

Result Report
Public Diplomacy
Damascus~Syria
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March, April and May 2008

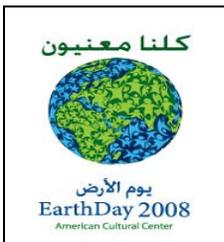
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- IIP Speaker Chuck Mills, March 25-27, 2008
 - Earth Day Program, April 20-24, 2008
 - Ericka Ovette & Paul Pieper, May 6-13, 2008
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IIP Speaker Chuck Mills, March 25-27, 2008

Former speaker, businessman, and government official, Mr. Chuck Mills was the guest speaker on the topic of entrepreneurship in Damascus for three days, March 25-27. His ambitious program allowed the U.S. Embassy to connect with audiences from a variety of academic and professional backgrounds. Syrian audiences engaged him in a lively discussion of business practices, public policy, monetary policy, and economic trends. Young and mature audiences gained insight into the “how to” aspects of starting a business and sought his opinion on economic issues pertaining to the U.S. economy, and the prospects of a Syrian stock exchange.



Earth Day Program, April 20-24, 2008



Concern about the environment is an issue that has gained increased importance in Syria. PD Damascus seized this opportunity and hosted a week long program (April 20-24) on environment issues. Dr. Brenda Ekwurzel, a scientist working with the Union of Concerned Scientists, traveled to Syria as an IIP Speaker and gave a series of presentations in various venues. Dr. Ekwurzel’s presentations tackled environmental issues such as global warming and climate change and their effect on our living environment and on our future. The highlight of the week was a public lecture on April 21 at the American Cultural Center entitled:



“How Our Activities Today Influence the Environment of Tomorrow.”

She gave a similar lecture at two private schools for youth audiences and also engaged informally with environmental organizations, senior scientists, and the media.

Ericka Ovette & Paul Pieper, May 6-13, 2008

Ericka Ovette and Paul Pieper's six day visit included live performances and interactions with students at Syria's Higher Institute of Music. On May 9th, Erika and Paul played to a full house in Marmar in the Old City. Two days later, the duo played in front of a standing room only crowd of adoring fans at the Hamra Theater. The media interest in Ovette and Pieper gave the artists a forum to discuss the importance of jazz as an American institution and to provide journalists with a mini-tutorial on the historical significance of the five African-American jazz vocalists to whom they pay tribute during their shows.



IIP Speaker Derek Shearer, May 29-31

Former U.S. Ambassador to Finland Derek Shearer traveled to Damascus to engage Syrians on the upcoming U.S. Elections and Democracy in America. His four day visit was popular among Syrians who hope that a new administration would leave Syria less-isolated. Ambassador Shearer's lecture regarding the elections to Damascus University students elicited questions on the likelihood of an Obama or McCain victory and what impact this would likely have on U.S. foreign policy in the region.



At the semi-independent newspaper Al-Watan, Ambassador Shearer held discussions centered around Turkish-sponsored peace talks between Syria and Israel, the Syrian-US bilateral relations, possible troop withdrawals from Iraq, and future US policies that can be made by the new Administration.

Wednesday Movie Nights, March through May, 2008

Every Wednesday, young Syrians turn out in large numbers for movie night. Their enthusiastic participation reflect the presentation of topics considered otherwise taboo. Movie night provides the Embassy the opportunity to gauge the pulse of Syrian society on a wide variety of issues, from corruption, to religion, to civil rights and citizen activism. Movie night helps PD Damascus pursue one of its central goals -- positive engagement with Syrian youth, providing them opportunities to practice English and a forum for the free exchange of ideas and opinions.

