Do you believe in a viable Armenian state? An economically independent and competitive nation whose citizens’ dreams are inspired with hard work, self-reliance and a secure future?

Realization of the “Armenian Dream” - that is what Armenia Fund is all about. That is what the founders of the organization—Louise Simone and Hirair Hovnanian had in mind when they brought together their communities to establish the Fund 15 years ago, an organization that will become the hub of an extraordinary nation-building effort. That is also what many in the Diaspora around the world envisioned when they joined forces to strengthen Armenia Fund’s history-making mission.

The leadership of Armenia Fund USA revealed the “Armenian Dream” at an evening of appreciation to the Diaspora that was held at the United Nations on October 6, 2007. The 15th Anniversary Gala assembled many distinguished guests and speakers among them Hirair Hovnanian, founder of Armenia Fund in 1992; Armenia Fund’s outgoing Chairman, Kevork Toroyan, his predecessor Chairman Emeritus Hagop Kouyoumdjian; incoming Chairman Raffi Festekjian, AGBU

President Berge Setrakian and Keynote Speaker Vartan Oskanian, Foreign Minister of Armenia.

“This organization was born out of dire need to address urgent challenges of the newborn Republic in those dark and cold days following independence,” said Hovnanian. Hirair Hovnanian’s support of Armenia Fund, both in leadership and material contributions, are what has made most of its major initiatives possible, including road and highway construction, healthcare, agriculture and infrastructure projects and other ambitious nation-building programs. “You have to go to Armenia and see for yourself what a beautiful country we have,” said Hovnanian expressing gratitude to the over 300 attendees.

continued Page 2...
The “Armenian Dream” - We Can Do It

gathered for the 15th anniversary celebration.

Chairman Raffi Festekjian spoke of Armenia Fund’s vision of “building Armenia’s tomorrow today.” With over $170 million raised for the Fund’s many initiatives, he recalled the founding mission of Armenia Fund: “To transform this tiny, landlocked former soviet republic with little name recognition into a productive, prosperous, respected nation; to make this new Homeland an endless source of national pride and inspiration to every Armenian—anywhere in the world.”

A Can-Do Organization Building a Can-Do Nation

Armenia Fund today is represented through 18 affiliates in five continents. For over 15 years, the Fund has met enduring challenges with dedication and visionary leadership. Among the hundreds of projects implemented are life-changing initiatives in infrastructure, economic and social services, healthcare and medicine, road building, culture and sports. The Fund has committed to going beyond “bricks and mortar” to implement programs that foster sustainability and long-term development.

Over the past 15 years Armenia Fund has become a symbol of unity and strength of the Armenian Diaspora worldwide. Since the early days of independence, the Fund has become the “Can-Do” organization building a “Can-Do” nation.

Water Works –A Short Film with a Big Vision

Take one dream; add plenty of water and mix well, preferably in a clay pot. There is no telling what happens next to change the destiny of a poor but talented villager, his family, and the economic fate of their community. A humble Potter living in a remote village in Armenia imagines all the ways that life could improve for him, his family and the entire community if only he had a basic resource like running water...

This heartwarming story, filmed in Armenia’s rural countryside and produced in Yerevan, celebrates the unique talents and hidden dreams tucked away in the hills and valleys of Armenia’s heartland. Displayed for the first time at the Armenia Fund 15th Anniversary Gala, “Water Works” is available on-line at http://ArmeniaFundUSA.org/videos/20071226.htm.
Two Childhoods...

“My sister was two years older than I was and already going to school, and I was in kindergarten dreaming of going to school. I used to say, ‘Send me to school soon!’ but when I went there I realized that the kindergarten was better. The school was located in shabby temporary cabins,” recalls Gayane Makarian, a tenth-grader at a Vanadzor school named for Catholicos of All-Armenians Vazgen I. She was born two years after the 1988 earthquake and like others, her age lived through all the hardships of that disaster. “I was going to go to school ten years ago, I imagined a big, bright building, but now all I remember from my first years is the smell of petroleum,” said tenth-grader Tigran. His classmate Taron shares the same memories: “In those cabins all we thought about was getting warm. No one thought about studying.”

There is a generation in Vanadzor, Gyumri, Spitak and other towns in the area who have spent the ten years of their schooling in cabins, perhaps never even imagining what a real school is supposed to look like.

But things changed for Gayane, Tigran, Taron and their classmates in 2000 when they started their fourth grade in a bright new school building. This school, named for Catholicos of All-Armenians Vazgen I, was sponsored by Armenia Fund USA. “We always believed that we would have a nice school but we didn’t know when,” Taron said, adding that this building, with its style and comfort, was even better than they had expected. “When we first came to this school, it was so big that we couldn’t find each other”, Gayane smiles. “It was the school we had dreamed of. When we walked in, we ran around in the corridors, even in the basement admiring the colorful walls,” Taron recalls. And in Tigran’s opinion, the cheerful building, the heating, and everything else, help the learning process.

This year they will bid farewell to their school days which they have spent two childhoods – dark and light, cold and warm, miserable and dignified.

The Vanadzor School, the oldest and most famous school in the Lori Marz, has educated Armenia’s leading artists, politicians, scientists and writers. After the devastating earthquake of 1988, Armenia Fund USA led an aggressive campaign raising a record $650,000 to not only restore the existing infrastructure, but also provide more classroom, laboratories, computer facilities, a new cafeteria, library and a sport complex. Going “beyond bricks and mortar”, more than 1,500 donors and supporters became part of this inspiring and life-changing project.

I support because...

January, 2008

“...In 1996 I visited Karabakh for the first time. The trip was long and arduous, along a decrepit road that would challenge the most powerful SUV. One-way from Yerevan took almost nine hours back then - last year it took only four.

Recently, I also had the pleasure of cruising the North-South Highway in Karabakh that Armenia Fund had completed in 2005. It’s as beautiful a blacktop as you’ve ever seen.

Cutting through pristine mountains and emerald fields, the road unites the country and allows access to remote villages. One day on the highway, we stopped to admire an orchard of beautiful pomegranate trees. The woman of the house saw us taking pictures of her trees, and rushed out to offer us a handful of ripe fruit. As we chatted, I asked her how the road has made a difference for her, and she gushed ‘The road has changed our lives. My husband can go to work and we can go to market. Traveling is no longer a burden, it is easy.’

The work of Armenia Fund is tangible and real. The impact is immediate, and the results are long-lasting. Through unity, efficiency and leadership, they have brought vitality and life to the people of Armenia and Karabakh. That is why I support the Armenia Fund.”

Pierre Hacopian, Hoboken, New Jersey

www.ArmeniaFundUSA.org
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mig Garabedian, Jessica Pucci, Lt. George A. Rustigian, Nazareth &
Lucy Salibian, Toros & Salpy Yete-
rian, and Anne M. Zartarian
my mother, Propion Sayranian
by Rose Sayranian
her beloved husband Nigoghos
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her parents Anahid and Mihran
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by Alicia Vredjian
Nubar Yenicag
by Krikor Yenicag

Donor Acknowledgement (through December 5, 2007)

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by Marjorie K. Nanian, Esq.
Iren and Sahag Avanesian
by Flavia Galuppo
Garabed Ayadian
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Karaker and Serpoosh Balukjian
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by Hazel Barsamian, and Maria A.
& Karineh Viggiani
Noyezmar Der Bedrossian
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Ohannes Ipekck
by Masis Harzvartyan
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by Manuel & Aline Khatchadurian
Akop Ishkhanian
by Tigran R. Petrosian
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Arpineh Meneshian
Charles Kondakjian
by Thomas & Carol Kondakjian
Violet and Jacob Kougasian
by Charles Kougasian
Vahan Kroshtian
by Dr. Vasken M. Kroshtian
his father Rene Luleldjian Sr., who
escaped the 1920 Genocide
by Arthur Z. Luleldjian
Mom and Pop Malgranian
by Gladys Malgranian
Sarkis H. Malkosian
by Marie J. Malkosian
Garabed Charles and Satin
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Victor Mazian
by Armeney Mazian
Richard Mechtel
by Prof. Nishan & Florence Par-
likian
Ardavast Megerdechian
by Karo Megerdechian
my parents, Haroutlun and Mary
Mekhstian
by Ardash & Yester Garabedian
Richard and Freda Melkonian
by Paul Melkonian
Sarkis and Harutune Mikaelian
by Dr. Dran & Koudy Mikaelian
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