

in winter enjoy

In seedtime learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy. - William Blake

Friends of Warm Hearth ~ Armenia's First Long-Term Group Home

Issue # 6 ~ 2011 Report

Year in Review

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Letter from the founder

It is striking to me that the new year, the time to begin again, occurs midwinter when nights are longest and feast days have just passed. In this season, the daylight hours are a promise of what is to come as they are only beginning to lengthen again toward the balance of equinox. It is in this quiet space that we consider both the past year and the year to come.

In seedtime learn

Each year has its seasons of learning, its seedtime. This year we brought Alya, our Armenian Country Director, to the United States. We wanted to see the daily routine and management of various group homes in order to strengthen our own ability to manage difficult behaviors and residents with complicated diagnoses.

While I missed going to Armenia this year (we couldn't manage both) and seeing our dear residents, it seemed fitting to allow her the extraordinary chance to see other group homes. Because ours was the first - and only - long-term group home in Armenia, she had never had the opportunity to see another. Our time together here was rich and sparked a renewed commitment to bring Anna

and Sassoon home from the clinics in the spring. (Read more on page 3.)

While observing different group homes, we felt validated in that the most important components of a loving group home are in place at Warm Hearth. We were exposed to new ways of caring for individuals with particular behavioral challenges. We were reminded that the struggles we face are by nature part of this work and are not endured by us alone.



**Warm Hearth residents and staff
on a walk in Yerevan.**

In harvest teach

In 2011, we enjoyed the gifts of each particular season and helped our residents do the same. As in any endeavor, and in any human life, there were

unexpected losses and surprising bounties along the way. We - resident, staff, donor, volunteer - experienced both, as did each of you, I imagine.

Many of our residents began their third and final year of study at Yerevan State Humanities College. They have thrived in this setting and we look forward to their graduation day in 2012. We continue to think of ways in which we can achieve movement toward further integration into the community after graduation - whether in work, service, art or play. We look forward to how this will enrich and strengthen our residents' lives.

In winter enjoy

I spoke with our residents an hour ago. It is the eve of the Armenian New Year and they are staying up late, reveling in the celebration with its tasks and merriments, talking about their gifts, enjoying one another. It bring me so much joy to hear their voices full of anticipation, full of hope.

As Blake urges, winter is a time to enjoy the work of the year, the bounty of the harvest. They are doing just that. In this spirit, I want this report to do the same. We have so much to be grateful for, in large part because of each of you. So in these pages, I want to share with you our seeds, our harvest, and our winter that you might also learn, teach and enjoy.

Blessings to you and yours,

Natalie Bryant-Rizzieri

RESIDENTS

Our residents are the heart and soul of our work. If they are doing well, we are doing well. 2011 was a peaceful and productive year for them.

Those who are enrolled in Yerevan State Humanities College went on a three-day retreat with their fellow students to the town of Tsakhadzor. Thank you to Bridge of Hope NGO for making this possible.

With the help of volunteers and professionals, our residents completed the renovation of our balcony, which overlooks our village and has a gorgeous view of Mt. Ararat. Summer days and nights were spent in this freshly painted space. Treats were shared. Laughter was had. Guests were welcomed.

The residents brought their artistry to the world this year. They prepared handicrafts and sold them in Yerevan for an Easter Exhibit. They completed their first large carpet, which was sold a few months later to support their livelihood. We created an online store for them to sell their handicrafts (<http://smallcornerstore.blogspot.com/>) which will eventually be incorporated into our website. The residents' handmade Christmas cards, embroidery, paintings and clay art have been sold in Armenia and the USA.

Most exciting in terms of their artistic endeavors, the residents gained the audience of the Prime Minister and other ministers of the Armenian government. They showcased their traditional looms, the weaving process and the final craft - handmade carpets.

We are so proud of the life that the residents have created. It is a life of learning, of giving and serving, of nurture, of struggle, of healing, of risking and loving. Collectively and individually, it is a full life. As we - their staff and supporters - stand by, we're challenged by their gratitude, the way that they experience the world with soulfulness, with depth, and with vulnerability.

May we learn from them.

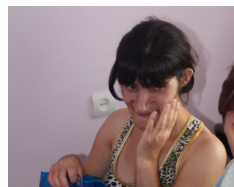
May we protect the life that they have carved out.

May their gentle way be more and more ours.

piece by piece, hand by hand

Our residents rely on the efforts of so many people around the world. Piece by piece and day by day, we create this home for our residents. And hand by hand, it is made stronger. It is sustained. While there is not room on this page for all the thanks that are due, we would like to highlight a few of the ways we received in 2011.

- Armenian Volunteer Corps helped to complete our balcony renovations.



- Board member Lee Ann Williams conducted a presentation at the Knights & Daughters of Vartan in San Francisco. She also facilitated the

sale of our residents' handicrafts at her local church.

- Meline, Sona and Juliet translated countless documents from Armenian into English. Additionally, Juliet represented our work at the Orange County Armenian Festival.

- Erin Tyler represented our work at the Alexandria Armenian Festival in Virginia.

- Glenn and Suzi Brown opened wide their home and hearts to us during Alya's trip to the USA.

- Palig Mouradian, an intern with Armenian Youth Federation, volunteered at Warm Hearth for three weeks.

- Brian Kremer and Chris Kitahara filmed, designed and are creating a short film about Warm Hearth.

- We were chosen to be part of the Paros Foundation initiative, Paros 100.

- Michael Zadorian collected unclaimed clothing from local dry cleaners and shipped it to Armenia.

sharing the task, sharing the vision

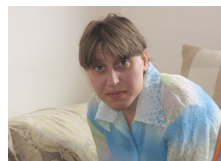
A vision without a task is but a dream.

A task without a vision is drudgery.

A vision and a task is the joy of the world.

(T. Macker)

We are profoundly grateful that our residents received the gifts from the following events and organizations in 2011:



- Armenian Youth Federation event (San Francisco Chapter)

- Armenian Speed Dating (NYC)

- The weddings of Mandy White & Henry Kaiser and Raina Clark & Brian Gaun.

- Ashley Howard's fundraiser (Boston)

- Charlie Hickman and Marie Stepanyan's 2nd Annual Art Show and Auction (Longmont, Colorado)

- Armenian Women's Association (Yerevan)

- Zohrab Center's "Night of Conversation & Celebration" (NYC)

- The Dinner Circle in the Vartanyan home (La Canada, CA)

- 7th Annual Armenian Thanksgiving Eve Fair (NYC) put on by AGBU YPGNY, Armenian Network, NY ASA, AYF-YOARF New York Hyortik and New Jersey Arsen Chapters. Special thanks to Tamar Gasparian and Rafi Hovsepian.

- Gogian Family Foundation (California)

- Armenian Relief & Development Agency (Yerevan)

a real conversation

Brian Kremer (pictured below), our 2011 Peace Corps Response Volunteer, worked at Warm Hearth for six months helping with marketing and handicraft sales. He recounted this conversation to us recently.

The other day someone asked me, "What was your favorite spot in Armenia?"

- "Warm Hearth," I responded.

- "Where and what is that?"



- "It's the home where I worked on the outskirts of Yerevan."

- "Oh no. I meant, what was your favorite place to eat, to relax or enjoy the sites?"

- "Well, there was this place that had some of the best Armenian coffee, borsch soup and dolma that made you wonder if you would ever be able to stop eating. Did I mention the view? There was indoor and outdoor seating overlooking the city, at eye level with a mountain so tall it made you wonder how long it would take to climb."

- "Did they play music?"

- "Of course. There were some of the best Armenian songs sung by some of the most beautiful Armenian voices I've ever heard."

- "Was it crowded?"

- "Sometimes, but there was always great company to be found. Artists, singers, workers and students looking to have a meal, chat with a friend, or just enjoy the view. There were people, you know, mostly chatting about the weather, talking about their days, the flowers in the garden, or the berries blooming on a nearby tree."

- "Wow. That sounds like a great spot."

- "Yes, it was. It really made you feel at home."

- "Where was it?"

- "In a village on the outskirts of Yerevan."

- "What was it called?"

- "Warm Hearth. The home where I worked."

Sassoon & Anna

A mountain is moved by carrying away small stones.

— Chinese Proverb

Every year we share either joyfully or sorrowfully about Anna and Sassoon, our two residents with more intense behavioral needs. Every year you listen, you encourage, and you grieve or rejoice with us and with them.

Loving and providing for them has been one of our largest mountains.

Loving them has also been one of our greatest honors.

The history. Anna and Sassoon first moved into Warm Hearth in January 2006. In November 2006, Sassoon was taken to a short-term Psychiatric Clinic. He came home only to return to the clinic the next month. In January 2007 he was transferred to yet another clinic. Despite multiple staff trainings, consultations, hires, and creative efforts on his behalf, he has remained in clinical settings to this day.

Anna was taken to a short-term clinic in October 2006. She returned home after three weeks. In January 2007, she was taken to another clinic, and again returned home. In April 2007, she went back to that

clinic. Two years later, in May 2009, she came home for around one year. Since then she has been in clinical settings.

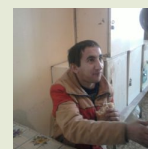
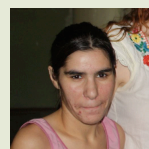
In August 2010, after another training, our staff agreed to bring Anna and Sassoon home. However, a decision by a government official impeded their move.

The hope. After Alya's visit to US group homes and facilities in July, we decided to bring Anna and Sassoon home to live in a Garden House (Alya's idea), which is under construction as I write. In the Garden House, we hope that Anna and Sassoon will have the specialized care and space that they need to transition well and peacefully.

Our goal is to keep them home, though we understand that short-term stints in clinics may be necessary.

The future. Natalie, Bridget (Board Member) and Juliet (Volunteer/Supporter) will travel to Armenia this coming spring to support the staff and residents during this transition. This is only possible because

so many small stones have been carried along the way, many of them by you.



It doesn't hurt [or heal] us to be involved in a cause because we don't have to name the individual people who make up the cause or see them one by one. We may be politically correct, but we are far from being truly human.
- Madeleine L'Engle

We have worked, prepared and fought so hard for this. They have waited a long time. Now we excitedly await their homecoming.

May the seeds we have all sown to make this possible, sprout and thrive under the spring sun.

May this mountain finally be moved.

(Photograph at top - Warm Hearth Group Home)



"We need to be integrated into [the residents] way of being... They can create their own life, tenor, community that they can then invite us into..."

- Ian Brown

I have worked in Warm Hearth for four years as a psychologist. The main goal of my work is to develop the residents' skills, including their social skills. But my work is not limited to the residents. I also work with the staff as we seek the right approach in caring for the residents.

When I first came to Warm Hearth, there was tension between the residents. They were impolite because at the orphanage, group interaction was not incorporated into their daily activities. There were too many children. But as time has passed, the atmosphere here has changed a lot. The residents can speak about their struggles more freely. As they began to speak about their problems, they became more and more caring and started to help one another.

During my four years of working here, there have been many changes.

For example, Yulia used to be very closed off. She didn't speak or express her thoughts. In the beginning, when we were gathered for conversations, she didn't even listen. But later, she became interested in the conversations

Every month, the staff fills out an Individual Care Plan for each resident. We try to complete these with the residents' help. The staff has a list of ideas and goals and talks with the residents about which goals they will

Once a week we have group conversations about different topics. I choose the topics based on the residents' needs and recommendations.

We conduct staff meetings where we discuss our approach to the residents. The approach is individualized but it corresponds to the name of the home - Warm Hearth - and the atmosphere is very warm. The approach of the staff is one of kindness coupled with firmness only when required. The kindness has allowed the residents to become more open, to feel free, and to be unimpeded by thoughts of harsh punishment. There is no harsh punishment here and that is why they are able to speak freely about everything.

-- Anahit Iskandarova



Residents from left to right: Alina, Sassoon, & Armine

Everything that has been wrestled from doubt I welcome - the mouths that burst open after long knowledge of what it is to be mute. -Rilke

and even started to respond. I also noticed that she likes singing very much. So during work and free time, I try to sing with her. She is significantly changed when she sings. There are many changes in her.

work toward.

We have a tack-board that tracks the goals of each resident. In this way we try to encourage the residents.



Even when programs are thoughtful and well designed, the secret of success in...international development is simple: build a community of collaboration. Commit to being guided by those you serve and allow local talent to drive the effort forward, then collaborate with compassionate people from around the world. - Deogratias Niyizonkiza

Commitment



[Disability Awareness Day - Warm Hearth residents and staff participated. (Photo credit: B. Kremer)]

Nicholas Bruno is the Director of Program & Training for U.S. Peace Corps Armenia and has been living in Armenia since 2001. He has also worked in Armenia at the USAID Mission as a Health Advisor. He has observed the creation and growth of Warm Hearth.

Warm Hearth is a phenomenal story of commitment to advocating for and building a practical model providing humane care, and promoting the rights of people with special needs. With continued efforts in promoting the Warm Hearth model of providing care to the Government of Armenia and training residents to integrate into society, there is great potential for true social partnership to evolve and other homes to be established through public-private partnerships. This would have significant impact nationwide and holds potential to spread to other countries in the region over the ensuing years.

Throughout the last eight years, I have remained in Armenia and followed the progress of this work to establish and evolve Friends of Warm Hearth & Jermik Ankyun Foundation.

I have been quite impressed by Warm Hearth's ability to institute lasting change not only in the lives of some of the residents, but also in the progress of laying the foundations for institutional change in providing care for people with special needs in the post-Soviet environment.

Advocacy



[Warm Hearth Staff light candles.]

Bridget Brown, a founding board member of Warm Hearth and a former Peace Corps Volunteer in Armenia, has known some of the residents since 2001. Here she reflects on the ways that Warm Hearth policy and practice were created and how they have influenced her work in the United States.

As an advocate for people with special needs, it has been fascinating to observe the evolution of Warm Hearth's influence on policy and practice for its own sake and also in my work in the United States.

In the beginning, I contributed to the development of Warm Hearth's founding policy documents by poring over textbooks from the recycle bin at my university and applying what I learned. I was particularly interested in learning from the deinstitutionalization process that characterized the 1970s in the USA. What was rapidly becoming less relevant in the USA as we moved further away from the period immediately following deinstitutionalization was fresh and useful as we began to develop Warm Hearth.

As the years proceeded, I was able to incorporate what I learned about special education policy into conversations about Warm Hearth policy formation. The basic human rights that parents in the USA fought so hard for were included in the foundational documents (and therefore daily practice) of Warm Hearth.

Policy



[Disability Awareness Day - Warm Hearth residents and staff participated. (Photo credit: B. Kremer)]

Since then, the Warm Hearth policies and practices have been fine-tuned. In the meantime, I began to work as a consultant for the Washington DC Public Schools Special Education department. Suddenly I was faced with interesting challenges at work regarding how to develop a tool to monitor residential facilities. I found myself pulling from Warm Hearth's tried and true monitoring system. These recommendations were included in a tool developed by an interagency task force to improve monitoring of residential facilities across the United States.

Presently, the behavior planning that we have agonized over for Warm Hearth residents informs my day-to-day work supporting three group homes in Oregon.

I believe that the level of quality in the Warm Hearth policies is due to the fact that we were able to incorporate the best practices from the fields of education, social work, mental health, psychology and psychiatry. I am using Warm Hearth resources as a point of reference. I am seeing how the development of high-quality policy and practice comes full circle.

I look forward to seeing how the policy and practice so carefully crafted for Warm Hearth continues to influence and protect the vulnerable in our world.



Stewardship

*If we know carefully enough who, what, and where we are,
and if we keep the scale of our work small enough, we can think responsibly.*

- Wendell Berry

Thanksgiving



[residents enjoying summer]

Sustainability



[residents' handwoven carpet]

Our wellsprings



[fundraising dinner]

Values



[Natalie and Alya]

Broader Vision



[residents' handcrafts]

Our residents and those who love and serve them are upheld by each of you. We couldn't stand alone. We are honored and humbled each time we receive a gift and we are strengthened by your growing support, your deepening commitment to our residents, your desire to see them flourish, and our shared vision of husbandry to the land, hearth and home in 3rd Village that belongs to Hasmik, Gayane, Davit, Susanna, Roman, Agappy, Davo, Armine, Yulia, Alina, Anahit and hopefully soon Anna & Sassoon. Together, let's continue to provide them with a life of peace and nurture.

In 2011 we secured and then lost Armenian government funding due to the fragile economy. We are holding this news in our hearts and rethinking what it means to be sustainable. We view sustainability not as an abstraction but as a concrete commitment to continue loving and feeding, healing and providing for our residents in both the short and long-term. Some have mentioned that *not* receiving this government money may be a blessing in disguise. We can imagine that this might be true and we continue to *ring the bells that still can ring. Forget [the] perfect offering. There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in.* (Leonard Cohen)

In 2011 individual contributions comprised 78% of gifts given, totaling \$102,880. Foundations, churches and organizations gave \$29,024, which was 22% of the total gifts.

\$7,480 worth of food, shoes, household goods, paint, etc., were donated. Volunteers donated their time, services, hands and hearts. Their efforts are of infinite value but if we have to put a dollar amount on it, their contributions are valued at \$17,945.

Still more of you gave in ways that are unquantifiable, offering an encouraging word, a blessing, or understanding.

Budgets are moral documents.

While it does require work to bring in the harvest, we do our best to keep overhead costs low.

We try to act out of our deepest values or in other words, according to what most honors our residents.

In 2011, 78% of our cash expenditures were directly for our residents. Fundraising costs amounted to 12% and administrative costs were 10% of our total cash expenses.

Full, quarterly financial statements are available upon request. We welcome inquiries and value transparency.

This is a 'silent crisis', which affects not only disabled persons themselves and their families, but also the economic and social development of entire societies, where a significant reservoir of human potential often goes untapped. (United Nations) Often when we discuss stewardship, we don't think to mention that we are each stewards of our own lives. Part of what that means for us is helping the residents become more and more the stewards of *their* own lives, embodying their gifts in the world, helping them as they find their vocation. In this way we are trying to address the silent crisis, the untapped reservoirs of potential.

Comparative Statements of Financial Position

Current assets	12.31.2011	12.31.2010	12.31.2009
Cash - total current assets	\$147,831	\$136,637	\$68,790
Land & house in Armenia	143,647	115,442	115,442
Furniture & equipment	6,393	6,393	6,393
Less accumulated depreciation	(18,061)	(14,015)	(9,969)
Net property & equipment	131,979	107,820	111,866
Total assets	\$279,810	\$244,457	\$180,656
Liabilities (accrued payroll taxes)	1,891	2,016	2,048
Unrestricted net assets	277,919	242,441	178,608
Total liabilities & net assets	\$279,810	\$244,457	\$180,656

Comparative Statements of Activities

Revenue	2011	2010	2009
Cash contributions	\$131,904	\$166,536	\$146,294
Sales of Handcrafts	6,887	894	939
Contributions of goods	7,480	7,859	10,137
Contributions of services	17,945	26,155	20,618
Interest income	1,170	1,006	791
Total contributions & interest	165,386	202,450	178,779
Expenses			
Facility & program	92,336	95,057	92,602
Promotion & fundraising	23,079*	30,045*	26,183*
Management & general	14,493	13,515	13,903
Total expenses	129,908	138,617	132,688
Changes in net assets	35,478	63,833	46,091
Net assets, beginning of period	242,441	178,608	132,517
Net assets, end of period	\$277,919	\$242,441	\$178,608

* These amounts include \$10,648, \$18,642 and \$13,737 in donated services respectively in 2011, 2010 and 2009.

the community we serve

*Friends of Warm Hearth, Inc. (USA nonprofit) and Jermik Ankyun Foundation (Armenian nonprofit) work together to serve and protect orphaned or abandoned individuals with disabilities or mental illnesses who are over the age of 18. Our residents, and others like them, come of age in the state-run orphanages or psychiatric clinics. Upon reaching adulthood there is no infrastructure in place to meet their needs. The only option available to them is to be committed to the psychiatric institutions, which are large, former Soviet institutions offering no chance of rehabilitation, individualized care or re-integration into the community. These institutions are aptly referred to as "graveyards" by local Armenians; they house some of the worst human rights abuses in the nation of Armenia. In June 2006 one such institution was accused of harvesting and selling the organs of patients. Currently, we provide an alternative - a *home* - to eleven residents and are preparing to bring home two additional residents (Anna and Sassoon) who have been in local clinics and institutions for some time. Through providing a home to this group of residents, developing a sustainable and effective model of care, and advocating for the human rights of individuals with disabilities in Armenia, we strive to effect change on behalf of the broader population with disabilities as well as their families and friends.*

