



FALL/WINTER 2015

Providing humanitarian relief to orphaned Armenians throughout the world since 2005

Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief

2015 CHAPTER EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

January 2015: SOAR-Colorado raised \$4,700 at its annual January Art Show to benefit the 2015 Art Program at Warm Hearth, a group home in Armenia founded in 2006 for orphans with disabilities who have outgrown orphanages. The January Art Show has raised a total of \$21,144 since the first event six years ago. This year, the show featured artwork from Warm Hearth residents, artists from Colorado and across America. Individuals, local businesses, and organizations donated raffle items.

June 2015: Over 100 people came out to SOAR-Chicago's Annual Fundraiser. This year's event featured traditional Armenian folk songs performed by the a cappella trio Zulal from New Jersey. It was held at St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church in Chicago. Guests enjoyed bidding on silent auction items and took a chance in a raffle for a Michael Aram platter. Over \$6,000 was raised to support new dental clinics throughout Armenia.

July 2015: SOAR-Dallas hosted its first School Supply Fundraiser, featuring an amazing musical performance by Radu Cernat, a well-known community violinist. He performed some of his best work and even got a few of the supporters dancing! Donated items will be sent to Mari Izmirlyan Orphanage in Yerevan and Terchoonian Home Orphanage in Gyumri.

August 2015: SOAR-Los Angeles held its 5th Annual Summer Gala "Casino Royale" at Hollywood's Taglyan Cultural Complex. Over 300 people came out for a night of 007 mystery and excitement. With event sponsors like Kat Minassi, IceLink Luxury Watch and Jewelry, Tic Tock Florals, and couture designer Michael Costello, SOAR-LA raised over \$63,000 in both donations and child sponsorship pledges.



Remembering the Fallen of the 1915 Armenian Genocide

SOAR chapters worldwide remembered the 100th anniversary this past April of the Armenian Genocide during which 1.5 million Armenians lost their lives and 150,000 Armenian children were left parentless. SOAR thanks these children for their courage and remembers their sacrifices. SOAR Chapters marked the Genocide through a variety of fundraisers, concerts, and other commemorative events.



SOAR Child Sponsorship A Success Story



SOAR's Child Sponsorship Program is the primary mechanism through which SOAR provides support to specific orphaned Armenians. Kristina Nettles, President of SOAR-Geneva, shares her story about how sponsoring Davit, an orphan at Vanadzhor orphanage, has impacted her life:

"I was searching for an orphan sponsorship program in Armenia and thankfully came across SOAR's website. I was quickly given all the necessary information about each child I was interested in. I chose Davit, then only 9 years old since he needed sponsorship for his medical bills attributed to a spinal condition. He needed some follow up treatments after his surgery. Two summers later, I visited Vanadzhor Orphanage and met Davit. He was such a well-mannered boy, opened the car door for me and helped me to carry my heavy bag. We chatted a little with him. He thanked me once again for his bike that we bought for his 10th birthday and he said there are so many boys in the orphanage and only one bike and they take turns to have fun. I was so pleased to know that he shares his bike with other boys and decided right there we will raise money to buy 10 additional bikes. With the help of SOAR-Geneva we were able to purchase 10 bikes for the orphanage that Christmas."

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

SOAR offers a wide range of programs devoted to bettering the lives of orphaned Armenian children. The following are just two of these programs:

Orphan Transitional Program: The Orphan Transitional Program was created in March 2015 to facilitate independent living for orphaned and otherwise institutionalized children in Armenia.

The Program has four primary components:

1. Opportunities for advanced education or specialized job training
2. Financial assistance with housing and daily living expenses to facilitate independent living
3. Psychological counseling
4. Internships and job placement, including interview coaching

Business Development Program: The Business Development Program was established in May 2015 to assist the orphanages in Armenia to develop their own business enterprises. Volunteers who participate in the BDP facilitate the development of business ideas among and for the orphanages in Armenia, review business plans, assist in the creation of a marketing plan, and identify strategies for implementation. The BDP is overseen by [SOAR-Amman](#), [SOAR-Budapest](#), [SOAR-Cleveland](#), [SOAR-Stockholm](#), and [SOAR-Southeast Asia](#).

An Interview with SOAR's 2014 Volunteer of the Year: Kohar Mardirossian Pelter



Kohar has been involved with SOAR since the organization's very earliest days. She now serves SOAR in three roles: West USA and South America Regional Director, Grants and Corporate Funding Director, and the Ventura County Chapter President.

Q. Tell us a little about yourself and how you first got involved with SOAR.

A. *I was born in Aleppo, but raised and received most of my higher education in Beirut, Lebanon. Escaping the ravages of the*

Lebanese Civil War, I immigrated to California where I resumed my career at UCLA as Administrative Nurse and simultaneously received my Masters degree in Nursing. I held many positions as administrator, educator, Clinical Nurse Specialist at Kaiser Hospital, and consultant at AMGEN, and positions at Huntington Memorial and UCLA.

Following the loss of my parents, I resolved to honor their memory by directing my future efforts to serving Armenian causes. Recalling my father's and maternal grandparents' ordeals as Genocide orphans and survivors, I chose aiding orphans as my highest priority. In 2007, I joined the Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief and help establish the first SOAR chapter in LA. However, it was a trip to Armenia, Artsakh, Javakh and Western historic Armenia, with my husband Mitch and daughter Megan that truly motivated me. Visiting several orphanages, I saw firsthand, the deplorable living conditions of the children living in orphanages and which reaffirmed my resolve and commitment to raise our community's awareness of the dire need for humanitarian orphan relief in Armenia, Syria, Lebanon, and elsewhere.

Q. What do you wish other people to know about SOAR?

A. *SOAR is a very unique charitable organization with an important vision and unwavering commitment. It is purely based on one mission, which is to help Armenian orphans around the world. It is very transparent and published. It is also a very current organization, which can relate to a modern generation of young Armenians while keeping close ties to the Armenian heritage and traditions. It has successfully been able to connect with Armenians around the world regardless of age, gender, background, culture, or any other affiliation.*

Q. What has been your greatest challenge as a SOAR volunteer?

A. *The challenges are so many and some are much harder to overcome.*

It is an everyday struggle to keep the mission alive. The greatest challenge is how to impact the reality of an orphan's life and how to raise people's awareness to the reality that an abandoned child or an orphan suffers through.

Q. Tell us about one of your successes as a SOAR volunteer?

A. *I am proud of all the work I have been able to contribute through my 9 years of involvement with SOAR. Carrying on my parents' legacy in educating children and understanding the dire need of the orphanages in Armenia, we embarked in 2011 on the computer lab project to bring modern learning and higher education levels to the orphans. It took me and my team two whole years, holding three to four fundraising events per year, to successfully build 12 computer labs in 12 orphanages and centers in Armenia. All these accomplishments would not have been possible without the aid of friends and loyal supporters.*

Q. Anything else you would like to share about the work you do with SOAR?

A. *My work with SOAR continues to embody my longstanding commitment to the orphans. It has transcended many challenges and heartbreaks, shared many successes and laughter, fought many uphill battles and along the way even if I have touched and made a difference in one life, then I have succeeded.*



Child Rights Spotlight: Disability in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh

Although Armenia has ratified the 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, provision for adults and children living with disabilities in remains a major challenge. In Armenia over 90% of disabled adults are unemployed. According to UNICEF, 65% of children with disabilities are poor or live on \$3 a day on average and 30% of disabled children do not attend any form of school. In Karabakh, the situation is not much better with nearly 10,000 registered disabled people including children and a lack of provisions for medical and social needs. Many Armenian children with disabilities are social orphans and reside in orphanages due to their parents being unable to care for them.

Dental Care for Armenian Orphans

By the age of 18, only 20% of Armenian children have all of their natural teeth. SOAR is partnering with Global Giving to help Armenian orphans get dental care! We need your help in the construction of dental suites at four orphanages: OLA Center, Orphanage of Fridtjof Nansen, Terchoonian Home and OLA Tashir to help provide dental care for 235 orphans. For more information, please contact George Yacoubian at gyacoubian@soar-us.org or Kohar Pelter at kpelter@soar-us.org.



Did You Know? Fun Facts about Armenia

Armenia is one of the oldest wine-producing countries in the world. Its success in wine production can be attributed to its blessed location in the fertile valleys of Mount Ararat where high quality grapes can be grown.

SOAR

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