

Local

AMIDEAST marks 15th anniversary of Kennedy-Lugar YES scholarship

Alumni gathering hosted by CODED and attended by US Ambassador



Samar Khleif, AMIDEAST Country Director, speaks during the event.



KUWAIT: Attendees gather for a group photo during the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: AMIDEAST, in collaboration with Cod-Education (CODED), hosted an event to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study Program (YES) held at the CODED headquarters in the Free Trade Zone in Industrial Shuwaikh. The YES program is being administered locally by AMIDEAST, an American non-profit organization engaged in international education, training and development activities in the Middle East and North Africa.

Samar Khleif, AMIDEAST Country Director, told Kuwait Times that around 200 Kuwaiti students have so far benefited from the YES program since its establishment. "We accept Kuwaiti students from grades 9 and 10 only. They will stay with a foster family while going to school in the United States for one year. In this way, they have the opportunity to live and experience US education and culture," Khleif explained. "After the program, the students will return back to Kuwait and continue their high school studies. They will become cultural ambassadors of the US to their

respective countries," she said.

AMIDEAST is in the process of selecting students for the next cycle of the YES Program. Both Kuwaitis and residents of Kuwait from select countries including Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bosnia, Egypt, Gaza, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and South Africa among other nations are eligible to apply. Students live with an approved American host family, study at an approved US high school, participate in youth leadership training programs, experience US culture and society firsthand, improve and practice their English speaking and writing skills and make life-long friends.

The scholarship is administered by AMIDEAST under the support and partnership of the US Embassy. Tuesday night's gathering was hosted by YES alumni and cofounder of CODED Ahmad Marafi. US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence R Silverman also attended the event and gave a speech. Silverman lauded the YES program alumni and mentioned Marafi's achievements and successes. "He is a great example of how to build success from the YES experience," he said.

"His CODED institute is helping to inspire and build expertise in computer coding among Kuwait's next generation," he said. He said to be chosen for the YES program, one has to demonstrate good grades, ambition, potential and drive.

"The US State Department offers many other exchange programs to help connect and help break down cultural barriers. In fact, we have more than 2,000 alumni of US State Department exchange programs in Kuwait. Just this month, we sent 12 Kuwaiti professionals to the International Visitors Leadership program which was created 50 years before YES. These professionals will interact with their counterparts from America and around the world to deepen their understanding of issues such as counterterrorism and environmental policy," Silverman said. He encouraged alumni to work together on projects involving entrepreneurship, English teaching, science and other subjects.

The deadline to apply for the scholarship is Dec 4, 2018. More details can be found at: <https://www.amideast.org/kuwait/academic-and-cultural-exchange/kennedy-lugar-yes-program-kuwait>



US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence R Silverman delivers a speech.

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