'Macedonia's Progress since Independence' could not be realized. Similarly, the Prime Minister could not meet with the mainstream Australian media such as The Age. However, initiatives such as these will be re-visited at the earliest opportunity.

After the visit, UMD met with Viktor Mizo, CEO of Invest in Macedonia, to discuss ways in which trade and investment can be significantly enlarged, using Australia as the gateway to the markets of the Asia Pacific, and using Macedonia as a gateway to the markets of Europe and the Middle East for Australian companies. ✨



## UMD Announces 2009 Macedonian Heritage Scholarship Recipients

**By Meto Koloski**

*In November 2009, UMD announced that Michael Culkoff, Ana Gicova, and Diana Popstefanov have been selected as the recipients of UMD's 1st Macedonian Heritage Scholarships. The UMD Macedonian Heritage Scholarship Program was established to assist young Macedonians pursuing an undergraduate degree in Australia, Canada, Europe, and the United States.*

*By promoting the education of young Macedonian scholarship recipients, we hope they go on to become significant achievers, guided by the values of their Macedonian upbringing, and contributing meaningfully to the ongoing development of world society. Through this scholarship program, UMD hopes to develop a powerful network of community leaders whose vision will help shape worldviews about Macedonia, leaving a lasting legacy for Macedonian generations to come.*

*Students have been selected on the basis of academic achievement and commitment to civic leadership and involvement in the global Macedonian community. Recipients submitted an essay on what being of Macedonian heritage means for them in the context of the wider society.*

### 2009 UMD Macedonian Heritage Scholarship Program Recipients:



#### **Michael Culkoff**

Michael is a first generation Australian-Macedonian from Sydney, Australia. He is pursuing an undergraduate degree in Arts Communication–Social Inquiry with an interest in Public Relations at the University of Technology in Sydney. Michael is the Centre Manager for the HK Ward Gymnasium at Sydney University Sport and Fitness and an avid cricket player.

Being from a multicultural country like Australia, there are so many people from all walks of life and from all parts of the globe. I feel my being of Macedonian heritage is not only accepted by the wider community of Australia, but also openly embraced. I have been born and raised in Australia, but have always been interested to know about my “other country” and how society views Macedonians.

When asked about my background, I am proud to say that I am 100 per cent Macedonian, but obviously I consider myself to be 100 per cent Australian too. My mother came to Australia when she was seven years old and my father in his late teens, so as parents they have instilled in me traditional moral values from the old country. But, more than this, they have taught me the importance of treating people equally and not judging them because of ethnic differences. Honesty, respect and a positive attitude that attempts to see the best in everyone - including oneself - has been impressed upon me by my parents. And, above all else, they taught me to believe in myself. This has been a great springboard for me to harmoniously accept my ethnic identity and nationality seamlessly, and it has enabled me to wear my heritage as a badge of honor.

My wonderful grandparents have passed on the Macedonian traditions of being incredibly generous and loving to family and friends. I have not witnessed this spirit of endless generosity and truly unconditional love amongst any of my peers. It is amazing what my grandparents do for their kids and their grandchildren. It is impossible to put their actions and their way of being into words. This is my true Macedonian heritage. And this is the heritage that I want to pass on to my children.

My values have been affected by the society in which I live, but nowhere near as profoundly as they have been affected by my Macedonian heritage, as seen through the eyes of my parents and grandparents. There is little doubt that my parents have taken the best values from their own culture and the Australian culture, and they have mixed and matched. They have thrown out old antiquated superstitions that serve no one, yet have remained true to customs that honor the Macedonian heritage: the food, the dancing, and above all, the concept of family.

All human beings should have the same core values instilled in them and it should not matter what language you speak or what country you are from. I feel very deeply that my family got the ‘mix’ just right. They have remained true to their roots and their ethnicity where it counts and without sacrificing being loyal to Australia. As a result, I have never felt different or inferior, nor have I had to “defend” my ethnicity in any way. On the contrary, my Aussie mates think I am incredibly lucky. We all have a story to tell and each and every story is unique and special with reference to

our heritage and family tree.

My immediate family went on a holiday back to Macedonia in July 2008. It was a family pilgrimage to see where it all began: for my mother and her brother and their parents to go back to the villages where they grew up. The trip touched my soul.

I recall visiting my father's sister with my Mum and my sister Sandy, in the house where Dad and his three siblings grew up, in Capari, near Bitola. They still use the house as a retreat during the summer months. It was a truly gorgeous place. It had a stream of water trickling down from the mountain, through their front yard and it was crystal clear... I felt a connection and a sense of tranquility overcome me. I am not sure why, but I have little doubt that, for the first time, I was deeply moved by my heritage.

We visited my grandfather's village in Lazec and my grandmother's village in Rotino. I listened to their stories of growing up in Macedonia in the early days. The story of how my grandparents met and eloped on a pushbike was priceless. I heard the joy in their voices and saw the emotion in their eyes. Having all four of their grandchildren and their two children in Bitola was very special for my grandparents and for my Mum and her brother Kris. I saw where they were born and where they grew up. It was amazing. It is something I will cherish forever and I know I will return again one day with my children.

My cousin and I decided that it would be a good idea to get tattoos. I had been thinking about getting a tattoo for a few years now, but wanted it to be something truly significant and meaningful, which would last a lifetime. The original Macedonian flag - the yellow symbol of the 16 points of Alexander the Great and the Sun - was the choice. My cousin and I feel it connects us forever to each other and to our heritage. I can't say my mother felt the same way! To me, it is a symbol of my pride in my Macedonian heritage.



### Ana Gicova

Ana was born and raised in Kocani, Macedonia and came to the United States in September 2006. She is a senior at Ohio University pursuing a Bachelor of Business Administration, specifically in the areas of Finance and Strategic Management and Leadership Skills. Ana is a recipient of the Risto Gusterov Manasseh Cutler Scholarship, which is given to one student from Macedonia every three years. She has volunteered for UNICEF and the International Red Cross in Macedonia, and has interned for the Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce in Naples, Florida. Ana has received numerous awards for her fluency in Spanish, and is a member of the National Honors Society, International Business Honor Society Beta Gamma Sigma, and the National Youth Association of Macedonia.

As a Macedonian, I have learned that my heritage and culture truly define the woman I have grown to become. The relevance of my background became clear to me as I ventured outside of my country, to embark on an educational journey in the United States. Within the context of American society, I have realized that the qualities that best exemplify me were from my upbringing in Macedonia.

I learned from my parents at a young age that great success is contingent on the hard work you put into attaining it. Leaving my native country to come to North America required me to not only take their advice, but to live by it. Upon moving to the United States, I learned quickly that communicating with others would be difficult. My first year at Ohio University required me to work twice as hard as my American peers to fit in socially and to excel in my education. Upon realizing my communicative handicap, I forced myself to sit down after every class, rewrite all my notes, and translate topics I failed to understand with a dictionary. Dedicating myself to this task required a lot of discipline and personal initiative; qualities that I attribute to my Macedonian upbringing.

In my short time abroad in the United States, I have come to realize that my persistence has provided an avenue for my success. Macedonians and Americans alike share the quality of persistence. Through persistence, I have been able to succeed in school. Among my peers, my persistence has led to respectful friendships. This quality is dear to me, because it usually leads to positive and successful results.

Courage and compromise may seem to be two contradictory issues, but being an international student entails understanding how they are both connected. Living in America for the past three years has required me to be courageous in certain aspects of life, and to compromise in others. Through both courage and compromise, I have become successful in harmoniously adapting my ethnic identity and values with the values of my American peers. Although it may sound like a simple enough task, creating a hybrid of my Macedonian identity and American identity has proven to be challenging. There are so many aspects of daily life here in the US that require me to compromise, yet, compromising my core Macedonian principles and ideals is something I have never been willing to do.

Being courageous by standing up for my background has been very challenging, as well. Though immersed in American society, I would never compromise my Macedonian heritage. But I have compromised on issues pertaining to cultural differences in communication, social activities, and food. Today, I eat hamburgers and speak English in order to



adapt. However, at home, I eat national Macedonian cuisine and speak my native language. I am still the same person in America as I was in Macedonia, yet I have learned about how to compromise to create a harmonious balance in my daily life.

Today, have attained more success in life than I could have hoped for. I am an honor student at Ohio University, a member of prestigious business organizations and scholarship committees. I have worked for large corporations around the world and broadened my cultural awareness through foreign exchange programs. I speak Macedonian, English and Spanish fluently and continue to excel in all aspects of my professional career. Being Macedonian has never been to my disadvantage, and my heritage has molded me into the woman I am.



#### **Diana Popstefanov**

Diana is a first generation Macedonian-American from Garfield, New Jersey, United States. She is pursuing an undergraduate degree in International Affairs at The George Washington University in Washington, DC. Diana was the Founder of the Eastern European Club, and was President of the Spanish Club at the Academy of the Holy Angels in Demarest, New Jersey. In high school, she received the Presidents Awards for Educational Excellence and the Bronze Medal in the National Spanish Exam.

Although I was not born and raised in Macedonia, I consider myself a very proud Macedonian-American. This pride comes from my understanding of what it means to be Macedonian. My heritage connects me with other Macedonian-Americans while setting me apart from other cultures. Although my culture is different than that of other cultures, being Macedonian helps me to understand other cultures and traditions on a personal level. I have a deep understanding and vast respect for tradition, family values, and being Macedonian is the aspect that connects me to society both on a local and global level. I have always been able to make friends with people of other cultures. Coming from a different one myself has connected me with a sense of gratitude towards other cultures. My heritage has always given me a sense of pride that has helped me become the person that I am today and that will help me grow into the person that I have yet to become.

Being born a Macedonian, in a proud Macedonian family, I have learned my values and have had a sense of pride for my culture starting at a very young age. There was always a large commitment to tradition in my home regarding customs and holidays. Being of Macedonian Christian Orthodox Faith, I was always connected on a large level to the rest of the Macedonian community through the Church. There was always one celebration or another, be it for a holiday, a name day, a wedding or christening, a chance to come together as Macedonians and share our tradition. It is this common sense of heritage and respect among our community that keeps us united as a culture. The church community stands within the diversity of the larger community, yet stands apart on its own at the same time.

Coming from a Macedonian community has helped me to be understanding and respectful of other cultures and traditions while providing me with a sense of identity that allows me to relate with other Macedonians. There is a sense of respect that is instilled within me for other cultures and heritages because I come from a traditional one myself. Being Macedonian has helped me to harmoniously adapt to my own set of people within the same community and also those of other cultures. This is fundamental on a global scale regarding community and society. I feel as though no matter which country and culture I visit, I will have a respect and appreciation for that culture and that I will also present my culture to that society so that they too can have a respect for mine.

My family, both immediate and expanded, has played a large part in making me aware of my heritage. I can remember from a very early age, my grandparents sharing stories with my brother, sister, and I about where we came from. These stories were filled with experiences and memories of village and city life and gave me a sense of pride and respect for myself as a Macedonian-American. I was always eager to visit Macedonia to see and feel the places that I came from. Each time I visit Macedonia, I feel as though I am truly at home and among my people. There is a common bond among Macedonians that you can just feel walking along the streets. Macedonian society radiates a quiet pride that is second to none. Although there is not a lot of wealth in Macedonia from a materialistic perspective, each household has an abundance of cultural wealth and integrity. It is this combination of values passed to me from my family which I will pass along one day to my own children.

*To learn more about the UMD Macedonian Heritage Scholarship Program, or donate in support of the program, please contact Boban Jovanovski at (202) 756-2244 or [bjovanovski@umdiaspora.org](mailto:bjovanovski@umdiaspora.org)* ✨

# UMD Canada Holds Gala Banquet, Dimitras Honored for Human Rights Leadership

By Aleksandar Mitreski and Mark Branov

On October 24, 2009, United Macedonian Diaspora gathered in Toronto, Canada, to celebrate its fifth anniversary. The Gala Banquet was a huge success, expanding UMD's presence in North America's largest Macedonian community.

Speakers included a variety of UMD Board Members, as well as the Republic of Macedonia's Consul General in Canada, Ambassador Martin Trenevski, and Major Ted Opitz, representing Canada's federal government in Ottawa. Other notable guests included businessman and philanthropist John Bitove, Sr., and a team of Macedonian Army officers, who are currently training with the Canadian military at CFB Borden, in Barrie, Ontario.

A portion of the proceeds from the banquet went to UMD Canada's Scholarship Program, with three prizes towards an undergraduate degree at a Canadian college or university.

The keynote speaker of the event was Dr. Panayote Dimitras, a Harvard PhD from Athens, and tireless advocate for minority rights in Greece. As an academic and NGO director, Dr. Dimitras has committed his life work to improving conditions for all oppressed minorities in Greece. Due to the hostility of the Athens government to even recognizing its national minorities, Dr. Dimitras is now facing a potential charge of "high treason" because of this advocacy work, punishable by life in prison. But Dr. Dimitras' work continues courageously, because he shares UMD's goal of seeing true democracy in Greece. UMD awarded him with a special plaque in recognition of his vital work and achievements.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Dimitras drew a distinction between the xenophobia of Greek society versus the openness of Canadian society: "Some of you following the news may have noticed that Canada has been visited this week, but the United Nations expert on minority rights Gay MacDougall, to write a report about minority rights in Canada. She gave her conclusions yesterday, and the Canadian government – who had invited her – said they would implement her recommendations... but exactly one year ago, (MacDougall) was doing exactly the same thing in Greece. She went around Greece, to look into the human rights problems there. Unlike in Canada, she was harassed, when she visited Voden / Edhessa."

He continued: "One of the foremost human rights advocates during the difficult years in the Macedonian human rights movement, Hristo Sideropoulos, was here a few months ago, and I'm reading from his interview in UMD Voice magazine, that 'MacDougall's report was one of the most positive public proclamations for the Macedonian community in Greece. We have been waiting for this recognition for a long time.' His work goes back to the 80s, when activists were still afraid to mention their names in Greece. And 'It seems,' says Sideropoulos, 'that the truth

has finally come out.' This is how Sideropoulos, Father Tsarknias, the Vinozhito people, all feel about this report and others that came out this year. It is ... recognition from the international community."

Dr. Dimitras said: "MacDougall's report calls on Greece to retreat from whether there is a Macedonian minority or a Turkish minority, and focus on protecting the rights of those communities, and to comply with the judgments of the European court, that associations of those communities be allowed to use the words "Macedonian" or "Turkish" in their names."

This UN directive comes in light of the bitter legal battle over the Home of Macedonian Civilization. Dr. Dimitras explained: "Every lawyer who works in the European court knows the 1998 case of 'Sideropoulos and others vs. Greece'; it is his name that will be so important forever in the history of the struggle for Macedonian human rights in Greece. The court convicted Greece for not allowing the association to be registered. (But Greece appealed, and) a few weeks ago, the Supreme Court of Greece again rejected the registration of the Home of Macedonian Civilization. The judgment mostly deals with how the European courts never understand history, and the final conclusion - which is totally shocking - says: '... there is no Macedonian nation, consequently there is no Macedonian culture, and there is no Makedonski language, and of course, there is no Macedonian minority in Greece.' In my fifteen years of working on human rights in Greece, I have never seen something so unacceptable, and coming from the Supreme Court of Greece, not some stupid mayor in the Lerin area. This is an insult, not just to the Macedonian minority in Greece, this is an insult to the whole Macedonian nation, which is not supposed to exist, including all of you here this evening, and all of those who live in the Republic of Macedonia, in Bulgaria, in Greece, in Albania and the other Balkan countries." ❄️





## Vinozhito Party Opens Office in Voden

By Mark Branov

It was a promising sign when Vinozhito – a party representing ethnic Macedonians in Greece – opened its second office in the city of Voden (Edhessa) on November 15. With the European courts paying close attention, Greece is no longer free to intimidate its citizens as it once did, and the office opening took place peacefully and without incident.

“Today, we are very happy, because the party Vinozhito has opened an office here in Voden,” said Father Nikodim Tsarknias, well-known activist and priest of Sveta Zlata Meglenska in nearby S’botsko (Aridea), “Voden is making progress. This is the time, in this new European era, for Greece to finally give human rights to its minorities. Greece mustn’t close its eyes... it must see the truth. How shameful that we find the Greeks, even now in the 21st century, still saying there are no Macedonians, and still saying there are no other nationalities in this country. It’s the biggest lie in the world. I urge the new government (of Papandreou) to guarantee the rights of all the nationalities in multicultural Greece – religious rights, language rights and all the other freedoms that ethnic minorities deserve.”

Dimitar Jovanov, of Kaljani said: “Today is a great day, because... through Vinozhito, we hope to break down

these taboos that exist in Greek society. We hope to be recognized and accepted as ethnic Macedonians.”

Kole Netevski, of Shestevo, Kostursko (Kastoria) stated it clearly: “Today we open an office in Voden, and tomorrow, we open another in Kostur.”

Koco Tasev, of Lerinsko added: “Little by little, we will reach Solun (Thessaloniki) as well. We are very happy because we have succeeded, step by step, to give our people a place to gather in Voden, to discuss our common problems and how we can move forward together.”

Only four years ago, things were not so peaceful. In September 1995, a Greek mob physically attacked the Lerin (Florina) headquarters of Vinozhito. The office was ransacked, and the ethnic Macedonians inside were assaulted. Thugs threw office furniture and equipment from the windows and set it on fire in the streets. Not long after, Greek prosecutors charged four Vinozhito members under article 192 of the Greek Penal Code, for “inciting hatred among the citizens.” The phony charges were eventually dropped, and subsequently, the European Court of Human Rights convicted the Greek government for various human rights violations. The government was ordered to pay 35,000 euros in damages to Vinozhito. ✨

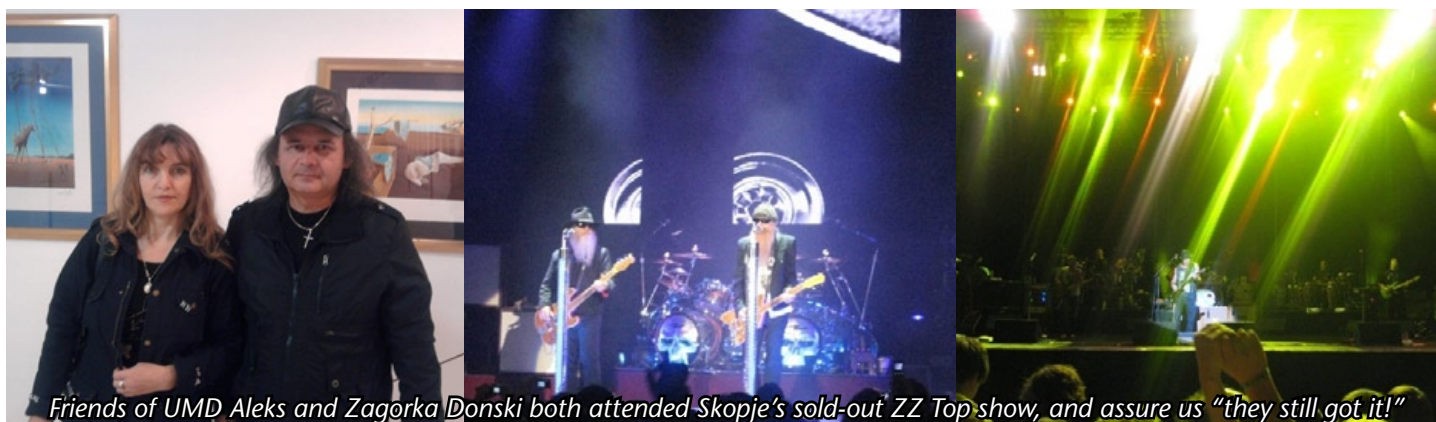
## Rock n’ Roll Alive n’ Well in Macedonia!

By Mark Branov

Most of the international press coverage coming out of Macedonia these days is related to politics, with an occasional story about soccer. But Macedonians love to rock, and this year proved it. The capital is still buzzing about major sell-out shows by guitar legend Carlos Santana and US super group ZZ Top.

On July 10th, Santana appeared with his 10-member all-star band as part of his “Trip through the Hits” European tour, which included a stop in Athens. His band played a two-and-a-half hour concert at Philip II Stadium in Skopje, which was an amazing musical journey through the guitarist’s long and illustrious career. Some estimates cited 20,000 fans at this event.

On October 22nd, Prime Minister Gruevski famously had a private meet & greet with ZZ Top, just before their huge gig at Skopje’s Boris Trajkovski Arena. US Ambassador Philip Reeker and Interior Minister Gordana Jankulovska were spotted in the crowd. ZZ Top’s tour European tour included stops in Belgrade and Sofia. During their audience with the premier, the famously bearded rockers were quoted as saying: “We came to throw a great party and make lots of noise!” ✨



Friends of UMD Aleks and Zagorka Donski both attended Skopje’s sold-out ZZ Top show, and assure us “they still got it!”

# Top Macedonia Leaders Visit North America, Strengthen Ties to US, Canada, Diaspora Communities

By Mark Branov, Stojan Nikolov, Meto Koloski



In recent months, there have been several high profile visits to North America from the very highest officials in the Macedonian government. It would seem that Macedonian dignitaries are making special efforts to boost their cooperation with Washington and Ottawa, while at the same time enhancing the country's relationship to ethnic Macedonians of US and Canadian citizenship.

In late August, Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, Foreign Minister Antonio Milososki, and host of other top Macedonian dignitaries visited Ottawa and Toronto. On the 26th, the Prime Minister and his team met with Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Defense Minister Peter MacKay, and Minister for International Trade Stockwell Day, among others, in the Canadian capital. The Prime Ministers signed a significant agreement on social insurance, which would allow Macedonian citizens with a Canadian pension to retire in Macedonia and receive their pension or disability payments directly, and vice versa. With Macedonia expected to enjoy visa liberalization with Europe in 2010, PM Gruevski and PM Harper discussed the possibility of a similar arrangement between Macedonia and Canada. Macedonian officials hailed the strong bilateral relations between the two countries, and Canadian officials especially praised the Army of the Republic of Macedonia combat role in NATO-led missions. A key aspect of Macedonia's commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration, the ARM's NATO missions have gone forward, despite Macedonia being denied NATO membership by Greece's hostility towards the Macedonian

name and ethnic identity. This hostility resulted in Athens vetoing Macedonia's membership in April 2008, effectively holding the multi-national organization hostage to appease Greek ultra-nationalists domestically, and breaking the 1995 treaty that Athens signed.

On the 27th, the Prime Minister and his entourage were hosted at St. Clement Macedonian Orthodox Cathedral in Toronto. His Eminence, Metropolitan Metodij of the American-Canadian Diocese, Very Reverend Father Trajko Boseovski and other Macedonian Orthodox clergy greeted the ministers, who lit candles at the altar. They were then led to the grand hall, where a crowd of 600 people enjoyed a gala banquet in PM Gruevski's honor. PM Gruevski's detailed speech highlighted his government's accomplishments over the last three years; everything from fulfillment of all requirements for NATO and EU visa liberalization, to anti-corruption measures, economic reforms, and investments in education.

On Friday, philanthropist and business leader John Bitove, Sr., hosted a luncheon for the Prime Minister and his entourage. The small, private gathering of 15 included UMD Director of Canadian Operations Jim Daikos, and UMD representatives Mark Branov, Micheal Branov, and Goran Saveski. Also present were Macedonia 2025 President Mitre Kutanovski and Executive Director Deyan Kostovski. Later on that evening, a business-oriented conference open to the general public was held at St. Clement's, where the Prime Minister discussed his strategies for attracting foreign investment from Canada's large Macedonian community.

The following month, Macedonian President Gjorge Ivanov visited the United States, spending the first leg of his trip in Vermont, where he met with state government officials and leadership of the Vermont National Guard. The President announced the Macedonian Government's decision to deploy additional troops to Afghanistan, who will be paired with their US

counterparts from the Vermont National Guard - the first such pairing of American troops with forces from a non-NATO country.

On September 19th, UMD Voice Development Director Stojan Nikolov attended a reception hosted by Vermont's Adjutant General Michael Dubie in Ivanov's honor. Nikolov had the opportunity to meet with the president personally, and the President emphasized the benefits of the ARM's partnership with the Vermont National Guard over the past 15 years. Starting as a military partnership, it has since lead to educational exchange and collaboration in areas such as environmental research and international trade.

On September 25th, President Ivanov delivered a speech to the UN General Assembly, where he spoke of his country's willingness to achieve "a reasonable and fair compromise" with Greece, so long as it does not "touch upon, nor deny our national, cultural and linguistic identity in any way." He stressed that: "there is no more sovereign right than the right of self-determination" and said that Greece had prevented his country from becoming a member of NATO "contrary to the obligations undertaken in the 1995 Interim Agreement. This was done in an attempt to unfavorably influence the outcome of the negotiations held under the auspices of the UN, and acted completely opposite to such common visions."

President Ivanov's visit concluded with two events in New Jersey. The first was a dinner in honor of the President held at Sts. Kiril and





Metodij Macedonian Orthodox Church in Cedar Grove, organized by the Macedonian Human Rights Movement of New Jersey. Over 250 guests attended the dinner, including Dr. Srgjan Kerim, former President of the UN General Assembly, Congressman Bill Pascrell,

and Clifton Mayor Jim Anzaldi. In his remarks, President Ivanov praised the efforts of United Macedonian Diaspora in Washington, DC. The final event was a private reception at the home of Honorary Consul Slavco Madzarov in Clifton, New Jersey, which featured over

60 guests from New Jersey's political, economic and social establishment, including former New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine. President Ivanov expressed his deep gratitude for the friendship between the great State of New Jersey and Macedonia. ✨

## Papandreou Stonewalls, Macedonia Remains Committed to Interim Agreement

By Mark Branov

In a column for Canada's Globe and Mail newspaper (The Vanishing Powder Keg, October 9, 2009), Misha Glenny suggested that the Balkan political scene was in for a renaissance, and that Greece – of all countries - would lead the way to Balkan integration in Europe. This was just one of several dubious assertions.

“(In 2001, there) was the small civil war in Macedonia, where relations between the country's large Albanian minority and the... majority threatened to collapse into a bloodbath. Brussels acted with uncharacteristic speed, offering the country a fast track to European Union membership as part of a proposed peace deal,” Glenny wrote, with no sense of irony. But he ignores that it is now 2009, and there is no indication that Macedonia is on any sort of fast track, just the opposite. EU ascension talks have yet to fully materialize due to Greek objections, and Greece recently vetoed Macedonia's NATO membership on the most spurious of grounds, in violation of the 1995 Interim Accord.

Glenny's entire article is full of distortions that could easily mislead the casual reader, such as his careless use of the politically-charged Greek term “Slav Macedonian” to refer to ethnic Macedonian people. But perhaps the most absurd suggestion is that Greece is poised to become some sort of champion for Balkan integration.

Glenny writes: “One politician who had deeply understood (the value of European integration for the Balkans) is George Papandreou, then the Greek foreign minister in 2003, who last week was returned to office, this time as the Prime Minister. In the teeth of both indolence and opposition from some European countries, he mounted a successful campaign to persuade European Union leaders to make a commitment that all Southeast European countries would eventually be able to join, if they wanted. It has been a slow and laborious process since then, but it is working... now that Mr. Papandreou, the Balkans' greatest supporter within the EU, is back in power, there will be renewed impetus to think the unthinkable.”

Unfortunately, recent events

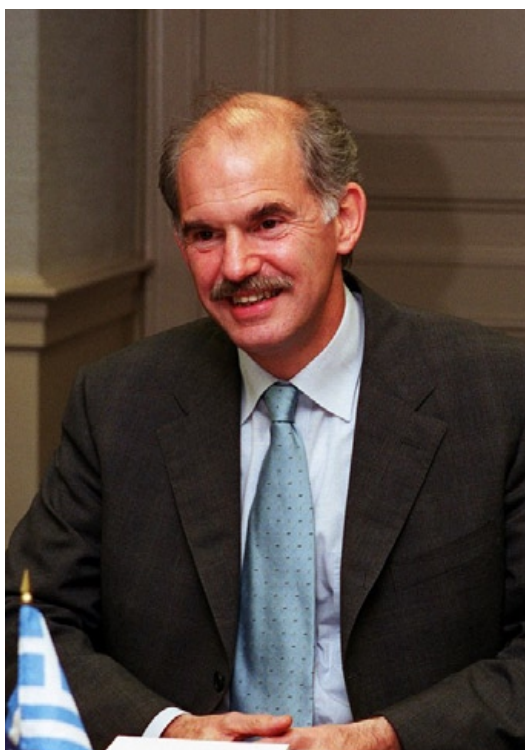
suggest that these theories are modern Greek myths. According to MIA News Agency, Greek representative Adamantios Vassilakis met with UN mediator Matthew Nimetz in November to deliver another list of extreme demands on Macedonia; demands that suggest nothing has changed from the hostile policies of the former Athens administration.

These demands include the use of a compound name for both international and internal communication, even with the 127 countries that have already fully recognized the Republic of Macedonia under its constitutional name. Vassilakis also insisted on the adjective ‘Northern’ or ‘New’ being used for the Macedonian nation, that the international telephone and internet code MK be changed, and that all Macedonian maps and instruction books be censored, so that Macedonian-language toponyms not be used for villages and cities in Aegean Macedonia / Greece. Not surprisingly, no mention of improving human rights for the Macedonian minority in Greece is made.

According to Macedonian Foreign Minister Antonio Milososki, the Macedonian government will continue to take active part in the UN-sponsored negotiations out of respect for the provisions of the Interim Accord, and calls on Greece to do the same, especially vis-à-vis Greece's treaty obligation to not hinder Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integration.

“In the spirit of the Interim Agreement and respecting its standards, the Republic of Macedonia will remain actively engaged in this bilateral dialogue, led under the UN aegis... We expect for our southern neighbor to act in line with the provisions of the Interim Accord as well, to respect the mandate of mediator Nimetz, and accordingly... to support our country's Euro-Atlantic integration,” he said.

Papandreou's young government has so far shown no signs of renewed pragmatism or good will either to his country's northern neighbor or to the restive minority of ethnic Macedonians within Greece, who endure official state discrimination. Mr. Glenny's optimistic outlook about Greek intentions in the region appears to be misplaced. ✨



## Macedonia Today: A Canadian Perspective

*By Julian Portelli, Zinejda Rita, Gjorgji Stamov, Maja Stjadic, Katarzyna Wichrowska*

For any student of European politics, the Balkan region poses a challenge, rarely, if ever, fitting comfortably into the European puzzle. For five students at the Centre for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies at the University of Toronto, it did not take long for Macedonia to capture our curiosity.

In light of the bloody Balkan conflicts of the 1990s, Macedonia did not receive the media and international community attention of other former Yugoslav republics. In comparison to Bosnia-Herzegovina or Kosovo, Macedonia appeared less complicated at the time. Despite having a multiethnic population, the country was able to separate from Belgrade peacefully. However, the ethnic balance in Macedonia proved more fragile to regional influence than expected. In 2001, the country finally succumbed to a violent interethnic conflict of its own. The violence was relatively brief and the international community managed a ceasefire swiftly, but deep scars remained.

From a distance, it had appeared that Macedonia was transitioning and developing more confidently than the rest of the Western Balkans. Indeed, Macedonia had been one of only a few candidate countries for membership to the European Union in the 1990s. Others included Croatia, which is now closest to obtaining EU membership, and Turkey, a country that has been candidate status limbo since 1995 with little to no progress. Despite significant international support, Macedonia's ascension stalled. Meanwhile, more of the country's deep-seated problems have begun to surface, threatening political stability.

Thanks to the support of the Macedonian-Canadian community, the Consulate General of Macedonia in Toronto, and the expertise of Professor Robert Austin, five U of T students were able to travel to Macedonia. Our busy schedule included meetings with public figures such as Ivica Bocevski, Deputy Prime Minister in charge of European Integration, members of the NGO community, such as Vladimir Milcin of the SOROS foundation, and entrepreneurs like Zivko Gruevski, owner of MAT Airlines, along with many other groups.



Photos courtesy of: umdiaspora.org

Our only interaction with an Albanian group in Macedonia came at the SEE University in Tetovo. Milcin had explained to us that the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) had segregated the two ethnicities, with public schools now running different schedules for Albanian and Macedonian students. SEEU was established as a result of negotiations between Macedonians, Albanians and the OSCE in 2000, and it was stipulated that classes would be held in Albanian, Macedonian and English. Although the opening of universities in Albanian did improve the percentage of Albanians with university diplomas, it also failed in two other respects: it did not please the Albanian side, which had demanded state funded higher education in Albanian, not a private university. Also, it started a trend where the students for the two different communities do not need to interact anymore.

This dangerous division within the country was institutionalized after the 2001 conflict, where higher education in Albanian language had been one of the demands of the insurgents. The proclaimed purpose of the OFA was to stop the violence by giving Albanians more rights. Eight years later, violence has virtually ended, but the key issues on the ground have not been resolved. To many Macedonians, the OFA gave the Albanians much more than they deserved, whereas to many Albanians, the OFA did not give enough. Implemented in law but not fully in practice, the OFA did give Albanian political parties tools for dissent and obstructing the integration process. As a result, the average ethnic Albanian citizen cannot gain very much on the ground unless he or she is affiliated with the Albanian party. In several of our discussions with figures such as Stevo Pendarovski, Security Advisor to former Presidents Branko Crvenkovski and Boris Trajkovski, and Matt Fields, Political Advisor to EU Special Representative to Macedonia, it was clear that stagnation in Macedonia, at a time when Albania is moving towards Europe faster and has already become a member of NATO, will consequently create more internal turmoil.

Savka Todorovska of the National Council of Women proposed that her organization provided crucial common ground, because it fights for the shared goal of







improving the status of all women in Macedonia. The 105 women's organizations that work under the umbrella of the National Council of Women are multiethnic in character and strive toward integration of all groups living within the Republic. Still, while cooperation has taken place, it continues to be a difficult process because of the broader social and political problems. Our discussions informed us about the major issues that women face within private and public spheres, and the efforts being made in areas such as the woman empowerment, gender equality, peace building, education, employment and the involvement of women in politics.

However, the work of NGOs, one could argue, is dwarfed by the influence the European Union has in shaping Macedonia's political, economic and social future. After being granted candidate status in 2005, the prospect of growth and reform was realistic and it seemed that membership would certainly be attainable. Four years later, the momentum of EU-driven progress has been lost; reforms in political, economic and social spheres have become stagnant and "Macedonia's path toward membership is headed in the wrong direction," said Matthew Fields, Political Advisor to the EU Special Representative in Macedonia. In legislative terms, Fields claimed that stronger reforms needed to take place in the judiciary, along stronger anti-corruption measures and stronger environmental policies. In the economic realm, privatization and business competition must be furthered in order to meet basic economic benchmarks.

The Macedonian Government has been pre-occupied with Greece's name dispute, but from the perspective of the EU, the tactics to deal with this dispute will only yield short-term benefits. Fields raised a concern about the potentially negative reaction from non-ethnic Macedonians if EU membership does not come soon. Even if Macedonia does become politically, economically and socially ready to gain full membership, Greece will make sure Macedonia stays out of the European club so long as the Greek dispute over Macedonia's constitutional name remains unresolved. This is an issue, which is of deep concern to ethnic Macedonians but not minority ethnic groups. And all Macedonian citizens have suffered under the strict visa regime enforced by EU countries. According to Ivica Bocevski, Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration, more than 70% of the population has never visited the EU.

That the youth is overwhelmingly absent from Macedonian society was repeatedly stressed throughout our meetings. Nevertheless, the group of students we met from the University American College in Skopje did show a genuine desire to see their nation prosper and significant awareness of issues currently facing their country. This indicated to us that the youth does not suffer from apathy, as is the universal belief of older generations, but rather that conditions within Macedonia inhibit opportunity and cause feelings of disenfranchisement. As we can testify ourselves as students, international experience and international exposure are essential to young people beginning their careers. Thankfully, there are indications that visa liberalization is on its way. This must take place much sooner than later if the EU is to keep the Macedonian government interested in reforms. It became clear to us early in the trip that the government must do everything in its power to ensure that the visa liberalization becomes a reality in 2010, as promised.

Our academic fact-finding mission to the Republic of Macedonia was motivated by the desire to answer questions related to the political, economic and social development of Macedonia. Above all, the key question is what direction Macedonia will take now, given the painful Greek veto at the 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest and Greece's ongoing legal obstructions. If the experience of an entrepreneur like Zivko Gruevski - who lost large investments after the Bucharest Summit - is any indication, delaying European integration is a painful option, and could have serious consequences. As it stands, support for the EU in Macedonia is still strong at 80%. Support for Macedonia in Brussels is another issue, but Bocevski was adamant that the rest of Europe recognizes the need to integrate Macedonia. Despite how bad the situation may seem now, Bocevski pointed out, history has shown that even the most unlikely of candidates have become members of the European Union. Hope remains that wisdom, along with positive and constructive debate, can lead to a solution that would allow for the Republic of Macedonia to finally join the European family. ✨





## Are We Experiencing Another Bucharest?

By Jana Lozanoska



The question does not suggest that the EU will fail to propose a date for the start of accession negotiations, despite the unresolved name dispute with Greece. On the contrary, it refers to the period prior to Bucharest, when there was enormous pressure from the international community and regional powers on the Republic of Macedonia to “reach a compromise”. Therefore, it would be useful to reflect back, in order to learn from past mistakes, and not repeat them.

Prior to Bucharest, the pressure was, as always, on the Macedonian side, as if it was the unrelenting one. Meanwhile, Greece was and still is setting the rules in the negotiations. The build up to Bucharest seemed more like a dictation than real negotiations. Greece has never had anything to lose; all those stories of ancient heritage are just a paranoid excuse for Greece to pander to domestic hysteria. At the same time, with every concession made, the Republic of Macedonia loses its collective dignity and identity.

A closer analysis of official Greek attitudes before and after Bucharest indicates, above all, an utter irrationality and absurdity – invoking the so-called “right to historic exclusivity” in order to make a physical distinction between the territory of the Republic of Macedonia and ancient Macedonia. It ignores the fact that this distinction is already present in our constitutional name – the Republic of Macedonia.

Therefore, is it actually possible for opinions to converge? Considering recent events before the change of government in Greece, but also the clear signals sent by the current government, an agreement would have to be reached on two issues: the wording of the name and the extent of its use (whether it will be used internationally, only bilaterally with Greece, or some other combination).

If we consider the actual wording of the name, the absurdity of the latest proposal of the mediator Nimetz – the Republic of Northern Macedonia – becomes obvious. The word ‘Republic’ is redundant and what remains is the name ‘Northern Macedonia’. This is exactly why the name ‘the Northern Republic of Macedonia’ has not been brought forward, since it would expose the irrationality of Greece’s demands.

The extent of the use of the name, on the other hand, especially Greece’s insistence on international use, prompts many legal implications, none of which are in the interest of the Macedonian side, especially since it has already been recognised under its constitutional name by nearly 130 countries of the international community, who are also members of the United Nations.

Considering all of the above, the question that arises is whether the pre-Bucharest pressure scenario will be repeated or whether the focus will shift. The latest European Commission progress report for the Republic of Macedonia states: “reaching a mutually acceptable solution remains essential.” It is an indicator that, once again, things will not change much. In plain words, what this means is that if there is no mutually acceptable solution, there will not be a date for negotiations. For a mutually acceptable solution to be reached, there would need to be at least a slight convergence of attitudes on contentious issues.

Two issues come out of this European Commission report. First, the EU is applying pressure on the Macedonian side. Second, the EU is unable, as an organization, to distance itself from this bilateral issue belonging to Greece, its member state.

The Macedonian side must bear in mind that any potential shift in the direction of international pressure will not happen on its own. It also will not happen as the result of standing aside and repeating phrases like “the Republic of Macedonia remains constructive in the negotiations.” On the contrary, it will only come about if we get actively involved and use arguments based on the evidence of past experience.

If Greece does not agree to give a date for the start of the negotiations, it will once again violate the Interim Accord of 1995. Greece’s violation of the Interim Accord at the Bucharest summit was the reason why the Macedonian side initiated a case before the International Court of Justice in The Hague. In this context, not reaching a consensus on a date for the start of the negotiations due to Greece’s objections will constitute another obstruction of the Republic of Macedonia’s membership to international and regional organizations.

The only clear responsibility that the Greek side undertook by signing the Interim Accord was not to object to our entrance to international and regional organisations. Hence, this will be a strong additional argument to support the application already submitted to the court in The Hague, but it could also be used as counter-pressure towards the EU. If it does not change EU behaviour and decision-making, it clearly shows disrespect for the bilateral commitments undertaken by EU member states.

Isn’t the EU, after all, supposed to be based on rule of law, both at the national and international level? It might sound idealistic, but maybe in retrospect, the Republic of Macedonia will be the precedent that changes the way EU decisions are made. After all, the law, including European law, should at least respond to reality.

*Jana Lozanoska holds an LL.M degree from the University of Geneva, and is currently a PhD candidate at the Euro-Balkan Institute – Division of Applied Policy Research.* ✨

# Exploring Macedonia With Author Chris Deliso

By Mark Branov

*Whenever we decide to travel, we often create a list of all the things to do before we leave, and buying a trusted travel guide is often right near the top of that “to do” list. In the English-speaking world at least, chances are that the travel book we actually do choose will be from Lonely Planet, the world’s largest travel guide publisher. This British/Australian firm has a staff of over 350 writers who produce approximately 6 million guidebooks a year in eight languages. The effect of Lonely Planet’s global gaze is legendary, with favorable reviews often bringing in new clientele from around the world.*

*Thanks to author and journalist Chris Deliso, Lonely Planet has definitely started to take notice of Macedonia as a premier travel destination and hidden gem in the heart of Europe. We had a chance to catch up with this prominent Macedonia-based writer - who is also the director of Balkananalysis.com, a premier news and analysis site on the Balkans - in hopes of learning more about his work, and his passion for sharing the beauty of Macedonia with the world.*

**MB: Please tell us a bit about your background, and what led to you writing about, and eventually living in the Balkans?**

CD: Originally from the United States, I have a master’s degree in Byzantine Studies from Oxford University. I developed some knowledge of this region and its cultures, and have been traveling, studying and living here - in Greece, Turkey, and now Macedonia. In addition to Macedonia, I cover several other countries for my website - balkananalysis.com - and global media bodies, such as Lonely Planet, Jane’s Defense and the Economist Intelligence Unit. As a freelancer, I choose my projects, which gives me flexibility.

**MB: Lonely Planet is one of the world’s most prestigious publishers of travel books. You recently wrote the Macedonia section for Lonely Planet’s guides to the Western Balkans, published in May 2009, and Eastern Europe, published in October 2009. Tell us about that experience.**

CD: Writing these travel guides, according to a strict system, is a bit like the baseball season - you start in April and finish in October. The Western Balkans book covers seven nations, therefore, it was the work of seven different writers, numerous editors, mapmakers and production

staff. Eastern Europe, covering 21 countries, was a much bigger project. I was very proud to add 40 percent more coverage of Macedonia, including new areas that have never been mentioned in previous editions. Also, the Ohrid section now includes a walking tour of all the sites, including the coastal villages and beaches. The new Skopje section features reviews of many more eateries, cafes and bars, as well as the famous monasteries, mosques and archaeological sites in the area.

**MB: It was interesting to see that your work goes well beyond Ohrid and Skopje, with extra focus on the lesser-known jewels in Macedonia’s crown, like the Mariovo region, and the beautiful eastern districts. Tell us about your experiences off the beaten track.**

CD: Since I had the freedom to add places I felt important, and since Lonely Planet books attract a more adventurous type of traveler, it was easy to get off the beaten track. For me, it’s a great pleasure to explore these places; you often encounter things so unusual, you simply have to write them down! For instance, Golem Grad, the island in Lake Prespa with its snakes and strange trees, or Mariovo, where I ended up going by Lada Niva down the “Tsarski Pat” - a practically invisible path made by the Serbian army during WWI. Today, it passes through rivers and thick brush, so without local experts, you won’t get through. Or swimming in the Bela Reka with its freshwater crabs and glittering gold flakes on the bottom. Or the man in the ‘ghost village’ whose front yard featured an odd sort of Christmas tree - its branches decorated with rusty battle helmets he has found lying around the area from the WWI era. Strumica is always larger-than-life. I think of Kolid in Kolesino - the

largest watermelon depot in the Balkans - where bronzed, sweating farmers heave around these huge fruits onto 18-wheelers headed as far away as Croatia. This sort of offbeat sight is common for Macedonians, but an outsider might find them unique, not to mention hidden gems like the Smolare and Kolesino waterfalls. It was great to find a provincial town with such an unexpectedly lively entertainment scene. But if you don’t bring these places to tourists’ attention, they might never know to look, and thereby they would miss out on the full Macedonian experience.



**MB: What does Macedonia offer the world traveler that is rare or unique?**

CD: This is a question I try to emphasize whenever I speak with Macedonian tourism providers. The trick is to use uniqueness to your advantage in a very competitive market. Nowadays, foreign tourists have an unprecedented range of affordable travel options, with European budget airlines connecting you to almost everywhere. Tourists today don't have much time to spare, and with the economy, they frequently have budget concerns too. So, why should someone pick Macedonia instead of, say, Estonia, Egypt, Scotland or Spain? The trick is to capture the attention and build the curiosity. Discovering what is rare, unique and memorable about Macedonia is extremely important, and involves critical thinking. Ultimately, the local people must get involved, but when the locals don't know what the visitor might be familiar with or want, this job becomes much harder. So the local tourism providers must consult with their peers from abroad, who do have that awareness.

**MB: Macedonia has received international accolades for its natural beauty, and ecotourism is an area with great potential. What would you recommend to those interested in getting away from it all?**

CD: Ecotourism is key for Macedonia. The natural beauty hasn't been destroyed yet, unlike in some overdeveloped areas in Bulgaria. It scares me when I hear hotel owners in Ohrid who dream of lining the lakeshore top to bottom with luxury hotels. It would destroy the whole atmosphere and the natural factors that attract tourists in the first place, and they would never be able to fill them. On the other hand, I also encounter the other extreme: people who want to avoid any kind of development. That won't work either. The trick is to fulfill all the conditions for sustainable tourism by building ecologically friendly infrastructure, avoiding overdevelopment, and engaging both the locals and visitors in "green" activities. I know of many places that are doing this very successfully in neighboring countries; ecotourism has become a major buzzword in the travel industry, with real marketing power.

**MB: For Diaspora Macedonian travelers seeking to reconnect with their culture, history and traditions, what are some of the "can't miss" destinations to put on top of the list?**

CD: Of course, the churches of Ohrid and Skopje, and more far-flung ones like Bigorski, Veljusa in Strumica, Lesnovski and Osogovski also in the east, as well as major ruins like Stobi and Heraclea. And the historic parts of Skopje and Bitola, of course.

**MB: We receive constant reports from Diaspora Macedonians – often Canadian, US, or Australian citizens – about being "blacklisted" by the Greek border authorities, and turned away when they attempt to visit family in Aegean Macedonia from the Republic. What do**

**you know about this phenomenon, and do you have any advice for these travelers?**

CD: I too have heard of this. Incidents may have to do with specific situations, like whether or not the border policeman on duty was in a bad mood. Certainly, no one should be turned back if they haven't committed a crime in Greece ... I would suggest just being as polite and cool-headed as possible, just like in any other social situation, even if the larger issue is fraught with emotion.

**MB: What can be done to boost the tourism industry in Macedonia?**

CD: The most important thing is honesty and self-criticism, without politicization. People here are often eager to take credit or to criticize according to barely-concealed partisan motives. Some of the largest tourism promotion activities undertaken in Macedonia are highly controversial from a cost/benefit analysis point of view. Sadly, there is no rational level of discourse. Second, Macedonians should understand the current place of their country on the tourism map, and what it has to offer that, as you said, is rare, unique or special. There remains very little awareness here of how the outside world views Macedonia as a tourism destination. Changing this involves listening to outside voices - the Diaspora strikes me as a good place to start - as well as foreign experts with relevant experience to share. And, I might add, to be familiar with the promotional material that currently exists, such as the guidebooks I have worked on. These publications have great influence worldwide and no one has been taking advantage of it. Also, we need to keep observing how tourism development has succeeded or failed elsewhere, to learn from their best practices and avoid the mistakes made. The one hopeful aspect of Macedonia's delayed growth in this industry is simply that irrevocable mistakes have not yet been made, unlike in other Balkan countries.

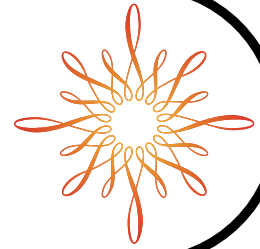
**MB: What are new writing projects are you working on, both now and in the near future?**

CD: I remain very busy these days with my writing, as well as an exciting redevelopment of the news site I have run since 2003, [Balkananalysis.com](http://Balkananalysis.com). One writing project I am fascinated in is a short history/travelogue about the Turkish legacy in Macedonia from Ottoman times. Turkey is one of the friendliest countries to Macedonia today, and has an important historic legacy here, as well as a peaceful and well-integrated Turkish minority. These people haven't really been given a voice, and I would love to bring their story to a global audience.

*Chris Deliso is an American travel writer, journalist and author, based in Skopje, Macedonia since 2002, and a previous contributor to UMD Voice Magazine. His personal website is [www.chrisdeliso.com](http://www.chrisdeliso.com), and he is the director of [www.balkananalysis.com](http://www.balkananalysis.com).* ✨



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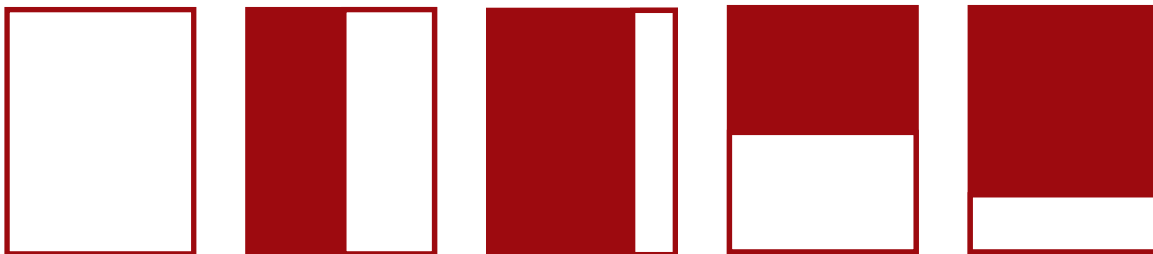
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## UMD Meets with Macedonian Government Officials

*By Stefan Lewandowski, UMD International Policy and Diplomacy Fellow*

During the month of November 2009, UMD and the Embassy of Macedonia organized two unique invitation-only round-table discussions with the top-level officials in Macedonia's government, in Washington, DC. Through such events, UMD seeks to facilitate a greater engagement of the Diaspora in Macedonia's socio-economic development.

On November 5, 2009, UMD met with the Speaker of Macedonia's Parliament, Trajko Veljanoski, who was accompanied by the Vice Speaker of Macedonia's Parliament, Jani Makraduli, and senior executives Vasko Kronevski and Igor Andonovski of NextSense, the company that developed "eParliament Macedonia." Issues discussed included Euro-Atlantic integration and the current disputes with Greece. UMD reiterated its stance that it objects to any changes to Macedonia's constitutional name.

On November 17, 2009, UMD met with Macedonia's Minister of Economy Fatmir Besimi and members of his staff. Anvi Mustafaj from the National Albanian American Council attended the roundtable as well. Macedonia's current economic situation was discussed, and attendees posed questions to the Minister regarding the investment-friendly environment in the country, and the ongoing reforms. The Minister learned from attendees about how Macedonia is viewed in the Macedonian-American community and what his ministry can do to improve the image of Macedonia internationally. Minister Besimi offered to cooperate with UMD and plans to highlight some of UMD's economic development initiatives on the ministry website in the future. ❄



*UMD with Macedonian Speaker of the Parliament*



*UMD with Macedonia's Minister of Economy*

Photos courtesy of: umdiaspora.org

## Spreading the Word in Salt Lake City

*By Boban Jovanovski, UMD Director of Public Policy*

Earlier this month, I had the honor of attending the 7th North American-Macedonian Studies Conference at the University of Utah, in Salt Lake City. As a sponsor of the event, it seemed only fitting that a representative of UMD be present to observe. Indeed, I was pleasantly surprised. The conference is held every third year, alternating between a North American site, and the Republic of Macedonia.

While I regret having missed the opening day of the conference due to scheduling conflicts in Washington, DC, I was impressed by the caliber of the presentations, the enthusiasm of the organizers, and the zeal of the many guests who wished to learn more about Macedonia, its history, language, and culture.

The majority of the conference was devoted primarily to linguistic concerns and the unique characteristics of the Macedonian language, particularly its retention of several features not found in other Slavic languages. Additionally, the conference covered Macedonian arts, including literature, poetry, and theater. Importantly for UMD and

the Macedonian Diaspora as a whole, the conference also touched upon some of the more troubling points in Macedonian history, especially the issue of the Child Refugees, expelled from Greece during the brutal Greek Civil War following World War II. Though informative, and generally without incident, minor disruptions from some Greek extremists did surface. Nonetheless, the conference continued, unhindered.

Aside from the formal events of the conference, the organizers arranged two special events to help introduce us to Salt Lake City and the Great Salt Lake Valley. Events included a cable-car ride to the top of a mountain, and a dinner where organizers were able to mingle with participants, complete with a local Balkan band. I was able to exchange ideas with academics, students, and other participants about their personal experiences, while also sharing with them the important work UMD has done for five years, promoting the Macedonian cause. ❄

# The Fifth Immigrant Reunion of the Macedonian Diaspora

*By Anastas Sasa Odaklieski and Boris Patarov*

In August, the Radio Macedonia Satellite Program organized the Fifth Reunion of Immigrants, in beautiful Mavrovo, Macedonia. About 50 immigrants to Canada, Northern Europe, Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Croatia and Serbia congregated at the Hotel Makpetrol.

The guests had all previously emigrated from all across the country, from Kriva Palanka to Gostivar to Strumica. There were about fifty Macedonian immigrants from all around the world, from countries including: Canada, Sweden, Germany, Austria, Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Croatia and Serbia.

The participants got to enjoy each others' company for two days, exchanging stories about their life and work in their newly adopted countries. It ended in a warm, friendly and joyful atmosphere. The team from "Radio Macedonia" supported the event. One of their featured programs - The Voice of the Motherland - has played for five years, and enables listeners from the Diaspora to go live in the studio. This program's interactive nature allows close relatives and friends in Macedonia to take part, making it a perfect opportunity for reconnecting with faraway loved ones. By making all of this possible, "Radio Macedonia" represents a bridge, connecting Macedonian people from around the world.

Previous reunions in the past few years have been held in Vinica, Strumica, Struga, and Probistip. No matter the distance, the Macedonian people will never forget about their roots, cultural values, traditions and folklore.

In the evening, Macedonian immigrants spent some time in the gorgeous ambiance of Mount Bistra and Lake Mavrovo. By singing the old Macedonian songs and dancing to the steps of their national dances, they reminded themselves of their youth.

On August 8th, the radio broadcast featured Macedonians from all over the world, such as Tance Trajkovski, originally from Bitola and now living in Canada, then, Gorgija Mojsovski, a Kicevo-native living in Sweden, Dobre Fudarski with his lovely wife - immigrants in Switzerland, Laze Novakov and his mother Temjanuska from Bulgaria, and the hosts Nake and Ana Savevski from Serbia. Also present at the event was Mayor of Mavrovo, Muharem Mehmed and the director of the Hotel "Makpetrol", Radoslav Simevski.

The immigrants talked about their lives in their new countries, about their activities in local Macedonian cultural clubs,

and the church dioceses; important organizations where the Macedonian culture abroad is maintained. One of the highlights of the night was the speech of Mr. Anastas Odaklieski, representing the Macedonian Diaspora in Croatia. He stressed how important it is for all of the Macedonians abroad to cooperate closely with each other for better affirmation and further progress of Macedonia.

Mr. Odaklieski also mentioned the work and the meaning behind the UMD Global Conference 2009, which was held in Washington, DC. Reflecting on his impressions and experiences from the conference, he pledged for a more intensive cooperation among the Macedonians from all around the world to further our cause and strengthen our being.

He also expressed his support for Croatia's decision to recognize our country under its constitutional name, with the help of the Macedonian minority.

The hosts then described the national treasure that is Mavrovo National Park, pointing out the potential for economic growth and prosperity in this region if more investments were to take place.

On Saturday, August 8th, several hours were spent on visiting the beautiful Radika Canyon, as well as ancient religious sanctuaries - the monasteries "St. John the Baptist" and "St. George the Victorious".

After the Fifth Immigrant Reunion in Mavrovo came to its end, everybody came away with the same impression: "We are going home with wonderful memories that will be cherished for the rest of our lives." ✨





# Michigan's MASA: Youth Advocacy In Action

By Amanda Kostoff



At the University of Michigan-Dearborn, fall marks the beginning of new classes, a new football season, and Global-fest, where the university shows off its cultural diversity by hanging flags, sharing ethnic foods, music, and dances with their fellow students and faculty.

In the university's 50-year history, Macedonia had never been represented. Three students on campus decided it was time to change that.

The Macedonian-American Student Association (MASA) was created with the desire to represent Macedonian culture on campus, but has become so much more. MASA Vice President Justin Vasilevski said "We knew there were many other Macedonians on campus, it was just a matter of finding them; MASA allowed us to do that." After a unanimous vote by the Student Government, MASA officially became a recognized organization in March 2009.

Since being approved, MASA has become an active organization on campus, responsible for a number of events, such the Mini-World Cup - and coincidentally also the first team to win the tournament. MASA has also hosted a "Baklava Bonanza" where students were able to taste baklava, among other traditional Macedonian foods, and to get more information about MASA and Macedonia.

MASA also wanted a chance to give back to the community through charity work, so it joined with the University of Michigan-Dearborn Soccer Club to organize Goodwill Goals, a charity 5 v 5 soccer tournament, where

teams pay a fee to participate, or are sponsored by a local business. Door prizes and a first place grand prize were given as incentives for participation. Through registration, and support from local businesses, Goodwill Goals was able to raise over \$1000 for an orphanage in Bitola, Macedonia and other causes. Secretary Margarita Lazarevska, who was able to see the donations at work, said: "Seeing the smiles and happy faces of the children made it worth the effort."

In the short time MASA has been an official organization, it has been able to become an active part of campus life, and we hope to continue to unite Macedonians not only on our campus, but also in the greater community. There are currently three other branches of MASA in Michigan including Oakland University, Wayne State, and our newest chapter at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. We hope others will "pull up a chair, and join the MASA!", and we encourage other students to represent their heritage on other campuses worldwide. For the first time in 50 years, the Macedonian flag will hang proudly at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, and we look forward to expanding our activities in the future.

For more information about MASA, please find us on Facebook at Macedonian-American Student Association, or [contactusatmasassociation@umd.umich.edu](mailto:contactusatmasassociation@umd.umich.edu)



Photos courtesy of: MASA

## In Memoriam: Vasil (Bill) Branov, 1943-2009

Bill Branov was born in the village of Bouf, Lerin Region, Aegean Macedonia, on November 5, 1943, in the middle of WWII. As a result, his upbringing was a turbulent one, and included periods of hardship and struggle.

He came to Canada at the age of 12. After spending his early years in Windsor, he soon settled in Toronto. He brought a natural charisma and an old-fashioned work ethic to his career, eventually achieving his goal by running his own printing company, Bran Graphics.

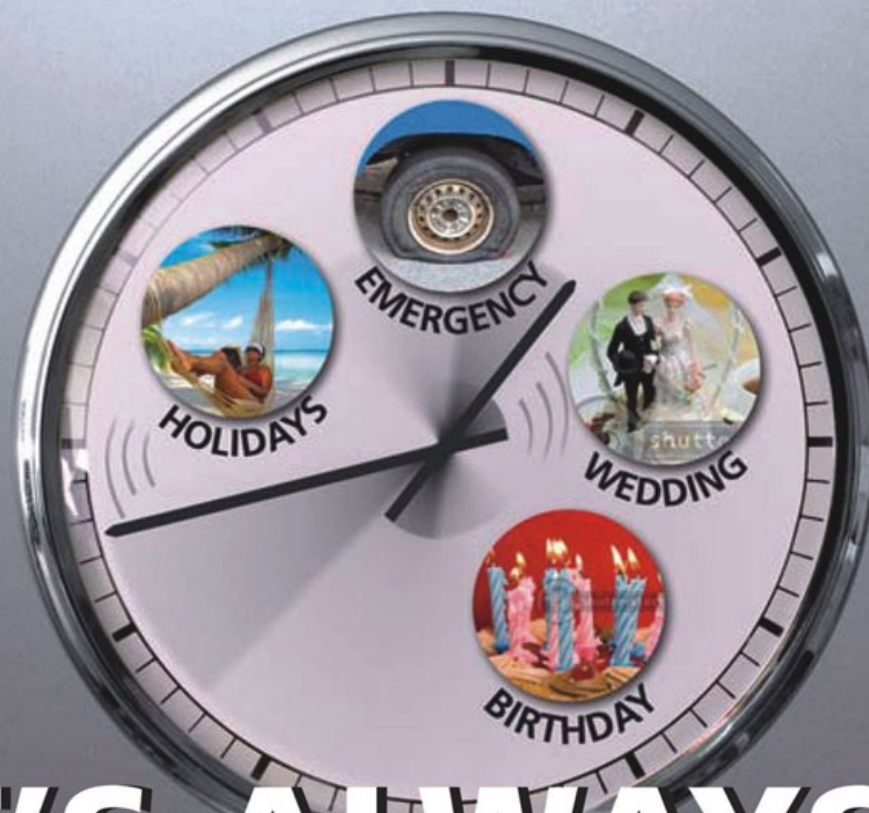
Bill Branov was a patriot, who wore his love for Macedonia on his sleeve, and his heart bled for Aegean Macedonia. All of his charitable activities over the years are too numerous to mention. An active member of St. Clement Ohridski in Toronto since it was built, Bill's fundraising for the church began in the late 1960s. In 1967, he helped to form MACY, Toronto's first Macedonian youth group. He would go on to devote many years to the Canadian Macedonian Place senior citizens home, serving on its Board of Directors. In 1995, he became president of the Macedonian Business and Professional Association, regularly donating printed material to Macedonian projects from his company. In 2005, he was elected president of St. Dimitrija Solunski in Markham.

Bill Branov always showed his special gift for cultivating genuine friendships. His frankness and his passion would sometimes rock the boat, but he made up for it with humor, honesty, dedication, consistency and guts. Above all, Bill Branov devoted his life to his family, helping them in every way he knew how. This included his loving wife of 41 years, Yana, his cherished children Maya, Micheal and Mark, his son- and daughters-in-law, Nick, Helen, and Matilde, his darling grandchildren Veronica, Emily, Cyril and Matthew, his parents Spiro and Tomania, his brother John, his sister Fanny, and many other loving relatives.

He will be sorely missed. ✨







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