



AMERICAN TURKISH
ASSOCIATION OF
WASHINGTON DC

JULY 2026
ISSUE 10



SELECT USA 2026 INVESTMENT SUMMIT

BUILDING BRIDGES
THROUGH INVESTMENT

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

BARIŞ ORNARLI

TÜSIAD REPRESENTATIVE
IN THE UNITED STATES

POWER OF NETWORKING
OPPORTUNITIES COME
THROUGH PEOPLE

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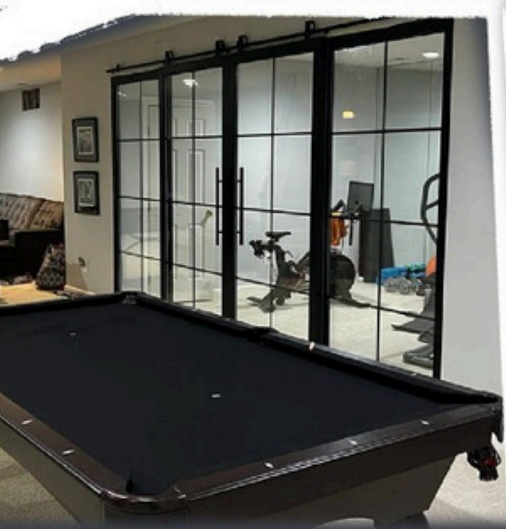
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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Dear ATA-DC Members and Friends,

As we turn the page on the second quarter of 2026 and welcome the summer months, I find myself reflecting on the meaning of community. In many ways, community is one of the few things that cannot be measured. It is not defined by attendance numbers, event calendars, or membership statistics. Community is found in the relationships we build, the support we offer one another, and the sense of belonging that reminds us we are part of something larger than ourselves.

For Turkish-Americans, community has always played a special role. Whether we arrived in this country recently or generations ago, we all understand the importance of maintaining our connections—to our heritage, to our traditions, and to one another. Organizations like ATA-DC exist because people before us recognized that these connections matter. They understood that culture survives not simply because it is remembered, but because it is shared.

As I look around our community today, I am encouraged by the diversity of experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives that make us stronger. I see members who have supported ATA-DC for decades, young professionals beginning their careers, families raising the next generation of Turkish-Americans, and volunteers who generously give their time and talents to serve others. Together, they represent the best of what our community can be.

The midpoint of the year also invites us to look forward. The future of ATA-DC will not be shaped by any one leader, board, or initiative. It will be shaped by the people who choose to participate, contribute, and invest in our shared mission. Every volunteer hour, every new friendship, every act of mentorship, and every effort to strengthen our community becomes part of that future.

As we enter the second half of 2026, my hope is that we continue to build an organization that is welcoming, forward-looking, and deeply rooted in the values that bring us together. The challenges facing communities today are real, but so are the opportunities. By working together, we can ensure that ATA-DC remains a place where culture is celebrated, friendships are formed, and future generations find a sense of pride and belonging.

Thank you for being part of this journey. I look forward to all that we will accomplish together in the months ahead.

With sincere thanks and warmest wishes,

Sertap Schreffler

PRESIDENT OF ATA-DC



turkish festival

TURKISH FESTIVAL 2025 WAS SUPPORTED BY MORE THAN 20 LOCAL AND NATIONWIDE SPONSORS.

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- KAZAKHSTAN CULTURAL-BUSINESS ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA
- UYGHUR ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

WHAT OUR SPONSORS SAID

For over 30 years, David Saltzman and I have supported Turkish American organizations nationwide. But the number of successful organizations has not kept up in recent years. In that sense, ATA-DC is exceptional, serving as an organization of its time and the future, always. We believe the Turkish Festival and Republic Day Gala are beautiful celebrations. What a Turkish Delight your leadership has been. Thank you!

GUNAY EVINCH, SALTZMAN & EVINCH

I've been supporting ATA-DC as RE/MAX since the first festival in 2002, and each year it's a joy to set up the RE/MAX balloon with my family on Pennsylvania Avenue. It's a wonderful experience to reconnect with old friends and clients, meet new people, enjoy Turkish cuisine, and watch the amazing shows at the stage. I'm proud to support ATA-DC's efforts in promoting Turkish culture. Excellent work, ATA-DC!

MELIH CAKMAK, RE/MAX

FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Hello friends and esteemed readers,

Welcome to the July 2026 issue of ATANews.

This edition reflects the many ways our community continues to grow. We celebrate ATA-DC's newly elected leadership and the volunteers who dedicate their time to serving our members. We revisit meaningful cultural gatherings that kept our traditions alive—from Bayram celebrations and concerts to educational seminars and community events. We also share inspiring moments that brought us together, including our visits to the Library of Congress and the U.S. Capitol as part of America's 250th Anniversary celebration.

Our feature coverage takes us to the SelectUSA Investment Summit, where innovation, entrepreneurship, and international collaboration were on full display. Complementing this, I had the privilege of speaking with Barış Ornarlı, Washington Representative of TÜSİAD, about Türkiye's economy, foreign investment, and the future of U.S.-Türkiye business relations.

As Editor-in-Chief, I am continually reminded that every issue of ATANews is itself a collaborative effort. It is made possible by our writers, editors, volunteers, advertisers, and the many organizations that generously share their stories with us. My sincere thanks go to everyone who contributed to this edition and to you, our readers, for continuing to support our mission.

As we enjoy the summer months, I also invite you to look ahead. Exciting programs, new initiatives, and the 2026 DC Turkish Festival are already on the horizon, and we look forward to bringing our community together once again.

Thank you for being part of the ATA-DC family. I hope you enjoy this issue.

Warm regards and cheers,

Ozge Övün-Sert

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
ATA-DC SECRETARY GENERAL



ATADC's Annual Father's Day Picnic Unites Generations in Celebration and Service



Turkish Embassy Counselor Fırat Sarma joined ATA-DC Father's Day picnic

ATA-DC hosted another wonderful Father's Day Picnic at Lubber Run Park, bringing together families, friends, and community members for an afternoon of celebration, connection, and meaningful updates.

The event honored fathers in the Turkish-American community and recognized their dedication, strength, and leadership. The beautiful setting of Lubber Run Park provided the perfect backdrop for the gathering, as families enjoyed the park, children played throughout the afternoon, and many attendees cooled off by exploring the creek.

Guests also enjoyed delicious food, refreshing drinks, and desserts, adding to the warm and festive atmosphere of the day. In addition to celebrating Father's Day, ATA-DC shared several important community announcements, including the official results of the ATA-DC elections and the launch of pre-orders for the new ATA-DC Virginia Specialty License Plate. The plate proudly features Atatürk's timeless message, "Peace at Home, Peace in the World," and represents an important milestone for ATA-DC and the Turkish-American community in Virginia.

ATA-DC extends its heartfelt thanks to everyone who attended, volunteered, and supported this memorable event.

ATA-DC'S FATHER'S DAY PICNIC AND ELECTION

ATA-DC's new leadership with the newly elected Board members for the 2026 term is as follows.

Executive Leadership

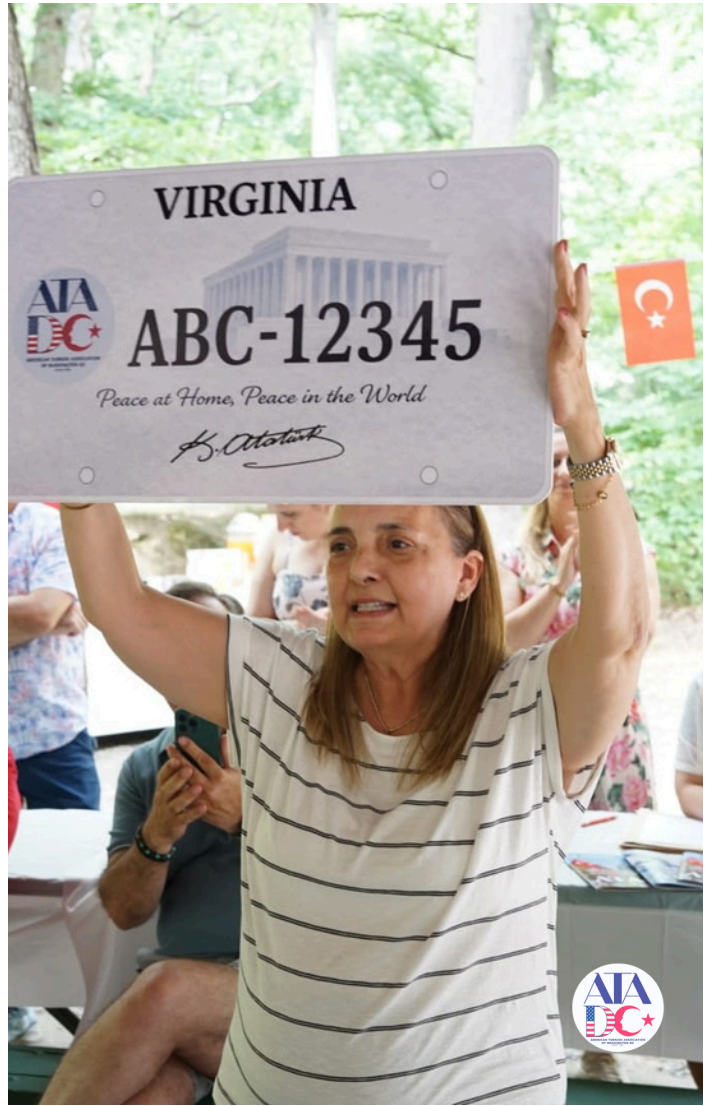
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- Nazlı Göksoy
- Tolga Özec
- Güçlü Özenci
- Elvan Ramazanoğulları
- Berk Somer
- Büşra Kayı Tarhan
- Burcu Yüksel

ATA-DC members came together to honor fathers and celebrate the important role they play in our community. Guests enjoyed delicious food, refreshing drinks, and desserts while reconnecting with friends and making new connections.





A TRIBUTE TO MASTER PAINTER İBRAHİM SAFİ AT ATA-DC HOUSE

ATA-DC, in partnership with the Cultural Diplomacy and Development Foundation, hosted a memorable evening at the ATA-DC House honoring the life and legacy of renowned Azerbaijani-Turkish painter İbrahim Safi, celebrated for painting a live portrait of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

Guests viewed a compelling documentary highlighting Safi's artistic contributions and cultural impact. Following the screening, filmmaker and author Jale Jafarova shared insights into the project and signed copies of her book.

The event welcomed distinguished guests, including Azerbaijan's Ambassador Hazar Ibrahim, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus Ambassador Damla Güçlü, Brigadier General Alpaslan Güldal, Turkish Embassy Counselor Melih Güngör, and Alp Özerdem, Dean of George Mason University's Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution.

The evening concluded with engaging conversations and a dinner generously provided by Istanbul Kitchen (Özfeke Catering), celebrating cultural heritage, artistic excellence, and international friendship.



ATA-DC and MATA leadership with the Turkish Counselor Fatih Öztürk at the picnic

MATA PICNIC BROUGHT TURKISH AMERICANS TOGETHER IN MD

ATA-DC was delighted to join the Maryland American Turkish Association (MATA) at its Mother's Day Picnic at Centennial Park in Ellicott City, Maryland. The event brought together a large number of families and community members for a day of celebration, fellowship, and enjoyment. Counselor Fatih Öztürk from the Turkish Embassy was also among the guests.

The picnic was well attended and provided a wonderful opportunity for members of the Turkish-American community to reconnect, make new friends, and strengthen community ties. A highlight of the gathering was the traditional lamb roast, prepared over a pit and enjoyed by guests throughout the day.

ATA-DC thanks MATA for hosting this successful event and creating a welcoming space to celebrate mothers and bring the community together. We look forward to participating in future events that promote friendship, culture, and unity.



FIFA WORLD CUP EXCITEMENT AT THE ATA-DC HOUSE IN VA



The excitement of Türkiye's long-awaited return to the FIFA World Cup after 24 years brought the Turkish-American community together through a series of unforgettable ATA-DC watch parties. Despite the late kickoff times, community members gathered with incredible enthusiasm to cheer on our national team. The first watch party began at 10:30 p.m. ahead of the midnight match against Australia. Guests enjoyed pizza, snacks, and a festive atmosphere decorated with Turkish flags as nearly 50 supporters filled the venue. Although Türkiye fell 2-0, the energy and community spirit made the evening a tremendous success.

The second party, featuring homemade lentil soup and delicious pide, welcomed a record-breaking crowd of over 60 attendees. Once again, the venue was filled with pride, excitement, and unwavering support as fans stood behind the national team despite a narrow 1-0 loss to Paraguay.

Türkiye closed the tournament with a spirited 3-2 victory over Team USA, scoring its first goals of the tournament in a bittersweet but prideful finale. ATA-DC looks forward to supporting the national team again as they continue building toward an even brighter future at the next World Cup.

ATA-DC BOARD RETREAT CHARTS THE PATH FORWARD AS ALWAYS

The annual ATA-DC Retreat once again brought together the dedicated Board Members of ATA-DC for an important opportunity to reflect, collaborate, and strategically plan for the future of our organization. Throughout the retreat, board members engaged in thoughtful discussions regarding ATA-DC's long-term vision, shared valuable feedback gathered from our members, and explored new ways to further strengthen the association's effectiveness as a dynamic and impactful nonprofit organization. The retreat continues to serve as an essential platform where leaders from diverse professional and personal backgrounds contribute unique perspectives, creating a stronger foundation for the organization's continued growth.

This year's retreat was particularly meaningful as it allowed us to look back and evaluate the goals and promises we set for ourselves three years ago. We are proud to recognize that many of those commitments have successfully become reality. From the establishment of the ATA-DC House to the expansion of our festival into a larger and more impactful community event, we have demonstrated our dedication to delivering meaningful results for our members. These achievements reflect not only the strength of our shared vision, but also the collective commitment of everyone working to ensure ATA-DC continues to grow, evolve, and better serve our community for years to come.



TURKISH AMERICANS CELEBRATED BAYRAM WITH KAVURMA IN VA

Kurban Bayramı was celebrated with a festive gathering centered around one of the holiday's most cherished traditions: Kavurma. Organized by Turks in DMV and the Social Women's VIP Club, the event brought together families and friends to enjoy freshly prepared Kavurma—the traditional meat dish long associated with Kurban Bayramı celebrations. More than just a meal, the gathering celebrated the spirit of generosity, togetherness, and cultural heritage, giving community members an opportunity to reconnect, strengthen friendships, and experience the warmth of Bayram traditions while away from home.

The event also served as a meaningful reminder that preserving cultural traditions helps strengthen the bonds of the Turkish-American community across generations.



COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER FOR A TRADITIONAL SIRA GECESİ



On April 3, the Turkish-American community came together for an evening of culture, music, and fellowship. Featuring live performances with drums, sazes, and bağlama, the traditional Sira Gecesi offered guests traditional foods, including çiğ köfte and a variety of appetizers, while they joined in folk dances and halay throughout the night. Organizers, including DMV Talks, emphasized that the goal was not only to host an event but also to preserve the Sira Gecesi tradition and strengthen community bonds across the DMV region. A raffle held during the evening awarded prizes to 60 attendees. Gold sponsors included Capitol Law Partners, Efesus Cafe, and Azizam Bakery.

90s THEMED CONCERT BY THE DMV TURKISH MUSIC ENSEMBLE

On April 25, the DMV Turkish Music Ensemble celebrated its third anniversary with a high-energy concert of 90s pop hits. Led by Şef Tuna Yıldız, the group performed a rich repertoire featuring tracks from 90s icons like Mustafa Sandal, Çelik, Yaşar, Demet, Nilüfer, and Candan Erçetin, as well as all-time favorites Tarkan and Sezen Aksu. The crowd spent the night dancing to upbeat rhythms and singing along to classic ballads. This milestone concert caps off 3 years of growth for the volunteer-based group. Since its founding, it has brought Turkish music and heritage to the DMV area and served as cultural ambassadors, representing Türkiye at the Reston Multicultural Festival, D.C. Turkish Festival, and the Turkish Society of Rochester's Republic Day Ball.



ATATÜRK SOCIETY OF AMERICA'S ANNUAL MAY 19TH FUNDRAISER



The Atatürk Society of America (ASA) commemorated May 19 Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day with a series of events in Washington, D.C., bringing together members and supporters to honor Atatürk's legacy and support educational initiatives. Speaking at the event, ASA President Filiz Odabas-Geldiy emphasized the significance of May 19 and Atatürk's faith in younger generations. "Atatürk's decision to entrust this meaningful day to the youth remains one of the strongest expressions of his confidence in future generations and his belief that the nation's future rests in their hands," she said. She also underscored the importance of safeguarding Republic's founding principles, including secularism, the rule of law, and modern education. The celebrations began with ASA's annual Education Fundraising Dinner at the Yavalar Residence. During the evening, ASA presented its prestigious Atatürk Awards to two distinguished individuals. The Atatürk Award for the Arts was presented to renowned ballet artist Serkan Hasanusta, while the Atatürk Sports and Achievement Award was bestowed upon national tennis champion Zeynep Sönmez, who sent a message of thanks from Türkiye as she prepared for an international tournament.

KIRMIZI MIKROFON CHORUS GAVE ITS SPRING CONCERT IN MCLEAN

The Kırmızı Mikrofon Choir performed its "Çiçek Bahçesi" concert at Langley High School in Virginia, bringing together nearly 450 guests for a memorable evening of Turkish music. The audience enjoyed a rich repertoire of beloved songs, accompanied by a strong orchestra and an impressive choir performance. With its colorful stage presence, heartfelt music, and warm community atmosphere, the concert received great appreciation from attendees. Beyond the music, the evening carried a meaningful purpose: proceeds from the concert were donated to help establish music rooms in earthquake-affected regions of Türkiye. This special event beautifully demonstrated the power of music to bring people together while supporting hope, healing, and education through the arts.



ATA-DC LAUNCHES TURKISH SPECIALTY LICENSE PLATE IN VA



ATA-DC announced its historic milestone Specialty license plate initiative for the Turkish-American community in VA. The project has received official sponsorship in the Virginia General Assembly and now moves to its final phase. Under Virginia DMV requirements, 450 prepaid applications are needed before the specialty plate can be produced. Community participation is essential to reaching this goal. Virginia residents can begin the purchase process by visiting www.atadc.org/atadclicenseplate, where they will complete the required Virginia DMV application and payment. The fee is \$25 for the standard plate and \$35 for the personalized plate and can be paid online. The receipt and forms must be emailed to preorder@atadc.org

ATA-DC MARKS AMERICA'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY WITH EDUCATIONAL TOURS OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS AND U.S. CAPITOL

BY FERİHA İŞTAR



As part of the celebration of America's 250th Anniversary, ATA-DC was delighted to host two special visits to the Library of Congress on June 5 and June 11, giving our members the opportunity to explore one of America's most treasured cultural institutions.

Over the course of these two memorable tours, participants spent wonderful hours captivated by the beauty, history, and grandeur of the Library. Visitors were especially impressed by the magnificent tapestries, breathtaking architecture, and the remarkable collections that make the Library of Congress the largest library in the world. Every room offered new discoveries and a deeper appreciation for this extraordinary national treasure. We were particularly honored to learn about the Library's extensive collections related to Türkiye and the Near East, and to gain unique insights into the important role these collections play in preserving and sharing cultural heritage.

A very special thank you goes to Joan S. Weeks, Head and Turkish Specialist of the Near East Section at the Library of Congress. Having lived in Türkiye and being a true admirer of the country and its culture, Joan brought a unique personal perspective to the tours. Her deep knowledge, enthusiasm, and warm hospitality made each visit both educational and inspiring.

We are deeply grateful to Joan for generously sharing her time and expertise with our members. Thanks to her guidance, these two special visits became unforgettable experiences, leaving all of us with wonderful memories and an even greater admiration for the Library of Congress and its treasures.

ATA-DC also organized a special tour of the United States Capitol Building, which reached full capacity shortly after registration opened. Participants explored one of the nation's most iconic landmarks, learning about the history of Congress, the Capitol's remarkable architecture, the Rotunda and its historic artwork, the National Statuary Hall Collection, and the symbolic center point beneath the Rotunda from which Washington, D.C. was originally measured.

The Capitol tour provided members with a unique opportunity to gain a deeper appreciation for the institutions and history that have shaped the United States over the past 250 years. As with the Library of Congress visits, the experience combined education, history, and civic engagement, making it a meaningful way for ATA-DC members to commemorate this historic milestone while celebrating the rich heritage of their adopted country.



ATA-DC'S COMMUNITY SEMINARS CONTINUED WITH REAL ESTATE



ATA-DC continued its Community Series with a well-attended Real Estate Seminar, bringing together community members, real estate professionals, and mortgage lending experts for an informative discussion on homeownership and financing opportunities.

The seminar featured real estate agents and mortgage specialist Tolga Çınar, who shared valuable insights into the home-buying process and current lending requirements. Representing ATA-DC, Secretary General Özge Övün-Sert delivered a presentation highlighting the association's ongoing commitment to community education and engagement.

Participants had the opportunity to ask questions about purchasing property, mortgage qualifications, and financing options, creating an interactive and practical learning experience.

The event concluded with a complimentary lunch sponsored by Mediterranean Eats and community supporter Sema Gülmez. ATA-DC thanked all attendees and reaffirmed its commitment to offering free educational seminars through its Community Series in the months ahead.



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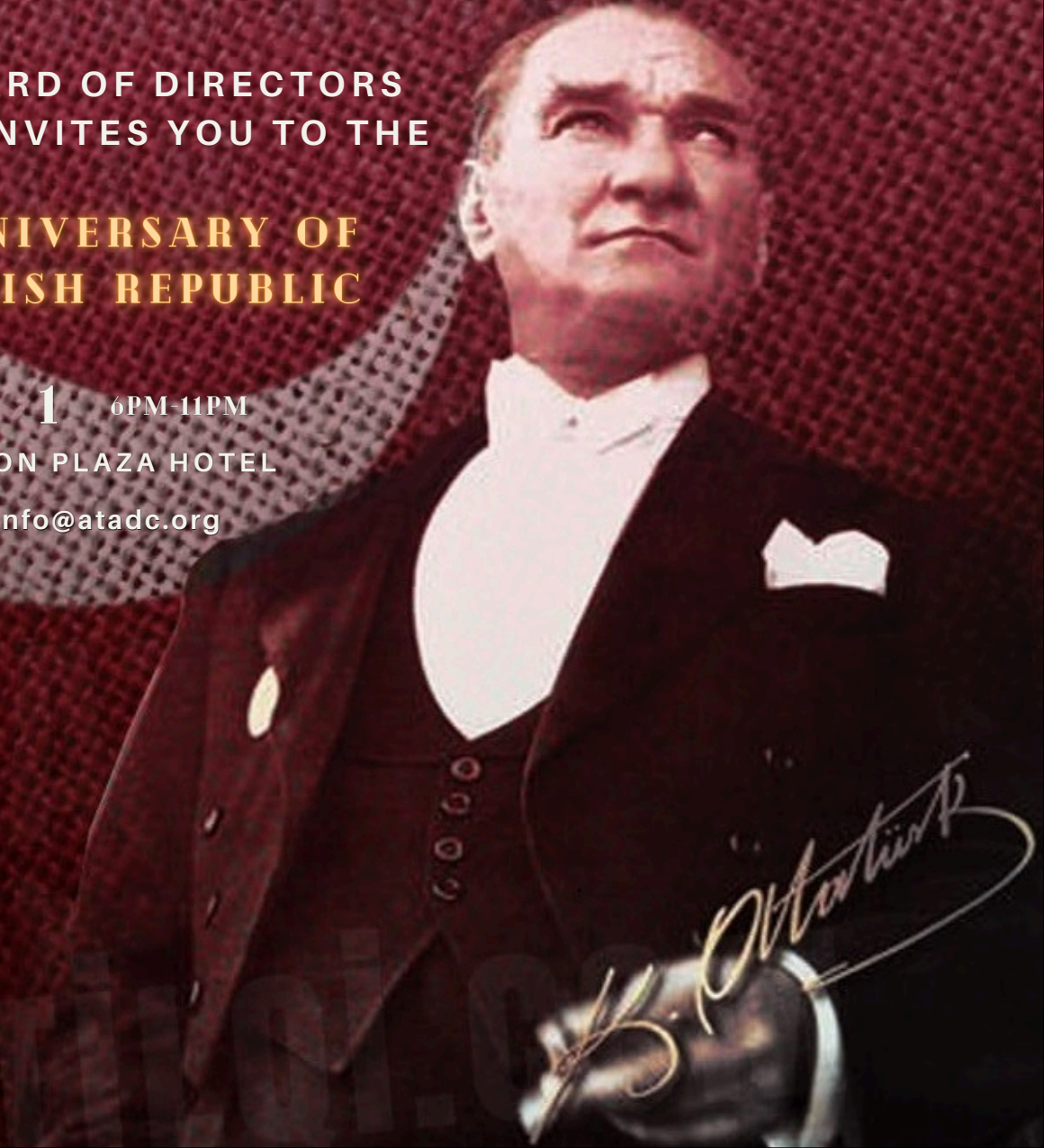
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BIG NEWS— SOMETHING EXCITING IS COMING!

We are thrilled to announce that the official **ATA-DC** mobile app is launching soon on the

App Store! and **Google Play!**

Our goal has always been to bring our community closer together — and now ATA-DC will be right at your fingertips, anytime and anywhere.



★ HERE IS A SNEAK PEEK AT WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT ★



EVENTS

Browse upcoming ATADC events, get directions to venues, and add events directly to your calendar.



NEWS & MAGAZINE

Read the latest news, announcements, and our publications all in one place, anytime and anywhere.



NOTIFICATIONS

Never miss what matters. Receive instant alerts about upcoming events, important announcements, and community updates directly on your phone.



MEMBERSHIP

View and manage your membership, explore your member benefits, and stay connected and engaged with the Turkish American community.

We cannot wait to share it with you.

Stay tuned for the official launch announcement.

With warm regards,
The ATADC Team

TURKISH BUSINESSES TAKE THE STAGE AT **SELECTUSA** INVESTMENT SUMMIT 2026



THE RECORD-BREAKING U.S. INVESTMENT SUMMIT BROUGHT TOGETHER THOUSANDS OF BUSINESS LEADERS, OFFICIALS AND ENTREPRENEURS—INCLUDING A STRONG TURKISH DELEGATION—TO FORGE NEW PARTNERSHIPS AND EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE AMERICAN MARKET.

BY GÜÇLÜ ÖZENCI

The SelectUSA Investment Summit is the highest profile event in the United States to facilitate business investment by connecting thousands of investors, companies, economic development organizations (EDOs), and industry experts to create meaningful introductions and develop business.

Hosted by the U.S. Department of Commerce, at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center in National Harbor, the Investment Summit is for companies considering expanding to the United States and provides EDOs with the opportunity to meet directly with international companies to facilitate investment deals.

Since its inception, the SelectUSA Investment Summit has attracted thousands of international companies and economic development representatives generating over \$256 billion in new U.S. investment projects supporting more than 130,000 jobs across the United States and its territories.



The 2026 SelectUSA Investment Summit, held as the United States prepares to celebrate its 250th anniversary, welcomed more than 5,500 attendees from 100 countries and 55 U.S. states and territories. Organized by the U.S. Department of Commerce, the summit brought participants together for in-person networking and informative programming on key industry topics affecting the foreign direct investment (FDI) community. This year, the summit took place from Sunday, May 3, through Thursday, May 7, and included side events throughout downtown Washington, D.C., as well as at embassies and corporate venues.

By the time it wrapped up, the 2026 SelectUSA Investment Summit had become the largest in the event's history, according to the Department of Commerce. The week's program opened with keynote remarks from U.S. Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick and featured nine governors, 25 ambassadors and chiefs of mission, and more than 200 speakers across the agenda. The Summit catalyzed more than \$56 billion in new and planned investment commitments –

including a record \$2.5 billion in deals announced on-site – and drew more than 2,700 international delegates and over 600 tech-sector participants to the Exhibition Hall. The Department of Commerce has already confirmed that the 2027 SelectUSA Investment Summit will return to National Harbor from May 2-5, 2027.

U.S. Consul General in Istanbul Michael Lally was among the American diplomats who participated in the event. Speaking at the 2026 SelectUSA Investment Summit, Lally said that Türkiye and the United States are making strong progress toward their \$100 billion bilateral trade target, with current trade volume nearing \$48 billion. He highlighted growing investment ties, the participation of 33 Turkish companies, and expanding cooperation across key sectors and regional initiatives.

The U.S. Consul General also met with Turkish investors and U.S. summit organizers during a reception hosted at the residence of the Ambassador of Türkiye to the United States in Washington, D.C. Addressing the guests, Lally reiterated the importance of strengthening commercial and investment ties between the two countries.





ATADC's board member Güçlü Özenci was invited to the summit as a speaker by the Department of Commerce for two occasions: as a judge and as a panelist. The pitching session took place on Monday, May 4th and attending startups, all aiming to grow in the U.S., had applied and been selected among many others for the chance to gain visibility and receive feedback from both the panel and the audience. They went on to compete in the World Pitch finals, held on the last day of the summit.

The panel took place on Tuesday, May 5th and titled as: "When is the right time to expand into the US". The panelists shared their perspectives on what the common pitfalls are, what needs to be done to prevent failure and increase chances of success in the World's largest market and biggest opportunity which comes with the fiercest competition. Growing startups often assume that their solution is ready and relevant for the U.S. market, so they allocate limited resources and make the leap. However, the reality is usually that their product- market fit is quite different from their home market. Regulations, expectations, needs and even problems might be different. The costs are much higher, and the processes are extremely well defined in some verticals.

The event venue was impressively large accommodating thousands of attendees simultaneously while hosting parallel sessions. Attendees had the chance to book one-on-one meetings with relevant people to develop businesses. Dozens of tables were set up for these meetings, which participants scheduled through the summit app.

The Expo area hosted 55 states and territories' booths. These states' booths are usually hosted by economic development organizations to attract foreign investment to their location. They offer various initiatives for specific industries and each focuses on its selected strategic vertical. Wisconsin focuses on dairy and adjacent industry investments, while Texas on energy and technology. Washington, DC; Virginia; and Maryland were each represented separately – DC by the Mayor's office, and Virginia and Maryland by their respective economic development partnerships.

Our DMV region is attracting government contracting and adjacent strategic investments as expected. On top of that, startup technology ventures are drawn to the region because they create jobs and attract talent and capital. The DMV region is among the most highly educated regions in the nation, giving it all the ingredients to become a tech hub.



Meanwhile, Turkish Ambassador to the United States Sedat Önal participated in a special session at the 2026 SelectUSA Investment Summit, where he addressed entrepreneurs, investors, and business leaders. One of the featured events, “U.S. Market Playbook - curated by FarkLabs”, focused on strategies for building businesses in the U.S. market. The session brought together founders, investors, and industry operators for a high-level exchange of insights and experiences on navigating growth opportunities in the U.S.



“SELECTUSA IS A VALUABLE PLATFORM FOR INTRODUCING U.S. INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES TO TURKISH ENTREPRENEURS WHILE ENCOURAGING GREATER ENGAGEMENT WITH STATE-LEVEL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIPS.”

Sedat Önal
Turkish Ambassador to the U.S.

The Embassy of Türkiye hosted a reception for participants of the 2026 SelectUSA Investment Summit at the residence of the Ambassador of Türkiye to the United States. Bringing together senior government officials and representatives of the Turkish and American business communities, the event underscored the growing momentum in bilateral investment and commercial cooperation. In his remarks, Ambassador Sedat Önal described SelectUSA as a valuable platform for introducing U.S. investment opportunities to Turkish entrepreneurs while encouraging greater engagement in state-level economic partnerships.

The reception was attended by Diane Farrell, Deputy Under Secretary for International Trade at the U.S. Department of Commerce, Michael Lally, U.S. Consul General in Istanbul, Mehmet Kırdar representing the U.S.-Türkiye Business Council, and Khush Choksy of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Speakers highlighted the strong trajectory of U.S.-Türkiye economic relations, with officials emphasizing continued progress toward the shared goal of reaching \$100 billion in bilateral trade. Consul General Michael Lally noted that 33 Turkish companies participated in this year's SelectUSA Investment Summit, reflecting the growing interest of Turkish investors in the U.S. market. He also pointed to the expanding trade and investment relationship, which has approached \$48 billion, while hundreds of business-to-business meetings during the summit created new opportunities for cross-border collaboration. The evening served as a dynamic networking platform, reinforcing the commitment of both countries to strengthening investment ties and fostering long-term economic partnerships. ■



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TÜSIAD IN USA



TÜSIAD Washington Representative *Bariş Ornarlı* discusses Türkiye's economy, foreign investment, innovation, and the future of U.S.-Türkiye business relations.



BY ÖZGE ÖVÜN SERT

As Türkiye navigates a rapidly evolving global economy, strengthening commercial ties with the U.S. has become increasingly important for both countries. In this exclusive interview, Bariş Ornarlı, Washington Representative of the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TÜSIAD), shares his insights on the state of Türkiye's economy, the challenges facing foreign investment, and reforms needed to enhance the country's competitiveness. He also discusses TÜSIAD's efforts to deepen U.S.-Türkiye economic cooperation through dialogue, innovation, and strategic partnerships. Speaking with ATANews Editor-in-Chief Özge Övün-Sert, Ornarlı offers a thoughtful perspective on the opportunities that lie ahead for entrepreneurs, investors, and policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic.

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with us. What are TÜSIAD's primary activities and priorities in the U.S., particularly through its Washington office?

Thank you for this opportunity, Özge. Since its founding in 1971, the Turkish Industry & Business Association (TÜSIAD), a voluntary, independent, non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting welfare through private enterprise, has been the leading voice of the Turkish business world. It serves as a strategic bridge to global partners for the private sector. Established in 1998, the Washington Representative Office of TÜSIAD anchors this mission in the United States. The primary goal of the TÜSIAD Washington Representative Office is to strengthen US-Türkiye relations through sustained

dialogue, mutual understanding, and deeper cooperation. The Office serves as a conduit for exchange of information between Türkiye and the United States on business, economic and political issues by organizing conferences, panels, roundtable discussions, and research projects and events. The organization endeavors to develop and deepen the bilateral relationship in every field and to strengthen mutual interaction. To advance these priorities, we maintain regular engagement with a variety of stakeholders –from government to business circles, think tanks, universities, the media, international organizations, and local Turkish-American groups. In this context, we support the work of the Brookings Institution and have built strong partnerships with numerous think tanks and research organizations in the United States.

TÜSIAD's presence also extends well beyond Washington, D.C. Over the last 10 years, we have built strong business networks in Silicon Valley and New York. The TÜSIAD Silicon Valley Network, led by Ayşegül İldeniz, and the TÜSIAD New York Network, led by Cemil Müjdat Altay, help mobilize a strong professional diaspora focused on business, entrepreneurship and innovation. The members of these business networks organize panel discussions, webinars, in-person meetings, and programs featuring leading Turkish and Turkish-American professionals to support an exchange of information between Türkiye and the United States. This also provides an opportunity for Turkish-American business professionals to support each other through exclusive networking events. This multifaceted approach aims to deepen U.S. – Türkiye cooperation in a way that is substantive, forward-looking, and mutually beneficial.



How does TÜSIAD engage with U.S. policymakers, business leaders, think tanks, and trade organizations to strengthen economic ties between the two countries?

The TÜSIAD Washington Representative Office engages with U.S. stakeholders as an independent, credible, research-driven voice of the Turkish business world. We take TÜSIAD's identity as a "factory of ideas" to heart, striving to serve as a platform for dialogue and exchange. Our goal is to bring the perspectives and priorities of the Turkish private sector to the institutions and networks that work on trade, investment, and economic policy in the United States in ways that are substantive, constructive, and lasting. We do this by convening Turkish and American counterparts around a practical agenda for cooperation through regular meetings, policy discussions, business delegation visits, roundtables, conferences, and partnerships with leading institutions in Washington, D.C. Through our long-standing presence in the U.S. capital, we have cultivated strong, mutually reinforcing relationships with policymakers, business leaders, think tanks, trade organizations, and civil society actors on both sides.

The Board of Directors of TÜSIAD travels to the United States each year for high level meetings with government, business leaders, entrepreneurs, and innovators. We organize regular business delegation visits to Washington, Silicon Valley, New York, and Boston to engage in critical policy dialogues, exchange industry insights, and bridge the gap between global market disruptors and institutional decision-makers. Over the years we've supported independent research by organizations like the Brookings Institution, the German Marhsall Fund of the U.S. (GMF), the Center for Transatlantic Relations at Johns

Hopkins University, and many more. We have published reports in partnership with business organizations, served as a credible source of information and research for policy makers and researchers alike.

What misconceptions about Türkiye do you encounter most frequently among American business leaders, and how do you address them?

Türkiye falls victim to the headlines of its region. Some business leaders see a neighborhood fraught with geopolitical risk and market volatility. But that view often misses the depth, diversity, and resilience of Türkiye's economy and people. Those who know the country well recognize a different reality: strong human capital potential, including a talented diaspora dispersed across the world, a dynamic innovation ecosystem, a vibrant entrepreneurial culture, a sophisticated private sector, and an active, vibrant civil society.

When you take a closer look, Türkiye also has structural advantages that set it apart from less stable neighbors in the region. Geographically, Türkiye sits at the intersection of energy routes, trade corridors, and production networks linking Europe to Asia. Economically, it is deeply integrated into European supply chains, with strong capacity across industrial goods and services and a rare sectoral breadth that spans industry, agriculture, tourism, healthcare, logistics, technology, and a fast-growing defense sector.

This economic diversity is a major source of resilience. Recent years have tested this repeatedly, through the pandemic, regional wars and conflicts, political upheaval, energy-price volatility, financing constraints, and supply-chain disruptions. Turning that resilience into lasting competitiveness will, of course, require a predictable, rules-based investment climate, investment in our human capital, and a shift toward higher value-added production.

How does TÜSIAD assess the current state of the Turkish economy? What do you see as its greatest strengths and most pressing challenges today?

TÜSIAD views the Turkish economy as fundamentally resilient with a high potential, yet under growing strain from an increasingly fragmented and uncertain domestic and global



environment. The recent data captures this dual picture. The Turkish economy expanded by 2.5% in the first quarter of 2026, supported by private consumption, services, investment, and inventory accumulation, but the growth was uneven across sectors. Industry and exports remain under pressure, weighed down by high financing costs, geopolitical uncertainty, and the disruptions running through global supply chains.

Fortunately, Türkiye's strengths are structural and largely durable. The country benefits from a diversified industrial base, with companies deeply integrated into European supply chains; a young and adaptable workforce with strong entrepreneurial capacity; and strategic proximity to major markets and energy routes. These advantages are likely to become even more valuable at a time when concerns over supply chain security are reshaping global production networks and encouraging diversification away from China.

Türkiye is also gaining momentum in high value-added sectors, including defense and aerospace, and is home to an increasingly sophisticated innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem. Türkiye ranks 43rd of 139 economies in the 2025 Global Innovation Index, 3rd among upper-middle-income economies.

The challenges, however, are real and in part longstanding. Inflation remains high, and the war with Iran has added additional pressures on prices. The real sector is operating under the combined weight of costly financing, weakened export competitiveness, productivity constraints, and energy dependence. We must support our disinflation target with complementary tools that address production, exports, and industrial transformation.

The central challenge now for Türkiye is to turn resilience into lasting competitiveness within a global order that is undergoing a multilayered transformation. Geopolitical tensions, trade wars, technological disruption, artificial intelligence, the climate crisis, energy security, supply-chain security, and demographic change are no longer separate concerns; they have become parts of a single competitiveness equation. TÜSIAD takes the full measure of this shift, and our view is that several things must advance at once. We must hold firm in the fight against inflation while protecting our production and export capacity. We must accelerate industrial and skills transformation and adapt to the digital and green economy. We must deepen our integration with the EU and broaden our global networks. And we must strengthen the foundations of institutional confidence, predictability, and a rules-based market order – keeping social welfare and inclusive development at the center of all of it. This is a shared responsibility, one that rests both on the public and private sectors.

Foreign direct investment into Türkiye has not returned to the levels seen in previous decades. From TÜSIAD's perspective, what factors are influencing international investors' decisions regarding Türkiye?

In today's global environment, investors no longer look only at conventional economic indicators. Economic security has become a key concept driving trade and investment decisions, where resilience of supply chains, energy independence, access to technology have become as important as regulatory and institutional predictability for investor confidence. In this sense, investment decisions have become more complex and more strategic. Foreign direct investment is also undergoing a significant global restructuring, particularly as companies reassess their supply chains and seek to reduce excessive dependence on China. Türkiye is exposed to this broader current, but country-specific factors weigh just as heavily.

Although several structural strengths of Türkiye make it an attractive candidate for firms seeking a dependable base between regions, what ultimately turns interest into long-term commitment is ability to accurately predict and plan. TÜSIAD has consistently emphasized that predictability and the rule-of-law is essential for stronger investment. Macroeconomic stability is the first condition of an effective transformation agenda, and the fight against inflation must remain a priority. High inflation does not only mean rising prices; it erodes trust, planning capacity, purchasing power, investment appetite, and the broader sense of economic fairness. A rules-based market order, consumer welfare, and the protection of the market's trust mechanism are therefore common priorities. The international dimension is also critical. One of the clearest signals Türkiye can send to long-term investors would be the deepening of commercial and investment ties with the European Union. In that sense, TÜSIAD maintains that the modernization of the Customs Union with the European Union should be launched without delay and should not be held back by technical or political preconditions. This modernization process should create a more predictable, institutionalized relationship based on shared strategic priorities. Moreover, diversification of international partnerships is also critical. Deepening ties with the U.S. in technology, innovation and defense; advancing the Middle Corridor as a strategic connectivity initiative between Europe and Asia; and developing complementary partnerships with the Gulf countries beyond capital flows can all reinforce Türkiye's standing as a credible, diversified, and strategically positioned investment hub.





How important are issues such as the rule of law, institutional predictability, and regulatory transparency in improving Türkiye's investment climate?

They are absolutely essential. These are not secondary or technical matters—they are the foundation on which a competitive investment environment is built. TÜSIAD has persistently stated that we must build strong and resilient institutions and a consistent and reliable rule of law should be strengthened first and foremost. In a country where the rule of law is ensured, rules and predictability prevail. Investment is, by its nature, a long-term decision that rests on confidence. In the simplest terms, predictability and the rule of law mean stronger investment. A broader space for freedom means greater innovation capacity.

What role can the Turkish-American business community play in strengthening commercial and investment ties between the two countries?

The Turkish-American business community is indispensable to strengthening commercial and investment ties between Türkiye and the U.S. The business community serves as one of strongest bridges because it understands both economies. Entrepreneurs, academics, investors, executives, and students with roots in both countries can spot opportunities, build trust

and connect people and institutions in ways that formal channels alone often cannot. Our own work in Washington, D.C., Silicon Valley, and New York has made clear just how much Türkiye's globally dispersed human capital is a strategic strength. We engage regularly with highly accomplished individuals—many of them have achieved exemplary success in American companies, universities, and innovation ecosystems. Our aim is to mobilize their energy, creativity, ideas, and global perspective to create connections and build credibility.

How can Turkish companies become more integrated into U.S. supply chains and innovation ecosystems?

In my view, integration into U.S. supply chains and innovation ecosystems today requires more than cost competitiveness. It requires reliability, quality, compliance with standards, supply chain security, transparency, and the ability to build trust over time. Turkish companies that want to deepen their presence in the U.S. market need to position themselves not only as suppliers, but as long-term strategic partners. This means moving beyond transactional export/import relationships and building deeper forms of cooperation with U.S. firms. And we must recognize that this takes time. We have been discussing the potential for cooperation between Turkish and American companies in third countries – we believe there is great potential there. Technology partnerships are also key. Turkish businesses already have important capabilities and previous relationships in sectors such as manufacturing, defense and aerospace.

Any advice for young Turkish entrepreneurs?

My first piece of advice is to resist crowded markets and find your niche and then become genuinely excellent at it. Many spaces are saturated, and the entrepreneurs who break through are usually the ones who identify a specific, real problem and solve it better than anyone else. Start with a problem that matters, and a deep, honest understanding of the customer you are solving it for. A strong idea is only the beginning. Global competitiveness comes from understanding your customers at an international scale, executing with consistency, and earning trust – because trust and brand recognition are what ultimately allow a company to compete beyond its home market. And finally, do not try to do it in isolation. You must be out in the world: building relationships, learning from those ahead of you, and connecting with the people that can open doors and accelerate your growth. ■



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THE POWER OF NETWORKING IN THE U.S. BUSINESS COMMUNITY

BY SAID MURAT

When many people think about success in the United States, they often focus on hard work, education, experience, or having a great business idea. While all of these things certainly matter, there is another factor that plays a major role in professional growth in the U.S.: networking.

For many immigrants and entrepreneurs, this can be one of the biggest cultural differences to understand. In many countries, people tend to separate personal relationships from business.

In the United States, however, relationships are often an important part of how opportunities are created. People want to know who they are working with. They want to build trust before doing business.

This does not mean networking is about collecting business cards or trying to sell something to everyone in the room. In fact, the most effective networking in the U.S. is often simple, genuine, and relationship-driven. Because the goal is not to make a sale—it is to make a connection.



Sometimes, a short conversation at a local event can lead to a future partnership. A casual coffee meeting may open the door to a new client. A recommendation from someone in your community can create opportunities that advertising alone cannot achieve.

One thing I have personally observed while living and working in the U.S. is that visibility matters. Many talented business owners struggle not because their services are bad, but because people simply do not know they exist. This is why community involvement, attending events, supporting organizations, and building authentic relationships are so valuable.

Networking is also changing in the digital age. Today, your online presence has become part of your professional identity. Platforms such as LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, and community media channels allow people to learn about you before they ever meet you in person. In many cases, people build trust through digital visibility first.

Especially for small businesses, personal branding and consistency have become increasingly important. People are more likely to support businesses when they feel connected to the person behind the brand.

Another important aspect of networking in the U.S. is community engagement. Volunteering, supporting local initiatives, attending cultural events, or participating in nonprofit organizations can help people build meaningful long-term relationships.



In American business culture, being active in the community often creates credibility and trust. Many newcomers initially believe that success comes only from working harder. But over time, many discover that relationships can be just as important as skills or experience. In the U.S., opportunities often come through people.

That is why networking should not be viewed as self-promotion, but rather as relationship-building. The goal is not simply to meet more people - it is to create genuine connections, provide value, and become part of a community.

Sometimes, one conversation can change everything. For immigrants, entrepreneurs, and small business owners, this mindset can make a real difference. Building a network takes time, patience, and sincerity, but the results can be powerful. In a country where relationships often open doors, showing up and staying connected may be one of the most valuable investments you can make.



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BY SELÇUK OFLAZ

A NEW CHAPTER FOR ATATÜRK SCHOOL: FIRST **ACADEMIC YEAR AT ATA-DC HOUSE ENDS WITH **CELEBRATION** AND ACHIEVEMENT**



Atatürk School has proudly completed its first year of education at ATA-DC House in Falls Church, VA, after more than 30 years of serving the community at other locations. Prior to the end of the school year, it organized celebrations for the National Sovereignty & Children's Day on April 23rd.

The program included student performances and traditional folk dances as well as a magician show. As the 2025-26 academic year came to a close, Atatürk School also gave each student a certificate of completion recognizing their hard work, growth, and dedication throughout the year.

While ATA-DC wishes all students a wonderful and relaxing summer break, the Atatürk School team is already preparing for the next academic year. Early registration is now open for the 2026-27 school year, with classes beginning on Sunday, September 13. We look forward to welcoming back returning students and meeting new families joining our school community. Here's to another year of learning Turkish language and culture!

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INVESTING IN TOMORROW'S LEADERS: CELEBRATING THE 9TH YOUTH CULTURAL AMBASSADORS PROGRAM GRADUATION

BY DEMET CABBAR

On May 19, the Turkish American Association of Washington, DC (ATA-DC) proudly celebrated the graduation of the ninth cohort of its Youth Cultural Ambassadors Program (YCAP), marking another important milestone in one of the Association's flagship youth initiatives. Hosted at the newly established ATA-DC House, the ceremony welcomed graduates, families, volunteers, and community leaders to celebrate the accomplishments of the program's largest graduating class to date—45 Youth Cultural Ambassadors.

The timing of the ceremony made the occasion especially meaningful. Celebrated on Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day, the event reflected the vision of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who entrusted the future of the Republic to its youth. Gathering young leaders and their families on this significant day served as a powerful reminder that investing in future generations is one of the most meaningful ways to honor his enduring legacy.

Over the course of eight months, YCAP participants embarked on a journey of personal growth, leadership development, and community engagement. Through educational workshops, distinguished guest speakers, volunteer service, team projects, and cultural activities, students strengthened their leadership skills while deepening their understanding of Turkish history, heritage, and identity. The program encourages participants not only to embrace their cultural roots but also to become active, engaged citizens who build bridges across diverse communities.

The graduation ceremony celebrated far more than the completion of a program. It recognized the dedication, perseverance, and growth demonstrated by each participant throughout the year. It also reflected the collective efforts of an extraordinary community of volunteers, coordinators, mentors, guest speakers, judges, Board members, and parents whose unwavering support continues to make YCAP a transformative experience for every cohort.



ATA-DC Celebrates the Largest Graduating Class in the History of YCAP

Hosting the graduation ceremony at the ATA-DC House for the first time added another memorable chapter to the Association's history. As graduates accepted their certificates surrounded by family and friends, the evening was filled with pride, gratitude, and optimism. The new home of ATA-DC house provided a fitting backdrop for celebrating not only the achievements of the students but also the strength and unity of a community committed to preserving its heritage while investing in its future.

As one of ATA-DC's signature programs, YCAP continues to prepare young Turkish Americans to become confident leaders, engaged community members, and proud ambassadors of their cultural heritage. Each graduating class represents another step toward strengthening the bonds between generations and ensuring that the values of service, leadership, and cultural understanding continue to flourish.

ATA-DC House Hosts Its First YCAP Graduation in a Celebration of Youth and Community. Record Number of Graduates Reflects the Growing Impact of ATA-DC's Premier Youth Program.

As the evening came to a close, one message resonated throughout the celebration: honoring Atatürk's legacy is not simply about remembering the past—it is about shaping the future. Through programs like YCAP, ATA-DC remains committed to empowering young people to lead with confidence, serve with purpose, and strengthen the Turkish American community for generations to come.

Planning is already underway for the 10th anniversary year of the Youth Cultural Ambassadors Program. High school students interested in leadership, community service, cultural engagement, and building lifelong friendships are encouraged to apply when applications open later this year. We look forward to welcoming the next generation of Youth Cultural Ambassadors as they begin their own leadership journey.

ATA-DC extends its heartfelt congratulations to the 45 graduates of the YCAP Class of 2025–2026 and sincere appreciation to everyone who contributed to another successful year. The Association also gratefully acknowledges Chef Aynur for the wonderful catering that helped make the celebration even more memorable.



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