Venera Bekteshi Featured in the Albanian American Success Stories Project

On November 21-23, 2014, Venera Bekteshi, Assistant Professor of Social Work at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, traveled to her native country of Kosovo to participate in and be featured in the Albanian American Success Stories Project, a demonstration of the achievements of members of the Albanian American community. As an extremely accomplished scholar within her field, Dr. Bekteshi clearly deserves to be highlighted in this project. Dr. Bekteshi has a Postdoctorate Fellowship with the Siteman Cancer Center of Washington University in St. Louis Medical School, PhD in social work, MSW from Boston College, MPA from Columbia University, MA in political science from St. John’s University, and a BA in journalism and political science from the University of Oklahoma. Her research and practice interests include breast cancer-related health disparities and immigrant populations, along with immigrant integration challenges and immigrant women. Previously, she served as Deputy Director at the Albanian American Women’s Organization in New York, Deputy Director at New York City Department of Youth and Community Development’s Beacons After School Program, Program Manager at the New York City Department of Homeless Services’ Homeless Prevention Program, Administration Coordinator at Aon Re Inc and International Rescue Committee, and Research Associate at the United Nations Development Program. For a full bio of Dr. Bekteshi, please read http://socialwork.illinois.edu/faculty-staff/venera-bekteshi/.

As part of the Albanian American Success Stories Project, Dr. Bekteshi traveled to Prishtina, Kosovo’s capital city. On the first day of her visit, she met Prishtina’s mayor, Shpend Ahmeti, and the Albanian Ambassador to Kosovo, Qemal Minxhozi. On the second day, she met the U.S. Ambassador to Kosovo, Tracey Ann Jacobson. That evening, she attended a gala in Prishtina’s largest hotel, where she had the opportunity to meet politicians, a pop singer from Eurovision, Miss Kosova, business leaders, and other important dignitaries. On the third day, she and the other Albanian American Success Stories Project participants visited Stone Castle Winery, developed by the U.S. embassy, and the Museum of Ethnography. In addition to attending authentic Kosovan dinners and cultural programs, Dr. Bekteshi met with Gerantina Kraja, a top senior advisor to the President of Kosovo, to discuss topics related to her academic work such as women’s issues, research on female rape victims, and research funding. The meeting gave her new insights and opportunities for her work. She also met with the Gender Equity Office of the Ministry of Health. According to Dr. Bekteshi, one of the highlights of her trip was giving a well-received lecture at Dardania University in Prishtina, where she presented her current research on a contextual approach to acculturative stress among Latina immigrant women. Senior and junior faculty of various disciplines, the Dean, and university students attended her lecture. Dr. Bekteshi was very honored to be featured in the Albanian American Success Stories Project and enjoyed her trip to Kosovo as part of the project. Albanian Media Group, Fadil Berisha Studio, along with the American Councils for International Education’s Kosovo American Education Fund, have developed a multimedia array of materials to showcase the successes of individuals of the
Albanian-American community and the contributions they have made in business, politics, science, education, the arts, etc. This project features individuals and their accomplishments in a deluxe full color book, a videotaped interview available on the albaniansuccessstories.com website, and in a documentary.

Thirty-five percent of the net revenue of this project will benefit American Council’s Kosova American Education Fund.

See more about the Albanian American Success Stories Project at: http://albaniansuccessstories.com/about/

This is the website with Dr. Bekteshi’s photo featured in the project: http://albaniansuccessstories.com/category/nominees/page/35/

Bethany Wages is a graduate student in Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her focus of study is History, and she is currently researching student movements, political violence, and the intelligentsia of late 19th century Russia. She received her B.A. in Honors/History and English Literature in 2014 at Wright State University.

Stephanie Chung is a Ph.D. candidate in Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her research interests are in Soviet literature and culture, Russian women’s writing, and Czech literature. She received her B.A. in Plan II Honors/Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies in 2007; and her M.A. in Slavic Languages and Literatures in 2009 at the University of Texas at Austin. She plans to write a dissertation on Soviet women’s memoirs.