On April 13, 2012, the groundbreaking ceremony of the new AGBU office building in Yerevan took place. Presided over by His Grace Bishop Hovnan Hakobyan, Grant Sacristan of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, the ceremony was attended by AGBU Central Board member Vasken Yacobian, head of the Republic of Armenia Government's Committee for Coordinating Humanitarian Projects Simon Ter-Simonyan and special guests, as well as AGBU’s local staff, scouts and members. Remarks were made by both Yacobian, who explained the intricate details of the construction, and AGBU Armenian Representation Interim Director Hovig Eordekian. Following the blessing, a time-capsule was lowered by Yacobian into the foundation of the building containing the following statement:

(Continued on page 2)

The feast of the Holy Resurrection of Jesus Christ in the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin

On April 8, the Feast of the Glorious Resurrection of Jesus Christ was celebrated in the spiritual headquarters of the Armenian Church, the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin. On the occasion of the Dominical Feast, His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians celebrated Divine Liturgy in the Holy Cathedral of Holy Descent.

Surrounded by crosses and banners, the Ecclesiastical procession, led His Holiness Karekin II processed to the Mother Cathedral for the commencement of the Easter Divine Liturgy. His Holiness was accompanied by Serzh Sargsyan, President of the Republic of Armenia, and his wife Rita Sargsyan.

The Pontifical Canopy Bearers were members of the Armenian General Benevolent Union: Aris Atamian and Vasken Yacoubian, members of the AGBU Central Board of Directors; Haig Messerlian, Chairman of the AGBU Western District Committee, and Ashot Ghazaryan, President of the AGBU Armenian Representation Managing Committee.

(Continued on page 2)
GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY...

(see page 1) “On this 13th day of April, 2012, during the presidency of Berge Setrakian, the blessing ceremony of the Armenian General Benevolent Union’s new office building took place in the Capital by the hand of His Grace Bishop Hovnan Hakobyan, Grant Sacristan of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin.”

Though AGBU has been active and present continuously in Armenia, it was not until recently that the organization purchased land and commenced the construction of its own office building on Melik-Adamian Street, adjacent to the Republic of Armenia Government building in the center of Yerevan. The six-story facility, in addition to two underground parking levels, will be built on a land area of 1,380 square meters, with a total area of 6,700 square meters. The structure will offer modern amenities with fully equipped office space, conference rooms, and exhibition halls. The new building will preserve the architectural aspects of Old Yerevan by delicately blending new and environmentally friendly features with the historical façade of the old building that was once built on a neighboring street.

In addition to serving as the main headquarters of AGBU in Armenia, the building will allow for the expansion of the organization’s existing educational, cultural, humanitarian, and youth programs throughout the country. It will also provide the needed resources for the implementation of new projects, as well as create a hub for cultural events. Ultimately, however, the new building will deepen AGBU’s roots in the soil of the homeland, and strengthen Armenia-Diaspora ties.

Construction is expected to be completed in 2013.

For the video material please visit: Groundbreaking ceremony for AGBU’s new office building

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST...

(see page 1) Assisting His Holiness during the celebration of the solemn Divine Liturgy were His Grace Bishop Vertanes Abrahamyan, Head Chaplain of Republic of Armenia’s Armed Forces, and His Grace Bishop Artak Tigranyan. His Holiness then addressed his Pontifical message to Armenians around the world.

Present at the Easter Divine Liturgy were Mr. Samvel Nikoyan, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, Mr. Tigran Sargsyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, Chairman of the RA Constitutional Court Gagik Harutyunyan, representatives of the National Assembly and the government, as well as members of the Supreme Spiritual Council, ambassadors and leaders of diplomatic missions accredited in Armenia, representatives of international organizations and Mother See benefactors.

AGBU members, the Pontifical Canopy Bearers, with His Holiness Karekin II

For the video material please visit: Feast of Holy Resurrection at Holy Etchmiadzin
AGBU ARMENIA VISITS THE GENOCIDE MEMORIAL

Every year, on April 24th, the Armenia-based structures and members of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) visit Tsitsernakabert to pay tribute to the 1,5 million innocent victims of the Armenian Genocide. This year too, early in the morning of April 24th, AGBU Armenian Representation staff, AGBU Armenia members, AGBU Yerevan Scouts and Young Professionals, as well as AGBU and Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin Children’s Center students marched to the Genocide Memorial on Tsitsernakabert hill. Headed by AGBU Buenos Aires Chapter Secretary Antonio Sarafian, AGBU Western District Committee Chairman Haig Messerlian and AGBU Diaspora Youth Programs Coordinator in Armenia Hermine Duzian, and carrying the flags of the Republic of Armenia and AGBU scout movement, the group laid a wreath at the eternal fire to honor the memory of the Genocide victims.

For the video material please visit: Visit to the Genocide Memorial

A VIRTUAL TOUR WITH AVC TO THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE MUSEUM

Following the success of AGBU AVC’s first virtual tour of Matenadaran in February, the AVC administration and instructors decided to continue the initiative. On the occasion of the 97th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide the Armenian Virtual College organized a second virtual tour, this time to the Armenian Genocide Memorial and Museum. Many AVC students from all over the world participated in this memorable event on April 25-27. The one-hour virtual tour offered the students comprehensive historical and cultural information about the Armenian Genocide memorial and museum, important details about their construction, as well as many archive materials, photos and documentation about the process of the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

It was an unforgettable experience for the AVC students, both those of Armenian origin and foreign, to be a part of this virtual journey. During this one-hour tour they managed to watch, learn, and visit Armenia virtually. This unique online meeting that brought together Armenians from different parts of the world, put a new seal of success to the overall global mission of the AVC, thus becoming a firm cultural bridge among the AVC students.

AGBU AVC ANNOUNCES ENROLLMENT FOR SUMMER TERM 2012

The AGBU Armenian Virtual College (AVC) is pleased to announce the opening of its enrollment period for Summer Term 2012. The following courses are offered in multiple languages (Eastern Armenian, Western Armenian, English, French, Russian, Spanish and Turkish) and on multiple levels:

- Eastern Armenian
- Western Armenian
- History of Armenia
- Introduction to Armenian Architecture
- Introduction to Armenian Music

The classes start on July 16, and end on September 18.

For enrollment, please visit the AVC portal at www.avc-agbu.org, create your log-in and submit your enrollment application.
On April 2, as part of the NUR (New Educational Strategy) program, Fruitful Armenia Fund and Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) started the distribution of X0 computers to the schoolchildren of Artsakh.

About 3,500 computers – a donation from Argentinean-Armenian entrepreneur Eduardo Eurnekian – have already been distributed to the 1-4th graders and their teachers at schools of Stepanakert, Shoushi and Qarin Tak.

Present at the ceremony were NKR Prime Minister Ara-yik Harutyunyan, NKR Education Minister Vladik Khachatryan, President of AGBU Armenian Representation Managing Committee Ashot Ghazaryan, AGBU Armenian Representation's NKR Projects Coordinator Sassoun Baghdassaryan, NUR Project coordinator Sebastian Arias Duvall.

Emphasizing the importance of the project, AGBU Armenian Representation Managing Committee President Ashot Ghazaryan said in his speech, "AGBU has carried out a lot of projects in Artsakh and it eagerly joined Eduardo Eurnekian's initiative as well. This is the future of our children. With these devices they will achieve greater heights".

“Our goal is to provide the young generation with a high quality education. We are pleased to give these computers to you as presents. Despite the size, these are very powerful tools to reach new heights", said Sebastian Arias Duvall addressing the children.

NUR is the initiative of Eduardo Eurnekian. In January 2011, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Argentinean-Armenian entrepreneur and the NKR government according to which within the frameworks of NUR project 1-4th graders in Artsakh and their teachers would be provided with XO computers designed specifically for educational purposes. NUR is implemented in partnership with the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), the world's largest non-profit Armenian organization, which has undertaken the responsibility of providing the necessary on-the-ground support to ensure the success of the project. The government of NKR has also committed to provide the Artsakh schools with high quality internet connection, which is an important part of the program. NUR was conceived following the concept of One Laptop Per Child (OLPC). OLPC is an educational program developed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Boston. OLPC develops state of the art laptop computers equipped with advanced educational software for students in developing countries. The goal of this program is to change the future of education systems. NUR aims to provide high quality education to the children, helping to raise their awareness and to communicate with the rest of the world.

"The world community sees Nagorno Karabakh within the context of war and regional conflict. People fail to take notice of the children who are born and live there. These children are entitled to the universal right of education and access to information. Through OLPC, I intend to bridge the gap and give the children of NKR the opportunity to receive the best education the world has to offer", Mr. Eurnekian had said earlier.

As part of his visit to Artsakh, Ashot Ghazaryan, President of AGBU Armenian Representation Managing Committee, was received by NKR President Bako Sahakyan on April 2nd. Issues related to AGBU’s projects carried out in Artsakh were discussed during the meeting. President Sahakyan emphasized the important role and contribution of AGBU in the development and prosperity of Artsakh underlining the necessity to further expand the mutual cooperation. President Bako Sahakyan also expressed his satisfaction with AGBU’s active involvement in the development of sports in the country, noting that the Union’s assistance contributes greatly to the strengthening and unification of different communities of Armenians.

For the video materials please visit: NUR in Artsakh (H1 TV), NUR-1 (Artsakh TV) and NUR-2 (Artsakh TV)
SEMIFINALS OF THE 6TH REPUBLICAN INTERSCHOOL CHESS TOURNAMENT

The third round of the 6th Republican Interschool Chess Championship took place in Yerevan, Javakhq, NKR and all other regions of Armenia from March 28 through April 7.

The Republican Interschool Chess Championship is held in Armenia upon the initiative of RA Chess Federation and the Republic of Armenia’s Education and Science Ministry, through AGBU’s sponsorship. The goal of the national championship is to promote a love of chess among schoolchildren and identify talented young people who can grow to be future champions in the sport, helping to continue Armenia’s role as a major player in world chess competitions.

The Yerevan Municipality hosted the Yerevan semifinals on March 30th. Present at the game were RA Chess Federation vice-president Smbat Lputyan, AGBU Armenian Representation Managing Committee President Ashot Ghazaryan, Deputy Mayor of Yerevan Vano Var-danyan, other officials, parents and guests. Most successful at the Yerevan tournament were #2 college (3rd prize), school #190 (2nd prize) and school #170 (1st prize). These three Yerevan schools will continue the struggle in the final round that will take place in May. On April 2nd, Smbat Lputyan and Ashot Ghazaryan also attended the Artsakh semifinals. The winner here was the Qashatagh school team. General sponsor of the tournament, Armenian General Benevolent Union, awarded netbooks to all the winners of the semifinals in Armenia, NKR and Javakhq. The winners of the tournament, as well as their coaches, will also be awarded by the AGBU.

6th Republican Interschool Tournament started in the fall of 2011. AGBU, which has already donated more than 5,700 chess boards, 150 chess clocks, computers and other presents to the winners during the past 5 years, continues its support of the tournament. AGBU and the Chess Federation of Armenia have now been cooperating for more than five years.

AGBU “HYE GEEN” SUPPORTS FAMILIES IN NEED

“Hye Geen” Pregnant Women’s Centers have operated in Armenia since 2002 upon the initiative of AGBU Southern California’s “Hay Geen” program. These centers provide consulting and medical assistance to pregnant women in different regions and villages of Armenia. Recently, expanding its activities, AGBU Hye Geen came up with a new initiative of handing out clothes to disadvantaged families, most of whom live in extreme poverty.

The program is being implemented jointly with the Pregnant Women’s Centers, Armenian Apostolic Church and the RA Ministry of Social Welfare. On April 26th, the first day of the distribution of clothes, the Armavir Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church hosted the most disadvantaged and needy families of the region, who, according to the previously prepared list, came to receive the clothes sent to them as humanitarian assistance from the USA.

The first baby girl born after the opening of “Hye Geen” Yeghvart Center was named Nora in memory of the late Nora Injijian

(Continued on page 6)
AGBU ARMENIA NEWSLETTER

AGBU “HYE GEEN” SUPPORTS...

(see page 5) Four days later, on April 30th, a similar distribution of clothes took place at the “Nora Injijian” pregnant women’s center located at the Yeghvart Hospital. Present at the first two events were AGBU Southern California District Committee Chairman Haig Messerlian, AGBU Armenian Representation Interim Director Hovik Eordekian and Finance Officer Lena Baghdassarian, and “Hye Geen” patron Mary-Louise Injijian. The families that received the assistance expressed their deep gratitude to AGBU, “Hye Geen” members, personally Mrs. Injijian and all those involved in the implementation of this invaluable project. Once again they underscored the importance and efficiency of “Hye Geen” pregnant women’s centers. The distribution of clothes will continue in Vanadzor, Talin, Tavush and Gegharkunik.

This year, AGBU Young Professionals of Northern California gathered for the 13th annual YPNC Winter Gala, which raised $8,500 for the AGBU Hye Geen Pregnant Women’s Centers in Armenia providing prenatal care and education to women in Talin, Vanadzor and Yeghvart. Since its inception, YPNC has generously donated over $67,000 to worthwhile programs locally and in Armenia.

For the video material please visit: AGBU Hye Geen in Armavir (Armavir TV)

BAREKAMAVAN: STRENGTHENING OUR BORDERS, ONE VILLAGE AT A TIME

The Barekamavan Development Project is an initiative started by 3 repatriates, Gayane Gevorgyan, AGBU YP Yerevan Steering Committee member, Anna Aghajanian, AGBU YP Yerevan Liaison and George Tabakyan, former AGBU YP UAE member. Upon hearing about Barekamavan and following their first visit to this border village less than 2km from the Azerbaijan border, they were adamant that something had to be done to help the patriotic yet honest and simple people of Barekamavan, who despite being faced with the daily threat of Azeri sniper bullets, refuse to leave their village and abandon this strategically important outpost.

A seedling of an idea blossomed and took shape with the help of those who believed in the ideas and passion with which they were undertaken. First to lend their support were the Armenian communities of Ireland and Dubai, whose donations were used to build the first 2, 100m² greenhouses for the Mirzoyan and Karagyozyan families. The Armenian Tree project donated over 500 fruit trees to the entire village as well an expert who showed the villagers how to plant then cultivate the crop. AGBU Armenian Representation very generously provided transportation and continues to do so for the numerous 6 hour round trips to monitor the progress in the Barekamavan. A local company IPSC donated the funds to build a third greenhouse for the Mirzoyan family (no relation to the first Mirzoyans) and Macademian, a leading Canadian IT company based in Yerevan provided a full day seminar for the children of Barekamavan on the basic use of computers and the Internet and encouraged them to discover the world using the two school computers gathering dust, discarded due to a lack of anyone’s ability to use them.

The overall aim of BDP is to ensure a source of income for each family in Barekamavan and to ensure that their desire to remain in their homeland is supported by a reality where they are able to provide not only the daily bread of their family but build a better future for their children. BDP hopes to do this in a number of ways:

Firstly: 25% of the income obtained from the sale of the crop of the first 3 greenhouses goes back into the project which will then build a greenhouse for the next family on a continuous basis. BDP has retained the services of a USAID agriculture expert with vast experience in greenhouse vegetable cultivation, who has been with the farmers during each step of the build and cultivation of the tomato and cucumber crop. He has carried out seminars and workshops for the remaining villagers on innovative methods of farming and continues to visit Barekamavan at least once every 2 weeks to monitor the progress of the crop of the greenhouses as well as help other villagers with difficulties in their own crops. A Farm to Market plan has also been developed for each greenhouse by this expert where he will help each family get their crop to the market at the best possible price. (Continued on page 7)
BAREKAMAVAN...

(see page 6) Secondly: BDP has encouraged as many groups or individuals to visit the village to show the population of Barekamavan that although they are geographically isolated they have not been forgotten. For 3 days, between April 27th and 29th, 30 children of Hay Aspet visited Barekamavan got to know the local kids, went on hikes around the village as well as the areas surrounding it, camped out under the stars, sang patriotic songs around the all night campfire and taught the local children long forgotten ethnic dances from the many regions of Historic Armenia. Following these fun filled days where the children of Barekamavan were finally able to leave their cares behind and truly enjoy their childhood they promised to keep in touch with the Hay Aspets through their newly acquired IT skills. With donations from the Diaspora as well as local groups and individual, the BDP hopes to continue the important journey that has been started and ensure the integrity and security of our borders. For more information please visit the BDP Facebook Page: https://www.facebook.com/pages/Barekamavan-Development-Project/325151650845353

“MUSICAL ARMENIA”:
AGBU DEBUTS NEW CULTURAL PROGRAM FOR DIASPORAN YOUTH

The world’s largest Armenian nonprofit organization has announced the launch of a new cultural summer youth initiative, Musical Armenia. Diasporan Armenian musicians are invited to explore the melodies of their rich cultural heritage through this music education program in Yerevan. The program’s inaugural season will begin in July 14, 2012 and continue for 3 weeks until August 4.

Musical Armenia will welcome all eligible youth 18 years or older, who have basic musical knowledge, have pursued certain courses of study involving musical instruments or voice training, and wish to have a new experience in the homeland. Special classes will be held in accordance with musical trends and the level of knowledge and preferences of the participants.

Musical Armenia is geared toward diasporan who play musical instruments (piano, violin, cello, duduk, guitar, etc.) and have some experience in singing. Eligible youth will have the opportunity to enrich their musical knowledge and performing artistry by attending master classes in their area of expertise. Courses will be offered in classical, contemporary (jazz, pop, etc.), national (popular, minstrel), and spiritual music. In addition, they will attend specialized lectures on the music and performances of Gomidas, as well as Armenian contemporary, jazz, popular, minstrel, and spiritual music, taught by well-known Armenian musicians, musicologists, and experts. The classes and lectures will be conducted by well-known native Armenian musicians and musicologists, including Anna Mayilian, Armen Tutunchian, Tovmas Poghosian, Gagik Kinosian, Anna Arevshatian, Gevorg Dabaghian, Lucine Grigorian, Hakob Djaghatspanian and others.

Participants will be given the chance to immerse themselves in the musical life of the homeland by attending concerts, engaging in dialogue with professional artists and musicians, performing with talented peers, taking part in a cultural enrichment program, as well as a variety of social and recreational activities, sightseeing trips, and excursions. For more details please visit: www.agbu.org/musicalarmenia

“Art is an essential part of our culture. And Armenian music is a big part of that cultural heritage that we must keep alive in the youth of today. By exposing young Armenians to the rhythms, sounds and diversity of our musical life, we can ensure that the Armenian spirit stays alive everywhere”, says AGBU Central Board member and mastermind of the “Musical Armenia” program Vasken Yacoubian.
For Gyumri, the second largest town of Armenia, spring is the period of true cultural rebirth. For the fourth consecutive year, “Renaissance” contest-festival brings together talented musicians and artists from all over the world turning Gyumri, the cultural capital of Armenia, into an international cultural center. Steadfastly the festival moves forward paving its way into the cultural life of the Republic.

“Renaissance” 4th international contest-festival of musician-performers took place between April 10-19, 2012, hosting 1365 participants from 25 countries. Armenia was the first with the highest number of participants, then came Russia, Iran was the third. Also among participants were Artsakh, Georgia, Lebanon, Ukraine, Greece, France, USA, Belarus, Italy, UK, Israel, Syria, the Baltic countries and others.

Prominent musicians and artists such as Anastasios Papas, Jean Der-Mergerian, Olavi Kasemaa, Alireza Shafakhi Nejad, Mark Gulegin, Valery Grokhovski, Gabnis Eduardas, Nina Vorona, Alexey Larin and others were jury members in nine different categories.

It has become a tradition to hold an international conference called “Dialogue of Cultures: Armenia and the World Culture” as part of the festival. More than 40 papers on different cultural directions, cultural dialogue and other relevant topics were presented during the three-day conference on April 15-17. It also served as an excellent arena for young researchers and students to introduce themselves and their work, as well as enrich their professional experience. Two exhibitions of artworks were organized as part of the conference: Yervand Kochar’s illustrations of the literary epic “David of Sassoun” and the works of two contemporary painters from Gyumri, Angela Manvelyan and Vahan Topchyan.

The closing gala and the “Renaissance” award ceremony took place on April 19th, at V.Atjemian State Drama Theater. Grand prix in seven out of nine categories were awarded to Rokny Arash Mokhsen (Iran, piano), Marike Krup (Estonia) and Mariam Vardanyan (Armenia, string instruments), Gor Ghasabyan (Armenia, wind instruments), Christina and Regina Mehrabovas (Georgia) and Garnik Yengibaryan, Aida Yesayan and Zarouhi Amiraghyan (Armenia, chamber ensemble), Berdibek Kulgarayev (Kazakhstan, pop-jazz vocals), Mher Galstyan (Armenia, traditional vocals), Bella Hovhanissyan (Armenia) and Shushan Sargsyan (Armenia, composition). There were no winners in two categories, academic solo performance and folk instruments. As well as the Grand Prix, more than 500 participants of the festival received special awards and diplomas.

“Renaissance” international contest-festival of musician-performers is held under the high patronage of the First Lady of the Republic of Armenia, Mrs. Rita Sargsyan. The organizers of the festival are RA Culture Ministry, “Pyunik” All-Armenian Fund for Human Resources Development and the Gyumri branch of the Yerevan State Conservatory (YSC). VivaCell-MTS is the general sponsor of the festival. Armenian General Benevolent Union is among the sponsors of the “Renaissance”.

Promotion of classical art, creation of new ties, strengthening and expansion of cooperation, dissemination of the Armenian culture and creation of new opportunities for young and talented musicians are just some of the goals pursued by the organizers of this festival.

For years AGBU has provided financial support to the Gyumri Art Academy, where the Gyumri branch of the Komitas State Conservatory is situated along with the Film and Theater State Institute and the Academy of Fine Arts.

For the video material please visit: Renaissance contest-festival (Gyumri TV)
ARTSAKH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA’S GIFT TO ITS AUDIENCE
Well-known mezzo-soprano Juliette Galstian on the Artsakh stage

On April 12th, Artsakh State Chamber Orchestra presented a new concert program dedicated to the month-long celebration of Armenian women. It has become a tradition for the orchestra to invite world famous musicians and singers to perform for the Artsakh audience. The guest soloist this time was world famous mezzo-soprano Juliette Galstian (Switzerland), who performed the works of Sen Sans, Bach, Rossini, Piazzolla, Bizet and E.Abrahamian together with the Artsakh State Chamber Orchestra. Juliette Galstian has performed on the most renowned world stages and enjoys the appreciation of lovers of classical art all around the world. From her early days, music and theatre have always been part of Juliette Galstian’s everyday life. She is the fourth generation of a family of acclaimed opera singers, musicians and ballet dancers. From the age of six she studied the piano at the Tchaikovsky Music School and later at the State Conservatory in her native Armenia. Juliette has won prizes at the Maria Callas Grand Prix (Athens, Greece), Julian Gayarre Competition (Pamplona, Spain) and the Viotti Competition (Vercelli, Italy). Winning the 1st prize in Italy led to Juliette’s international debut, as a soprano, at the Teatro Regio di Torino, and an engagement at Venice’s Teatro La Fenice. She is engaged by many prestigious opera houses, in several cases returning for further productions. She sings in ROH Covent Garden (London), Opéra Bastille (Paris), Opernhaus (Zurich), Grand Théâtre (Geneva), Teatro Regio (Turin), New National Theatre (Tokyo), and other theatres. She performs concerts and recitals at Milan’s La Scala, London’s Barbican, New York’s BAM, Prague, Montreal, Brussels, Innsbruck, Budapest, as well as at the Festivals of Salzburg, Nantes, Beaune, Ambroix, Bergen, Miscolc. She currently lives in Geneva and sings in 7 languages. The famous mezzo-soprano was not the only guest of the day. The other guest performer was flutist Artashes Grikorian. This young musician, born in Artsakh, graduated from the Moscow State Conservatory’s flute department. He has performed with the Moscow Conservatory, RF Defense Ministry brass and symphony orchestras, as well as in other countries of Russia, France, Iran and Lebanon.

CONFERENCE DEDICATED TO THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN SCOUT MOVEMENT

Armenian scout movement is 100 years old. The scout movement was established by Lord Baden-Powell in 1907. The first Armenian scout groups were founded in 1912 in the Armenian schools of India and Constantinople. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Scout Movement, Homenetmen’s “HASK” NGO organized a conference on April 21 at the Erebuni Plaza hotel. A brief history of the foundation of the movement, current challenges and development prospects were presented during the conference. Key speakers at the conference included Hayk Demoyan, Director of the Armenian Genocide Museum, Homenetmen-HASK chairman Bagrat Yesayan and Homenetmen Lebanon representative M. Shimshirian. Among the invited guests was the delegation of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), which has had scout groups all over the world for more than 80 years. The AGBU Yerevan Scout movement was established in 2008. AGBU Armenian Representation Interim Director Hovig Eordekian welcomed everyone present and spoke about AGBU’s scout movement in Armenia. Also included in the AGBU delegation were Hermine Duzian, AGBU Diaspora Youth Programs Coordinator in Armenia and Aza Hambardzumian, member of the AGBU Armenia scout council.
SPRING ACTIVITIES OF AGBU YEREVAN SCOUTS

Like the winter with all the New Year and Christmas celebrations, the first months of spring were also full of AGBU Yerevan Scouts’ unique activities and projects, some of which are presented below.

APRIL 1: DAY OF LAUGHTER AND HUMOR

April 1, April Fools’ Day, has been officially celebrated in Armenia as the Day of Humor and Laughter since 2006. This year, thanks to the initiative of AGBU Yerevan Scouts, the streets of Yerevan were full of “yellow smiles”. The yellow smiling balloons were everywhere in the streets all over the city, quickly passing from hand to hand and bringing smiles and laughter to the faces of passersby, which was the main goal of this beautiful initiative.

“Our main goal is to bring laughter and happiness to the people. Today is a holiday and evidently people here in our country lack smiles on their faces”, said Christine Sargsyan, Deputy Chief of AGBU Yerevan Scout group. The event kicked-off at the Republic Square. The scouts divided into groups and gave out balloons to everyone on the streets, regardless of age and sex, from simple passersby to on duty police officers.

EASTER EXHIBITION AND DINNER

Exhibitions of handmade crafts has become a tradition for the AGBU Yerevan scouts. The latest, dedicated to Easter was held at Arabkir Children’s Center. Beautiful handmade crafts and souvenirs prepared by the scouts themselves were offered to the visitors. All revenues from the exhibition went to charity.

On April 8, the Easter gala dinner organized by AGBU Scout Yerevan Women’s Committee was held at the AGBU Armenian Representation. The evening commenced with the blessing of Reverend Fr. Komitas Hovnanian, Head of the AGBU and Holy See Children’s Centers, with further periodical remarks on the meaning, food and celebrations of Easter today and in the past.

3-DAY SPRING CAMPING TRIP

Several times during the year AGBU Yerevan Scout groups hold 3-day camping trips to AGBU’s campsite in the village of Lermontovo in Armenia’s Lori region. These trips provide a good opportunity for the scouts to not only put into practice the knowledge they have gained during their weekly meetings but also to acquire new hands on skills and knowledge. The first 3-day camping trip of 2012 took place on April 20-22. The group left the Children’s Center early in the morning heading to the AGBU campsite. Upon arrival each group of scouts began their pre-assigned duties: food preparation, clean up of the surrounding area, construction of the flag pole. A rich and diverse program of activities, including discussions, lectures, games, hiking, singing and dancing followed. They returned to Yerevan on May 22 with unforgettable memories of the trip and in anticipation of their next Sunday meeting.
AGBU ALEX AND MARIE MANOOGIAN SCHOOLCHILDREN IN ARMENIA

AGBU worldwide schools and youth groups continue their regular visits to the land of their ancestors. A group of 30 students of AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School of Detroit, headed by Director Hovsep Torossian and teachers Sepouh Avedikian and Anahit Toumajan, spent 10 days in Armenia, from April 25th to May 4th. These visits to Armenia are excellent opportunities for the Diaspora Armenian youth to get acquainted with the customs and traditions of their homeland, go on sightseeing tours and develop friendship with their peers. On April 27th, the group paid a visit to the AGBU Yerevan office, got acquainted with the Union’s activities in Armenia and the courses offered by the AGBU Armenian Virtual College. Dividing into three groups the students participated in an interesting intellectual game-contest prepared by the AVC team. All three groups received prizes and souvenirs at the end from AVC Administrative Director Anna Yengibaryan. The group also attended an unforgettable concert by the children of the AGBU and Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin Youth Center in Nor Nork district of Yerevan. They visited Khor Virap, Noravank, Jermuk, Garni, Geghard, Oshakan, the Tatev Monastery, Matenadaran, the Genocide Museum, and laid flowers at the Genocide Memorial.

AGBU DIASPORA YOUTH PROGRAMS IN ARMENIA AND MOSCOW FOR SUMMER 2012

“ANTRANIK” SCOUT CAMP
Age: 13-18
Dates: July - August, 2012
Price: 100 USD (air travel not included)

For more information please contact:
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E-mail: youth@agbu.org                                         E-mail: antranik.agbulb@yahoo.com
Website: www.agbu.org

“DISCOVER ARMENIA” YOUTH TRIP
Age: 15-18
Dates: August 6 - 23, 2012
Price: 950 euro (air travel not included)

For more information please contact:
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YEREVAN SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM
Age: 19-26
Dates: June 22 - August 5, 2012
Price: 1950 USD (air travel not included)
Scholarships available

For more information please contact:
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Tel: +212 319 6383                          Anna Aghajanian
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MOSCOW SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM
Age: 19-26
Dates: June 22 - August 5, 2012
Price: 2450 USD (air travel not included)
Scholarships available

For more information please contact:
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Diasporan Armenian poet, playwright Zareh Melkonian passed away after an enduring illness at his home in Freemont, California, on March 30. Our deepest condolences go out to the family and friends of the deceased. Below is the translation of AGBU President Berge Setrakian's message on the death of Zareh Melkonian.

“With deep sorrow and pain AGBU Central Board of Directors learned about the passing of prominent educator, poet, playwright, author of grammar and literature textbooks and AGBU member Zareh Melkonian on March 30th, 2012, in Freemont, California. Zareh Melkonian has been part of the group of intellectuals who contributed greatly to the active cultural life of the Armenian Diaspora in the 50’s. Moreover, he has played a major role in the history of the Diaspora-Armenian culture, particularly as a teacher of Armenian language and educator, with his educational activities at AGBU schools and his textbooks, which continue to serve as simple and practical grammar and literature sources inside the schools. Supporting the process of teaching and undistorted preservation of Western Armenian he has always shown unwavering dedication towards the efforts of development of the language and its passing to the next generations. As the Executive Director of the AGBU Western District Committee of America and more than 15 years of service inside the Union’s structures, Zareh Melkonian has brought his invaluable contribution to the AGBU. His merits as an editor, literary critic, publicist and author of memoirs were significant. The loss of a dedicated member of the AGBU family is painful for every one of us but with his deep impact on the minds and souls of the generations and with his life dedicated to the Armenian education and teaching he will always be remembered and his memory will always be blessed. On this sad occasion, on behalf of the Armenian General Benevolent Union’s Central Board of Directors and on my personal behalf, I would like to send my deepest condolences to Zareh’s daughters, Shoghik and Silva, as well as all family members and friends.”

Berge Setrakian

ARIS SEVAG PASSES AWAY

Aris Sevag, loving husband, father, educator, writer, editor, and translator, passed away on April 28, at the age of 65, in his home in Jackson Heights, N.Y., after a courageous battle with cancer. Born in 1946 in Philadelphia to Dr. and Mrs. Manasseh Sevag, his intellectual curiosity and commitment was evident from his early years. After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania, this curiosity took him around the country and around the world. Ultimately, he focused on his life’s mission: to serve his Armenian nation that he loved.

In a lifetime of service as a teacher, educator, writer, activist, editor, and most notably, expert translator, his meticulous intensity, discipline, and passionate intellect allowed him to honorably and humbly serve his people throughout his distinguished literary career. His kindness, generosity, warm heart, passion for life, and robust sense of humor touched and inspired all who knew and loved him.

He is survived by his loving wife Asdghig, son Armen, daughters Aida, Alice, and Ani, and brother Paul.

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Established in 1906, AGBU (www.agbu.org) is the world’s largest non-profit Armenian organization. Headquartered in New York City, AGBU preserves and promotes the Armenian identity and heritage through educational, cultural and humanitarian programs, annually touching the lives of some 400,000 Armenians around the world.