



**SOCIETY FOR ORPHANED ARMENIAN RELIEF (SOAR)**

150 N. Radnor Chester Rd., Suite F200, Radnor, PA 19087

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**2019 Report to the Harold and Josephine  
Gulamerian Armenian Orphan Fund**

Harold and Josephine  
Gulamerian Armenian Orphan Fund





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## **Creation and Management**

George S. Yacoubian, Jr. and Erica Yacoubian began their adoption process in 2005. Throughout the spring and summer, they went through home study and various levels of domestic governmental approval. While in Armenia during the summer of 2005, George saw Liliana for the first time. He submitted Liliana's adoption dossier to the Armenian government in the fall of 2005, received preliminary approval in December 2005, and obtained final adoption approval in March 2006. Liliana Sara Yacoubian arrived in the United States on April 23, 2006.

George S. Yacoubian, Jr. founded the Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR) in the fall of 2005 as a charitable organization that provides humanitarian relief to orphaned children living in Armenia. Dr. Yacoubian has served as SOAR's Executive Board Chairman since 2005 and provides oversight and guidance to all SOAR operations worldwide. In early 2006, an experienced and talented Board of Directors was assembled, a network of Partners in Armenia was recruited to assist with distributions, and the web site was launched. Between 2006 and 2008, SOAR established itself as the only charitable organization whose singular mission is to provide humanitarian assistance to orphaned Armenians around the world. In late 2007 and early 2008, SOAR launched its first two Chapters – in Los Angeles and Washington, DC. In 2009, a National Board of Trustees was created to annually review SOAR's fiscal operations and distributions. In 2010, SOAR



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launched its Sponsorship Fund, which today remains the primary mechanism through which micro-level needs are addressed. Since 2005, SOAR's work has impacted thousands of children across a multitude of constructs, with the penultimate goal to provide institutionalized children with the same educational, emotional, medical, and social support as their non-institutionalized counterparts.

In 2016, SOAR expanded its mission, recognizing that, after a decade of helping children in residential settings, it was necessary to take the proactive step of attempting to reduce the institutionalized orphan population in Armenia. Toward that end, SOAR now supports several day centers, all of which provide services to children *at risk for institutionalization*. SOAR also established its Services to Children in their Own Home (SCOH) Program. The SCOH Program works with residential institutions to deinstitutionalize and reunify children with biological families and provides home-based services after reunification to reduce the economic, social, emotional, and professional barriers within the family dynamic that may trigger reinstitutionalization.

Represented by 142 Chapters, 6 Junior groups, and more than 600 volunteers worldwide, SOAR supports 45 institutions – orphanages, boarding schools, day centers, summer camps, and transitional centers – in Armenia, Artsakh, Javakh, Istanbul, Lebanon, and Syria. Chapters contribute to SOAR's mission in a variety of ways, from traditional fundraising to Program development to professional expertise. The common bond among



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members of the SOAR family is the unwavering belief that orphaned children and adults with disabilities represent the most vulnerable population of Armenian society.

SOAR prides itself on collaboration, creativity, cross-cultural respect, fiscal responsibility, loyalty, and transparency. During the past 14 years, SOAR's work has transcended all reasonable expectations. In 2006, distributions totaled approximately \$60,000. Since 2015, SOAR has exceeded \$1M distributions annually. SOAR's efforts not only address the major humanitarian constructs of education, emotional and psychological support, nutrition, health and hygiene, dental and vision care, and fundamental human rights, but the Programs offer educational curricula on a multitude of topics that stimulate intellectual curiosity, empowerment, and enrichment.

For several of us, SOAR is our life's work, and we are blessed with a dedicated and selfless cadre of supporters who share our short-term aspirations and long-term vision. We are faced with an enormous responsibility. Our greatest trepidation is not inadequacy or a belief that we are ill-equipped to assist the orphaned children we have embraced as our own, but rather that we have influence and power beyond measure. Our daily routine involves a compulsive desire to assist the abandoned, the sick, the impoverished, and the abused. As SOAR's light shines, we hope that we are unconsciously giving our orphaned population the will to do the same.



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# Quality Control

SOAR has a strict quality control protocol to assure that all donations, in their entirety, reach the intended recipients. This protocol has six primary elements:

1. SOAR rarely makes cash distributions directly to the orphanages. Rather, goods and services that can be procured in Armenia are purchased by SOAR's Partners and distributed directly to the orphanages. Donations from the Armenian diaspora that can be hand-delivered directly to the children are encouraged.
2. SOAR implements chain-of-custody procedures for any distributed goods or services, providing assurance that these items have been received by the orphanages in the exact quantity intended. These procedures have three steps:
  - a. SOAR staff sign for the shipments and/or attest to the type and quantity of goods or services procured in Armenia. This invoice includes an exact description of the type and quantity of goods and services.
  - b. The recipient orphanage's director signs this same invoice, indicating that the exact type and quantity of goods and services received is the quantity indicated.
  - c. Both invoices are mailed to SOAR's Executive Board Chairman.
3. SOAR staff, Partners, Chapter members, and other volunteers who visit Armenia make random inspections of the orphanages. Any distribution discrepancies are to be reported immediately to SOAR's Executive Board Chairman.
4. When possible, donations provided by SOAR are engraved and/or stamped with a corporate seal. Capital projects are acknowledged with a dedication ceremony and plaque.
5. A zero-tolerance policy for fraud, theft, and/or deception is imposed. Any malfeasance would result in the termination of assistance.
6. SOAR utilizes Microsoft Planner, which allows SOAR to retain all receipts, pictures, and internal documents for all projects.



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## **Institutions We Support**

SOAR supported 45 institutions in 2019: 32 orphanages, special boarding schools, day centers, and summer camps in Armenia; two Armenian boarding schools in Artsakh; two schools in Istanbul; one orphan summer camp in Javakh; four Armenian orphanages and one orphan summer camp in Lebanon; and three Armenian orphanages in Syria:

**Armenian Evangelical Boarding School (AEBS)** in Ainjar, Lebanon, is home to approximately 75 healthy, social orphans.

**Birds' Nest Orphanage (BN)** in Byblos, Lebanon, opened shortly after the 1915 Armenian Genocide and has been home to thousands of Armenian children for more than 90 years. Today, BN houses approximately 20 healthy, social orphans.

**Boarding School #1** in Stepanakert, Artsakh, houses healthy and special needs children between the ages of 4 and 16.

**Boarding School #2** in Kashatagh, Artsakh, houses healthy and special needs children between the ages of 6 and 17.

**Boarding School #2 of Fridtjof Nansen (formerly Orphanage of Fridtjof Nansen)** in Gyumri, Armenia, houses healthy and special needs children between the ages of 4 and 18.

**Bzommar Orphanage** in Bzommar, Lebanon, is operated by the Armenian Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, a religious order of nuns established in 1847. The Sisters carry out catechetical, cultural, and social work with both natural and social orphans. Approximately 10 teenage girls reside at Bzommar.

**Cardinal Aghajanian Orphanage (CAO)** in Ainjar, Lebanon, is home to approximately 25 healthy orphaned boys.

**Children's Home of Gyumri (CHG)**, a state orphanage in Gyumri, Armenia, houses approximately 85 children with special needs ages 6 years and younger.

**Community Development and Social Support Center (CDSSC)** in Gyumri, Armenia, is a non-residential, state center that offers alternative care and material assistance to special needs children and their families. The Center started its activities in 2012.



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**Dzorak Care Center** in Yerevan, Armenia, served as an orphanage for 400 children during the 1940s. In 1959, it became a boarding school for children from underprivileged families. Today, Dzorak is a state care facility for adults with severe physical and psychological disabilities who have outgrown the traditional orphanage.

**Gavar Orphanage**, a state orphanage in Gavar, Armenia, houses approximately 45 healthy children under the age of 18.

**Gyumri Social Childcare Center (GSCC)** is a state, day center in Gyumri, Armenia. Since July 2006, the Center has served children from around the province who are at serious risk for institutionalization.

**The Holy Cross Armenian Church of Javakh Summer Day Camp** in Akhakalak, Georgia, serves social orphans living in poverty from the nearby villages. The Camp provides the children with a safe, clean, fun, and spiritual environment during the summer.

**Kharberd Orphanage** is a state orphanage in Yerevan, Armenia that houses approximately 200 children and young adults with severe disabilities.

**Mari Izmirlyan (MI) Orphanage** is a state orphanage in Yerevan, Armenia that houses approximately 100 children with special needs between the ages of 6 and 18.

**Mer Doon (MD)** is a private home in Echmiadzin for older Armenian girls who have outgrown the traditional orphanage. MD offer education in a compassionate family environment, thus easing the transition from orphanage life to mainstream society.

**Mer Hooy (MH)** is a private home in the Arapkir district of Yerevan for approximately 25 teenage girls. The girls receive language and job skills training, computer instruction, life skills training, psychological support, and hope, confidence, and love.

**Orran**, "haven" in Armenian, was established in Yerevan as a non-residential Center in April 2000. In 2009, a second Orran center was established in Vanadzor. Today, Orran supports approximately 95 seniors and 200 children across Armenia.

**Our Lady of Armenia (OLA) Annie Bezikian Youth Center** in Kanaker, Armenia, houses girls between the ages of 16 and 22 who have outgrown the traditional orphanage and are transitioning to independent living. The Center is operated by the Armenian Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, a religious order of nuns established in 1847.





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**Our Lady of Armenia (OLA) Center** in Gyumri, Armenia, houses approximately 28 healthy children between the ages of 6 and 18. The Center is operated by the Armenian Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, a religious order of nuns established in 1847.

**Our Lady of Armenia (OLA) Center Summer Camp (Bzommar, Lebanon)** hosts children ages 8 to 15 throughout the summer. The Camp provides nutritious food, physical rest, recreational activities, and religious-educational experiences both to institutionalized children and other impoverished children throughout Lebanon.

**Our Lady of Armenia (OLA) Center Summer Camp (Tsaghgadzor, Armenia)** hosts approximately 800 children throughout the summer, in four 16-day sessions. The Camp provides nutritious food, physical rest, recreational activities, and religious-educational experiences both to orphan and otherwise needy children throughout Armenia.

**Our Lady of Armenia (OLA) Educational Center** in Tashir, Armenia, is operated by the Armenian Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and provides meals and after-school activities to approximately 30 orphaned and otherwise needy children.

**Our Lady of Armenia (OLA) Educational Center Summer Camp** in Tashir, Armenia, hosts approximately 50 children ages 7-15 for four weeks throughout the summer. The Camp provides nutritious food, physical rest, recreational activities, educational opportunities, and religious experiences to children from the Tashir community.

**Prkutyun** in Yerevan, Armenia, is a day center that offers food, educational, and therapeutic services to approximately 55 children and young adults with disabilities.

**Saint Theresa's Little Flower Orphanage (Azizie and Meydan, Syria)** is the House of Providence. After the 1915 Genocide, the Armenian Sisters of the Immaculate Conception stood responsible for the displaced and served as comforting and caring "mothers" for the lonely Armenian orphans. In 1936, "The Providence Orphanage" (Nakhakhnamootian Doon) was founded in the Syrian region of Azizie and was a haven for 300 orphaned children. Before March 2011, the orphanage housed up to 35 girls. Because of the unrest in Aleppo, many of the Armenian orphans could no longer stay at The Providence Orphanage. Some live in Meydan, a very poor Armenian section in Aleppo, and attend Zvartnotz School, while other orphans live in Azizie and attend Zanabek, the other Armenian school run by the Armenian Sisters.



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**Shengavit Kindergarten Number 141** in Shengavit, Armenia, houses students Monday through Friday whose families live in extreme poverty or which have histories of abuse, domestic violence or alcohol or drug addiction. Although some children return home on the weekends, approximately 150 remain at the school full-time.

**Sisters of Charity (SOC) (Bethlehem and Spitak, Armenia)** is a Catholic religious order established by Mother Teresa to tend to “the poorest of the poor.” SOC-Bethlehem is a private orphanage outside of Yerevan that houses approximately 25 very young children with severe physical and mental disabilities. SOC-Spitak is a private orphanage that houses approximately 15 teenagers and adults with severe physical and mental disabilities.

**S.O. Khach Orphanage** in Syria has been a family for more than 90 years. Before March 2012, the children lived in the Telil area of Syria. Due to civil unrest, the children moved to the Aram Manoogian Community Center in September 2012. S.O. Khach houses healthy children and young adults between the ages of 8 and 19 years old.

**SOAR's Transitional Center**, the first of its kind in Gyumri, Armenia, is a residential setting for older teenage girls who have outgrown the traditional orphanage but who are not yet ready for independent living. Opened in November 2019, these young women are enrolled in a college or university; assist in a SOAR-cultivated business; are enriched by SOAR's academic programs; learn the value of volunteerism and essential life skills, including home and money management; build self-nurturance and self-confidence; and prepare themselves for emotional, fiscal, and professional independence.

**SOS Children's Villages' (Idjevan and Kotayk, Armenia)** is a child-centered organization whose mission is to provide care for children without suitable parental care. In 1990, SOS Children's Village in Kotayk opened its doors for children who had lost their parents in the earthquake. SOS Children's Village in Idjevan was founded in 2009. Presently, SOS in Armenia operates a wide range of childcare and family strengthening community and educational activities.

**Terchoonian Home** is a private orphanage in Gyumri, Armenia, housing approximately 20 children between the ages of 3 and 18.

**Vanadzor Orphanage** is a state orphanage in Vanadzor, Armenia, that houses approximately 45 healthy children under the age of 18.



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**Vardashen** is a state boarding school in Yerevan, Armenia, that houses approximately 53 children who exhibit socially dangerous behavior between the ages of 6 and 18.

**The Voice of the Armenian Church Summer Day Camp** is held in Tsaghgadzor, Armenia, and hosts orphaned children between the ages of 10 and 16. The Camp, held in July for eight days, exposes the children to comfort, love, compassion, and care, while simultaneously instilling in them the love of Christ and the history of the Armenian Church.

**Warm Hearth (WH) (3<sup>rd</sup> village and Arinj, Armenia)** offers private residential living to approximately 21 adults with disabilities who have outgrown the state-funded orphanages.

**Yerevan Children Home (formerly Nork Orphanage)** is a state orphanage in Yerevan, Armenia, that houses approximately 60 children under the age of 6.

**Yerevan Special School Number 11 for Mentally Retarded Children (Nubarashen)** is a state boarding school in Yerevan housing approximately 48 children with special needs.

**Zadik Yerevan Child Assistance Center** is a state orphanage in Yerevan, Armenia, that houses approximately 45 children between the ages of 6 and 18. After the age of 18, the children move to either Rainbow House, a transitional home, or Zadikavan, a farming village in Arzni.



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## The Harold and Josephine Gulamerian Armenian Orphan Fund

Originally from Van (Armenia), Harold Gulamerian was born to immigrant parents in 1924. Harold joined the army in 1943, and, after the war, went to City College to earn a degree in science and business administration and then a law degree. When Norman, Harold's brother, returned from the service, he apprenticed himself to artist Frederick Taubes (1900-1981). He primed his canvasses and grounded his paint. Norman, an artist himself, was having trouble finding unprimed linen. Harold suggested they import it from Belgium. That was the start of Utrecht Art Supply.

Harold and Norman sold linen out of their basement in Brooklyn. The two brothers dedicated themselves to supplying artists with the "highest quality art materials and supplies for the best value." In 1951, they rented an office at 119 West 57<sup>th</sup> street. The Gulamerian brothers' art supply business grew quickly. In 1957, they developed their revolutionary acrylic gesso for priming canvas. In 1958, they rented factory space at Bush Terminal in Brooklyn. By the end of the early 1960s, they had expanded the Utrecht line to include professional-grade oil paints, acrylics, and watercolor supplies. In 1968, they opened their first retail store at 32 Third Avenue in New York City. They then opened locations in Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Washington DC, Berkeley, and San Francisco. By the



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time they sold their business in 1997, they had grown from a small space in Bush terminal to 50,000 square feet and an additional 50,000 square feet of retail space.



Mr. and Mrs. Harold and Josephine Gulamerian visited Armenia in 1998 at the invitation of Catholicos Karekin I. The Gulamerians were very moved by this visit, especially by the orphaned children they met. Established in 2013, The Harold and Josephine Gulamerian Armenian Orphan Fund (GAOF) is dedicated to improving the lives of orphaned Armenians throughout the world. Through a cooperative agreement with the Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR), the Foundation provides support to orphaned Armenians in Armenia, Artsakh, Istanbul, Javakh, Lebanon, and Syria.

In CY2019, SOAR received \$325,000 from the Harold and Josephine Gulamerian Armenian Orphan Fund (GAOF) to support a variety of personnel, programs, and projects. A breakdown of these funds is provided in Table 1. As shown, approximately \$199,000 of the \$325,000 award was earmarked for personnel. GAOF funded the salaried position of Susan Snavelly (SOAR Management Assistant) and three full-time positions in Armenia.



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Noticeably different from past years was the salaried position for Dr. Yacoubian, SOAR's Founder and Chairman. The GAOF agreed to fund this position as an investment in Dr. Yacoubian and his ability to generate additional revenue for SOAR. We are happy to report that this full-time, grant-funded position yielded significant revenue increases.

Revenue from SOAR's Sponsorship Fund, which is the primary mechanisms through which SOAR provides micro-level support to orphaned Armenian children, increased more than 40%, from \$184,419.60 in CY2018 to \$267,140.78 in CY2019. Total SOAR distributions increased from \$1.131M in CY2018 to \$1.378M in CY2019. Grant funds, which Dr. Yacoubian made a priority in CY2019, were received from the Albert Tamberchi Foundation (\$60,000); the Hrair and Anna Hovnanian Foundation (\$80,000); the Jirair and Elizabeth Hovnanian Foundation (\$44,500); Fondation Armenienne (\$26,680); Hilton Fund (\$14,100); and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (\$7,350). These awards, and SOAR's overall revenue increase in CY2019, would not have been possible without the trust of the GAOF and its Directors,<sup>1</sup> who generously supported this full-time, grant position.

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Louis and Yolanda Mazzola.



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**Table 1. GAOF CY2019 Budget**

GAOF Budget: CY2019	Description	USD
<b>Unrestricted Grant</b>		<b>\$198,720.00</b>
Chairman	George Yacoubian	\$126,000.00
Management Assistant	Susan Burdette	\$32,400.00
Executive Director	Hripsime Muradyan	\$14,400.00
Quality Assurance Director	Hasmik Hovhannisyan	\$8,520.00
Program and Fund Manager	Zoya Torosyan	\$7,800.00
Travel		\$9,600.00
<b>Projects and Programs</b>		<b>\$126,280.00</b>
Birthday Fund	Parties for MH and WH	\$2,625.00
CDSSC	Annual rent	\$3,600.00
Child Reunification and Family Training (CRAFT)	SCOH	\$5,000.00
Diaper Fund	Diapers for CHG, MI, Nork	\$5,000.00
Global Hosting Program	Thessaloniki (2 girls); Sofia (2 from Zadik and Gavar)	\$7,080.00
Javakh Summer Camp (Georgia)	Summer camp assistance	\$4,000.00
Mobile Eye Care Van	Equipment and supplies	\$44,000.00
OLA (Tashir)	Renovated bathrooms	\$14,000.00
OLA (Tsaghgadzor)	Renovate soccer field	\$8,700.00
Summer Retreat	Kanaker, Orran, Vanadzor, MD	\$10,000.00
Transitional Center	SOAR Center	\$16,275.00
Voice of the Armenian Church (VOTAC) Summer Camp (Armenia)	Cash assistance with operating funds	\$4,000.00
Warm Hearth	Garden Renovation (with San Diego)	\$2,000.00
<b>CY2019 Budget</b>		<b>\$325,000.00</b>

*A photographic montage follows below.*





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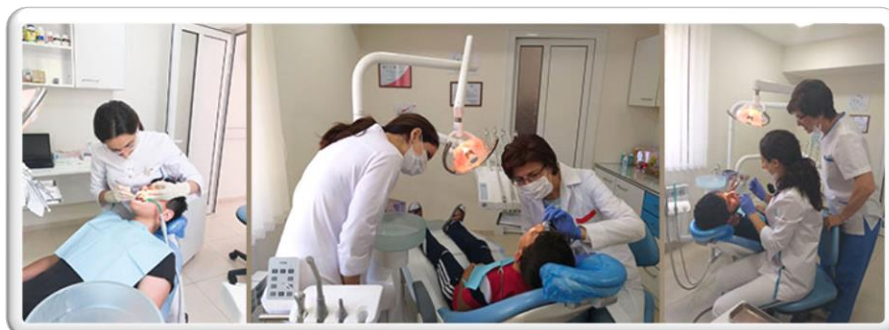
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### **Projects**

#### **Birthday Fund**



#### **Dental Fund**







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### **Global Hosting Program**



### **Javakh Summer Camp**





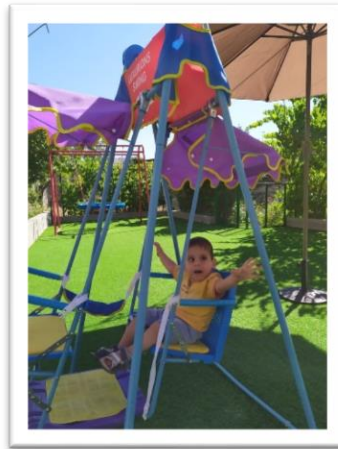
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**Sisters of Charity Garden Project**



**Warm Hearth Garden**





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**Tuition for Karine Antanosyan**



**Microwave and Freezer for OLA Kanaker**



**Music Therapy Project**

SOAR has implemented a Music Therapy Project that will integrate musical therapy into 10 childcare institutions in Armenia.





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### **GAOF Annual Retreat**





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**Mobile Eye Care Clinic**



**Female Empowerment Program**







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### **SOAR Transitional Center**



### **Art Therapy SOS Village Idjevan**





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## **Conclusion**

The Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR) was established in the fall of 2005 to provide humanitarian relief to orphaned Armenian children and orphaned Armenian adults with disabilities. SOAR's long-term goal is to provide orphaned Armenians throughout the world with the resources fundamental to their physical, emotional, and intellectual development.

In calendar year 2019, the Harold and Josephine Gulamerian Armenian Orphan Fund (GAOF) distributed \$325,000 to SOAR to support the Birthday and Diaper Funds; rent for CDSSC; international travel for children through SOAR's Global Hosting Program; salaries of key personnel; reunification work through the Services to Children in their Own Homes (SCOH) Project; renovated bathrooms (OLA Tashir) and soccer field (OLA Tsaghgadzor); financial support to the Voice of the Armenian Summer Camp; and garden renovations at Sisters of Charity (Bethlehem).

In addition to these projects directly funded by the Foundation, the budget included, for the first time, a grant to George S. Yacoubian, Jr., whose primary responsibility was to increase SOAR revenue. Whole SOAR's 990 has yet to be filed, Sponsorship Fund revenue increased more than 40%, from \$184,419.60 in CY2018 to \$267,140.78 in CY2019. Total SOAR distributions increased from \$1.131M in CY2018 to \$1.378M in CY2019. Grant funds, which Dr. Yacoubian made a priority in CY2019, were received from the Albert Tamberchi Foundation (\$60,000); the Hrair and Anna Hovnanian Foundation (\$80,000); the Jirair and Elizabeth Hovnanian Foundation (\$44,500); Fondation Armenienne (\$26,680); Hilton Fund (\$14,100); and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (\$7,350). These awards and SOAR's overall revenue increase in CY2019 would not have been possible without the GAOF, who generously supported this full-time, grant position.

SOAR is extremely thankful for the support it receives and extends its heartfelt gratitude to the GAOF for its generosity in 2019. The desire to improve the lives of orphaned Armenians is the bonding element among our supporters. If you have any questions about SOAR, the institutions we serve, or this report, please contact George S. Yacoubian, Jr., at (610) 213-3452 or by email at [gyacoubian@soar-us.org](mailto:gyacoubian@soar-us.org).