

Gettysburg College  
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Creating Comprehensive Educational and Social Opportunities for Marginalized Children  
July 3-27, 2014  
Republic of Armenia

### **Summary of Project Main Activities**

This project is aimed at educating disabled, homeless, and children of war-torn families English, healthy living, computer literacy, and social skills. The objectives will be achieved through provision of high-intensity, interactive workshops during 21 days. These workshops will be integrated into the main educational curricula and will provide introduction to the interactive methods of teaching (in contrast with existing lecture-style teaching). The overarching theme will be interactive education, which is a great innovation in the most populous city in southern Armenia. Each week there will be morning and afternoon education sessions, as well as sports lessons every other evening. During the three weeks children will have 18 sessions of English language, 6 sessions on healthy living, and 12 sessions on computer literacy. Throughout these sessions, we will offer various ice-breaking and team-building exercises on leadership and social skills. The boarding school is a free overnight school that houses roughly 200 children, due to the fact that Kapan does not have any orphanages. In Armenia the school week consists of 6 days, with Sunday for day of rest. There will be 10 peer leaders who will volunteer to help make this ambitious project a reality.

Growing up in Armenia and most recently interning at the Human Rights Defender's Office of the Republic of Armenia, I have first-hand knowledge of the disparity that exists in the educational system. I have experienced the divide between the education accessible to the children of wealthy parents and children who have to rely on the scarce government funding to secure their food, shelter, clothing and education. There is a huge stigma in Armenia against people with disabilities and it is heart-breaking to say that more often than not they are treated as inferiors. This aim of this program is to build confidence among these vulnerable children through the efforts of the influential people. Usually the foreign investment into the Armenian educational system goes into schools located in the capital, Yerevan. Upon my arrival in Armenia, I will go to Yerevan where I will purchase English textbooks, notebooks and pens from ManMar Publishing House at discounted prices, provided by Ruben Aghayan. I will transport all of these supplies in the car I will use to get from Yerevan to Kapan. If my project is funded \$10,000 by Dr. Davis's donations, the project funding will be used to purchase two desktop computers for school to ensure sustainability of the project beyond its duration. The CEO of Unicomp CJSC, Armen Baldryan, will provide Microsoft Office programs at no additional cost.

I am a product of hard work, but above all I am the product of faith. When my family first moved to the U.S. a person with a huge heart took us all in. She gave me the greatest gift of all, besides love, and that gift was education. She paid for my education and believed that if I worked hard I would be successful. I am hoping to recruit volunteers that are not only intelligent, patient, funny, curious, but also passionate and hopeful. That hope is the belief in these children. By encouraging them every day to apply themselves to their studies, their activities, their happiness and a hope for brighter futures.

I have already had numerous people express interest in volunteering and partnering with me on this project. The partners include: Ashot Hayrapetyan, Mayor of Kapan, Armenia; Dr. Vardanush Petrossian, World Health Organization (WHO) Expert, International Gastroenterologist, Dietitian and TV talk-show host; Armen Baldryan, CEO of Unicom CJSC; Ruben Aghayan, Publisher at ManMar Publishing House; Kapan's Number 3 Special Educational Boarding School for Children with Special Needs and Homeless (Spandaryan Street 5, Kapan, Republic of Armenia); 10 peer leaders from Yerevan and Kapan Cities in Armenia (application process in progress). To my great pleasure all of the volunteers have working knowledge of English and some of them are studying at the American University of Armenia. I am planning on integrating a few question and answer sessions into the schedule where the volunteers and I will share with the children our personal experiences. However the most important message will be persistence and hope through times of adversity. Regardless of one's particular situation or background, education can make a difference for everyone.

### **Extracurricular Activities**

We will also organize small soccer tournament for the children of the school. Soccer is the most popular sport in Armenia and it will serve as a unifying force for team-building. I will purchase soccer balls and jerseys for the school, which the children will all share.

### **Expected Outcomes and Prospects for Future Impact**

This project will provide educational, social and peer support for children in dire need. Our workshops will not only impact the lives of these children, but will influence the entire community to become more involved, which includes attending to the needs of these children. The Mayor of Kapan will come to the school one day and make a speech about community unity and inclusion. Dr. Petrossian is not only a successful Doctor in practice, but is also a daytime television talk-show host who has her own program on one of the most watched television channels in Armenia. She has great influence over her audience. Dr. Petrossian has agreed to volunteer 50% of her time as well as mention our efforts at Kapan's Number 3 school in her upcoming lectures at Yerevan State University and the American University of Armenia. Raising a well-educated and fully-integrated generation of children is the greatest way to achieve peace. I hope in the future this initiative will get expanded into other regions of the world.

### **Approximate Timeline**

July 3- Leave for Armenia

July 4- Arrive in Yerevan, Armenia

July 5- Purchase textbooks and other supplies from Yerevan

July 6- Leave for Kapan / Arrive in Kapan / meet with Peer leaders and Instructors at School

July 7- First day of workshops

July 13- Watch the finals of the FIFA World Cup together in the auditorium

July 19- Excursion to Baghaberd Fortress of the 4th century, also known as David Bek's Castle

July 27- Soccer Cup (we will devote this day to having a soccer tournament), then end with a small goodbye ceremony