

Tolerance Academy 2012

The second Tolerance Academy Rakari 2012 "Teaching Tolerance Through English" was organized and sponsored by the USA Embassy in cooperation with LATE, LAKMA from Lithuania and EATE from Estonia. It took place from the 12th to the 17th August. This year 24 children and 6 creative teachers from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were able to enjoy staying and working together for 5 unforgettable days near Salacgriva.



LATE organized a workshop for the teachers from all three countries at the end of June and they arrived at Rakari as a well-prepared team to start working with their students on topics connected with tolerance, friendship, discrimination and respect.

The first day at Rakari everybody got to know each other better, and introduced themselves and you can just read this poem by Aksel, an Estonian student:

WHERE I AM FROM

*WHERE I AM FROM,
IT'S COLD AND BLOOMY
EVEN IN THE SUMMER
YOU ONLY SWEAT A BIT,
BUT I DON'T CARE IF IT'S COLD
OR BLOOMY OR NO SWEATING COUNTRY
IT'S STILL BEAUTIFUL,
AND HERE I WAS BORN, HERE I WILL STAY
AND HERE I WILL LOVE IT UNTIL MY GRAVE*

*WAIT, I'M NOT IN MY GRAVE YET
SO MY STORY GOES ON,
IN A VILLAGE THAT I LIVE
IT'S STILL A SMALL VILLAGE
WITH A LOT OF OLD LADIES
AND GENTLEMAN.
EACH ONE HAS A STORY,
WHO TALKS ABOUT LOSSES IN WAR
OR WHO HAD MANY CARS*

*THE VILLAGE IS BEAUTIFUL,
SMALL VILLAGE WITH BIG PEOPLE
WHO LOVE THEIR VILLAGE AND THEIR PARENTS
WHO MADE IT POSSIBLE
FOR THEM, TO ENJOY THE VILLAGE.
SO THAT IS WHY I TRIBUTE
THIS POEM TO MY PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS
THEIR PARENTS AND THE VILLAGE
THAT ACCEPTED ME FOR WHO I AM
NOT HOW I LOOK LIKE*

AKSEL HEISKONEN, 13 YEARS OLD, FROM
ESTONIA 14TH AUGUST 2012, SALACGRIVA,
LATVIA

Nearly everybody mentioned that they improved their English and at the same time students learned different new things every day:

Viktoria: "I met people from other countries. Now I know more about tolerance, discrimination and respect. Today we had fun games with Debbie Roberts."

Karolina: "I learned that everyone can make the world better and friendship rainbow shines for everyone. We learned about bullying, it's so bad, so stop bullying".

Julia: "I learned to be more careful, I made new friends, I learned something new about myself and I gained self-confidence"



Kerli: "World is better if everyone is happy. Tony (Tony Chapman – a guest speaker, a black person she met for the first time in her life) was sooo cool!"

Lisette: "I learned that all people can change the world"

Aksel: "I was glad to meet the ambassador and I found out that he doesn't like driving a Toyota."

These five days in such a nice environment near the sea in Rakari passed so quickly with

teaching, learning and afternoon activities together with the assistants Laura, Richard and Santa. Every day the students met and had discussions with interesting people like the US Ambassador Mark Pekala, Public



Affairs Officer Amy Storrow, Tony Chapman from the US Embassy and Debbie Roberts with fun games. The Tolerance Academy wouldn't have been successful without Marta Sarma, US Embassy representative, who took care of the program of the Academy and helped our everyday activities to run smoothly.

The teachers say:

The "Teaching Tolerance Through English" Academy was a great experience for students and teachers as well. Students were happy and excited

because they learnt a lot about tolerance, had opportunity to meet different interesting representatives from the Embassy of the USA in Latvia and made new friends.

The Academy gave them opportunity to speak in English and learn some words in Estonian and Lithuanian. The teachers are proud of students because they were eager to participate in all activities and made the days spent in Rakari unforgettable."

Teacher Ieva Apine from Balozi Secondary School, Latvia: "Thanks for the great opportunity to be there. We had a wonderful time and gained remarkable experience in teaching tolerance."

Jurgita Zubiene, Pagiriai gymnasium, Vilnius: "Teaching Tolerance through English 2012" was a fabulous opportunity for the students aged 11-13 to learn about American, Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian cultures, speak about tolerance, meet interesting people from the Embassy of the USA in

Latvia, practice English, make new friends from the Baltic States, do sports, swim in the sea, walk along the beach, play exciting games with our teacher assistants and even have a party! The experience was invaluable both for the 24 students and 6 teachers from Kose Gymnasium (Estonia), Vilnius and Lukšiai Schools (Lithuania), Baložu Secondary School and Riga Secondary School 34 (Latvia) who were an excellent team and became friends forever.



Jelena Safonova (Latvia)

