

## COMMUNITY NEWS

### ATA-DC's Ataturk School Now Has Sister School

Demet Cabbar

October 29, 2007



In October, ATA-DC and ATATURK School parents teamed up to support a Bayram gift project organized by the Bridge to Turkiye Fund. The project, namely boots/coat/backpack campaign, targeted 500 children in need in some of the remote villages of Turkey. ATATURK SCHOOL parents and ATA-DC decided to support this project and raised funds to buy a coat, a pair of boots, and a backpack full of stationary and personal care items for 30 elementary school children in Agilozu village in the province of Bitlis. As a result ATATURK School and Agilozu Village Elementary School became sister schools. The gift items were distributed to the children in the village during Ramadan Bayrami. In late October, we received a very touching "thank you" message from the



students of Agilozu Elementary, which is now our sister school. ATATURK School plans to continue communicating with the school students and their teacher and supporting them in the future as well.

ATA-DC's ATATURK School has 33 students this semester, who are divided in four classes based on the level of their Turkish. Established in the 1980s, the school's goal is to provide Turkish language and culture classes for Turkish-American children ages 5 to 12 so that they may retain important aspects of Turkish culture while growing up in the United States. Children learn in a fun, yet structured environment. In addition to learning about Turkey and the Turkish language, children are able to socialize with other Turkish-American peers and further develop their language skills. They also learn about traditional Turkish values, such as giving and sharing with those who are in need by supporting underprivileged children in remote villages of Turkey.

Classes are held at McLean High School, each Sunday from 10 AM to 1 PM for two, 16-week sessions from September to January and late January to May.

For more information on ATATURK School, visit: <http://www.atadc.org> or email: [school@atadc.org](mailto:school@atadc.org) ■



Students learn the Turkish-American way of life as they celebrate Cumhuriyet Bayrami and Halloween simultaneously.



### 'Arkadaslar' Celebrate Republic Day

Demet Cabbar

October 29, 2007

I had the honor of attending a very special Republic Day celebration, hosted by *Arkadaslar Group*, on Sunday, October 28th. I found out about the Arkadaslar, only recently when some of their members attended the Ince belli Turkish Brunch, organized by ATA-DC in August. Soon after our meeting, I received an invitation from Ken Hill the head of Arkadaslar's DC Chapter to attend their 24th Annual Dinner celebrating "Cumhuriyet Bayrami" at Kazan Restaurant in McLean. I had no idea what a great surprise was waiting for me until I entered through the door of Kazan that evening.

If you are wondering who Arkadaslar are, they are a bunch of middle aged Americans who speak Turkish with funny Turkish village accents and whose first real love is Turkey. I have never met such people who care so sincerely and

deeply about Turkey in my life. I consider the few hours I spent with them as a gift and an eye opening experience.



Arkadaslar is an organization of returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs), staff, their family members and other friends of Turkey. They served as English teachers, or technical assistance staff in remote villages and towns all around Turkey between 1962 and 1970. At the time they were all in their early twenties. Most of them knew almost none or very little Turkish when they went to Turkey. The reason why they speak Turkish with a village accent is because they learned Turkish in those villages where they served for two years. The friendships they built in those villages have been life-long, and most of them have been back many times, sometimes with their brides, or the "gelin", as the villagers call them.



Peace Corps project was launched during the Kennedy Presidency with the goal of increasing collaboration between the US and other countries by building cultural bridges. The Peace Corps Volunteers program in Turkey was launched in 1962 and lasted until 1970. Most volunteers were young and idealist Americans who did not get a salary but only received living allowances, enough to

cover only their basic living needs. Approximately 1200 Peace Corps volunteers served in Turkey, and about 800 of them kept in touch. This year local chapters of Arkadaslar organized *Cumhuriyet Bayrami* celebrations in eight locations including Boston, New York City, Madison, Winter Park (Florida), Ohio, Portland, Seattle and Washington, D.C.

More than 60 members of the group joined the celebration in Kazan; Turkish food was served, Turkish flags were all over the place as decoration, and Turkish evil eyes were distributed to all the guests as a treat. During dinner some members came up on the podium and reminisced about their time in Turkey. The surprise of the evening, and the most touching moment for me, was when Turkey 1, which was the first group of volunteers to serve between 1962 and 1964, came up to the Podium and sang the Turkish National Anthem, *Istiklal Marsi*, in Turkish.

Arkadaslar's "Cumhuriyet Bayrami" celebration was an evening full of surprises and touching moments for me. It was an honor to be surrounded by such warm and friendly people, who share a great affection and love for Turkey. Well, who can blame them, after all first love is the deepest.

For more information on Arkadaslar, visit: <http://www.arkadaslar.info> ■

### **Republic Day Ball Benefits Mehmetcik Vakfi**

This year's Washington, D.C. Republic Day Ball was organized by ATA-DC at the Georgetown Holiday Inn. Turkish pop music singer Izel Celikoz performed; the event's proceeds were dedicated to benefit Mehmetcik Vakfi. Achievements of community work and leaders were also recognized as ATA-DC presented its community service awards. ■

## **BARYAZ PRODUCTION**

**Baris Yazar**

703 380 6435

703 505 9517

**Smart System home, restaurant  
Home Theatre and Plasma Installation  
Satellite Installation (DFH, Dish, Direct TV)  
Cable and Satellite Wiring & Installation,  
Whole-House Wiring, Telephone,  
Computer Wiring & Networking**

## **FAIRFAX GRAPHICS AND PUBLISHING**

**fairfaxgp@cox.net**

703.426.7151

703.426.7150 fax