

AAHPO Program Named for Dr. Raffy Hovanessian
Aims To Help Karabakh Physicians



Community News

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By Stephan S. Nigohosian

Among the horrific damage resulting from the war in Artsakh, both in 2020 and again this year, is the tremendous strain and destruction it has caused on the region's already fragile healthcare system. The treatment of Artsakh's civilian casualties and injured servicemen defending the territory is disproportionate to the number of trained medical professionals who are qualified to properly treat them. Fortunately, there is relief in sight.

Now in its 11th year, the recently renamed Armenian American Health Professionals Organization (AAHPO) Dr. Raffy Hovanesian Medical Education Program has provided doctors in the rural regions of Artsakh with the training needed to master innovative approaches, methods and technologies from top healthcare providers in Yerevan, free of cost. The program also focuses on maintaining and developing knowledge, skills and relationships through month-long trainings for regional doctors to ensure competent practice in the future. To date, more than 250 Armenian healthcare providers have gained critical skills by earning Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits through the program. Their knowledge then spreads exponentially when graduates return to their rural villages and share their expertise with fellow physicians. Areas of study are wide-ranging and include critically needed areas such as cardiology, oncology, infectious diseases, children's illnesses, geriatrics, genitourinary, orthopedic and diabetes education. As a result, the quality of life and contemporary healthcare services available to Armenian citizens in Artsakh has greatly improved.

A fundraiser to support the AAHPO, Dr. Raffy Hovanesian Medical Education Program will be held on October 16 at the New Jersey home of AAHPO President Lawrence Najarian, MD, to raise critical funds for the program. "Similar to the United States, CME is now required of all physicians by the government of Armenia so they receive yearly medical information," reports Najarian. "Our program offers these credits and living accommodations free of charge to eligible healthcare professionals, taking the financial burden off of their shoulders and enabling them to treat the citizens of Artsakh."

In 2011, AAHPO and the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), through the vision of the late Dr. Raffy A. Hovanesian, recognized the depth and urgency of the lack of up-to-date healthcare services and training for medical professionals in Armenia and Artsakh. Both organizations partnered to fund the CME Program, which is vital to training physicians and nurses as tens of thousands of Armenians in the region depend on their medical skills. Dr. Hovanesian's wife and daughter, Vicki Shoghag see AAHPO, page 7



Blair Dance Group at Armenian Academy (Photo – PUSD)

Pasadena Unified's Armenian Academy Is First of Its Kind

PASADENA, Calif. (ColoradoBoulevard.net) — The Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD) is not only celebrating Armenian independence this week [third week of September], they are celebrating the creation of exemplary Armenian world language programs.

It has been only two years since PUSD took a chance on creating the Armenian Academy at Blair High School, an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School. This program is the first of its kind in the world, attracting students throughout Pasadena and beyond. What has happened during those two years has been nothing less than outstanding, as students from 17 different cities have flocked to the innovative and tuition-free program, growing the enrollment at an impressive pace.

David Ibarra, former principal of Blair, an IB World School, who welcomed the incorporation of the Armenian Academy and who now serves as the district coordinator for Dual Language and International Baccalaureate programs, couldn't be more pleased with the success.

"It has been extremely rewarding to see the Academy grow and expand so quickly. The Armenian Academy fits perfectly with Blair because of the International Baccalaureate program and alignment with the world school focus. I'm proud to say that the Armenian Academy is a staple of the fabric at Blair High School."

Armenian Academy Advisory Board Chair Maro Yacoubian, who worked closely with the district to help create the program, sees a bright future for the community and Blair: "Our team, from the first day, was striving to reach lofty goals while others were paralyzed by the pandemic. We set our sights on creating the first International Baccalaureate Course in Armenian Literature in the world outside of Armenia and we did it. This past May, our IB diploma candidates tested and scored very well, including one a student with a perfect exam result."

Norayr Daduryan, the lead teacher for the Armenian Academy, was instrumental in establishing the IB Armenian Literature Course. He worked to develop the curriculum and secure approval from the International Baccalaureate Organization and the University of California.



PUSD Superintendent, Dr. Brian McDonald, visiting Webster Elementary (Photo – PUSD)

Daduryan explained.

Webster Elementary is now offering the very first elementary Armenian world language program in PUSD. It provides one daily Armenian Language Arts class per grade level and the remainder of the student's instructional day will include classes conducted in English. All language immersion classes will be taught by fully-credentialed bilingual teachers who have additional preparation and expertise in teaching Armenian.

"We are excited about the possibilities for the program in serving not only the students of Armenian descent but students from different cultural backgrounds as well," stated PUSD Superintendent Brian McDonald. He added:

"I was heartened to see students of different ethnicities and backgrounds in our first cohort at Webster and the enthusiasm they displayed for learning the Armenian language. I am truly grateful to the administrators, teachers, and staff and to parent leaders such as Maro Yacoubian who have worked tirelessly to make this program a reality."

Families interested in learning more about the Armenian Academy (6th-12th) and joining a tour can fill out an application for the 2023-2024 school year at ArmenianAcademy.org. Students from any city are welcome.

Edward and Janet Mardigian Sponsor Resurgence of Armenia's Berd Region to 'Save a Generation'

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK — The recent attack and invasion of Armenia by Azerbaijan continues to place all Armenian border areas in great danger. Berd along with 17 rural communities, with a population of more than 30,000, and right on the northeastern border with Azerbaijan, is one of these regions. It is one of the poorest areas in Armenia, and a constant victim of Azeri shelling.

This is a picturesque area of soaring mountains, valleys with lush vegetation, ancient monuments and monasteries, and courageous Armenian people who have always fearlessly defended themselves against the enemy.

The Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) has set up a revolutionary program "to break the cycle of poverty" there, by the Edward and Janet Mardigian family for healthcare and nutrition, education and vocational training, family stabilization, elderly care, and economic and community development, said Margarit Piliposyan, FAR program director in Armenia recently.

The Mardigian family has donated \$10 million to FAR since 2013, and pledged more for this ambitious and crucial program.

"This is our largest and most challenging project. FAR was the pioneer organization to set up this multi-faceted program and have a permanent presence there. Ten years ago, the people in this area had no trust in themselves. Now, they can and do help themselves in so many ways. This is revolutionary," she stated with great emphasis.

She also stressed that "to make sustainable results, the program, which involves working directly with the people, requires longer time and persistence." She then delineated the advancements and accomplishments in the various areas.

In economic development, the population has been helped by the creation of businesses on the grassroots level, support of modern agriculture, infrastructure rehabilitation, as well as roads in the mountains where animals are taken in the summer.

"Agro-machinery, technical literacy, financial support, training and coaching has significantly impacted Berd region communities with the goal of breaking the cycle of poverty." Farmers have gotten involved in more productive agriculture, operating small scale farms and greenhouses promoting self-sufficiency.

Village beekeeper Ashot Buldagharian has received new beehives, which he has since. New tractors were delivered to each of the 17 communities to help villagers in revitalizing hundreds of hectares of land, which had not been cultivated since independence. Water and irrigation see RESURGENCE, page 6



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Hovanessian and Ani Hovanessian, continue his legacy by funding programs like the AAHPO CME program to benefit the healthcare needs of Armenians in the homeland.

Although providing Armenians in Art-

sakh with vitally needed healthcare services is an important focus of the AAHPO, Dr. Raffy Hovanessian Medical Education Program, it is worth noting that the patients are not the sole beneficiaries. Doctors and healthcare professionals who participate in the program gain a sense of personal

and professional accomplishment from helping their brethren in need. Dr. Anahit Petrosyan, a native of Stepanakert who has conducted bio analysis at Arevik Medical Center for Children in Artsakh, heard about many cases of children from remote regions who were not able to get medical help due to the lack of medical personnel and proper equipment. She was inspired to further to enhance her skills by joining the program this year, where she spent one month honing her skills in hematology and biochemistry by studying clinical cases at Muratsan Hospital Complex in Yerevan, with all education and housing expenses covered by the AAHPO program. "This was my first CME training and it more than met my expectations," she said. "As specialists, we have to do our best to care for the children and their parents." Dr. Petrosyan has decided to dedicate her life and work to the people of Artsakh.

Artsakh native Dr. Narine Beglaryan, a general pediatrician, pediatric and nephrologist from Stepanakert Children's Hospital, is currently enrolled in the program for the third time. "The courses offered are specifi-



Dr. Narine Danielyan

ic to my professional field and the practical and theoretical knowledge I've gained has enabled me to improve the medical service and care of my patients," she said.

Another important program initiative has been held with National Institute of Health of Armenia and Stroke Initiative Group (SIATA). Recently, both organizations jointly started a six-month fellowship program for neurologists from Armenia and Artsakh with the purpose of establishing modern stroke centers in regions in those regions. The AAHPO CME program financially underwrites the participation of one

of the first fellows selected for this course, Dr. Narine Danielyan, a neurologist from the Stepanakert Republican Hospital.

"The program's trained and motivated healthcare professionals are a tremendous asset in their Communities," reports Hambardzum Simonyan, MD, FAR Deputy Country Director/Health Programs Director. "They ensure better quality healthcare service on a grassroots level that leads to decreased morbidity and mortality rates."

For more information on supporting the AAHPO, Dr. Raffy Hovanessian Medical Education Program, including attending the October 16 charity fundraiser in New Jersey, email info@aaipo.org.



An orthopedic workshop in Gyumri

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Minimum Qualifications

Master's Degree in Education
Experience in administration, as well as curriculum and instruction
Minimum of 10 years relevant experience

Benefits

Competitive salary
Coverage for Health and Dental Insurance