

Friends of Warm Hearth



2013 Annual Report ~ Volume VIII

Every person deserves to be protected.

Warm Hearth is home to 14 adult orphans with disabilities or mental illnesses.

We exist so that our residents can avoid a lifetime of institutionalization.

We exist so that our residents can experience peace.



A Letter from the Founder

I just returned from Armenia, from our home full of the reassuring comforts of daily routines, full

of clay and paints, laughter and tears, feasts and carpet looms and stuffed animals, care-taking and cleaning, meals and stacks of dishes, birthday celebrations and trips to the market and museum, comforting and arguing, singing and giving, learning and toasting and reciting poems, falling and dancing, holding and forgiving.

It was more beauty than a person can almost bear to sit around the feast table and listen to the residents—all of them—sing carol after carol. Most of you know how much we have endured and how long we have persevered to get two of our residents, Anna and Sassoon, home from institutions. And there they were, seated with the others, toasting to the New Year.

Some of us—residents, staff and visitors alike—were so moved that our faces were streaked with tears. I wondered if for the residents they were tears of joy or if so much goodness brought into starker relief some of the heartaches of the past. I will probably never know.

For my own part, I was reminded of the simple fact that this is why we do what we do: so that these dear people can gather around a table and break bread



daily and have someone to console them when they are in need. Thank you for protecting them, for believing that peace should also be theirs.

Sincerely Yours,

Natalie Bryant-Rizzieri

I take my basket to the brazen market,
to the gathering place.

I ask you, how much beauty
can a person bear?

-Louise Gluck



Patchwork

Our home is a patchwork quilt stitched together by many hands. The pieces vary in size, shape and hue but they all come together

to form a kaleidoscope of color.

We want to thank all who joined their hearts in 2013 to keep our residents warm and safe and protected. While every gift and every act of kindness is worth

mentioning, there is not room to list them all. Let these few stories be evidence of the ways you have all creatively sustained Warm Hearth in 2013. We have received so much and can testify that *“the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts...[and to] the number who lived faithfully a hidden life.”* (George Eliot)

A special thanks to the Gogian Family Foundation, SOAR-Colorado & National, The Paros Foundation (and Conrow Family), and other donors, volunteers, and friends for your sustaining support and funds.

ASA ~ New York



Tamar Gasparian and Rafi Hovsepian designated Warm Hearth as the recipient of the proceeds from the 63rd Annual New York Armenian Students’ Association Exhibition. A few words from Tamar: “Warm Hearth’s mission is very close to our hearts and we are always trying to find new ways to support the organization. I am so happy and proud to see how the organization has evolved over the years, especially when I think back to the very first days when I was involved in the initial staff training. I was also there the day the first group of residents moved into their new home. They have all made immense progress.”

Dinner Circle ~ L.A.



Every time we gather in L.A. to celebrate the work of Warm Hearth we are blessed by the many committed individuals there who believe in our work. This year the Vartanyan and Garibyan families hosted a stunning dinner in honor of our residents. The night was an intimate and beautiful way to honor the work that has been done on behalf of our residents and the exceptional individuals who have committed to sustaining the home. Under a temperate autumn sky, we circled together to reflect on the joys and trials of Warm Hearth. Thank you to all who participated this year.

Dedications



Taleen Babayan heard about Warm Hearth four years ago and was touched by the stories of our residents. In 2013, she wrote, directed and produced a comedic Armenian-themed play entitled “Where Is Your Groom?” or “Pesad Oor Eh.” At the October performance at The Players Theater in New York City, Taleen dedicated the proceeds from her debut to our group home. We are honored to be the recipient of such creative and life-giving endeavors. Thank you to Taleen and all of you who gave of your heart, your talents and your time to our residents.

A Net of Giving & Taking

This net of giving and taking is part of our daily experience. Every time we learn to give without calculating what we will get in return and every time we learn to receive without feeling ashamed or indebted, we tie a few more knots into this large net and make it a little more secure.

Dorothee Soelle, *The Strength of the Weak*

Faithfulness ~ By Juliet Setian



After spending a week at Warm Hearth, I came away thinking about faithfulness—the faithfulness of the residents to their own lives, their acceptance of their lives (the good and the bad) and also their day to day eagerness to grow and learn, to become better carpet weavers, gardeners, roommates and even better human beings. I think of the faithfulness of Natalie (the founder) and the staff—their tireless efforts to provide meaningful and fulfilling lives for the residents. Here is a portion of a letter from Anna (pictured here) to Natalie: *“Hello, dear sister Natalie. I miss you very much and feel your absence very much. I want you to always feel safe and free. I want God to watch over you and protect*

you, to bless you, and to be inseparable from you. With all of my life I am grateful to you for bringing me to such a trustworthy place. May God always be with you. May you always be happy. I’m very happy that I have such good caregivers. Your always loving and respecting, Anna.”

A Circle of Love ~ By Charlotte Susan Barnes



Here is a response to Anna’s letter, transcribed above, from a supporter of Warm Hearth.

This letter brought tears to my eyes. I immediately thought of sitting with Natalie in Yerevan many years ago now and of the feeling of desperation we both felt having just come from the psychiatric hospital where Anna had been committed. I remember talking about—from a macro perspective—the possibility that Anna and Sassoon could eventually both live in Warm Hearth again, and about what might be done to support the caregivers in learning how to care for them. I

remember there were many more questions than answers and that there seemed to be no real path and no real solution. There are those moments—even seasons—in life, when all is dark. And there is no obvious light poking out from anywhere. But then there is this. Many years later. This letter from Anna. And it is about much more than my philosophical ponderings on the seasons of life and how sometimes clarity and a path do eventually arise from a seemingly hopeless or chaotic situation. It is about Anna. It is about the honoring of her dignity as a human being and about the life she has now, which is so much brighter and better than the one she knew prior. It is about her having a “trustworthy place.” How beautiful to see how well and happy she now is. And what a blessing to receive this letter. What a beautiful circle love is. Finally, Anna is home. And she feels that she has a home. I think there is probably no better gift.

A Refuge ~ By Shauna Yoder



Note from the editor: *When I bring supporters face to face with the residents, there is a spark that lights up the room and brings warmth to all long after the coming together. The disparity between giver and receiver falls away due to the disarming love of the residents and the openness and devotion of our supporters. I had the opportunity to watch this unfolding when Shauna Yoder and Marshal Bryant (article below) visited Warm Hearth. Here are their reflections:*

Every few months for the last seven years, I have received and read the Warm Hearth newsletter. Through it, I have been able to follow the lives of the residents and the ups and downs of Warm Hearth's existence. The newsletter topics came wonderfully alive when I had the opportunity to visit this year.

Nothing could have prepared me for what I experienced there. Armenia is quite cold and gray in January, but Warm Hearth was a stark contrast. The residents embodied warmth and love unlike any other group of people I have encountered. The staff members were equally inviting and exhibited genuine love and competent care for the residents.

We played Uno together. The residents sang their hearts out. They showed me photographs of their lives and loved ones. They showed me their beautiful artwork. I was the lucky recipient of many hugs and kisses. We celebrated a birthday. They laughed at me as I tried to pronounce certain words.

To me, Warm Hearth was a refuge from the cynicism we often experience in our everyday lives. The amount of love the residents had to give, even after experiencing so much struggle in their lives, was truly humbling. It is a privilege to play a small part in sustaining Warm Hearth and to encounter their beauty face to face.

Love, Kindness & Longing ~ By Marshal Bryant (Board Treasurer)



What an exciting and emotional experience to be able to visit Warm Hearth. In 2004, I had the opportunity and privilege of meeting Davit, Roman, Gayane, Yulia, Susanna and Sassoon, who became six of the residents of Warm Hearth. As a member of the Board I have followed their life journeys and progress over the years as their home became a reality and grew. So it was with emotion that I stepped into their home to greet friends from the past and to make new ones. It was a beautiful experience to see smiling faces and to have them sing, recite poetry and show me their home, rooms, paintings, and photo collections. Not

knowing the Armenian language, there was so much more I wanted to understand—but love, kindness and longing transcend any language barrier. Alya and the staff are such loving and caring people and I cannot express the depth of joy and thanksgiving I felt while observing the atmosphere of Warm Hearth. I am so proud of the entire staff and thankful for everyone who supports Warm Hearth. **May each of you be blessed and have joy in your hearts knowing how much you make a difference in the lives of our precious residents.**

A Deepening Joy

Joy may be a redemptive experience itself and not just the fruit of one. Perhaps however joy is the outgrowth of suffering in a special way.

- Flannery O'Connor

Reflections from our director in Armenia ~ By Alya Kirakosyan



2013 was the most effective year in our work with the residents, which was focused around Positive Behavior Support Plans. Thanks to many trainings, we can now support the residents in managing their feelings, emotions and behaviors. In the beginning, our residents had overwhelming reactions. Their behavior was very emotional. They couldn't understand one another and they experienced a lot of conflict. Today they can enjoy their happiness and understand one another and their own feelings. Our residents are now able to verbalize or communicate their feelings, fears, pains and joy and we all understand them. We listen to them and try to help. This means that our work is much more of a team effort, which is centered on the individual resident.

Bay Area Outreach ~ By Sara Nielsen (Junior Board Member)

In the fall, Lee Ann and I, both board members of Friends of Warm Hearth, represented the organization and



residents at several bazaars in the San Francisco Bay Area: St. Gregory's and St. John's for the first time and St. Vartan's. We met many wonderful Armenians and non-Armenians.

At St. Gregory's, the largest of the events, the most special moment for me was meeting a non-Armenian couple who by some grace were compelled to adopt a boy from Armenia with Down's Syndrome. When they came across our work, their eyes filled with tears and they expressed such gratitude for the work at Warm Hearth. I will remember that moment forever.

At St. John's, the event was smaller and drew a neighborhood group. It was our first year at this event and it was a day of building awareness, making new friends in the community and showcasing our residents' crafts.

At St. Vartan's bazaar, Warm Hearth is well-known by all and our booth was bustling from opening to closing. New friends and old alike visited us, purchasing crafts and photos. The community there knows us well and supports us completely. I hope that over time, we can establish the feeling of home at the St. Gregory's and St. John's bazaars as well. **Thank you to all who made our presence possible at these special events.**

Social Change ~ A Letter from a Warm Hearth Caregiver



Sometimes social change is almost visible to the naked eye. Most often, though, it begins deep in the heart, under many layers of skin, and after a deep commitment has been made. Here is evidence of social change in the life and outlook of one of our caregivers.

Warm Hearth has become a second home for me. The residents are very important to me. Through my work with them, I have come to know them deeply and to love them. Warm Hearth has given me a lot of experience and skills and I am thankful for this. Warm Hearth has helped me to understand the loveliness of working with different vulnerable groups of people. I am doing it with pleasure. It is a true pleasure to work with people who need you, knowing that your work is necessary. I have a lot of plans concerning supporting vulnerable groups living in Armenia and I hope that I will be able to bring them to pass. It will be great if the number of houses like Warm Hearth could be increased in Armenia.

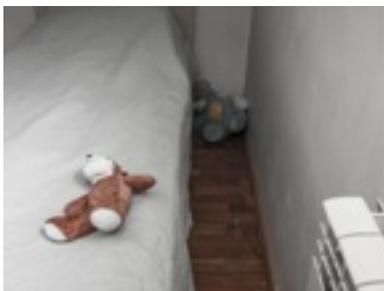
A Small Business. Another Small Step.



Sustainability is a most often a long, uphill battle for grassroots non-profits. But there might be something to be said for that. In life, helping people is often a lengthy and rigorous process. And staying committed, persevering, makes the work authentic: honest and laborious and joyful and lifelong. Perhaps the fact that it mimics real life is a kind of validity in and of itself, a good and simple measuring stick.

Currently we are in the process of creating a small business that our residents can operate from the home. We are planning to bake bread and sweet treats to sell at local markets. We are committed to this so that our residents, in addition to their handicraft work, will have more even more options for meaningful work as well as a way to engage further with the local community. We are also doing this so our home might be more self-sustaining. If you would like to join us in making this dream a reality, please reach out to us. We are currently applying for startup funds and looking for experienced individuals to assist us.

Stewardship ~ Time, Services, Hands, Hearts



It is important to us to express our gratitude to all who make Warm Hearth a home to our fourteen residents. We try to do this throughout the year, whether your gift is time, money, service or goods. Please accept our heartfelt thanks for all you do to keep our doors open, our staff appreciated, our hearth warm, our walls painted, our lights glowing, and our residents happy, making art and well fed.

Program expenditures in 2013 accounted for 79% of our cash expenses. Fundraising costs were 12% and administrative costs were 9%. Individual contributions totaled \$91,820 in cash and comprised 58% of gifts given. Foundations and organizations gave \$37,408. Our foundation in Armenia secured 18% of cash donations which amounted to \$28,076 up from \$8,700 in 2012. Donated goods and services were valued at \$26,298.

COMPARATIVE STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Current assets	2013	2012	2011
Cash	\$211,782	\$166,354	\$147,831
Property & equipment			
Land & house in Armenia	151,022	143,647	143,647
Furniture & equipment	6,964	8,179	6,393
Less accumulated depreciation	-26,010	-22,624	-18,061
Net property & equipment	131,976	129,202	131,979
Total assets	343,758	\$295,556	\$279,810
Liabilities (accrued payroll taxes)	2,016	1,891	1,891
Unrestricted net assets	341,742	293,665	277,919
Total liabilities & net assets	\$343,758	\$295,556	\$279,810

COMPARATIVE STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES

Revenue	2013	2012	2011
Cash contributions	\$157,304	\$133,075	\$138,791
Contributions of goods	1,957	1,246	7,480
Contributions of services	24,341	17,597	17,945
Interest income	673	693	1,170
Total contributions & interest	184,275	152,611	165,386
Expenses			
Facility & program	91,014	99,936	92,336
Promotion & fundraising*	31,528	23,099	23,079
Management & general	13,656	13,380	14,493
Total expenses	136,198	136,865	129,908
Changes in net assets	48,077	15,746	35,478
Net assets, beginning of period	293,665	277,919	242,441
Net assets, end of period	\$341,742	\$293,665	\$277,919

**These amounts include \$19,204, \$12,072, and \$10,648 in donated service in 2013, 2012 and 2011 respectively.*

Friends of Warm Hearth & Jermik Ankyun Foundation



Together we partake in the strenuous work of providing a home for our residents. There are seasons of struggle as well as seasons of rejoicing. Here are some of the insights we have come to

appreciate as we have labored:

- Individuals with disabilities and mental illnesses are even more forgotten than we realized in Armenia and in much of the world. They also are of deep value. What they offer society is a unique way of viewing the world, a tenacious hope, the ability to



embrace and be embraced, profound skills, insights and wisdom.

-As the Armenian proverb says, “If we move shoulder to shoulder,

we can turn mountains.” Nothing we have done has been accomplished alone. We rely heavily on our supporters and volunteers. Some of our best ideas have come from the “outside.” As a result, we practice keeping our ears and eyes open, as well as our hearts.

- Despair and hope often walk side-by-side. We have learned to hold the hands of both.
- Endurance, a cultivated love, sheer grace and a commitment to the value of our residents sustain us.

Friends of Warm Hearth, Inc.

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