



DECEMBER NEWSLETTER



American Councils BiH
Kolodvorska 5, Sarajevo



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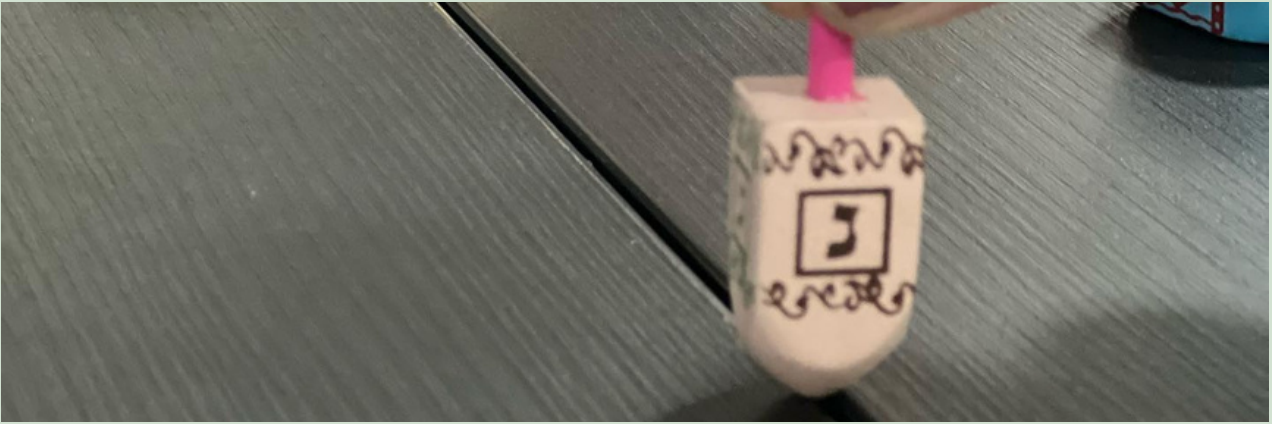
Decorating American Corner in Banja Luka



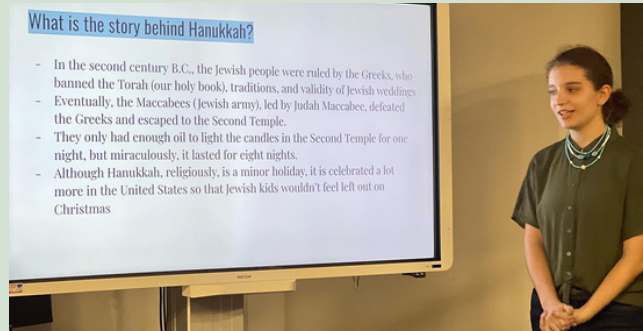
The holiday season had an early start in Banja Luka! On December 6, the YES Abroad cohort kicked off the festivities by joining forces with American Corner volunteers to deck the halls of their favorite hangout spot. The air was filled with laughter, holiday tunes, and an array of vibrant decorations, setting the perfect tone for the most beautiful time of the year.



Educational Hanukkah Celebration



On December 20, YES Abroad students in Sarajevo, Anneliese, and Syarra, hosted a gathering to educate friends and office staff about Hanukkah. It was an enlightening and fun-filled evening where everyone had the chance to learn about the history of the holiday, play traditional games like *dreidel* and card games, and enjoy delicious "krofne" (Bosnian donuts) and gelt. We would like to extend a special thank you to Anneliese and Syarra for organizing this memorable event. Happy Hanukkah to all!



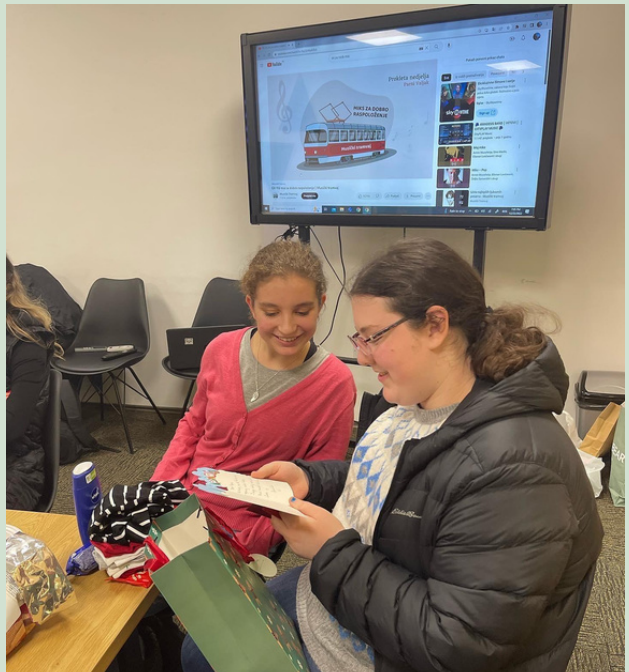
Making Christmas Decorations at the Faculty of Philology

On December 22, YES Abroad students in Banja Luka were swept away by the festive spirit at the Faculty of Philology's creative Christmas event! The night was filled with the sounds of cheerful Christmas music playing in the background as the students eagerly got to work creating beautiful Christmas decorations. The energy was high as they decorated the classrooms and competed to see who could create the most stunning decorations. But the fun didn't end there, as the evening concluded with a cozy movie night, complete with tea and cookies. It was a night of joy, laughter, and new friendships, and a perfect way to get into the Christmas spirit.



Secret Santa Gift Exchange

On December 23, the American Councils Sarajevo office was filled with cheer as YES alumni, office staff, and YES Abroad students came together for the annual Secret Santa event. The excitement filled the room as everyone exchanged gifts, indulged in delicious holiday treats, and shared in the festive spirit. This event is always one of the highlights of the year, as it brings the alumni community closer together and provides a chance for them to check in with program staff, as well as to meet up with the YES Abroad students too.



Language Immersion in Banja Luka

The Banja Luka YES Abroad cohort had an exciting December, having participated in two language immersion activities that month! December kicked off with students and staff attending the People with Disabilities Fashion Show, where Kai and Natalia had the chance to learn about inclusivity and expand their BCS vocabulary. For the second language immersion activity, the group visited "Zimzobal," a winter advent event in Banja Luka. The group had the opportunity to indulge in traditional food and drinks, warm up with a cup of tea, and snap a photo with Santa Claus. It was a truly immersive experience that gave the students a taste of local culture.





NOMAD Workshop in Trebinje

From December 9-11, 17 YES alumni and local youth participated in the Navigating Online Media and Disinformation (NOMAD) workshop in Trebinje. Led by three trainers, local high school teachers: prof. Lejla Causevic, prof. Slavica Grkavac, and prof. Denis Krama, participants learned how to identify disinformation and navigate online media. Over the course of two days, the workshop covered valuable skills and strategies for identifying and combatting disinformation online. The event was a great success, and participants are now planning to organize post-workshop projects in their communities to share their new knowledge and skills.





Sharing Our Differences

On December 25, Hajra Smajic '22, a recent returnee from the USA, took the initiative to organize a workshop for children who attend Mekteb, an Islamic school (similar to Sunday School) that takes place on weekends for children ages 6-15. With the help of Hajra's sister and medical student, Sumeja Smajic, the workshop was held for 20 participants aged 7-12 at a local mosque in Tesanj. The two-hour workshop focused on different cultures, religions, and people with disabilities, as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities is marked on December 3 every year. Hajra and Sumeja discussed various types of bullying and how to prevent it, as well as the emotions people feel when they experience it. The workshop was interactive, with participants being asked to think critically and work in groups to come up with different ways to respond to a situation of seeing someone being treated badly. They later wrote their favorite ways of reacting and put them on a tree as a reminder. In the final part of the workshop, the participants were randomly assigned each other's names and wrote something nice to that person, which they then gave as a gift. The main aim of the workshop was to teach young children that being different is not bad and that they should always be mindful of their behavior and the words they use when speaking to others. It was a great opportunity for the children to learn about empathy and kindness toward others.



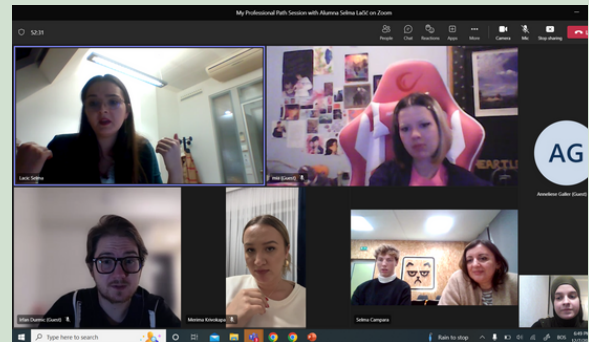
Thrift and Help

Throughout the month of December, YES alumna Mia Krcum '22, with the help of alumna Silma Jahic '22 and YES Abroad students John, Annaliese, and Syarra, organized a unique and impactful project for her local community. Mia contacted people in Sarajevo and local second-hand shops to gather second-hand clothing donations. On Saturday, December 17, they held a "buvljak" or a thrift clothes sale, with the proceeds going towards purchasing hygiene products and creating New Year's gift packages for socially disadvantaged teenagers in Sarajevo.

Mia and John personally delivered ten gift packages to the Center for Social Services Municipality of "Novo Sarajevo" to be distributed to local teenagers. This event was a great example of alumni coming together, with the help of other local partners, to make a positive impact on their community and peers in need.



My Professional Path: First Session



In December, Alumni Coordinator Amina Meric '20 launched a new project called "My Professional Path." The project invites successful and accomplished alumni to share their career and professional development stories with younger alumni and YES Abroad students. The first guest speaker was alumna Selma Lacic '11, a lawyer currently living and working in Vienna. Selma shared her key to success and professional development path with the audience during an online webinar. The alumni who joined the webinar heard Selma's story and participated in a discussion about professional path development. This project aims to continue in the coming months to offer valuable insights and inspiration to our younger alumni and YES Abroad students.



Thanks for reading our December Newsletter, see you next month!