



Friends of Warm Hearth ~ Annual Report 2008



Hope

*Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune - without the words,
And never stops at all,*

*And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.*

*I've heard it in the chillest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.*

~Emily Dickinson~

Dear friends...

After the joys, sweat and tears of our first three years, a renovated third floor of our home, five new residents, and much more, we come full circle, to thank you for all you have made possible. You are integral to our home.

*On both sides of the globe, people are our *home*. Through these pages, we share the steps we have made, both forward and back. In all that changes, what remains the same is our love for our residents. Together we share a commitment that widens to embrace a few more people, but remains rooted in the same place.*

What is the place we inhabit? It is placed within our hearts as well as in a home on a quiet vine-strewn alley in 3rd Village, Armenia. The grapes have been gathered. It is now past harvest time. It is winter, and a time to give thanks. And we do. In the quiet of winter, we also continue to look forward.

Adelia Prado, a Brazilian poet, says: **“Compared to my heart’s desire, the sea is a drop.”** The desire that lies beneath all we do at Warm Hearth is the healing, wholeness and joy of our residents. We desire to find a way to care for more residents, with varying needs, most especially Anna & Sassoon. For those of you who don’t know, Anna & Sassoon are a part of our initial group of residents. For the time being, and for a long time now, they have been in clinics as we have been unable to care for them in our home. We visit them weekly, but we long to provide them with more. We long to give them, and all our residents, the world. And at the very least, we long to give them what has been taken from them.

We long for them to be seen and loved as completely human, as they are. We long to become more human ourselves through loving and caring for them. You see, *the sea is but a drop* in comparison. And I know your heart’s desires are just as vast and might extend in multiple directions. That is at it should be. We are each called to the place where “our deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” (F. Buechner).

Even still, for the moment I will trust that some of your gladness corresponds to our residents’ lives. You have given me reason to believe this is true through your letters, emails, donations, time, dinners, invitations and prayers. I will trust that you will be imparted with greater strength and courage by seeing a bit of their courage and by seeing what such love as you have given has created. It has reached across the oceans to Armenia, to that quiet alley, this past year.

As I look back over the year, I am taken aback by the way our desires and dreams have unfolded. It hasn’t always happened in the way we expected and it hasn’t always been a straight shot, but it has been with the same *people* in mind. By now many of you know their names. They are Alina, Davit, Yulia, Roman, Sassoon, Susanna, Anna and Gayane. And the less familiar names of our newer residents are Hasmik, Armine, Agapy, Sargis and Anahit. We will come to know them, slowly but surely. For they are here to stay within our hearts and we hope, within our home.

And in these pages, we will begin to unfold the past year for you. Thank you for taking the time to peer into our home, our hearts, our hope.

Sincerely & With Gratitude,



Natalie Bryant Rizzieri, Founder



Mission

To provide community-based group home that offer holistic care and integrate the bodies, minds and souls of Armenian orphans with disabilities.

We Value

Our residents' social, physical, mental, spiritual and vocational development

Community integration that honors culture & tradition

Dignity, respect, choice, fulfillment, privacy and independence

Individualized care that empowers our residents to live as independently and confidently as possible, while consistently contributing to their community

Goals & Motivation

To prevent orphaned adults with mental illness or disabilities from being forced to spend the remainder of their lives in the psychiatric institutions of Armenia where their needs are unable to be met and where there is no hope for individualized care, rehabilitation and quality of life.

To initiate a movement towards privatized and community-based care through residential care homes in the nation of Armenia that will serve as a model for future projects for the benefit of the population with mental illnesses or disabilities.

Our residents



Yes, after much circumspection, we have *five new residents* in our midst (pictured above). We expanded in 2008 for the first time since opening in January of 2006. The day of homecoming for these new residents was October 31st, 2008. In bringing these new people to our home, to our warm corner and hearth, we unknowingly brought friends of our first residents back into their lives. They had not seen one another for many years, but had been friends as children in former orphanages. There was immediate recognition and celebration. They have a shared history. And though much of that history is dark, there are points of life and light which come when they recognize one another, just as it is when *we* recognize one another. And hopefully those points of light will extend into this next chapter of their lives.

Simone Weil says: *We must recognize our brother in a stranger.* Look in their eyes. Together we will take them into our hearts as much as possible. They have no brothers but us. See the part of *you* that shares their history. This might be the only road to healing, for them and for us. Work such as Warm Hearth can and does heal the one giving *and* the one receiving.

Residents' Accomplishments

Davit continues to bring laughter into our home and takes joy in life. When going to the local art school, he would put his best clothes on each time. Our Country Director, said, "It was like a holiday for him each time!"

Susanna now conducts weekly lessons for all the residents. She read stories to the group and initiated discussions with them. Her confidence has blossomed through these interactions.

Yulia's confidence has also increased and she has begun to interact more freely with guests and visitors. According to one of our staff, "she has opened up more, has become more free and less restrained."

A local artisan began weekly embroidery lessons for interested residents.

Gayane has a keen interest in this craft and has even begun showing her embroidery to local shops and markets. She is trying to begin a small business.

Alina had a difficult year in terms of her diabetes but instead of discouraging her, these struggles have stoked her desire to serve others. She articulated her vocation earlier this year: "For work, which I need, I want to help people. If a person feels bad, this is who I want to help."

Residents began attending local art classes outside the home. During this time **Roman** discovered his pleasure at creating mosaics and working with clay.





Vision-Keepers

Jermik Ankyun Foundation

The Armenian branch and implementing arm of our operation was handed over to Jermik Ankyun Foundation in mid-2008. (Jermik Ankyun is a rough translation of "Warm Hearth" in Armenian. It is the local name of our home...and literally means "Warm Corner.") This new nonprofit was begun and birthed to replace the former partnership we had with "Mission Armenia NGO." Today, our home is under the constant care and guardianship of this capable and focused organization which we believe can advocate more fully and effectively for our residents.

This shift in organizational structure has proved to be life-giving and strengthening for us on all sides. We have been freer to offer hands-on, face-to-face care and solutions for our residents and staff.

The nonprofit is under the direction of Armenians (two of whom are pictured above) who have walked with us since the beginning. These courageous individuals have internalized and made the vision of Warm Hearth



uniquely theirs and are carrying it forward. Together we share the goal of the first Warm Hearth group home being sustainable and viable by May 2011.

Staff & Organizational Accomplishments

Staff participated in trainings regarding group home management, care of the residents, and behavioral management.

Staff initiated and implemented an individualized vocational program for each resident.

Central gas was installed, which provides heat and hot water to our residents.

The 3rd floor was renovated to allow for additional bedrooms, bathrooms and meeting rooms for our residents. In addition, the kitchen was expanded to accommodate new residents.

Residents received comprehensive dental treatment for the first time in their lives.

Volunteers from Armenia and the U.S. continue to visit the home and provide stateside help on a regular basis. Each offers unique support according to their various skills and gifts. Some of the highlights of 2008 were:

- traveling musicians who spent an afternoon entertaining and making music with our residents
- traditional Armenian dinners and community events in San Francisco & Huntington Beach
- the pilgrims from St. John's Armenian Apostolic Church visited our group home again during the summer



- a lamb roast sponsored by the Armenian dental care office to celebrate with our residents and staff.



Advocacy ~ Looking Ahead

Friends of Warm Hearth & Jermik Ankyun Foundation are working together to build secure, productive and just communities of care for the benefit of our residents.

The Armenian government remains impressed with the quality of care that Warm Hearth provides. They would like to see us expand to provide homes for those with more acute needs.

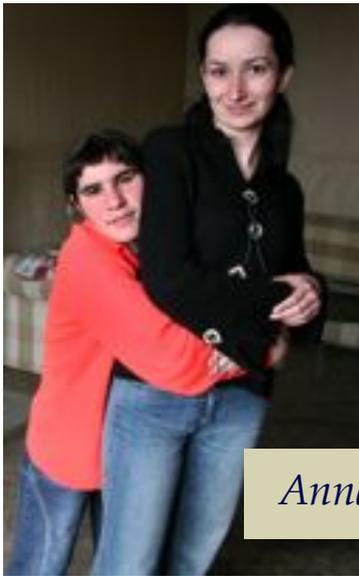
In 2008 they were cooperative and supportive in our endeavors and are considering our projects for inclusion in the 2010 federal budget.

The government initiated a licensing program this year, which establishes regulations for organizations offering long-term care to people with disabilities. This is a tremendous step in protecting the rights of this vulnerable population and we applaud their efforts. Warm Hearth was one of the first organizations to be licensed in 2008.

Accomplishments

- A long-term sustainability plan which includes required grant-writing and income-generating activities was signed in 2008.
- A full-time accountant and development director was hired to implement this sustainability plan.
- Our residents began receiving their federal disability pension, which will provide each of them with a minimal sustainable income.
- Alya Kirakosyan, Executive Director of Jermik Ankyun Foundation, presented our group home and model at the Armenian Roundtable for non-governmental organizations.





Anna & Sassoon



Now & always, they will be ours.

They began as our residents. We promised to care for them. But due to many sensitive factors, Sassoon & Anna have been in a psychiatric clinic instead of our home.

Caring for them looks different than we once thought. It looks like weekly visits, conversations, drawing with them, making carpets in the clinic's "meeting room," bringing them treats and clean pajamas. It is not what we wanted when the year began. It is not what we have ever wanted for them.

The year began with a tentative plan to bring Sassoon home, to try again. It is always that we want to bring them home. Bridget (a founding board member) and Natalie (founder and di-

rector) traveled to Armenia with this intention, but found that our staff and home were without the means and support to care for Sassoon. We try. We will try again.

We tried to find a "foster care" option for Anna. No one responded. So, we try again, though the shape of our next efforts are not yet known. We face our own limits, our inability to offer both of them a place of warmth and solace at this time.

We remain considerate of collaborating with the government to open a new home, which could benefit them.

We hope. And we try. And we remind ourselves that *"Courage doesn't always roar; sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the*

end of the day, saying, 'I will try again tomorrow.'" (M.A. Radmacher)

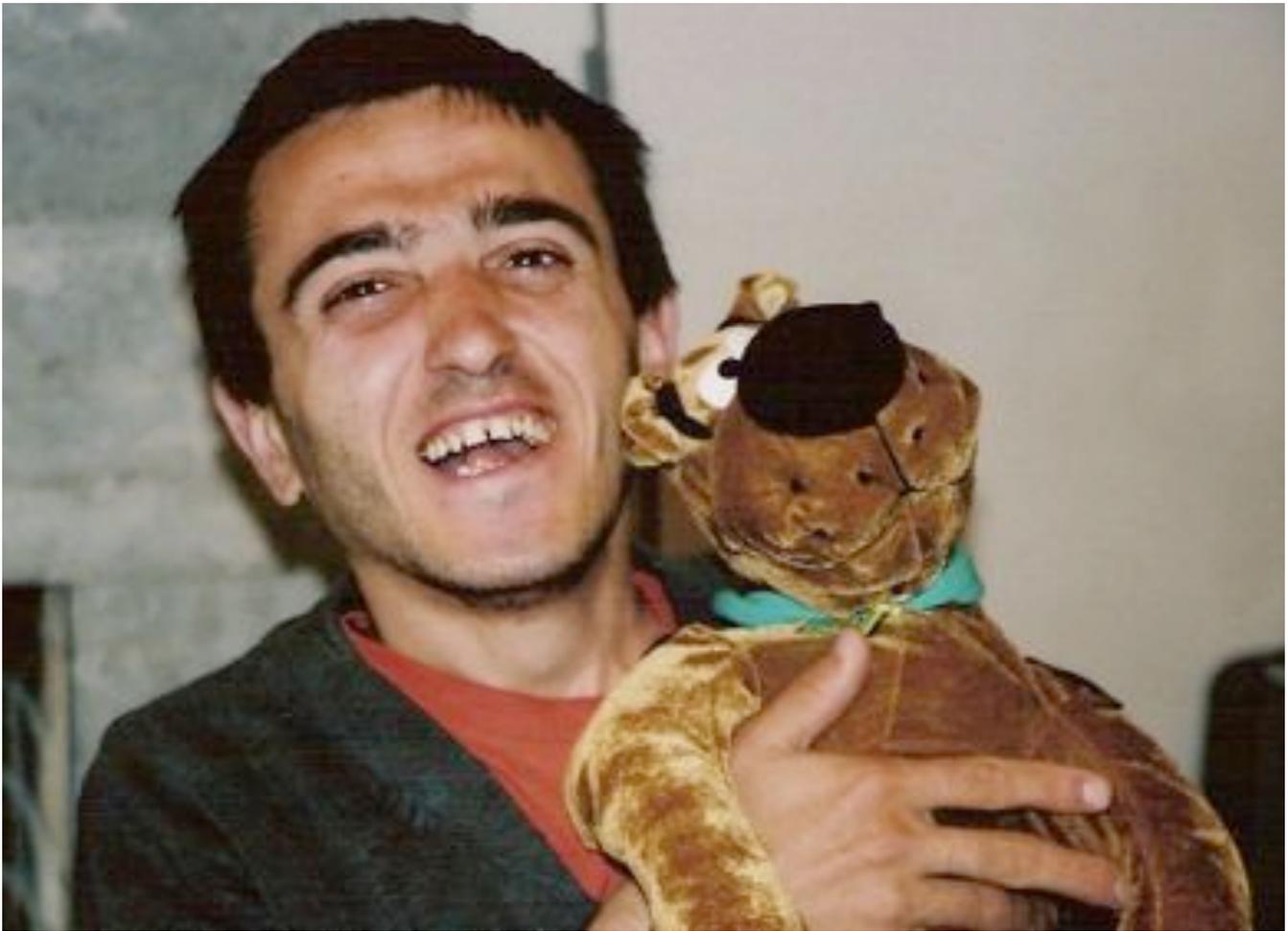
We will try again tomorrow...

...because Anna & Sassoon belong to us and because we love them.

Thomas Merton said that *"We have to become, in some sense, the person we love. And this involves a kind of death of our own being, our own self."*

The people we love, in particular, Anna & Sassoon, are human souls of infinite value. They are not 'objects' upon 'which' we try to 'do good.' No, they are a part of us.

They are the truth of the work we set out to do, even though that work is more difficult than we imagined.



Two Organizations ~ One Mission

Friends of Warm Hearth
(U.S.-based) was founded in 2005 to provide support and oversight to Warm Hearth Group Home(s).

Founder & Executive Director:
Natalie Bryant Rizzieri

Board of Directors:
Bridget Anderson
L. Marshal Bryant
Natalie Bryant Rizzieri
Jessica Barrett Simpson
Lee Ann Odabashian Williams



Jermik Ankyun Foundation
(Armenia-based) was founded this year to implement and manage Warm Hearth Group Home(s).

Executive Director:
Alya Kirakosyan

Board of Directors:
Alya Kirakosyan
Vahag Melkonian
Anna Mirzoyan
Anahit Mkhoyan

Stewardship

To our donors & volunteers -- Thank you.

Our residents' hope and healing inspired supporters and volunteers around the world in 2008, resulting in contributions from individuals, organizations, corporations, and faith communities. In all, private contributions totaled more than \$125,000 in cash, and almost \$14,000 in commodities and services. In addition, volunteers donated approximately 1,000 hours of work.

Your generosity in 2008 enabled us to renovate, expand and sustain a home that provides holistic care for our residents. Without each one of you, this work simply would not be possible. As we express deep gratitude to you, we renew our commitment to our residents in Armenia and celebrate all those, both here and abroad, who create hope and change.

Thank you for your unwavering support.

Efficiency

We strive to be excellent stewards of the resources entrusted to us. Ensuring that resources are wisely spent is a cornerstone of our values, vision and strategy of growth in the future. In order to keep our costs low in both Armenia and the U.S., we have not opened offices in either location but continue to work from our homes.

Transparency

We value the trust of our friends and supporters. We promise to maximize donations and ensure that donations reach our residents directly. We are always open to questions and inquiries. Full and updated financial statements and accompanying notes are always available upon request.

Accountability

In order to ensure that resources are properly used and with our residents' best interest at heart, we carefully review quarterly expense reports from Armenia. We monitor spending carefully and require that funding be used as allocated. All receipts and records in Armenia are available at all times for examination by Friends of Warm Hearth directors. In addition, our stateside expenditures are monitored and regularly approved by the Board of Directors.

Friends of Warm Hearth, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) organization.