YEAR STUDENTS REFLECT ON A YEAR IN THE UNITED STATES

From the end of April through the beginning of June, YEAR students successfully completed their academic year and departed their American communities to return home to Russia. The completion of their year in the U.S. prompted a variety of emotions among the students, most often a mix of eagerness to reunite with loved ones back home and sadness to be leaving new friends behind. Participants consistently reflected with pride on the past year, their personal growth, and the skills they developed during their time in the U.S.

“This year was the best one in my life so far. I’m very grateful to everyone who made any impact on me during this time, everyone who supported me, taught me something new or just made me smile when I felt down. The gap year spent in America is the best thing I could do after finishing high school. I’m just eighteen and now I’m starting a new journey of my adult life. I’m full of energy, inspiration, positive thoughts and ideas. I can’t thank enough the amazing YEAR Program for making me stronger and giving me such a good start on my way to achieving my goals.”

Endzhe, YEAR student from Arsk, Northwest College

The Year of Exchange in America for Russians (YEAR) Program provides outstanding Russian students with the unique opportunity to study for one year at U.S. institutions of higher education. During their year, this group of emerging leaders has the chance to engage with local communities, educate Americans about Russia’s history and culture, and gain a new perspective on the American society. All YEAR fellows live either in campus dormitories or with American host families, giving each fellow a unique opportunity to discover nuances of American life. The YEAR Program is funded by the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and administered by American Councils for International Education.
“My experience as a YEAR finalist gave me personal development and change. We are not the ones that we were before we landed at Washington D.C. Even though I deemed myself mature before, I realize that only now I can say that I am a mature person who is able to take responsibilities for her own life and decisions she makes. I would like to think that I have become more thoughtful and aware of the things that happen around all the time.”

Anastasiia, YEAR student from Bratsk
University of Minnesota- Twin Cities

“Anastasiia, YEAR student from Bratsk
University of Minnesota- Twin Cities

“It is actually very sad to leave the United States but the memories about the YEAR Program will always be with me. It is an honor to be a YEAR alumni and this thought gives me motivation and the belief that I can achieve a lot! I have met so many amazing people in the U.S. Independence, responsibility, reliance, confidence, and motivation are the skills which I have learned this year and which I will always develop. And of course, the memories of my trips all over the U.S., my adventures and challenges are the memories which will always be with me and which I will tell my children in the future with pride and a smile on my face. This year has changed my mind for the best and I am so happy to call myself a YEAR alumni and be part of this amazing program, full of opportunities and chances. If someone had told me before that I will experience a year like this, I would never believe them. Dreams do really come true when you work hard and want them to happen with all your heart!”

Narmin, YEAR student from Kazan
Northwest College

“Drina, YEAR student from Korsakov
West Virginia University

“This year has left a strong imprint on my life. I got new sound goals and desires, and will try to accomplish them upon the return home. I learned so much about other cultures and traditions, and would like to share this experience with my parents, family, and friends. I am a different person than I was before. I am more open-minded and communicative, responsible and independent, capable and purposeful now. I am sure that these valuable qualities will help me in the future. The year seems to be a long period but it is actually not. As I felt that my staying here is very limited, I tried to take part in as many events as I can. Thus, the time also became more valuable for me. The travelling to the United States was my first real trip abroad. And I fell in love with it. I enjoy studying abroad, learning new cultures and traditions. I would like to visit new places and countries in the future. I understood how it is interesting and helpful to know people from other societies. All in all it’s been a great year of discoveries. It’s made a bright new thread in the course of my life.”

Andrei, YEAR student from Bryansk
West Virginia University

YEARS STUDENTS ON POINT

Maintaining a high GPA is particularly challenging for international students, who must simultaneously adjust to a new language, academic system, and culture. Nonetheless, the YEAR students rose to the challenge. Fifteen students completed the year with a 4.0 GPA, which resulted in recognition by their host institutions with placement on the presidents’ or deans’ lists. Many other fellows were just tenths of a point shy of a perfect GPA. YEAR student Aleksandra of West Virginia University comments on the dedication required to maintain high grades in the U.S:

“I truly enjoyed the challenges associated with being an honors student, which are specific to the United States. Here you can earn a place on the President’s List only by your constant efforts put into achieving academic success; you can’t just get lucky during the finals and receive all “A”s. This is truly competitive and nevertheless rewarding.”

YEAR STUDENTS ON POINT

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STUDENTS
4.0 GPA
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To fulfill their second semester component of the YEAR Program, all participants completed three informational interviews with professionals working in their fields of study. YEAR students reported that these interviews were extremely beneficial, providing them valuable career advice and new insight into the jobs they might one day pursue back home.

“I enjoyed the interview process and it helped me to recognize and accept my artistic side, and for the first time I’ve considered this side to be important in my future career. [My music professor] Dr. Feris told me that I’m very creative and hard-working and that I have a lot of potential in the music field. She said that I’ll stay an artist within, no matter what career path I will choose. Her opinion was very inspiring and it made me much more confident. I could clearly see that I have inner desire, need of audience and discipline – three important components for becoming a good pianist. [She] also pointed out that I’m very communicative. This ability helps a lot in achieving heights in a music career. She could see me in such careers as a concert pianist, collaborative artist, composer and piano teacher.”

Vladimir, YEAR student from Saratov
University of South Dakota

“This interview helped me to realize many things and to discover something new about my field of study and my future career. The choice of a job after graduating from faculty of public relations is very wide. That was always kind of a problem for me: I could not decide what exactly to choose. However, here in the U.S. I think I found my real passions because I could take any classes and try anything. My professor Philip Stahl – he also teaches one of my communication classes - works on a Pittsburgh channel as a journalist/reporter and I think that I can see myself in this position as well. I always wanted a job where I would not be “stuck in the office” for the whole day, but do something interesting, meet new people and talk to them and this job is exactly about it. It is not an easy work to do and has a lot of challenges but I think that I love challenges and am ready for them as long as I am passionate about what I do.”

Elina, YEAR student from Moscow
West Liberty University

“One of my professors here is truly an inspiration to me. The classes she teaches are very tough, but she always finds a way to make them interesting. She is passionate about computer science and she teaches others how to be passionate about it, too. During my interview with her she gave me really good advice that a computer scientist should not only have the ability to think critically, they also should be good communicators. During this year my views on my career plans have changed a bit. I became more open-minded about all the opportunities this field has to offer. Also, I’ve learned four new programming languages and created a website, thus gaining a lot of important skills that will help me in the future.”

Valentina, YEAR student from Novgorod
University of Montana – Missoula

“…Surprisingly, machine learning is exactly what I had interest in picking up. I could not miss a chance and ask [statistician] Andrew for advice on how to start. According to him, I have more than enough to get going: mathematics from my three years of university at home and basic programming skills. He gave me a list of several books about machine learning, told me what software is used, and introduced me to resources where I can test my future acquired skills. This interview provided valuable insight into a profession where my major fits ideally. I can easily see myself in Andrew’s position, as it embraces cutting-edge technologies, sciences I enjoy.”

Razim, YEAR student from Ufa
Fox Valley Technical College

“[My professor] Dr. Hall stressed that the very useful characteristics and skills for a young teacher are an open mind and heart, patience, problem solving and organizational skills. Dr. Hall perfectly fits all those features. For me personally, it was extremely interesting to talk to Dr. Hall and to get some advice and the view from the inside on teaching. And I hope that all things that I experienced being a student in a completely different system with local methods and habits of teaching will help me to build my unique view on this occupation and to become a better professional in this area.”

Anna, YEAR student from Kursk
Alcorn State University

“My approach to my future career slightly changed during this year. At some point of time I even thought about dropping linguistics, because I had that moment in my life when I was thinking if it is something I really enjoy doing. But those thoughts disappeared when I had my first interview with my linguistic professor at WVU. We talked for almost two hours about EVERYTHING. Literally everything. And I caught myself thinking that I’m getting a real kick out of linguistics, that it’s what I see myself doing in a couple of years.”

Iuliia, YEAR student from Ukhta
West Virginia University
EXPLORING D.C. BY METRO

During her time in the United States, Evgeniia, a YEAR student from Kursk, aimed to become more independent and to see as much of the U.S. as possible. She worried at first that her goals would be difficult to accomplish due to her mobility limitations from Cerebral Palsy. But Evgeniia was pleasantly surprised by the subway system of her host city, Washington, D.C., which she used to visit an impressive array of the city’s neighborhoods despite being unable to walk long distances.

When Evgeniia received her free Metrorail pass from her host institution, American University, she immediately began to explore the nation’s capital in its entirety. She explains that in her home town of Kursk there is no metro system, so she was thrilled to be able to travel from one side of Washington, D.C. to the other with ease. “Overall, the D.C. metro was a very pleasant experience in terms of accessibility,” says Evgeniia. “I found the elevators at most stations very useful. Sometimes when escalators didn’t work, elevators saved my life, especially if I had a suitcase with me. What’s more, I’ve never seen ramps for wheelchairs in buses and shuttles before.”

During her time in D.C., Evgeniia visited at least 15 different metro stops, and each time came above ground to observe the nuances of D.C.’s different neighborhoods. She says that she never passed up an opportunity to join a volunteer project or visit a shopping center on the opposite side of the city, as long as it was metro accessible. Evgeniia comments that it was fascinating to compare the density of D.C. to the sparsity of outlying areas such as Rockville, Maryland. “When people hear about Washington D.C.,” she says, “They usually think about the White House, the National Mall, numerous memorials and other famous places. But… there’s much more to the capital of the U.S. than that.” Evgeniia says that the metro played a big part in helping her to develop her sense of independence this year. She comments that it also helped prepare her for her upcoming move to St. Petersburg next summer, where she’ll be using the metro system regularly.

When asked which neighborhood left the biggest impression on her, Evgeniia replies, “The Kennedy Center and consequently the Foggy Bottom metro stop are the places I’ve been to most often. There’s a shuttle going from Foggy Bottom to the Kennedy Center I encourage everyone to take at least once… It looks cute and classical music is always playing inside.” Learning the metro system presented Evgeniia with a few challenges as well. She laughs remembering moments when her phone battery died and she would need to find her way home without the help of technology. She also recalls accidently riding the train much too far in the wrong direction! However, the chance to explore D.C. via the metro is a special memory for Evgeniia. “Bit by bit you do a very special puzzle, collecting those tiny pieces in your mind and seeing different parts and sides of the city.” She is proud of her explorations and thankful for the accessibility of the D.C. metro, without which she would not have been able to independently do and see so much.

“Washington, D.C. taught me that having an impairment is not the end of the world and it doesn’t prevent you from being like everyone else.”

“One of the most precious take-aways from my year in Washington is a newly found self-confidence and a new awareness of what I am actually capable of.”
“My college opened up a lot of great opportunities for me this year,” writes YEAR student Takhmina, a native of Rostov-on-Don. Among the many high points of her year in the U.S., she is particularly proud of her work with the Enactus club, an entrepreneurial student group that strives to improve its community and the world through a wide range of community service projects. During her second semester at Northwest College, Takhmina volunteered to manage an Enactus project that she named “Diversity Day.” Together with her teammates, Takhmina created an outstanding cultural event for a local middle school. From the start, Takhmina had a very clear vision of her project and its intended impact: “Briefly, the point of my project was to tell local people about different cultures,” she says. “I chose to do it with middle school kids because… this kind of audience is the most open to new ideas and perceptions [in this] period of their lives. They enter middle school as children and leave as young adults with a whole new vision of the world. So, I thought it would be great to add some colors to this stage of their lives.”

Takhmina’s first step was to involve students from the Northwest College international student club to assist with the project. Fellow YEAR students Leilia, Endzhe, and Narmin volunteered to participate, as well as students from Chile, China, Japan, Taiwan, and Uruguay. Takhmina asked the students from each country to create a 15-minute cultural activity for the middle school students. Meanwhile, Takhmina worked closely with Powell Middle School to organize the Diversity Day.

On the day of the event, the Enactus team visited Powell Middle School and presented their cultural project for 200 middle schoolers. At each country’s station, the students were led through a different activity, including traditional games or crafts, before rotating to the next station. YEAR students Takhmina, Endzhe, and Leilia taught a Russian dance at their station, which students joined enthusiastically.

They completed the two-hour long event by giving a speech to the students about the importance of learning about other cultures. “The kids and their response were amazing. I could tell that they were excited to learn about so many cultures,” says Takhmina. “The kids had a lot of fun, we had a lot of fun, and everyone was happy!” Before leaving, Takhmina distributed short surveys to the students to help measure the change in their cultural awareness from the event. She got many positive responses that demonstrated the impact of her project on the students.

In May, Takhmina received the opportunity to go to California with her Enactus team for the Enactus regional competition. There, they presented their Diversity Day activity. “The judges were excited about this project!” Takhmina recounts. Her hard work and dedication to the project culminated in her team winning the regional competition. Takhmina is pleased to have been able to take on this leadership role during her time in the United States, which allowed her to so positively influence her community and her team.
LEARNING TO TEACH

Konstantin, a YEAR student from Moscow studying at Hawaii Pacific University, took a proactive approach to learning more about his area of study (TESOL) and preparing for a future career as a teacher of English as a second language.

In February, Konstantin learned about an opportunity to serve as an assistant teacher to a group of Japanese students coming to visit Hawaii. He immediately volunteered for the position, which would be only his second experience teaching. He explains that his main reason for volunteering was to discover if teaching was truly the career for him, as he was beginning to have doubts.

From February 22nd through February 24th, Konstantin led the Japanese students through a variety of English exercises focused on their area of study, tourism. Konstantin says that he worked closely with his assigned group of eight students to support them in learning as much as possible during the 3-day course. Together, they had discussions in English about tourist attractions in Hawaii, local activities, and foods. Additionally, they acted out a variety of dialogues relevant to the hospitality industry. Konstantin also helped the students to improve their tourism-related vocabulary and to understand and explain the Hawaiian map.

“I was actually enjoying it, which I didn’t expect at all. Maybe this was due to the students being highly motivated to learn...” He continues, “All of this, combined with some encouragement from my social psychology instructor, restored my faith in my ability to teach... I believe that for any language teacher, being in the country where the target language is spoken for a significant period of time is a must, hence my enrolling in the YEAR [Program].”

Konstantin is thankful for this experience which helped solidify his passion for teaching. He looks forward to continuing working towards a career as an English teacher, a role in which he feels he can make a true impact.

SCORING GOALS

Along with his suitcase, Marat, a YEAR student from Moscow, also brought his passion for soccer with him when he came to the University of Wyoming.

Upon his arrival to Laramie, Marat immediately joined two campus intramural soccer teams: the men’s team and a co-ed team. Marat says that it was his first time playing together with female athletes, as it is very uncommon for women and men to play on a soccer team together in Russia. Unfortunately, Marat’s teams did not last long in the fall semester tournaments as they were quickly eliminated by their opponents.

Nevertheless, their spirits were not dampened. “We came back stronger in the spring,” says Marat. In fact, both of his teams won their respective tournaments, victories of which he was very proud.

Marat says that the best part of his soccer experience in Wyoming was the positive dynamic among his teammates. “My team was international,” says Marat. “We had players from Saudi Arabia, Columbia, USA and Nigeria. I just enjoyed playing my favorite game with people who have different backgrounds. Soccer can amazingly unify people, disregarding any difference in political/religious controversies and prejudices. We achieved a very warm and welcoming atmosphere in the teams. I would call it international and interracial harmony.”

While Marat will continue to lend his soccer skills to teams back home, his memories with his teams in the U.S. will be cherished forever.
FROM SCRIPT TO SCREEN

Cinematography student Evgenii’s creativity led to great success at his host institution, the University of Minnesota. A native of Sochi, Evgenii was able to produce two short films in his filmmaking courses during his year in the U.S. His first film, entitled “Cubed,” was born from an idea that Evgenii reports had been stirring within him for some time. He explains that the story is about, “two space travelers who show up on a deserted planet to realize that the destiny of the whole civilization is now in their hands.” When he was given the assignment during his first semester to create a short film, Evgenii says, “I realized that this was my chance.”

Creating “Cubed” took three months. After its completion, Evgenii presented it as his final project in class, but the quality of the film was still not where he wanted it to be. Even though the course was over, he went back to his cast in December and rerecorded the sound to improve the quality of the film. Even though the course was over, he went back to his cast in December and rerecorded the sound to improve the quality of the film. Even though the course was over, he went back to his cast in December and rerecorded the sound to improve the quality of the film. Evgenii writes that after this additional work, “…I was pretty happy with the result and we made a private screening in the university, to which all the cast, crew, friends and people who helped during the production were invited. It was a wonderful artistic event, which coincided with my birthday. For me, it was the perfect ending of this complicated project, which taught me a lot.”

But it was not the end. When Evgenii received an email in March describing an opportunity to submit a film for the Minnesota Independent Film Festival, he decided to submit “Cubed”. Not long after, Evgenii’s film was formally selected to be one of just twelve films shown at the film festival, which was held on April 21st in Minneapolis. “It was a wonderful event with lots of people in a fancy theater,” recalls Evgenii. “It was a great opportunity to showcase my work, to see other works and to talk to lots of talented filmmakers. It’s always scary and exciting to see your work on a big screen – you can finally see what you’ve been working on for months of long hours and late nights. It’s an amazing feeling when you see the audience captivated and excited with the story and hear them applause at the end.”

Evgenii’s success in his first film inspired him to start work on a second film in the spring, entitled “Memento Vivere,” which he explains is Latin for “remember to live.” In this film, Evgenii explores the themes of love and death. Reflecting on the project, Evgenii writes, “I am excited to show it to the audience on a wide screen, because personally I am very proud of this project and the scale on which we worked - it was a very productive and fun creative collaboration with lots of people - our amazing cast, which came from theater stages, all the people who worked behind the cameras, sound designers, my production assistants, people who worked with us on aerial shootings, extras and many more passionate people who were involved in different stages of the process.”

Evgenii is thankful for this opportunity to work with so many talented students at his university.

“I am very grateful to the YEAR Program because it helped me [find] myself and my way. I am immensely happy that I finally found out what I want to do all my life and that I can start making the first steps in this long journey.”
MAKING CONNECTIONS THROUGH MUSIC

Music has always played a big part in the life of Anzhelika, a YEAR student from Kazan. A music major during her time at St. Louis Community College, Anzhelika reports that nearly every one of her courses this year was related to music. This year not only provided Anzhelika with new knowledge about the history of jazz, but also with an opportunity to professionally record one of her original songs, which she composed in the U.S.

Anzhelika says that she’s been humming original tunes to herself for years, and often would record the tunes on her phone to later put to words. She hoped that fully dedicating herself to her music this year would be beneficial to her music career, but she never expected that her musical journey in the U.S. would get a kick-start during her first week in Washington, D.C.

Anzhelika writes that at a contra-dancing event during the YEAR Program orientation in D.C., she met a music store owner from the D.C. area. When he found out that Anzhelika would be living in St. Louis for the year, he offered to connect her with his friend Ben, an audio engineer and studio owner in St. Louis. After arriving to her new community, Anzhelika reached out to Ben for an informational interview. During their meeting, Ben offered to record Anzhelika’s newest original song, entitled “Heart,” with her at his studio. She was thrilled by this unique opportunity, and worked tirelessly to practice and prepare her song for recording. On the day of the recording, Ben had Anzhelika sing the song eight or nine times in a row and later helped to edit the best pieces together. This was Anzhelika’s first time professionally recording one of her compositions, which turned out to be a great learning experience. Anzhelika writes, “Probably the coolest thing about being recorded… is that you can hear yourself crystal clear for once in your life. Honestly, I would say that I never fully understood what I sound like until I came to the studio. This is just something everyone has to experience, you will never learn about yourself more.”

After “Heart” was recorded, the song traveled north to Minneapolis, where fellow YEAR student Evgenii was hard at work on his second short film, “Memento Vivere.” Upon hearing Anzhelika’s song, Evgenii instantly wrote to Anzhelika to ask permission to use her song at the end of his film. “At that time I don’t think anything could be more flattering than this offer,” says Anzhelika. “So obviously I couldn’t say no. Then he asked me if it was possible to compose something else for another moment in the film. I had about three or four days to finish the work. He explained everything to me - what was going on, what mood we wanted to put the audience in, etc. After he had confirmed he liked the piece, I recorded three versions of it on my phone, edited it a little bit, and sent it to him. I wish we had more time to record it professionally, but I do like the final product anyways.”

Anzhelika reports that since this initial collaboration, she and Evgenii have continued working together. Their next project will be a music video for “Heart,” which they look forward to releasing. “I’m just super grateful to the program that we had an opportunity to meet each other and work together,” she says. “It says a lot about our YEAR community, I think.”
“THE PLAY’S THE THING!”

Dmitrii, a YEAR student from Smolensk, decided to try something new this year during his time at American University - something he calls a “recklessly brave decision:” to try out for a campus theater production. Dmitrii explains that he had no prior experience in acting. He hadn’t even intended to participate in the auditions when he went, only attending to support a friend. At the last minute, Dmitrii decided to try out as well. He recalls the events of that day: “I read a monologue given to me by a production assistant, and I did it poorly. At least, that’s what I thought. The next day I received a message saying that I had been given a role in Coriolanus... That’s how my incredible two-month journey began.”

This first production left Dmitrii eager to return to the stage. “The importance of trying out new things is that the thing that you’re doing might turn out life changing, as it happened in my case with acting. I felt infected with a passion for theater and auditioned for another play. This time I landed a lead role in Twelfth Night. It was a dream come true, because it was only my second play, and I got the role despite my Russian accent.”

Dmitrii finished his year at American University feeling thankful for that “reckless bravery” that came to him in January, for it left him with life changing memories and countless new friends. “I had never encountered an activity or craft that was so challenging and rewarding at the same time,” says Dmitrii. “I am thankful to YEAR for such an opportunity that helped me determine that art was what I wanted to do in my life.”
BRINGING RUSSIA TO WEST VIRGINIA

Anna, a YEAR student from Elista, took every chance she could get to share her culture during her year at West Liberty University. She writes that while she was active in several cultural presentations, festivals, and fairs on campus during the year, her most memorable presentation was the one she gave at a local high school.

Anna explains that part of her initial motivation to present at a high school was to see for herself what an American high school was like. She says the most challenging thing about planning this presentation was choosing a topic that would catch the interest of her audience. She was eager to share not only Russian culture, but also her ethnic Kalmyk culture. In the end, Anna decided to focus her presentation on school, dating traditions, teenagers, freedom, and food.

On the day of the presentation, she and several other international students from West Liberty University visited Brooke High School to present their cultures. The high school students were divided up into groups of 20 which rotated between speakers. Anna's presentation turned out to be extremely relatable for the students, who responded with obvious interest and many questions. "I loved all the students," writes Anna. "They had so many questions that I couldn't even finish my talk. This lively interest and [thought]-provoking questions surely made my day. My favorite thing about this experience was answering their questions. What is food like in Russia? How often do Russian students have to go to school? What about the weather? Why don't you look Russian? I like the last question the most. It was a wonderful chance to explain to the students that there are many people in Russia who look different. My ethnicity is Kalmyk; we have our own language."

"I just absolutely loved this," says Anna.

"Connecting with young people that are so interested in life around them makes me feel more alive."
SPEAKING FROM THE HEART

Anastasiia, a YEAR student from Moscow attending Fox Valley Technical College, was diligent about following up on her goals throughout her exchange year. Anastasiia says that after the completion of the fall semester, she felt even more motivated to make the most of her final semester in Wisconsin. Among her many second semester goals, the most important was to be selected as a speaker for the school’s international student end-of-year event.

Anastasiia says that she learned about this speaking opportunity in March. When she received the email announcing the audition to speak at the event, she immediately decided to take on this challenge. Anastasiia writes that she was driven to succeed by her desire to share her experiences and feelings with the people that had come to mean so much to her this year. Thus, throughout March and up until the audition in April, Anastasiia wrote and practiced her speech, and delivered it at the audition with the same passion that went into writing it. Not long after the audition, Anastasiia learned that of the sixteen students who auditioned, she was one of six selected to perform at the event.

While being selected for the event was a proud moment, it was delivering the speech at the actual event that stands out to Anastasiia as a personal success. Reflecting on this day, she writes, “I can’t say what other speakers felt at the moment of their performance, but I can say for myself that it was one of the most important things for me. I was standing in the middle of the stage, I was holding the microphone in my hand, and I was looking at all those people who became a part of my life during this whole year. My host family that was there from the beginning with me. My friends who shared so many fantastic moments with me, who helped me to create those moments. My fantastic advisors who guided us from the moment we came to Wisconsin. My wise and incredible professors who taught me so much more that I could ever ask for... At that moment for the first time I felt that my time was almost over, that it was getting closer to that minute when you should say goodbye. It was hard, but it was so incredible to have a chance saying thank you to all of them. However, the best moment turned out to be after, when people were saying that every single word that I have said touched them and made them think. That was what I wanted to do. And it turned out that eventually I did it.”

Although she has accomplished many of her goals for the year, Anastasiia is by no means resting on her laurels. She reports that her experiences on the YEAR Program have motivated her to look forward to future challenges. “…Now I have new goals, new dreams,” she writes. “This year showed me the most important thing: it showed me a way to find myself, which became the most successful achievement of this entire YEAR experience.”

AN EXCERPT FROM ANASTASIIA’S SPEECH:

“Being an international student is an honor for me. Having an opportunity to live in the U.S. for one year is the best experience I have ever had in my life. Only here I finally started to be myself, I started being positive, I learned how to appreciate things. Tonight, I have an amazing chance to share my experience, to highlight the best moments of this year and to say the words of appreciation to people who made this year absolutely fantastic.”