



Monthly Newsletter
JANUARY | 2024

Continuing Ruben's legacy

Dear friends,

We are pleased to introduce the inaugural issue of our newsletter. This publication aims to provide you with insights into "We Are Our Mountains" ongoing activities and special projects.

As you know, our founder, Ruben Vardanyan has been unjustly held captive in Azerbaijan since 27 September 2023. Regrettably, the authoritarian regime in Baku has recently extended his illegal detention, along with that of former leaders of the Republic of Artsakh, for an additional four months.

Despite these challenging circumstances, Ruben Vardanyan, true to his unwavering humanistic principles, has insisted on the continuation of our organization's charitable endeavors work in Armenia. Since October 2023, "We Are Our Mountains" has remained committed to supporting families displaced from Artsakh, helping them adapt to their new realities with dignity.

We firmly believe that by upholding Ruben's philanthropic initiative, through collective efforts, we can aid our fellow Armenians from Artsakh in their journey towards recovery and resilience following these harrowing trials.

Though our aspirations may be lofty, we are confident that, with your direct contribution, "We Are Our Mountains" will continue successfully achieving its objectives. We invite you to read on and join us in this noble task.

Thanks to the support of our loyal friends and partners and the steadfast support of the Vardanyan family, we have managed to launch five projects within a span of a few months. These initiatives have positively impacted over a thousand residents of Artsakh.

Together, let us continue to stand in solidarity with our brethren, offering hope and assistance in their time of need.



WINGS

The mother of 13-year-old Elina, who resettled in Dilijan, shared with us that her daughter experienced post-traumatic stress after being displaced from Artsakh. Positive changes became noticeable when Elina began attending art therapy classes at the Dilijan Community Center as part of the "Wings" project. By participating in these classes, Elina began to draw and smile more often.



The pilot project of the innovative rehabilitation program "Wings" was launched in November 2023. Thanks to the support of the "Dar"

Charitable Foundation, philanthropist Masis Arakelyan, and our other supporters, it has already helped identify and alleviate the psychological problems of more than 40 Artsakh children in Dilijan.

[Read more](#)



GIFT THE SEASON

On New Year's Eve, the "We are Our Mountains" team visited the family of Raya Makyan, who had found temporary housing in Tatev. The family continues to endure a state of heightened anxiety and uncertainty, with one family member held captive in Baku, and the fate of the other still unknown. Clearly, such emotional turmoil significantly impacts the daily lives of the children, especially during the holiday season.

"We Are Our Mountains" could not stand idly by. Thanks to your donations, we brought joy to several dozen children by organizing New Year's holiday performances in Tatev and Gyumri. Additionally, we provided each child with a Christmas tree adorned with toys, books, and other delights.



With the financial support of the Kamar Business Center and other benefactors, we supported the adults by distributing certificates for the purchase of necessary household appliances to all Artsakh families living in the Tatev community.

Among the beneficiaries of our project is Angela Sahakyan's large family from the Martakert region. On September 19, 2023, fleeing from Azerbaijani aggressors, the family, along with fellow villagers, sought refuge in the forest for a day before barely reaching Stepanakert. Angela still recounts her harrowing experience with horror, akin to a haunting nightmare.

[Read more](#)



SUPPORTING ARTSAKH CRAFTSMEN

To enhance the employability of Artsakh residents, the "We Are Our Mountains" organization has launched a training program focused on developing new crafts and specialties. The program also includes provisions for specialists with professional tools to facilitate the resumption of their work activities in Armenia.

Thanks to the financial support of our partners, including the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Saint Sarkis Charity Trust, Stepan Gevorgyan, and Masis Arakelyan, over 60 craftsmen have already received support, with the majority commencing their careers.

Just a few days before her wedding, the charming Manush (4th from the right in the photo) participated in a competition for young confectioners and received a job offer. This served as a wonderful wedding gift for the bride.

[Read more](#)



LEADERS2LEADERS

"Leaders2Leaders" is a transformative continuous development program designed for those displaced from Artsakh. Operating on the principle of "peer-to-peer" support, it offers a transformative platform for growth and resilience.

This program's implementation is made possible through the collaborative efforts of "We Are Our Mountains" organization, in conjunction with experts and alumni from Matena International School of Leadership and Professional Development. Armenian graduates from educational institutions like Harvard and Oxford have played a pivotal role in bringing this initiative to fruition.

[Read more](#)

Media Coverage of Ruben Vardanyan's Activities

- A compelling piece about Ruben featured in **"Hraparak"**: ***"He always emphasized that the opposite of life is not death, but indifference. I've never encountered someone who gave so generously without expecting anything in return."***
- [Interview](#) with lawyer Siranush Sahakyan (available in three languages) discussing the extension of Ruben's detention and that of other prominent figures from Artsakh.

ABOUT US

"We Are Our Mountains" carries out humanitarian assistance and development programs for our compatriots from Artsakh. Established by Ruben Vardanyan and his partners, the agency is dedicated to delivering tangible results while upholding principles of humanism and mutual respect.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Armen Davityan, Shant Martirosyan, Sergey Grichenko, "Liga Insurance" company, Christian Solidarity International, and all those who consistently support the work of "We Are Our Mountains" during these challenging times.

For further information please contact info@ourmountains.am