

Կամավորի Ձայնը

Voice of the Volunteer



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Arajamugh

By: Van Der Megerdichian from WUS

Upon returning from our journey to Artsakh, news of another soldier falling in defense of our country reached our ears.

With initial sentiments of sorrow, we continued to traverse down Mt. Mrav thinking of the sacrifices made by our fallen heroes, the likes of Garod Megerdichian, Garo Kahkejian, and many others. While the efforts of yesterday's martyrs in their painstaking efforts and ultimate devotion to our cause should never be understated or trivialized, we must not overlook those in the front lines today whose relentless efforts serve a constant notice that the struggle for our lands is incessant and unfortunately burgeoning the ranks of those losing their lives for our homeland.

Day after day, week after week, month after month, the news of a new soldier dying at the front lines in Artsakh have headlined our news outlets. And day after day, week after week, month after month, our reaction has been the same - virtually non-existent as we have become desensitized to the fact that Armenians are dying while life goes on for the rest of us.

However, once again, it is the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) that continues to reaffirm its pledge to stay authentic to its goals. It prioritizes and spearheads the long battle that we, as Armenians, must continue to undertake and the ARF-D Eastern Region's initiative in Arajamugh is a testament to that and ensures that lives are not being lost in vain. The project aims to repopulate the village of Arajamugh, which lies on the border of Artsakh, Azerbaijan, and Iran. While the village is small, the magnitude of such an initiative is anything but.

Arajamugh reaffirms the ARF's determination to remain committed to its ideals. War crimes and human rights violations continue to go unnoticed in the area, in fact are state-sponsored and encouraged by the family-run oil-dictatorship. The international community does not care, the OSCE Minsk group does not

care, the corrupt dictatorship of Azerbaijan does not care. Therefore, it is up to us to care. If we do not fend for ourselves, no one will. Representing a tiny country located in the South Caucasus, with more people living outside the state than in it, it is our duty to care. We must rely on our strengths and only our strengths since it is evident that the same ideals that the international community champions are not acknowledged in Talish or in Mataghis. Arajamugh shows not only Azerbaijan, but the international community that we are here to stay and that Artsakh is a country, and not a conflict. By investing in the land itself and its people, we will prove to the world that Artsakh is a long-term investment and that Artsakh is Armenian.

Our goal, aside from our irredentist ideals includes establishing a prosperous Armenia. Arajamugh and the efforts surrounding it teaches the world that justice will prevail. It is to teach Azerbaijan that retaliation, retribution, and redemption is not only best served by recouping Shahumian and Fizuli, but also by developing and reinforcing our interior. Arajamugh is one small taste of material and tangible revenge. It is revenge for the soldiers that struggled to liberate our lands. It is to avenge our fallen, those who have fought and died and continue to fight and die for every centimeter of soil that we will toil upon and use to cultivate our state, the state we call Artsakh.



There is work to be done and Arajamugh is a start. It is a reaction we can be proud of, an answer to our desensitization. By using this initiative as the cornerstone, a new Arajamugh can be built, cultivated, and

reinforced so that we can continue to prove to the world that Artsakh is not a land of rich history, but a rich future. Such efforts, under the leadership of the ARF, revisit and revitalize the visions of Njdeh and Andranik before us. It is only through our victory and our triumph that Artsakh will see peace and prosperity.



AYF Internship
By: Gabby Krikorian

I've been lucky enough to be in Yerevan this summer as a part of the AYF Internship program. I decided to apply because I thought it was the perfect way to spend my summer; gaining work experience, meeting new Armenians, and living in Yerevan which I already knew I loved. What else could I ask from my last summer before graduating and being thrown into the real world?

I am studying to earn my bachelor's degree in nutrition and want to apply that knowledge as a physician in the future, so during my first few days here I met with the coordinators of a couple of medicine-related locations that were accepting volunteers. Of course, I was a little anxious; my Armenian speaking skills were only sufficient, if that, and I knew that I really wanted to make an impact in my time here. Using this criteria, the organization that seemed to be best for me was the Children of Armenian Fund, or COAF. After my meeting with Dr. Lusine Antonyan, the doctor who I would spend most of my time with, the vision I've had for months to begin living and working in the motherland had finally begun to materialize.

I, Gabby Krikorian, would be going to Armenian villages to gather basic health data on village children that will be further expanded on and analyzed each following year, probably by volunteers like myself. This opportunity was even more exciting to me because I have felt like what was missing from my previous experience in Armenia was that I wasn't able to interact with real people. I felt like a tourist in the country I claimed to be my own! So, I really wanted this summer to be different.

On my first day at work, I did exactly what I was told I'd do: and I loved it! A group of professionals including a psychiatrist, social worker, family medicine practitioner, and my not-as-qualified self headed to Miasnikyan, one of the biggest villages in the Armavir province that's about an hour outside of Yerevan. Each of us had our own agenda. And I, along with Hripsime, a local teacher, mother, and hair stylist, brought in ten preschool students at a time to begin our data collection. I would take the height and weight measurements while she would record them. We had measurements for half the school, about 100 children, when we stopped and I was offered coffee for what was probably the fourth time that day. The rest of the women there who were teachers, cooks, coordinators, and I'm not even really sure what else sat down with me on a couple of shady benches in the preschool's courtyard. They asked me about where I was from, if I liked it here, if the apricots were tasty, and of course the classic, relentless questions about my relationship status. I'm not sure how much they truly understood of my broken Western Armenian, but we were having a great time with each other and I already felt at home, or I guess, work.

I continued the same project for a few days while Lucine began to prepare me for what was to come the following week. A group of doctors, a nurse, a midwife, along with some medical students and volunteers would be coming to work with COAF to hold clinics that are free to those living in the villages of Galarik, Kerakert, and Miasnikyan, where I had already been accustomed to. Most of these

compassionate individuals were a part of the Armenian American Health Professionals Organization which I recently learned is an organization that coordinates events and programs for Armenian medical professionals living in the New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut areas to provide medical support and education to Armenians all over the world. Led by Dr. Joyce Kurdian, they were here to carry out that mission.



Many of them return each year for these clinics and were already familiar with both COAF physicians, Dr. Antonyan who I mentioned earlier and Dr. Lusine Sahakyan, as well as many of the local village staff. In fact, they were so familiar with them that they would talk about their families and exchange gifts with each other. On the other hand, there were some of us that had no idea what to expect in the next few days. There were also a group who spoke no Armenian at all. Nonetheless, we all gathered in Republic Square on a Monday morning, introduced ourselves, and headed to Galarik for the first clinic.

When we arrived an hour or two later, all of us were warmly welcomed. Whether we were veterans or new recruits, the group of women who worked at the COAF clinic were delighted to have us there. But, we all knew that we needed to quickly set up before patients began to arrive in less than 30 minutes. All of us worked together to locate the supplies and arrange things in a way to make things run as smoothly as they could.

The building itself was very nice compared to the surrounding structures. There were separate rooms available for each of the specialties, usually with a desk and chair for the doctor and medical seat or bench for the patients. Electricity, running water, and toilets in the restrooms were common in the clinics, but definitely not a standard for the areas we were in. There was no air conditioning, but at this point, this was expected. It's been a particularly hot summer so far, but we were all happy to be there.



As the patients arrived, they came to a table where the nurse, a couple other volunteers, and myself were ready to take their basic measurements: height, weight, blood sugars, and blood pressure. Many would say that they didn't need to get all of these checked because they "knew" they were fine so we would use our Armenian language abilities to convince them otherwise, just in case.

A great majority of the locals who chose to come were women. So, after our preliminary station, we would hand the patient their basic medical form and direct them to Dr. Ferman, the oncologist and hematologist, for breast screenings. Following that, to Martha Boudakian the midwife, who I was able to watch and work with throughout the next few days. Then, to address their other health concerns, they could visit the other specialists that included an occupational therapist, a respiratory specialist, dentist, and psychiatrist.

Towards the end of each day as the last patients were clearing out, we would share a meal. We used what energy we had left to continue getting to know each other and discuss interesting medical cases, common patterns, or just entertaining individuals. We were all there to learn from one another. As we

shared our experiences we were quickly able to become a tight knit group whose excitement continued to grow, despite the exhausting days.



Although I have a limited medical background, there was a few patterns I was able to observe. There were many men and women would come in with back pains and were guided to the occupational therapist, Alyssa Boulkijian. She made sure to be thorough with each patient and provide very personal care and instruction based on their daily activities and resources. There were also a large portion of patents seeking dental care. This was clearly a common issue among the population, especially children, who may not have the resources or education for proper dental care. There was also a large group of patients who would point to their throats. At first, I thought that it meant they had a sore throat, but I was surprised to understand that they were actually indicating a problem with their thyroid, or a hormonal imbalance. The respiratory specialist, Vera also explained to me that she saw a lot of patients with breathing problems caused by stress, smoking that is very common among men, and pollution from nearby factories and nuclear power plants.

Something else that I have observed, in both the US and Armenia, is the remarkable intimacy and transparency within physician-patient relationships. There is an unspoken trust that allows for great

understanding of one another within very brief interactions. Although I do see this in the U.S., it seemed to be even easier to feel comfortable with one another in this setting. I like to think it was because we were speaking as one Armenian to another.

Working with COAF has been a blessing. I have been able to meet and work with individuals who came to Armenia with similar goals as myself. But also, I have been able to work with those living, working, and going to school in Armenia. All of these individuals have broadened my perspective of health care, but have also gave me raw insight to the culture and lifestyle of others who share the same history as I do. On the third and final day, I left Gerakert feeling inspired by the group that I had just met, a group of my newest role models. I hope to come back next year!

Nearly 100 Athletes Come Together in Detroit For 2018 AYF Mid-West Junior Olympics

By U. Haigan Tcholakian and U. Taline Bedirian

Detroit. Granite City. Racine. Chicago. These four chapters comprise the Mid-West Region of the Armenian Youth Federation, Eastern Region. Every July, this small but dedicated region gathers together to compete in “Junior” Olympics. This year, 94 athletes came together in Detroit to display athleticism, sportsmanship, and love for their organization.

The Midwesterners kicked off the weekend at the Friday Night Picnic, held at Rotary Park in Livonia. Travelers arrived, kids played, and everyone ate, all while preparing for the big day ahead. At 8:30 Saturday morning, athletes and their families began to trickle onto Franklin High School’s track. Though competitive, all chapters supported one another. The races were exciting and close. Prayers and good wishes were given by Der Hrant Kevorkian, pastor of St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church, ARF Azadamard Gomideh Chair, U. Raffi Ourlian, CE representative, U. Araxie Tossounian, Detroit KT Junior Advisor, U. Haigan Tcholakian, and AYF alumnus Al Sarafian who honored the legacy of Coach Aram “Sonny” Gavoor. Before awarding medals, all four chapters stood hand in hand, and danced the haleh. If anyone is curious as to what the Mid-West is “all about,” we invite you to join us at Junior Olympics 2019 and see for yourself.

Later that evening, the St. Sarkis Lillian Arakelian hall rapidly filled with AYF members, alumni, parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. Love was felt throughout the hall. Past generations were hugging and catching up, while the youth were creating life-long friends and memories. Together, they danced to Detroit’s very own Nigosian Band and DJ M-Kay. Congratulations to the fourth-place Granite City “Antranig” chapter, third place Racine “Armen Garo” chapter, second place Chicago “Ararat” chapter, and the host chapter, Detroit “Kopernik Tandourjian,” for taking home the gold. High scorers were Detroit’s Alexandra Ayiar and Mano Karjian, Chicago’s Saro Garabet, Racine’s Alec Mahdasian, and Granite City’s Anne Cloherty. The night could not have gone any better. When asked their favorite part of the weekend, the overwhelming response of juniors was “dancing our chapter dances.” Another congratulations to all athletes – to the high scorers and track stars, to the first-time competitors, and to those who overcame their fears and did not quit.

Thank you to all juniors, families, volunteers, and coaches for making this a successful and memorable weekend.



AYF's 85th Anniversary Gala Filled with Memories and Fun

By: Kyle Dinkjian

For 85 years, the Armenian Youth Federation has been an organization of family, traditions and growth. On Saturday, July 21, 2018 that growth was celebrated by the very families who created those traditions. The AYF-YOARF's 85th Anniversary Gala brought multiple generations of AYF lifers together in Warwick, Rhode Island for a night of nostalgia, outlook, and a good old fashioned AYF *barehantes*.

The night began with a cocktail hour. Upon arrival, guests reconnected with old friends and discussed their time in the AYF over drinks and mezze. At the front of the cocktail hour area stood a table curated with AYF memorabilia from years past. Guests flipped through previous Olympic ad books, looked at printed pictures from events past, and read from old AYF song books. On one of the back walls played a slideshow of pictures which hundreds of members submitted of their fondest AYF memories. Along each of the back walls hung informational posters detailing AYF chapters past and present. A step and repeat with the AYF logo and an image of Karekin Nejdeh (the organization's founder) was the perfect place to capture a group shot of another great AYF event.

After the cocktail hour came dinner and the program, emceed by U. Josh Tevekelian. U. Josh described his experiences within the organization and the lessons it has taught him that have stuck with him to this day. He then introduced the night's keynote speakers, U. Rosemary Alashaian, U. Shahan Avedian, and U. Nairi Khachatourian. Each speaker represented a different AYF generation in the room. U. Rosemary



spoke of her days in the AYF during its relative infancy and creating a family environment for the youth organization. U. Shahan described the lifelong friendships that the AYF fostered along with the organization's struggle during the times of a non-free and independent Armenia. U. Nairi explained how far the organization has come and how the AYF has affected each of the lives of its members so deeply. After the keynote speakers, U. George Aghjayan gave remarks on behalf of the AYF's parent organization, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation.

Once the remarks concluded, the dance portion of the night kicked off. As coffee and dessert were served, a band filled with AYF alumni of different generations got the crowd out of their seats and onto the dance floor. Active and former AYF members alike joined in to dance traditional Armenian line dances. At one point the legendary John Berberian took the stage to perform a guest appearance on the oud. As the dancefloor roared on, attendees continued reminiscing and taking pictures, creating new AYF memories and strengthening old ones. Once the dance ended, an after party was held at a nearby bar where attendees could get in one last drink and bite to eat together before calling it a night.

All in all, the AYF 85th Anniversary Gala was a smashing success. Past, present, and future members old and young gathered to celebrate the organization that has had such an effect on their lives. The spirit of the AYF was palpable throughout the event and the organization's outlook looks bright. Here's to another 85 years of the AYF-YOARF!

Pan- Homenetmen Scouting Jamboree
By: Kouyr Karyl Ashjian

1,200 scouts, 23 different countries. 1,200 scouts from all over the world meeting up in one particular place: our homeland, our motherland, Armenia. This summer 98 Eastern Region scouts were given the opportunity to be a part of these 1,200 scouts, myself being one of them. It was an honor to be able to travel to my homeland with all my brothers and sisters from around the world, who I got a chance to meet and spend time with throughout this ten day camp. It was incredible getting to meet people from Australia, London, Canada, etc., who all have the same background as me. Coming from the Eastern Region, it was impeccable to see the various accents and traditions from places all across the globe. The most extraordinary part of the whole experience was that everyone was the same. Everyone had at least one common language among them, Armenian. No matter how many different languages people knew how to speak, everyone knew Armenian and that was extremely eye-opening to me.

Throughout the ten days spent in Pyuragan, Hayasdan, we were given the chance to see Khor Virab, Noravank, Sardarabad, Tsitsernagapert, and Gyumri. Just seeing pictures and talking about these incredible places really doesn't do much justice. It was an indescribable feeling actually being able to see these astonishing monuments and churches. Some scouts were even given the opportunity to climb Mount Arakads during Jamboree. Myself being one of the 44 scouts able to participate, struggled to reach the top but was definitely worth seeing the view in the end. The best part about the excursions was being able to experience it all with my brothers and sisters from around the world. After getting back to Pyuragan, we would usually have dinner, then go to kharougahanteses at night. Every night two or three different countries would have their kharougahanteses, which consisted of a lot of singing and dancing. It was very fascinating seeing what each country does when they come together for scouts once a week. It's interesting to see all the different traditions they have and being able to compare and contrast what we all do at scouts.

On the days we didn't go on excursions, we would have activities to partake in, including daghavar, or kharoug practice. Daghavar is a whole day event when each country gets to decorate a tent representing where they come from. For example, Eastern Region had America banners, pictures of all our scouts, water pong, and beef jerky. We also had bracelets that we passed out to other countries that came to visit. That day everyone got to trade shirts or sweatshirts with other countries. We really had the chance to interact with people we didn't know, get out of our comfort zones, and learn the right skills to be able to trade an old Boston shirt to get a new Australia one.

We
memories
Jamboree,



made so many
throughout
ones we would

never forget. Met people we never thought we would have the chance to meet. I think I can speak for everyone when I say I would eat the same bread everyday, march in full daraz in 100 degree weather, get dirtier and dirtier everyday, to be able to relive those ten days over again. It truly was a once in a lifetime experience and I can't wait to go back in 4 years.



If you would like to submit any articles for the Gamavori Tsaynuh, please contact us at prc.eusa@homenetmen.org or pr@ayf.org

Articles must be submitted by the 20th of the month.

SAVE THE DATES

Mid-Atlantic AYF ACE Weekend October 5th Washington DC

<https://www.facebook.com/events/220269218644708/>

Midwest AYF ACE Weekend October 5th Chicago IL

<https://www.facebook.com/events/2333790953317101/>

New England AYF ACE Weekend October 12th Worcester MA

<https://www.facebook.com/events/176362963142724/>

AYF Flag Football October 20th Providence, RI

<https://www.facebook.com/events/476455072875224/>

Homenetmen 100th Anniversary Celebration Weekend October 26th-28th in Boston, MA

