



## 2016-2017 Iway Year in Review



*The 2016- 2017 IWAY association year was packed with many activities, we started the new IWAY season with a team building activity, we visited to Tegher Monastery in the Ashtarag region and shared a potluck lunch at Armine Sargsyan's summer house in Ashtarag...*



*In September, we organized a gala reception to promote IWAY and introduce it to the Internationals who had just arrived in Yerevan... this was generously hosted by the former IWAY President, Ella Barker.*



*The highlight of the season was the **2016 IWAY Christmas Charity Bazaar**; the funds raised at this bazaar are already on their way to finance the renovation of the windows of the Aghin School.*

*The stories included in this newsletter account for just few of our activities, much more activities, pictures & information can be found on the IWAY Facebook page.*

*Ladies! Thank you for your input throughout this association year and for your wonderful articles in this newsletter, in short thank you each & everyone for making IWAY such a rich and gratifying experience! **Enjoy your newsletter!***

**IWAY Communication**

**Lisa Arslanian**



## Foreword by Armine Sargsyan

President of the International Women's Association of Yerevan (IWAY) President



Dear ladies

Our motto is: "IWAY - Our Way"

IWAY really became an inseparable part of our life.

It's in IWAY where we contribute with our time, energy, enthusiasm and ...a part of our souls. It gives us new lovely friends, unforgettable moments and satisfaction of helping people in need.

The charity projects we implement in remote/border villages are a drop on the scale of the whole country but it's real value we find in the eyes of children, their mothers and teachers. This is what inspire us to join our efforts to realize more and more new projects.

IWAY enriches our lives with new intercultural communication and interesting time spent together, with learning from each other, assisting each other and enjoying each other's' companies.

So, develop and strengthen our Association!

IWAY-Our Way-Right Way!

To be a member of IWAY means fun ,joy and work this is what every one of us will agree otherwise they would not vote positive for the \*personal health\* book to be printed and distributed to schools far from Yerevan. To collect the sum we had the bazar it was fun joy and work.

Now that 70 copies are printed and ready for distribution we know that we will have fun traveling around will work a bit to carry the small load and there will be much joy to see the school children welcoming us happily .God bless you ladies.

Lydia Alvandian



## City Tour by Armine Sargsyan, Feb 8/2017



Our city Tour started from Baghramyan Avenue, in the corner of Baghramyan x Proshyan.

Despite -5C outside, the “bravest” IWAY ladies, namely Rose Tyler, Maureen Carreau, Angela Neilan, Lisa Arslanyan and Armine Khachaturyan have been in the

meeting point at 10 am. Even

2 European volunteers from Brusov University Alex Platzner from Slovakia and Carolin Maisenbacher from Germany joint us.

Tour started from AUA -American University in Armenia. We slightly passed to British Embassy, then to Residence of President of RA, Lovers’ park, Armenian Academy of Sciences and National Assembly.

Angela Nailan expressed a special interest towards the building of Armenian Evangelical Church located in 18 Baghramyan Ave., the former US Embassy building, where Angela worked many years ago. Surprising news!

Then we approached Syrian and Chinese Embassies, the former House of Techniques and Institute of Marxism-Leninism☺.

All the time Armine kept telling not only about the buildings themselves, but the time it was built, the former institutions located in the same buildings, the history of Yerevan, as well as the Soviet and modern education system, history of Academy and many other interesting things about Armenia and Yerevan.

Armenian Constitutional Court and House-Museum of famous Armenian Composer Aram Khachaturyan were the last sites we manage to observe, before our tour-members got frozen and decided to enter Brioche cafe to worm their hands, feet and souls ☺ Though it was decided to continue the tour after coffee-break, the worm, lovely and friendly atmosphere of the cafe made us lazy and “killed” our motivation. We came to conclusion to continue the tour when it becomes a bit warmer from the point we quitted it, from Opera House.

Anybody interested can join us in the second part of the tour (the date and time will be announced). The City Tours were organised by Armine Sargsyan.



*The second leg of the city tour on March 8*

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## Trip to Aghin by Shelagh Rosenthal



March 24<sup>th</sup> dawned bright and sunny, offering up lovely springtime weather for IWAY's outing to Aghin school in Shirak province. The main purpose of the trip was to visit the school that had requested a grant from IWAY, but we managed to pack in a side trip to Gyumri as well.

Ten of us settled into our minibus and we set off from the Marriott Hotel towards the east, where Mt. Ararat loomed large in the distance, majestic as always. I soon learned that coffee and food feature large on an IWAY field trip, and within an hour there was an active search for the right spot to enjoy some mid-morning refreshments. Shortly thereafter we made ourselves right at home in a farmer's roadside orchard, stretching our legs in the sun and making use of his outside table to set out coffee and treats.

Once on the road again we made our way towards Aghin, gaining altitude until we were above the snow line and mountains fringed the horizon.



After a bit of uncertainty about the right route to take, we drew closer and closer to the border with Turkey and eventually arrived at Aghin, which really is smack on the border. As we pulled up to the school, smiling staff and students emerged to warmly welcome us. Two adorable little children were all dressed up in their special outfits to greet us, offering us a special bread “Gata” as a welcome, after which our entourage was guided into the school building.

First up we were



shown the wall display with photos of Aghin’s fallen sons, including former students of the school, who have died in armed service for Armenia. It was clear that being so close to the Turkish border, Aghin is a village that feels both keenly vulnerable and highly patriotic, and has a long history of suffering (including the effects of the 1988 earthquake). We were next ushered into the kindergarten room, where the cute children put on a delightful play about springtime and presented us each with a posey of crocus flowers (which are –a definite sign of spring, and I’m sure the students were glad to feel the end of cold winter weather in their school!). After some words from our president Armine and the school’s director, we turned to the business we had come for: taking a look at the windows and doors which are in such poor condition that they cannot retain heat in the classrooms in winter, and which an IWAY grant can help pay to replace. Even on this spring day, with the sun pouring down, the school was indeed frigid and it was hard to imagine how the students and teachers can manage in winter.



Our intention had been to eat lunch in Gyumri after our school visit, so imagine our surprise when we were next led into a room with a huge table laid out with an amazing buffet of delicious local food! This was certainly a fine display of the wonderful hospitality that Armenia is known for; they put such a lot of work into hosting us. We enjoyed a wonderful meal with our new friends, enjoying both the food and the

conversation, and the impromptu songs, poetry and short thank you speeches that interspersed our lunch.

After saying goodbye to our potential grant recipients, we had a brief stop in nearby old Aghin and the old school, which was severely damaged in the 1988 earthquake, and heard more about the buffer area between Armenia and Turkey. It was strange to be so close to the border fence and think about all the history that has passed between the two countries over the decades.

As we drew away from the border and left Aghin in the rearview mirror, we headed north to Gyumri, no longer anticipating lunch but curious to see a bit of Armenia's second largest city and former capital. We arrived late afternoon and had a lazy walk around Vartanants Square admiring the memorial and statues, visited the Cathedral of the Holy Mother of God, and wandered a few of the nearby central streets to admire some of the older buildings, including those in a state of decaying grandeur or earthquake affected, and others that have been renovated. Eventually we made our way back to the square and settled into a café where we enjoyed good caffeine hit and snack before hitting the road for our return home. As we motored south towards Yerevan, a brief quiet settled over our minibus along with the setting sun. Soon enough, however, the conversation turned to reflecting on our wonderful day and thinking about the next IWAY adventure, which I'll be looking forward to joining. I was grateful for the opportunity to learn so much from my new IWAY friends, and see yet another part of this fabulous country.



## A Review of the Various Charity Projects Funded by IWAY

by Asdghig Panossian



near the border line.

International Women's Association of Yerevan as IWAY is an Non-profit, Non-religious and Non-political organization, whose primary goal is to endeavor to return something to Armenia through Charitable events and giving financial support to philanthropic projects, especially including women and children.

Through whole these years IWAY support about fourteen projects in all regions of Armenia, in remote villages

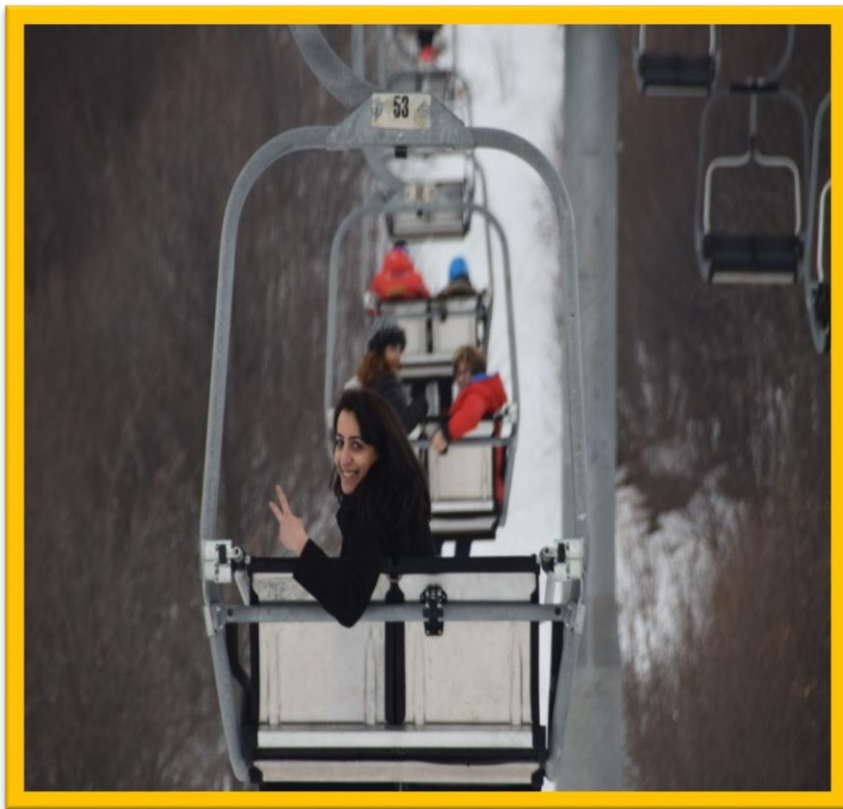
We renovate a kindergarten Syunik region in Dasdagert village. A polyclinic Davush region in Shamshadin. Renovate school gym in Gegharqunik region in vahan village.

We sponsor to a senior, paid for medical care for her ailing eyes. Installing a gas line for Oshakan

primary school. Helping a family to complete their house in Lori region Lijan village. Purchase solar fruit dryers in Solak village. Helping for disabled children In Full Life Stepanavan. Builds two toilets in Lchavan school. We bought 20 spinning wheel machine for wool and give employment to 20 women in Goris Shinouhyr Village.

Renovating a Canteen in Areguni village school. Bought an ultrasound machine for Noramarg village in Ararat region. Reconstruct the fence of a preschool in Syunik region Angeghagot village. Renovating doors and windows in Shirag region, Aghin village school very close to the border.

We are very thankful to all our supporters and our members, for the dedication of their time and effort to IWAY activities.



## Trip to Tsaghkadzor

by Maureen Carreau

On March 11, 2017, a group of IWAY ladies took a day trip to Tsaghkadzor. In retrospect, it seems that this was the last day of winter and we were all bundled up in our warm gear for the trip to the mountains. Nine of us departed from the Marriott, but after driving 15 minutes we found we had left someone behind. Luckily, the beautiful Hayasa Tahmazyan jumped into a taxi and we awaited her arrival before continuing our trip!

On arrival in Tsaghkadzor, we stopped in at a bright and colourful café for some refreshments, before heading across the street to the *House Museum of the Brothers Orbeli*. It was a wonderful museum tour and so fascinating to learn about this brilliant family and all their prestigious relatives. It seems they have made contributions in every aspect of both science and art!

Our next stop was *Kecharis Monastery*. It is a very beautiful site and always so humbling to visit historical and particularly religious monuments. The complex of churches, with hundreds of years of history, is a stunning contrast to the modern ski resort. Although it was close to the end of the season, the ski hill was still bustling. A few of us took the lift up to the first of five levels while the others took a walk on the ground level. The views were stunning and I'm sure they just get more spectacular with every lift you ascend.



Our final stop was for lunch at a local restaurant. We had a private cabin at *Burmunk Restaurant* and Armine Sargsyan ordered up a wide variety of dishes for the group. We enjoyed a fabulous, Armenian meal before climbing back in the van and heading home to Yerevan.

As a Canadian, I don't have the wealth of long history and rich culture that is in essence "Armenia". My country is so young and our national identity is based on being descendants of citizens of the many countries who built our nation a brief 150 years ago. As such, we embrace a very different and diversified culture. I think that is why, I love learning your stories and witnessing the deep national pride with every conversation I have or trip I take. Thank you for sharing.



*Kecharis Monastery.*



## **Areni Wine Festival** **By Jenny Parsekhian**

**On October the 1st IWAY ladies participated to the Areni Wine Festival.**

**The Village of Areni in Vayots Dzor, region in Armenia. The village has been hosting this festival for almost 14 years.**

**When we arrived to the village the locals had actively prepared the festival by lining up the tables with wine, fruits, cheese and other home-made products along the road.**

**The villagers were offering us their home wine which was made of warmth and love.**

**The traditional Armenian dances were performed on the main square of the village.**

**They were singing, dancing, drinking and having fun.**

**The IWAY ladies went couple of rounds for tasting the wines, Rose, apricot wine, sweet and semi-sweet wines. In fact we had many glasses but we were a great team of wine drinkers we didn't get dizzy but the opposite had so much fun.**





When you are in a group of amazing ladies everything you do is fun, we really enjoyed the event and returned home with many different kind of wine bottles.

## White Elephant Sale. What does it stand for?

by Hayasa Tahmazyan



Once someone said “Giving is not just about making a donation. It is about making a difference”. Every year, the members of International Women’s Association of Yerevan put their efforts to improve lives of children and women living in Armenia. The main source of funds that enable IWAY to shape such important issues is Christmas Bazaar. It is an activity that brings

together everyone and spread Christmas cheer.

While making difference, this activity also allows locals to get acquainted with different cultures. The richest, but the most diverse booth that you can find at IWAY Christmas Bazaar is called White Elephant booth.

Books from USA, toys from France, lamps from China, pictures from Armenia, candles from Cyprus, decorating things from Germany, bags from Madagascar, pillows from Russia, kettles from Iran, are presented at White Elephant booth.

It is an unusual booth of IWAY Christmas Bazaar that shares the culture of “White Elephant” sale in Armenia. Let’s see what White Elephant sale stands for!

White elephant gifts trace back to legends of an ancient King of Siam (Thailand), who had an interesting way of getting payback on those who dared to displease him. The cantankerous King was said to take his revenge not through battles, but through gifts. Get on his dark side and you may be bestowed with a rare albino elephant, and animal that was praised as a symbol of prosperity and signified the high social status of anyone who owned such an impressive beast. The

trick was, the elephant would cost so much to feed and take care of that its owner would be financially ruined. The burden of owning the animal far outweighed its usefulness, and it was a difficult gift to get rid of.

Today, “White Elephant” is not intended for revenge, but presents an opportunity to buy used items that most people would be happy to get rid of. They may be tacky, useless, embarrassing, or more trouble than there are worth. The tradition is also known by a number of other names including Yankee Swap, Dirty Santa, Cutthroat Christmas, Chinese Auction, Rob your Neighbor, Thieves’ Christmas, and more.

White elephant sales are typically organized by non-profit organizations to raise money for a charity cause or a special occasion. For IWAY White Elephant Sale, members donate old or not so much used items which they no longer use, or otherwise no longer care to own.

Items are sold at low prices, as many are obsolete, or useful to only certain people, and would not otherwise be sold.

White elephant sales are often useful to buyers and collectors, because they provide a way to purchase older and harder to find items.

## Trip to Angeghakot by Lisa Arslanian

On a crisp October Sunday, 7 of us along with our trusty driver Samvel took the road to Angeghakot to visit the completed fence project of the village’s Healthy Preschool, and what a fun day that was.

The Angeghakot project was all about building a fence around the pre- school of the village to ensure the safety of its young pupils, the money to buy the necessary materials would be sponsored by IWAY while the crafting, building and workmanship will be the charge of the villagers.



Angeghakot, a village of about 2,000-3,000 people (figures vary) is in southern Armenia, about 10 km. from Sisian, the regional capital of Syunik province. Travelers from Yerevan on the way to Karabagh pass by Angeghakot, then Sisian and Goris, before entering the Lachin Corridor.

The drive from Yerevan to Angeghakot takes roughly 3 hours. However, we spent even longer as Armine Sargsyan was adamant that we should stop to taste the so-called “Pshads” that grow in abundance on the roadside. The

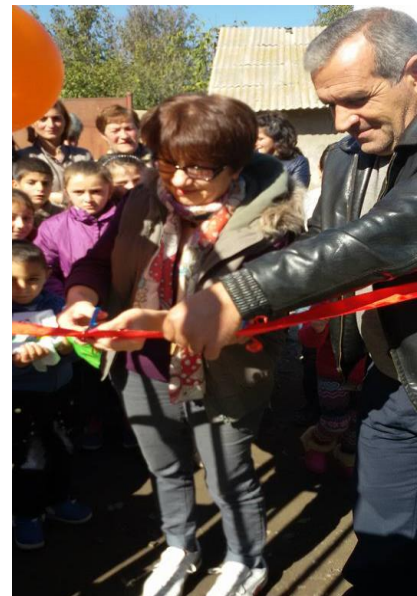
Pshads were surprisingly delicious and so was the hot steamy coffee that Armine Sargsyan never fails to carry in her thermos during our field trips, not to forget the delicious and tangy spinach ‘beurags’ homemade by Ani Panossian.

At our arrival we were received with great pomp, the school and the fence were decorated with colourful balloons, the little tots beautifully dressed in their frilly outfits carrying the traditional 'Gata', the Mayor of the village, the school principal and staff, the village dignitaries and the villagers were all there to greet us with the Armenian National Anthem, applause, warm hugs and a performance by the little ones. Quite an emotional welcome!



The school fence, brand new, brightly painted in blue and green, was inaugurated, the red ribbon cut and the IWAY plaque handed over to be hung well in sight.

True to Armenian tradition and generosity, a fine table was laid out in our honour and toasts were drunk to celebrate this achievement.



While Angeghakot does not have huge cathedrals and fortresses (though there are some in the mountains nearby), it boasts an extremely rich and ancient history, we learned that Angeghakot's history dates to the Stone and Bronze Ages. In or near the village are monuments attributed to the Vartanants War against Persia for the defense of Armenian Christianity against paganism. Following the meal, we walked through the village to the ruins of an old church perched high on the hills overlooking the water reservoir. Although in ruins, the church still frequented by the villagers, candles were lit, prayers said, hymns sang.

Sunday, October 23/ 2016 at the Angeghakot preschool was a day to be remembered!!!



END