

## **Masha Yumatova—A Dream Coming True, AH newsletter, October 2004**

We started working to get Masha enrolled in the ISU Criminal Justice Masters program about two years ago. At that time, I know that Masha saw this as only a dream. Now, thanks to a number of people, including several generous financial supporters, and a lot of hard work on her part, she has begun her two-year program. She plans to graduate in the spring of 2006 and then attend the U of I Police Training Institute's 12-week program. At ISU she will study criminological theory, research, statistics, policing, and American law. At PTI she'll get practical training.

In addition, she will have the opportunity to visit various local law enforcement organizations and prisons. She has already visited the Mahomet, Illinois Police Department, thanks to one of the teachers from the Fulbright group, Tom Murdoch, and she's had an "introductory" meeting at the police department in Normal. She's been invited back "any time" for patrol "ride alongs," to spend time with detectives, see how crime scenes are processed, and to observe other policing functions. (Masha spent last year working as an investigator in the small community of Bogolubovo and the surrounding villages just east of Vladimir.) She's also met with Federal District Court Judge Michael Mihm in Peoria. He's invited her back to observe his court in session.

After Masha arrived in the States on August 1, she stayed with Dr. Donna Vandiver—until the residence halls opened. Dr. Vandiver writes:

"During her two-week stay with me and my husband, she spent some time just becoming familiar with her new surroundings and getting a head start for the semester. This included a few mundane tasks: opening a bank account, buying schoolbooks, and meeting her professors. Also, Masha wanted to purchase a digital camera to document her journey. We spent an afternoon looking for the most suitable camera. It was fun for her to talk to many salespersons and practice her English. We also visited the malls, played miniature golf, and spent an afternoon at a local lake. In addition, Masha took a weekend trip to Chicago and another to St. Louis to visit some of her American friends. After school began, she started working as a graduate assistant and studying for classes. Her professors are impressed with her excellent English and her tenacious determination to learn as much as possible. She has already begun working on a research project, which she will have the opportunity to present at a research conference in the near future."

Masha's comments: "When I was in Russia I couldn't believe that some day I would get a chance to study at an American university. For most Russians it's almost impossible to get such an opportunity. After three months in the States, I still cannot believe that I am here. It's like a dream come true for me. Everyday I learn something new, I meet different people, and I find out interesting things about American culture. For example, it is very interesting for me to compare the Russian and American educational systems. I have found that the requirements in the courses I'm taking here at ISU are different from what teachers require in Russia. These include making PowerPoint presentations in class, more reading and writing assignments, and more student participation during class. Also on the exams American students are expected to apply what they have learned, and not just "repeat" what has been taught. I am confident that while I'm in America I will gain theoretical and practical experience which will be very useful for me in the future."