IN THIS ISSUE

1. Avak Sbarabed Steven R. Adams: A Call to Action
2. DON'T LET THE HISTORY REPEAT
3. $250,000 donation to Armenia Fund
4. Warm Hats and Gloves for Soldiers
5. Tavush Heroes
6. Armenia’s Contribution to Thanksgiving in Song and Cooking
7. Lodge News
8. Project News
9. Obituaries
Knights and Daughters of Vartan our homeland is calling you to help! Our organization was formed in 1916 as a result of the Genocide of our people. Here we are 105 years later, and we are again facing the threat of annihilation. I am sure you have all been following the suffering of our people in Artsakh at the hands of the Azerbaijani and Turkish governments. While there is some sense of helplessness and shock for us in the diaspora, there are definite measures we can take. The Armenian army is worldwide! While our young men and women are on the ground fighting, we have our part in this war.

As your Avak Sbarabed and Avak Dirouhie, we are calling on EVERY member to immediately donate. The Knights and Daughters of Vartan as an organization is planning on making a sizable donation. Won’t you consider adding to the donation by giving. You can add to our donation by going to:

kofv.org/helparmenia

This donation must be different than previous donations. We are not donating to build a road or bring in water. We are donating to SAVE our homeland. As Knights and Daughters of Vartan, this is our calling! Our people are suffering, if we can suffer even in the slightest by donating, it is the least we can do. Our donations must be substantial to make a difference. Putting this in perspective, if each member donated $1,000 we could add over a million dollars to the cause. Donate what you can, but remember your donation will help save our homeland. Please encourage your family and friends to donate also.

The other important effort we can undertake is bringing our issue to our local communities. Contact your local officials and make sure they understand our situation. Letters to the editor of your local papers to help inform the general public. If you have contacts on a more national level, then leverage your contacts to bring our case to the forefront.

This Call to Action is not an option! If we wish to call ourselves Knights and Daughters of Vartan, then this is our time to stand and let our voices be heard.

Steven R. Adams
Avak Sbarabed

Alice Kalustian
Avak Dirouhie

9 October, 2020
30, October, 2020
In this difficult time, when the people of our homeland need us, we stand united.
Just over a week ago, Avak Sbarabed Steve Adams called for an emergency Avak Tahlij. Typically, the Avak Tahlij meets only once a year during the Grand Convocation. This time, and on very short notice, more than 100 members participated via zoom and voted unanimously to allocate $100,000 to the All Armenia Fund (or as sometimes is called ArmeniaFund.org in the USA.)
The Avak Tivan immediately informed all Knights and Daughters of the vote. Our Tahlijes and Otyags across the United States contributed to the effort and held fundraisers of their own. In addition to our Knights and Daughters, the fundraising drive was also buoyed both by Armenians who are not members of our brother and sisterhood and non-Armenians who wanted to support our people. As of October 27th, $250,000 has been raised and transferred by the Avak Tivan to the Armenia Fund.
Before the emergency Avak Tahlij, many of our members had already donated to various fundraising efforts supporting Armenia and Artsakh. Our brothers and sisters there need your help now more than ever. “This has been a very difficult time for Armenians,” says our Avak Sbarabed Steven Adams. “We watch what is going on there, and we feel helpless here. The only thing we can do is raise awareness around the world and raise funds. Every April 24th, we get together and commemorate the Armenian genocide of 1915, which was the first genocide of the 20th century. We should do everything to stop the possible first genocide of the 21st century. This is not the end of our assistance but must only be the beginning. If we want to call ourselves “Armenians” then we must come to the aid of our homeland.”
Avak Dirouhie Alice Kalustian expressed “Some of our members have family in Armenia, fighting to save the homeland, some made the ultimate sacrifice. We pray for the safety of our people. We must never allow another genocide! Even if you have already contributed, please consider if you can do more.”
For 105 years we have been having commemorations, peacefully demonstrating, building monuments, writing op-ed pieces to our local newspapers, asking world leaders and their countries to recognize and condemn the 1915 Genocide of the Armenian people at the hands of the Ottoman Turks. These commemorations have spanned over three generations of Armenians. And people would ask...why? Why go through all of this trouble to commemorate something that happened over 100 years ago? As Armenians, we would often hear people tell us to “just move on.” The past is the past just let it go. Well, guess what…the past just became the present! Have our peaceful demonstrations and monuments fallen again on deaf ears? Were all of our warnings really in vain? Did anyone care about the Armenians in 1915? There were plenty of articles in the newspapers at that time telling of the massacres of the Armenians. Did anyone lift a finger to help those poor people? The result back then was 1.5 million Armenians were massacred in what Raphael Lemkin in his 1944 book “Axis Rule in Occupied Europe” termed the word “Genocide.”

So now we find ourselves, 105 years later, facing the same situation. We are reading in our newspapers of the attacks by Azerbaijan on the people of Artsakh (Karabakh). You would have to ask yourself, why? Are there rich oil deposits, maybe huge gold reserves? The truth is there is nothing but mountains, ancient churches, and the Armenian people who have worshiped in those churches for centuries. Now they are being attacked for what can only be for one thing, to claim land that was never theirs and to eliminate the people and culture that have inhabited those lands for centuries. What do you call it when a country eliminates a people from their ancestral lands and wipes out their culture? GENOCIDE!

The land of Artsakh/Karabakh had been ruled over by many powerful neighbors throughout its history, but the one indisputable fact is that it is the Armenian people who have lived there all this time. Yes, just like any other country minorities are living there, but if you do just a little research you can find the truth. In 1926 shortly after the formation of the Soviet countries of Azerbaijan and Armenia, the population of Artsakh (Karabakh) was nearly 90% Armenian. They were recognized back then as a semi-independent people and given the status of an “Autonomous oblast.” Let’s take a closer look at that term. Autonomous oblasts of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics were administrative units created for a number of smaller nations, which were given autonomy within the fifteen republics of the USSR. The keyword is “autonomy.” This small nation of people was given “autonomy” but placed within the borders of Azerbaijan by Joseph Stalin to appease Turkey. They were also granted the protection of the Soviet government. With the collapse of the USSR, that protection ended. The member nations of the former Soviet Union declared their independence, and this included the Republic of Artsakh.

Now 105 years later, history repeats itself. Have we learned nothing? We see countries all over the world condemning the attacks. We hear countries calling for a ceasefire. How do you “ceasefire” when you are the ones being shot at? If the Armenians don’t defend themselves, they will be annihilated. This small group of people are defending themselves against major world powers and armies. If we don’t want a repeat of 1915, then countries of the world will need to do more than “lip service.” Just telling Turkey to stop supplying weapons and armies to Azerbaijan is not enough. The US doesn’t need to send troops to fight, there are plenty of ways to influence Turkey. If countries are serious a complete economic blockade of Turkey or any nation adding fuel to this fire should be put in place immediately. Turkey has already been a thorn in the side of the US, its time to stop the talk and take action.

The 1915 Genocide of the Armenians was the first genocide of the 20th Century. Please world powers, don’t let the Republic of Artsakh become the first genocide of the 21st Century.
To my Brothers and Sisters of the Knights and Daughters of Vartan,
The past month and a half have been a very difficult time for our people and we are suffering as a nation. As I hope you are all already aware that an agreement was signed by the Prime Minister of Armenia, and Presidents of Azerbaijan and Russia to end the war in our beautiful Artsakh. The full agreement can be read here.

Our liaison in Armenia Gohar reported that during past month the general population in Yerevan worked very united, starting from collecting food, sweets, clothing, sleeping bags, and other needed items, making protective tents for soldiers, ongoing events to raise funds for the ArmeniaFund/Himnadram, and at the same time, helping relocated Artsakh people in Armenia with housing, clothing, food and more.

No matter how we try and look at this, the agreement is a loss for Armenia. There will be finger pointing going on for many months maybe years to come. People will want to blame those inside Armenia, others will point to countries that did not come to our aid. We will question ourselves as to whether we did enough to help. When a disaster hits the natural reaction is to blame someone or something. As hard as the situation is, we must deal with the reality of our defeat. There is no comfort in defeat, but we must take heed of our history. As Armenians we have survived for centuries in the most difficult and harshest of times. Our valiant hero and name sake Vartan Mamigonian should once again show us the way. The battle of Vartanantz was lost but the war continued. It took 30 years to achieve a peace agreement. The history of Vartanantz was not focused on the defeat but on the ultimate victory.

You know the saying, “Hind sight is 20/20”. Should something have been done differently to avoid this loss? Of course, looking back we can see many places where a different turn may have led to a different outcome, but that is hindsight. We must learn from what has passed. If mistakes were made, then how can we correct them in the future. It’s also possible that even in the light of our mistakes, there were events that were out of our control. Our homeland lies in a very difficult and dangerous part of the world. This is a very emotional time for our people. People react differently to their emotions. Many will lash out in anger. We must be tolerant of everyone in this time of grieving. People show their grief in various ways. This is equivalent to losing a loved one.

Much more will come in the upcoming days, but our work is just beginning. We have lost a battle, but the war continues. We must strive even harder to call out and name the criminals who seek our destruction. We must expose those who assist them in their evil plans. Here is our first step in helping. We have an urgent plea to sign a petition with a hope to protect our cultural heritage and churches in Artsakh. Click here for the petition link.

I call upon EVERY member, EVERY Armenian, EVERY person in the world to go to that petition and sign it TODAY! Send it to your friends.

Join today with the ANCA in calling on the United States to urgently re-engage in the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair process - challenging the disastrous agreement forced on the Armenian side and revisiting its terms and timelines in the context of discussions involving all three Co-Chair countries. http://anca.org/OSCE

Lastly, we want to remember and pray for the souls of our lost warriors, who sought to defend our homeland. We must make sure that their sacrifice was not in vain. They gave their lives for a future Armenia! That future now rests in our hands.

Long live the memory of our valiant hero
Vartan Mamigonian!

Long live the memory of our brave warriors of Artsakh!

Long live the Armenian people!
HELP STOP
THE EXTERMINATION OF THE
WORLDS FIRST
CHRISTIAN NATION

CHRISTIANITY

NOAH

ARMENIA
HELP DEFEND 150,000 CHRISTIANS BEING MASSACRED TODAY NEAR THE MIDDLE EAST

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

More than 150,000 Christians from the first Christian nation are on the verge of extinction by hostile Muslim forces, and they need your prayers and support.

They have been living for almost 2,000 years in the province of Artsakh (also known as Nagorno-Karabakh), near Armenia (see the enclosed map). They live on the land of their grandfathers, land on which they peacefully have worshipped in the Christian Church and raised their children to know and love the Lord.

The disciples of Jesus, Thaddeus and Bartholomew, travelled to the early Armenian Church to spread the Gospel message there.

The terrorizing President Aliyev, of the surrounding Muslim country Azerbaijan, is killing the Armenians of Artsakh. He is supported and funded by the genocidal President Erdogan of Turkey. They have vowed continuing artillery shelling, and widespread killing of children and their civilian parents until they chase the last Armenian Christian off this ancestral Armenian land.

After reading the enclosed Fact Sheet, please contact your Congressperson and ask them to:

1. Support bills condemning the murder of Christian Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, including HR 1165.
2. Stop sending arms to Azerbaijan and Turkey.
3. Sanction Turkey and Azerbaijan and move to save the people of Nagorno-Karabakh.

As Armenian Christians, we pray for solidarity with you, our Christian brothers and sisters, to help save our brethren at immediate risk of annihilation, akin to the Jewish Holocaust and the first Armenian Genocide in 1915.

May God bless you and your families as you pray for us and thank you for alerting your Congressional representatives.

The Knights of Vartan (kofv.org), established in U.S.A. in 1916, is dedicated to save and protect the Armenian Church and her people.
FACT SHEET

REPUBLIC OF ARTSAKH (FORMERLY NAGORNO KARABAKH)


http://www.nkr.am/hy/armenian-pogroms. The war ended with the Armenian win of Artsakh and a truce was signed in 1994.

The Republic of Artsakh and its Christian population have never been part of independent state of Azerbaijan, and the latter’s claims of territorial integrity have no basis under International law against the Armenian population’s self-determination.

Armenians have lived for 3,000 years in Artsakh, part of historic Armenia which, in 301 A.D. became the first Christian nation. In the ensuing centuries Armenia despite many invasions, the Armenian Genocide by Ottoman Turks beginning in 1915, subsequent Soviet rule and surrounding hostile Muslim countries, Armenians have held fast to their Christian faith.

Map showing the world’s first Christian Nation is surrounded by 150 million Muslims.

THREAT OF GENOCIDE

GenocideWatch.Org is issuing a Genocide Emergency Alert due to Azerbaijan’s aggression against the Armenian Republic of Artsakh.

Out of Genocide Watch’s 10 Stages of Genocide, they consider Azerbaijan to be at Stage 9: Extermination. Stage 10: is Denial.


Although a ceasefire was signed on October 15, 2020, Azerbaijani forces violated it and still are attempting to capture new territory. Azerbaijan uses laser guided drones to attack Artsakh’s defenders, who are mostly Artsakh civilian volunteers. Azerbaijan is using Syrian mercenaries and air support provided by Turkey, Azerbaijan’s political ally, sparking fears that Turkey will resume the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1922 that killed half the Christian Armenian population.

Azerbaijan denies displaced Armenians the right to return to Azerbaijan and forbids a person of Armenian heritage from entering Azerbaijan’s territory. If Azerbaijan retakes control of Artsakh, it could exterminate or forcibly deport all Armenians in Artsakh to Armenia. Forced displacement is a crime against humanity. The Azerbaijani government under Ilham Aliyev denies its past and current violence against Armenians. Aliyev is also a denier of the 1915 Armenian Genocide committed by the Ottoman Turkish State. The Azerbaijani government promotes hate speech and encourages violence against Christian Armenians. The risk of genocide against Christian Armenians is imminent and immediate action from fellow Christians is required.
“From this faith, no one can shake us, neither angels nor men; neither sword, nor fire, nor water, nor any, nor all other horrid tortures. All our goods and possessions are in your hands, our bodies are before you, dispose of them, as you will. If you leave us to our belief, we will, here on earth, choose no other master in your place, and in heaven choose no other God in place of Jesus Christ, for there is no other God.”

General Vartan Mamigonian at the Battle of Avarayr in 451 A.D. in defense of Christian Armenians.

If you want to support or get involved
www.kofv.org/helparmenia
All proceeds goto the Armenia Fund to support humanitarian needs of the victims of the war.

For more information contact Kevork Marashlian at
helparmenia@knightsofvartan.org

Steven Kradjian
November, 2020
Knights of Vartan

Prepared by the Knights of Vartan Communications Committee
The Sisters of Talar Oytag were drawn to the tragic deaths this past July of five Armenian soldiers whose lives were lost in the ongoing border skirmishes with the Azerbaijani forces in the Tavush region (near Berd):

Recognizing the need to get assistance to the families of the fallen as quickly as possible, ND Naira Serobyan initiated a spontaneous fundraiser that soon grew into a full-blown project. The word spread quickly via a string of texts, emails and phone calls to her Talar Oytag Sisters as well as receiving support from our fellow Gomidas Knights and the Armenian community from Baku in San Diego, who themselves have suffered under Azeri aggression.

Major Garush Hambardzumyan, 31, Lusakunk Village, Gegharkunik Region
Captain Sos Elbakyan, 28, Marmashen Village, Shirak Region
Junior Sergeant Smbat Gabrielyan, 20, Chambarak Village, Gegharkunik Region
Junior Sergeant Grisha Matevosyan, 20, Sisian Town, Syunik Region
Private Arthur Muradyan, 19, Yerevan City

Working closely in conjunction with ND Anahit Antonyan, NAD (and Kantzabedhouie) Lisa Kradjian as well as our Liaison in Yerevan, Gohar Palyan, ND Naira set a goal of raising $2,500 ($500 for each of the soldiers’ families), which was accomplished in record time by the following group of generous donors:
Raising funds was only one facet of this operation, so the help of our Liaison Gohar Palyan was enlisted. She then contacted the local town official for each deceased soldier in order to get the name and contact info of their family members. For each of these transactions, the bank sent receipts to ND Naira to show that all the funds have successfully been collected by:

Anna Hakobyan  
(for the late Major Garush Hambardzumyan)

Aregnazan Elbakyin  
(for the late Captain Sos Elbakyin)

Mkhitar Gabrielyan  
(for the late Junior Sergeant Smbat Gabrielyan)

Armine Davtyan  
(for the late Junior Sergeant Grisha Matevosyan)

Bagram Muradyan  
(for the late Private Arthur Muradyan)

Never let it be said that great things can’t be accomplished by willing hearts...Talar Sisters and Gomidas Brothers, plus the support of San Diego’s Armenian community, have proven that with their generous donations, which we are eternally grateful for! As ND Anahit Antonyan expressed, “This humanitarian aid is a small token of our appreciation for the sacrifices of these brave soldiers who died defending our Armenian homeland. We thank their families for raising such fine men and want them to know we stand with them.”

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress…” James 1:27

L to R: ND Anahit Antonyan and ND Naira Serobyany
Yeprad Lodge Raising Funds for the Armenia Fund

To support the homeland the Knights and Daughters of Vartan took the challenge to raise funds for the Armenia Funds. Despite of COVID19 inconveniences, the lodges organized various fundraising events.

On October 25th, Yeprad Lodge of Fresno city raised $54,000 during a special event dedicated to Artsakh. It was held at Avak Ted Ara Karkazian’s home. The event was successful thanks to the organizing committee. Avak Sbar Abed Steve Adams delivered an inspirational speech on how important is this support for Artsakh and Armenia.

To hear the full speech please visit https://youtu.be/vvmcT2f2

Help Lebanon

For over a century, ever since the 1915 genocide, Lebanon, particularly Beirut, has been a home for Armenians. Generations of our people have grown up, worked, married, and raised their families in Beirut. As a new niche and homeland, Lebanon and its people have shown great kindness to Armenians.

This past August the 4th, a devastating pair of ammonium nitrate explosions in Beirut’s Port District killed hundreds while leaving thousands more injured and homeless. Among the scores who died were Armenians. Many of their homes and schools in the city were also heavily damaged or obliterated.

Not willing to stand by as this tragedy unfolded, The Knights and Daughters of Vartan immediately began raising money to aid those Armenians in Beirut who were affected by the blasts. Many of our sisters and brothers grew up in Lebanon and still had families and friends living in the city.

In a very short time, Knights and Daughters of Vartan succeeded in raising more than 16-thousand dollars. The money was equally divided among our partner organizations, AGBU, AMAA, and ARS, all of which work directly with those affected on the ground in Beirut.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families who lost loved ones and those still suffering in Beirut. We hope the injured will recover swiftly from their wounds and that those parts of the city that were damaged or destroyed can and will be rebuilt.
Hats and Gloves for Tavush Soldiers

A generous donation of one-thousand dollars by one of our Nakhgin Avak Sbarabeds is being used to purchase items that are desperately needed by our soldiers who are defending their homeland. Many of us know Father Aram Mirzoyan of St. Hovhaness Church, located in the Tavush Region town of Berd. As you know this Marz has the longest border with Azerbaijan.

Our members have supported this region for decades.

The donation by our NAS has already been put to good use. 500 pairs of warm socks and hats have already been purchased and delivered to Father Aram for distribution. Out of concern for the safety of our soldiers, we cannot publish photographs of them, but our joy in being able to provide these needed items for these brave men is great indeed.

We are united, we are one, we are Armenians!
All for Armenia, all for our soldiers, and all for an end to this war and a lasting peace.

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NAASR and Knights of Vartan Grants

Two grants, shared by NAASR and the Knights of Vartan FAS, 2020

Dr. Talin Suciyan, Assoc. Prof., Ludwig Maximilian University, grant to support of Russian-language translation of her book The Armenians in Modern Turkey: Post-genocide Society and Politics (orig. published in English in 2016). Dr. Suciyan’s book was the 2017 co-winner of the Society for Armenian Studies book prize. Grant amount: $2,500

Dr. Kate Franklin, Lecturer in Medieval History, Birkbeck, Univ. of London, grant to support the Open Access publication of her recently completed monograph Everyday Cosmopolitanisms: Living the Silk Road in Medieval Armenia (Univ. of Calif. Press). Grant amount: $2,500
Armenia’s Contribution to Thanksgiving in Song and Cooking

By NS Nishan Dulgerian

One early September morning during the Knights and Daughters of Vartan’s Veratarts Hayrenik Trip IV (Return to Fatherland) which took place during September 14-22, 2019 timeframe, the trip participants visited a kindergarten renovation project site in the town of Aparan, northwest of Yerevan, supported by the Knights. The day started with a courtesy visit with Aparan’s mayor who cheerfully declared that city’s Community Council had unanimously decided in 2018 to rename the kindergarten we were to visit soon as the “Knights of Vartan Kindergarten”. Our collective elation went sky-high!

It was harvest time in Armenia. Our bus had been traversing through central Armenia’s beautiful vistas under sunshine and blue skies, and slowing down at highway intersections where roadside fruit and vegetable stands where mounds of plump pumpkins and gourds of various shapes and colors were featured. Sight of the pumpkins made me dream of a piece of pumpkin pie, my favorite dessert, and a cup of steaming coffee! I found myself humming “Hey Jan Ghapama, Heyjan Heyjan Ghapama…” the traditional stuffed pumpkin song I first heard from an acquaintance of mine years ago and learnt to sing it.

Even though our group was tardy in arrival to the kindergarten, the school-yard was full of students dunned in colorful costumes patiently awaiting our arrival. We were welcomed with three drummer boys by the entrance gate to the schoolyard who quickly went into the broadcast mode for our group’s arrival, earnestly playing a drumbeat I was ready to leap along Armenian style. Avak Sbarabed Steve Adams and other members of the entourage sampled chunks of freshly baked bread dipped in salt offered to us as a traditional welcoming act of goodwill and appreciation of new beginnings. We were pleasantly surprised seeing clusters of schoolchildren in the schoolyard in reenactment of traditional village pastime accompanied with songs describing what they were doing.

Once inside the schoolhouse, we were met by other groups who sang for us joyful village songs and danced in their authentic costumes. Watching talented youngsters perform dance routines in continual performances and recite joyful poems without hesitation, and with such vigor, left all of us in wonderous smile. Our escorted tour of this beautifully renovated “Knights of Vartan Kindergarten” was coming to an end when we were led into a room filled with handmade dolls crafted by the students using sticks and twigs collected from their schoolyard and nearby fields they had visited. And right in the middle of this colorful room was a table piled high with homemade tarts, small disks of gata, the Armenian sweet bread, tan, gourds of freshly made madzun, locally processed dried fruits and nuts, and to my pleasant surprise, smack in the middle of this colorful spread, the pumpkin dish most of us only heard about, Ghapama!

Upon my request, school’s assistant principal described how Ghapama was cooked, in this case using local produce, and ladled chunks of this baked pumpkin dish with its aromatic stuffing of rice, decadently sweetened with dried fruits and nuts, into small plates for us to taste. I thought one more of God’s blessings had been bestowed upon us all, this time in the form of small bowls of Ghapama!

What is this Ghapama dish anyway and what does its recipe read like? Well, it is an Armenian pumpkin dish which, in the parlance of Diaspora Armenians, could easily be classified as a vegetarian’s delight. Less difficult to cook than roasting a turkey for the Thanksgiving table, this stuffed and baked pumpkin is often cooked during the western Christmas season coinciding with the end of harvest time on the Armenian highlands when vegetables and fruits are aplenty. A pumpkin (ttum in Armenian) of choice is gutted and then stuffed with a mixture of partially cooked rice and creatively concocted mixture of chopped dried fruits like cornelian cherry, almonds, apple, apricot, plum, date, raisins and prunes, all characteristically local to western Armenia and regions where Mediterranean climate rules. Without being wrapped in aluminum foil or shrouded in a cooking bag, the pumpkin is then baked in a clay oven (tonir in Armenian) until the rind becomes soft and the steaming stuffing turns into mouthwatering delight. The pumpkin is then ceremoniously brought to the dining table where it is cut up in wedges and its stuffing served with a dressing of honey, cinnamon, and sugar!
Singing of Hey Jan Ghapama starts with gusto sooner than the last morsel of the stuffing is scooped up. Someone starts singing the opening lines while beating on the dinner table with hands to create a rhythm soon followed by everyone else clapping in tune following the lead singer! The song is not conducive for shurchbar (dancing in the round with a group of people) but people get up to dance anyway. Some branch off in pairs to do the one-on-one dancing with traditional hand gestures and creative footwork.

The singer must clearly verbalize the part of the host who is overwhelmed by arriving guests, especially by the number of uninvited khenami types who show up with spoon in their hands to partake the feast. The song of Ghapama ends up as a lamentation of not having enough Ghapama to go around, invited and uninvited guests alike!

Now how to sing Ghapama. Foregoing literal translation of the words, the lines in Armenian and their English transliteration go like this: Refrain by the chorus:

Hejjan hejyan Ghapama, anush gatov Ghapama,  
Hey dear Ghapama, tasty-fragrant Ghapama,
Heyjan heyjan Ghapama, anush gatov Ghapama,  
Hey dear heydear Ghapama, sweet milky Ghapama,  

Arank hasadz ttume, arank perink mer dune  
[We] picked a grown pumpkin, brought it to our house
Manr chartadz aghetsink, tonrin meche gakhetsink  
[We] seasoned it [with] chopped ingredients, hung it in the tonir
Yegan mer-hor u horkur, yegan her-mor u morkur  
They came father and auntie, there came mother and auntie
Yegan keri keragin, khenami u dekrgin  
They came uncle uncle’s wife, kinsman and brother-in-law’s wife
Yegan sanig sanamer, harsnekoor u harsnaghper  
They came godchild godmother, bride’s sister and brother
Yegan modig heravor, zokanch, gesoor u kavor  
They came near and afar, in-law’s mother and godfather
Refrain and instrumental break:  
Jan, hey jan, hey jan, hey jan, hey jan  
Jan, hey jan, hey jan, hey jan, hey jan

From here on the host sings about his Ghapama he could not even taste.
Those uninvited sing a different tune on their way home with empty stomachs, wailing over a Ghapama not intended for them in the first place!

Second stanza:
Ktaln aradz yegan dun haryur hoki angeschdun  
Spoon in hand hundred people came home underfed
Yes inch anem inch anem, haryur hoki meg ttum  
What should I do should I do, one pumpkin for hundred souls?
Yegan mer-hor u horkur, yegan her-mor u morkur  
They came father and auntie, there came mother and auntie
Yegan keri, keragin, khenami u dekrgin  
They came uncle uncle’s wife, kinsman and brother-in-law’s wife
Yegan sanig sanamer, harsnekoor u harsnaghper  
They came godchild godmother, bride’s sister and brother
Yegan modig heravor, zokanch, gesur u kavor  
They came near and afar, in-law’s mother and godfather.

A choir could sing joyously Hey jan Ghapama, hamov hodov Ghapama all day long while the listeners continue dreaming about tasting a delicious Thanksgiving dish yet to be cooked and served hot off the tonir.
The past year for House of Hope-Mer Hooys, Inc. has been challenging and rewarding at the same time. From summer of 2019 until February 2020, Mer Hooys had a very successful year with our children. After February 2020, Mer Hooys has been under lockdown and quarantine orders just like the rest of the world. We were very fortunate to have a donor provide us with private transportation for our staff to and from home, so they could safely get to and from work avoiding public transportation.

Our children and staff became very resourceful while quarantined. The children have learned to cook their own meals, and clean and maintain their rooms, with support from staff on site. Onsite staff has been limited to those necessary to help prepare ingredients for meals and support the girls’ daily social emotional needs and safety. Our staff rotates onsite schedules, and all staff continue to stay virtually in touch with our children daily. The children have continued their education in all areas virtually and have received solid psychological and educational support from members of our staff to get them through this unprecedented situation.

To compensate for the economic challenge we are facing now and for at least the next year or so, we have worked diligently with our staff to carefully review our annual budget, projecting into mid-2021. Although our expenses were already at a minimum, we have reduced work hours to the extent the government would allow, reduced salaries as well as a few staff positions, and encouraged our executive director to find local donors for food and sweets. We are grateful that his efforts have been fruitful.

Because I was unable to visit this summer as planned, I virtually meet regularly with our staff and our children, so they know they have not been forgotten. We are also planning virtual meetings in the coming weeks with special education professionals from California, in lieu of the onsite program we had hoped for this summer, so the girls will continue to strengthen their learning skills where they have learning deficits.

We are confident that with the support of our long-time and new donors, we can survive this current crisis and continue the mission we have established – to give these children hope for a better future. We know that times are difficult for everyone. We survive 100% from the generosity of our donors.

Our Mission

The Mer Hooys program has established a solid record of success in the eight years it has been open. Some of our highlights:

- Fourteen of the fifteen girls from our 2012 original class graduated high school. Six graduates have married, and three have started families. More than 50 percent returned to their families at the age of 18, after more than one year of family counseling by our professional staff.
- Our last onsite graduate, who is 22 years old, will soon be moving into an apartment with another girl her age, and will be returning weekly to teach our girls computer skills as a member of our staff. Another program graduate, also 22 years old, and her husband will be joining our staff to provide weekly spiritual programs.
- More than 60 percent of our first class of graduates attended university for at least two to three years, and five girls graduated in 2020. Two of our program graduates, who are sisters now living with their mother and extended family, are studying to be a doctor, and in the area of interior and graphic design.
• One of our graduates, orphaned as a child, is now married and the mother of a two-year-old daughter. She is a prize-winning artist who graduated from the Terlemezyan Art Institute of Yerevan. She continues her studies in art, with tuition supported by the artwork she has created and provided to Mer Hooys to offer as gifts to our donors.

• Our current, second class of 20 young girls, ages 9-16, includes several sets of two to four sisters. Two sets of sisters were successfully reunited with their family in the fall of 2019, after intense counseling and family rehabilitation by our staff. We welcomed three more girls to replace those who returned home. We also have one eighteen-year-old, older sister to one of our little ones, who is living with us while attending university. Those sisters became orphaned upon the death of their mother in 2019.

• Our older girls, ages 16 and up, are now transitioning to the graduate wing in our Center to begin learning skills to live more independently. We can accommodate up five girls in the graduate wing, which enables us to bring in new younger girls.

• Our girls are actively involved in after school programs including learning languages, music, arts, dance, computer skills, life skills, Armenian culture and religion. They also have a new playground at the Center, thanks to the generous donation of Focus on Children now and the Derik Ghookasian family.

• Our highly skilled professional staff works regularly with families, including supervising weekend home visits where available and safe, to prepare the children to eventually return home permanently.

• The newly reorganized government of Armenia has recognized our program and commended its operational model as unique in Armenia.

Our success is in large part due to the regular financial support from individuals and organizations like Daughters of Vartan, Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief, Armenian International Women’s Association – San Francisco Affiliate, Jinishian Fund and Focus on Children Now. Our operating costs, including graduate tuition for those girls who have no family, have remained relatively stable at $150,000 annually, thanks to the dedicated hard work by our staff in Armenia. We do not receive any financial support, or direct intervention in our program operations, from the government or the Mother See of Etchmiadzin. Our finances are managed locally in Armenia by our staff accountant, with regular and direct oversight by our U.S. Board members. No money is spent without our express approval.

Your support makes a difference in the lives of these children. The Daughters of Vartan have been loyal supporters of our program from its inception, and we have recognized the Daughters on our donor board at the entry of the Nakashian Children’s Support Center in Yerevan. We look forward to the time when Daughters can visit and see for themselves how valuable your support is!
Diaspora Frontline Family Fund (DFFF)

Supported by the Ararat Lodge

The DFFF was created by members of The Knights of Vartan Ararat Lodge in 2016, and is working in partnership with Children of Armenia Sponsorship Program (CASP).

The DFFF is committed to providing ongoing financial assistance to the children of soldiers whose lives were lost defending Armenia and Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh). Our mission is to help ease the financial burden thrust upon the families that our heroes were forced to leave behind. We intend to provide annual assistance to every single child affected until their 18th birthday.

DFFF has developed a mechanism for collecting 501(c)3 tax-deductible donations and efficiently distributing the funds in Armenia with verifiable and transparent mechanisms. All overhead costs are absorbed by the DFFF ensuring that 100% of your donation is distributed directly to the families.

So far over 100,000 USD was raised and $75,000 was distributed for children.

Your help is needed to continue this essential support. Please make your tax deductible donations at: https://kovcasp.org

Armenian Wounded Heroes Fund (AWHF)

Supported by the Mamigonian Lodge

Armenian Wounded Heroes Fund delivers 100% of every dollar donated. The organization is registered as a 501(c) (3).

AWHF founders cover all administrative costs, so that 100% of every dollar donated has an IMPACT, and reaches its intended recipients through a rigorous monitoring mechanism.

Single Dedicated Mission
Save, support and empower our wounded warriors

Targeted Programs for Our Defense Forces
- Funding combat casualty care capabilities through advanced first-aid kits and training
- Front-line infrastructure upgrades to protect our forces (communications, running water, hygienic living conditions)
- Physical and mental rehabilitation of wounded heroes.

To support our Wounded Heroes please make your tax deductible donations at https://armenianwoundedheroes.com
Knights of Vartan #106 School Renovation
Auditorium, Windows, Doors, Electric Wires

**Supported by the Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge, $55,000 in two years**

The Knights of Vartan Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge stepped up to the plate by continuing to support Yerevan’s School #106 once again this year.

The renovation project included installing new windows and doors, replacing old electrical wiring and a complete renovation of the auditorium by placing light fixtures on the walls, sanding and staining the stage and refinishing the wood in front of the stage down to the floor. The auditorium had not been renovated for decades. Another upgrade was to create a gradual incline rather than a level floor so that groups with many in attendance could have a clear view from the back rows. This request was added at last minute and the dedicated crew was more than accommodating. The school’s Principal, Mrs. Marine Vardanyan, expressed her gratitude and appreciation commenting “with the increase in the student population of the school, it is important to make the facility functional and pleasant” (currently there are over 1,500 students enrolled).

The project was implemented by The Paros Foundation while Past Grand Commander Dr. Gary Zamanigian and Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge Commander Kazar Terterian closely monitored the renovation and communicated with the Executive Director of Paros Foundation Peter Abajian. The Knights of Vartan Communications Office Liaison in Armenia, Gohar Palyan was indispensable as the facilitator.

This is the second project that Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge of Greater Detroit has funded at the Knights of Vartan School #106 in Yerevan, Armenia. Since 2018, the Lodge will have raised a total of $55,000 for the school’s renovations.
John Kasarjian (1932 - 2020)

N.S. John (Ohanessian) Avedis Kasarjian passed away on August 20, 2020. John was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts on April 20, 1932. He was the third of four siblings Margaret, Rose, and Nazar. His parents, Avedis and Antrik, moved the family to Queens where Avedis opened a tailoring shop. Dad attended Queens College and shortly after was drafted to serve in the Army for two years during the Korean War.

Once back in N.Y., he decided to become a dry cleaner and tailor. He opened Haven Cleaners in 1961 located in Woodhaven, N.Y. After meeting Ceran Keshishian at an Armenian picnic at Platdeutche Park, they dated for 11 months. On September 16, 1962 they were married at the Holy Cross Armenian Church in Washington Heights. John and Ceran were blessed with two children, June and Mark. They moved to Little Neck in 1966. John loved the snow and often had fun going sledding and ice skating with his children. He loved his life at home.

He enjoyed gardening, planting trees and barbecuing. You could also find John completing a crossword puzzle most evenings after dinner.

He and Ceran became dedicated members of the Armenian Church of the Holy Martyrs. John became a member of the Knights of Vartan in 1965. He was an active 50 year member and commander of the Knights of Vartan from 2002-2003.

John was blessed with 4 beautiful grandchildren: Heather, Veronica, Vahe and Natalie. He also was fortunate to enjoy two great grandchildren: Theodore and Maximus. John was a family man and enjoyed taking road trips. Whether taking a ride to Bayville or to the Catskills he was always happy driving in his car and loved the sights of our beautiful country. Once John decided to retire, he bought a second home in Putnam Valley, N.Y. There, he spent his time getting closer to nature and relaxing on the lake with family and friends. When he decided to buy a boat with Mark, we had the greatest time waterskiing and getting ice cream pops at the lake bodega.

It’s easy to see that John had discovered the components of a meaningful life. First, his dedication to and love of his family, second his perseverance at work and lasthis commitment to attend and be an active member of his church. John understood that the simple pleasures in life were what mattered most. He enjoyed a wonderful life. Of course, he did get some help. His wife, Ceran, was always by his side supporting him throughout their 57 years of marriage. He appreciated all of her love and care during his last days at home. She made sure he was comfortable as best as she could. He was loved by all and will be missed.

Mark Kasarjian (1966 - 2020)

N.S. Mark Avedis Kasarjian passed away on March 27, 2020, at the age of 53. Mark was born in Manhattan to John and Ceran (nee Keshishian) on April 24, 1966 at Columbia Presbyterian hospital. He attended Stony Brook University and graduated from St. John’s University in 1988 with a B.S. in Business/Management. He worked in market research for the Nielsen Company for many years. He continued using his business experience at SAS; a merchandising company where he oversaw product development in a retail environment.

Mark met his bride Karine in Armenia in 2006. They were married at Holy Martyrs Armenian Church in Bayside, New York on September 21, 2008. They had two children, Vahe and Natalie.

Mark was an active member of the Armenian Church of the Holy Martyrs. He sang in the St. Vartan Cathedral’s boys choir in Manhattan under Bishop Torkom. He graduated from Sunday School in 1983. He became a dedicated member of the Knights of Vartan in 2006. He became N.S. in 2012 and served
for two years. Mark helped organize trips to the annual Martyrs Day Commemoration in Times Square. He also enjoyed attending liturgical services and supporting fund raisers run by the Day School and the Language School.

Mark was a sports enthusiast and enjoyed playing tennis for many years. He also enjoyed travel. Mark was always happy.

Ashod Baboorian (1939 - 2020)

In his lifetime, Ashod Baboorian was an engineer, musician and philanthropist. But most knew him as Mr. Ash, the comic magician of Chicago. Along with running his Lincoln Square magic shop, Baboorian brought his unique blend of magic and comedy everywhere from local street fairs to WGN-TV’s Bozo’s Circus.

He performed for countless Illinois politicians, including former Illinois Gov. Jim Thompson and was proclaimed “Chicago’s Greatest Magician” by the Chicago City Council in 2015 — the only individual to have received such a recognition.

Ashod Baboorian was born July 26, 1939, in the Armenian diaspora community of Kirkuk, Iraq, to Zaroohi Hamparsoonian and Armenian Orthodox priest Nerses Baboorian. He was 80 when he passed away on July 3, 2020. He trained as a boxer, wrestler and weightlifter in Iraq before immigrating to the U.S. in 1960, where he served in the Army at Fort Knox, Kentucky, for three years. He attended the Illinois Institute of Technology and received his civil engineering degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, eventually landing in Chicago where he worked for the state as a bridge inspector.

Baboorian pursued country music as a lifelong hobby. It was also an early touchpoint to friendship with Langford, who came to Chicago in the 1980s. Langford said Baboorian used to visit his studio to play old country records, always singing Merle Haggard as he walked up the stairwell and cracking a “ludicrous” joke upon reaching the top. The two eventually collaborated on a single, “Give Me Back My Taxes,” recorded in Langford’s basement in the early 2000s. Baboorian pivoted to magic in the early 1970s, when a friend happened to rent an apartment strewn with the secondhand tricks of a late magician who went by Indian John. Baboorian began practicing and, a natural entertainer, quickly turned pro. He performed as “Mr. Ash” at venues across Chicago, including the New York Lounge, Mr. C’s and Dennis Rodman’s Illusions nightclub, along with regular appearances at local community events and children’s birthday parties. “He was like an old-school Vegas entertainer, he had all those jokes and all that patter that magicians don’t do anymore,” Langford said.

Baboorian was also committed to sharing magic with others. He established his first magic shop in 1977 before opening Ash’s Magic Shop in 1985.

Packed floor to ceiling with exploding pens, whoopee cushions and vomit-flavored candy, Ash’s Magic Shop became a community center for local children, amateur magicians and intrigued passersby. One day, one of those passersby was Brian Gersten, a filmmaker who spent the next year producing a documentary about the shop and the man behind it. Entering that store, you’re just like, ‘Oh my God, I’ve just entered a whole other world,’” Gersten said. “And it was very obvious to me that I had never met anyone like Ash. His mission in life was to spark joy, to entertain his friends and customers to the best of his ability. It’s rare to meet someone like that in life.”

Baboorian joined the Knights of Vartan in 1995 serving as Commander for Avarayr Lodge #4, Chicago from 2000-2002. He periodically traveled to Armenia to deliver school supplies and perform shows from village to village.
Edward Barsumian (1944-2020)

Edward Barsumian passed away after battling illness on September 27 surrounded by his wife Marina, their daughter Natalie, and close family friends. He has left his temporary home for a permanent home to be with his majestic Father in Heaven.

Edward was born in Tripoli, Lebanon on May 11, 1944 to Andranik and Hermina Barsumian. The family relocated to Syria where Edward and his younger brother Manoug attended public school. After graduating high school, he attended the American University of Beirut on a scholarship and completed his bachelor’s degree in civil engineering in 1968.

The next chapter in his life took him to Germany where he interviewed with an engineering company. He mastered the German language in a few short months to prepare himself for his new job. He relocated to the United States in 1969, and worked at several prominent engineering firms on the east coast.

In 1974, while attending St. Mesrob Church in Philadelphia, he saw Marina, his future wife, from a distance. He joined the church choir to be near her, and they were married on September 20th 1976. To be closer to family, Edward and Marina relocated to California in 1980 where Edward was hired by Bechtel Engineering Co. to work on nuclear power plants.

Edward and Marina where blessed with their daughter Natalie in December 1984. For the next 25 years he devoted himself to his daughter and family, while branching out into real estate development as a successful entrepreneur. The family attended church services and bible study regularly.

Edward was a member of the Aintab Cultural Association and a strong supporter of the Lark Armenian Musical Society. In addition he was an active member of the Knights of Vartan, Sevan Lodge, for the last fifteen years where he contributed his talents on many levels.

Armen Hampar (1931-2020)

Armen Hampar was born on November 26, 1931 in New York to Alice (Kazanjian) and Vahe Hampar.

He attended Columbia University, and was in the Phi Kappa Psi Fraternity. He graduated in 1953 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. He registered at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy and in 1954 was commissioned as an Officer of the Coast Guard in Savannah, Georgia.

In 1966, Armen’s job at Witco Chemical Co. brought the family to Southern California. The transfer from NY to Los Angeles was supposed to be a temporary two year stint, however, in 1968 the vacation abruptly ended when Armen decided to partner with two coworkers and purchase a nearly defunct company. From 1968 until the company was sold in 1998, Armen was the co-owner of Lubricating Specialties Company, which grew to become the largest independent blender and packager of lubricants on the West Coast, with plants in Pico Rivera, Commerce and Vernon.

He was extremely proud of the Ararat Home of Los Angeles where he served twice as Chairman of the Board of Trustees and also chaired several committees. He remained an active board member until his passing.

He was a 55 year member of the Knights of Vartan, Sevan Lodge. He was also a forty year member and Past Master of the Triple X Fraternity, Los Angeles Chapter.

Armen’s compassionate spirit and his undying desire to strengthen the Armenian Holy Apostolic Church, earned him the love and respect of the Diocesan clergy, his fellow parishioners and the entire faithful community. With his humble service and compassionate personality, he set an example for the young generation and his children who continue their
involvement in the life of the Armenian Apostolic Church. A benefactor and philanthropist in the truest sense of the word, Armen Hampar envisioned a vibrant and a more prosperous Armenian-American community.

Razmik Gharibian (1944-2020)

Razmik was born Yerevan Armenia, on September 5, 1944, to Moushegh and Janya Gharibian. His Grandparents were Survivors of the Armenian Genocide from the province of Van who later settled in the historic town of Oshagan where St. Mesrob Mashdots the Inventor of the Armenian Alphabet is buried.

Razmik had wonderful childhood memories of visiting his grandparents and playing in the gushing waters of the spring flowing downhill from the monastery. At an early age Razmik was interested in music. He loved Jazz and Rock-and-roll. As an accomplished guitar player with several of his friends in the 60’s formed the famous “AYK” Band, “The Dawn” they performed throughout of the Soviet Union, and they were the main attraction at the annual Soviet Young Pioneers Jamborees on the shores of the Black Sea. Besides being an entertainer, Razmik was a brilliant Electronics Technician, and was employed by the prestigious Mergelyan Research Institute in Yerevan where they developed and produced computer equipment, and control systems for military and civilian purposes.

On a faithful Summer afternoon, in July of 1972 while entertaining tourists on the roof of the famous ANI Hotel in Yerevan, Razmik met Helen who was visiting Armenia with a group of young Armenian women from Detroit. It was Love at First Sight. Upon her return home Helen was determined to bring the charming Armenian musician out of the Soviet Union. She had to circumvent many obstacles and red tape and after couple of trips back to Armenia, the young couple were married in Yerevan on November 22nd 1972, Two years later overcoming all sorts of travel restrictions, in May of 1974 Razmik arrived in the United States. Soon they were blessed with the birth of their daughter Ani, who became their joy and pride. In spite of his advanced electronics skills, Razmik had difficulty finding suitable employment due to language barrier. However, he was determined to attain his American Dream. In 1988 along with Helen’s administrative skills they founded Premier Electronics Inc. an advanced Fire Alarm Installation and Monitoring Company in Clinton Township Michigan. In a few short years Razmik was able to turn his company into a successful enterprise with strategic partnerships with industry leaders. Due to his deteriorating health, Razmik retired in 2018 after 32 years being at helm of his company. He was a hard-working man a loving husband and devoted father. He was a member of the local Masonic Lodge and a dedicated Knights of Vartan Asbed for 35 years a member of the Nareg Shavarshan Lodge # 6 In Detroit.

Razmik cherished his Armenian heritage; he was a true American Armenian patriot and a very generous man. He never forgot his relatives and friends in Armenia. He was instrumental in sponsoring his brother Rafig and other family members who immigrated to the U.S. He was loved and respected by all his friends. Razmik loved music and never missed major concerts, always had extra tickets to invite friends to accompany him. He was a walking encyclopedia of music, knew every tune from the Motown bands and the Beatles. Lately he was hooked to Elvis’s Gospel Music, and most of all adored Charles Aznavour.

Razmik was a practical Christian, not your typical church goer. For him religion was a private matter. That’s why he wanted to be cremated and his ashes to be interned with his predeceased loved ones in Armenia.

The last two years were hard on the family as Razmik struggled with dementia and complications of pancreatic cancer. Last Monday on September 1st, 2020 four days before his 76th Birthday, Razmik Gharibian made his transition from this world to eternity. He is survived by his beloved wife Helen and daughter Ani Gharibian.
Photo on the cover page “We Are Our Mountains” is a large monument north of Stepanakert, the capital of Artsakh Republic. The sculpture was completed in 1967 by Sargis Baghdasaryan. It is made from volcanic tufa. The Monument is widely regarded as a symbol of the Armenian heritage of the region, representing the mountain people of Artsakh.