



new english textbooks and community library in the resource center

They Did It!

I just returned from Ak Chiy in Kyrgyzstan, after spending a week with my family, and opening the newly renovated abandoned classroom, now a community resource center, in Rakymov Secondary School.

As you may remember, I had to abandon a successful grant application for the resource center when I left Peace Corps early. After a month or two last summer feeling sorry for myself, and for my village, I realized the people there who would do all the work were still there - I was just an instigator and organizer of the effort. I could still perform those functions in Montana - all we needed was a replacement funding scheme. With agreement from my Ak Chiy partners, we proceeded apace.

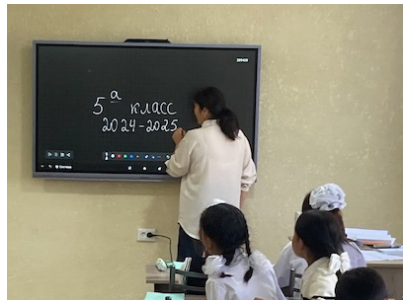
The Livingston Center for Art and Culture, a local NGO I'd worked with before, agreed, with some trepidation, to help me raise the funding - for a project where? Definitely not something they'd done before, but thank goodness they were game to help, and stuck with me through various trials.

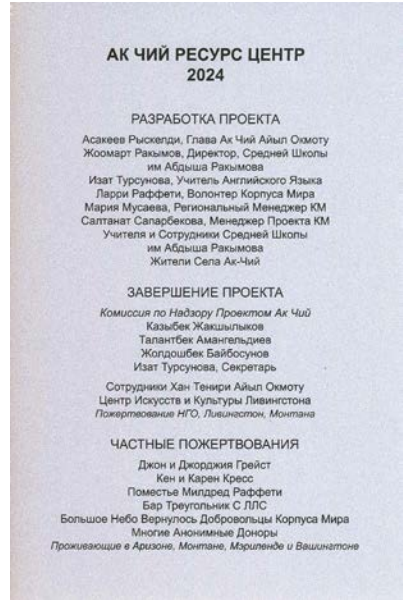
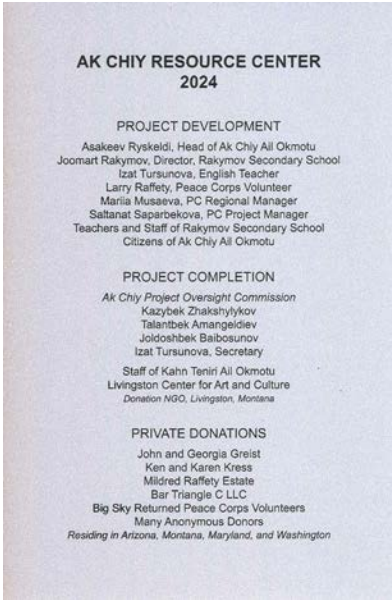


The project was clearly defined in the grant application, with a 10% contingency built in, so we were able to complete with very few minor changes. We also surmounted the challenges of a changing government structure in the area, and getting dollars to the village development account free of excessive fees and thieving hands. Most of the thanks go to my counterpart, Izat, and to project commission treasurer Kazybek.



We were able to celebrate the opening of the center with representatives from Kahn Teneri Ail Okmotu, the Ak Suu District Education Department, and of course with entertainment from students. This guest even congratulated the crowd for their achievement in his terrible Russian (Izat says I was understandable, but who knows what the truth may be!). Before traveling from Bishkek to Ak Chiy, I was also able to spend a great half-day with my Peace Corps regional manager Mariia.





engraved plaques to be mounted in the resource center

Thank you to all of you who donated, or assisted with the ups and downs of making this happen, or encouraged us in our efforts. You can be very proud of what you helped accomplish for a farming village in Kyrgyzstan.



Izat and Jypara, who survived teaching with me for a year

