

*No dreamer is ever too small;
no dream is ever too big.*

~Anonymous~

Friends
of WARM HEARTH



ANNUAL REPORT 2007

“It is restful here and I am comfortable. I can freely come and go. I have even gone to the clothing market and visited a neighbor with one of the guardians. There are many visitors that come and I always show them the Warm Hearth DVD. I even watch it everyday myself. I have learned how to clean my room here. I do physical therapy exercises every morning.”

~ Roman ~

PROVIDING HOLISTIC CARE FOR ORPHANS WITH DISABILITIES IN ARMENIA

Friends of Warm Hearth, Inc.

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

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“The morning has arrived. The day still belongs to you. Wait a little more and cry a little less. Sleep, sleep, child. Rest. Tomorrow will not be this way. Free, free - you will be. Free, free - you will rest.”

(Song lyrics by Vanya Van Essen, written on behalf of the residents shortly before Warm Hearth opened)

Dear Friends,

We opened the doors to our home in January of 2006. Almost two years later it is hard to believe that what seemed such a far-fetched dream has taken root. The dream was and still is to provide peace and safety to young adult orphans with disabilities. The dream was and is to provide an alternative to the psychiatric institutions where this vulnerable population is often relegated upon reaching adulthood. It is affirming to me that our dreams have remained the same and have stayed “close to home.”

The very nature of our work requires that we remain close to our residents and participate in one another's lives. We partake of their brokenness through acknowledging our own. We feel the repercussions of their past experiences, and this is never easy. But we consider it a unique honor to stay on this journey with them. Of course, being this close to our residents also allows us the joy of participating in their healing and growth.

In the course of this journey, we have come to recognize some common threads that run through our story. So, what do we hold to? What do we reach for? What is our unique fabric?

The first thing that comes to mind is hope. We have maintained hope for our residents in what sometimes seems like impossible situations.

And there is the love for our residents, a love that holds to the possibility of healing. Part of love is to protect the dignity of the beloved. This urges us to safeguard a life for our residents outside of the institutions when at all possible.

We have continued to walk forward when we have not known how it will all come together. **We believe that what matters is that we try something with all our might and that even if we fail, at least we haven't failed to try.** We have acknowledged our smallness, our inadequacies and even sometimes our weariness. But we have kept walking forward and will continue to do so.

We have stayed small, in part so that we can continue to make decisions based on the particular needs of our residents rather than on strict policies. This has felt more human than any alternative. Though we care about having a viable model for community-based group homes, this has always stayed second to the breathing beautiful humans we share life with.

We have welcomed anyone who has wanted to give to our residents. We have been on the receiving end. Our residents, supporters, donors and friends share in the responsibility of keeping watch over our home. We have accepted each gift, large or small, with the same gratitude, recognizing the smallest gesture as important. We have not walked alone.

We have tried to be the hands of God in this unpredictable world, but our journey is still a human one. Sometimes it is hard to take the next step. At times our hands seem impossibly small. But we do what we can to work towards greater justice and hope. And the smiles on these pages, the steps towards wholeness told here, are testament to that effort, to that tenuous and beautiful effort.

Thank you for taking part.

Sincerely & With Gratitude,



Natalie Bryant Rizzieri

OUR PROGRAM

Mission

To provide community-based homes 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 and 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 and/or disabilities.

"Warm Hearth is a wonderful idea, which will allow for the first time young adults with disabilities to live on their own and receive critical life skills which will help them to join the community. Hopefully this wonderful first-time idea called Warm Hearth will serve as an example, as a beacon to others and that many more homes like it will begin to spring up to serve these young adults seeking a better life."

(Patrick Hart, Former Peace Corps Armenia Country Director)

Handmade by Roman



IN REVIEW

Resident's Accomplishments

- Susanna has started to sing again.
- Davit and Anna have learned the art of carpet making.
- Roman has learned how to operate all the technology in the home and shows the Warm Hearth documentary to every guest.
- Yulia, who rarely spoke before coming to Warm Hearth, speaks now on a daily basis, recites poetry for visitors, and communicates consistently with those around her.
- All of the residents regularly create art. Beautiful paintings, embroidery and paper maché crafts, to name a few, now decorate the home.
- The residents have gained independent living skills and do everything from cooking to cleaning, from gardening to caring for the animals, and from painting to laundry.

Staff Accomplishments

- Psychiatrist, Dr. Anna Mirzoyan joined our local staff.
- Warm Hearth Staff completed "Individual Care Plans" for each resident.
- Mental Health Specialist, Anahit Iskandarova, joined our local staff & provides daily therapeutic activities for the residents.
- Staff participated in a week long training with Scott Van Alstine and Julie Langsdale, two professionals from Washington DC who focused on communication skills, daily rehabilitative care and modeling empowerment and independence for our residents.
- Board Member & Occupational Therapist, Lee Ann Williams conducted a one-day training for our staff in regard to sensory sensitivity and how this interacts with behavior.
- Staff participated in a training with Art Therapist, David Mitchell, on crisis management.
- Staff member, Anahit Harutyunyan, traveled to Syria to stay in the L'Arche group home for six months to learn more about the group home model.

Since opening in January of 2006, Warm Hearth has seen a vision unfold. Though our commitment has remained the same, the texture of our program continues to change as dictated by the needs, accomplishments, successes and struggles of our residents.

We have worked to nurture and provide a quality work environment for our staff. We have watched our staff allow the residents into their hearts. Together they participate in the daily life of Warm Hearth, with its daily transformations and struggles. There is a reciprocity that has been cultivated and for which we had dared to hope. Our staff is comprised of remarkable individuals who have given of themselves in the hopes that this would evoke healing changes in our residents. And it has.

"I'm very good, and I'm very happy today; it's very comfortable here."

YULIA

Steps toward Integration & Rehabilitation

- Peace Corps Volunteer, Robert Gobble, initiated a physical therapy program for the residents.
- Warm Hearth hired a local artisan to teach residents the traditional craft of carpet-making.
- Local Armenian-Americans regularly visit Warm Hearth and provide opportunities for integration & recreational activities.
- Local Peace Corps volunteers regularly visit the home and even have planned day trips and excursions for the residents to some of the historical sites in Armenia.
- A connection was established with the Occupational Therapy program at Yerevan State University and a group of students, including Liana Zakaryan, visit Warm Hearth and work with the residents for their practicum.

“Our visit to Warm Hearth was nothing short of wonderful. Let me say that it was our FIRST visit. We plan on visiting every year...”

(Father Sarkis Petoyan of St. John's Armenian Apostolic Church after taking a group of pilgrims to visit)

Embroidered by Gayane

“Life here is very good. We get to go out a lot and sometimes gather vegetables. We get to watch movies. And it is wonderful. The days are wonderful and we pass the time well. I feel free here. All the staff are kind and helpful, but I have my favorites. I only miss my friends from Kapan but I get to speak to them on the phone. There are no problems here to worry about. It is restful and calm. I think I am ready to live on my own. If it is possible, I would like to do so soon. But I would like to still live in this neighborhood, close to Warm Hearth.”



GAYANE

IN REVIEW

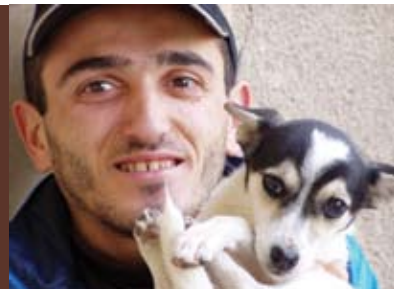
International Support

- U.S. Marines stationed in Armenia volunteered their time to work on home improvement projects and involved the residents.
- Armenian Volunteer Corps sent a volunteer, Tamar, to live and work at Warm Hearth to offer additional support.
- Peace Corps Encore! sent volunteer and psychiatric social worker, Patti Bortman, to assist and train Warm Hearth staff.
- An Armenian volunteer in Glendale, California, Karen Amirkhanyan, organized a fundraising event to benefit Warm Hearth.
- Two marathon runners, Fiona Coxshall & her husband Andrew raised over \$2,000 for Warm Hearth in the New York Marathon.
- Ongoing meetings are held with government representatives and social change programs in regard to future government collaboration with Warm Hearth.
- Board Member, Jessica Barrett Simpson, completed a cost-effective and cost-benefit analysis of the group home. These were presented to the Armenian Ministry of Labor and Social Issues in addition to the USAID-funded Social Strengthening & Protection program.
- A group of pilgrims from St. John's Armenian Apostolic Church (San Francisco, California) traveled to Armenia and visited Warm Hearth.
- Birthright Armenia's volunteers spent a day at Warm Hearth painting the first floor.
- Mount Pleasant Lutheran Church held a summer children's program and chose Warm Hearth as a beneficiary. The children of their congregation donated over \$2,000 worth of medications and art supplies and an additional \$600 as a direct contribution.
- A group of quilters from Enterprise Christian Church (Enterprise, Oregon) completed quilts for each resident.

The contributions of local and international supporters are too numerous to list, but we did want to give a picture of the collaborative effort that makes Warm Hearth what it is. Some of the most precious gifts have been the way our friends and supporters have visited with the residents or staff, and shared an afternoon cup of coffee in the living room of our home. Some have worked behind-the-scenes on administrative necessities. Some have donated supplies. Some have told others about Warm Hearth. We do not take the generosity of our supporters for granted. We could not do this alone.

“Davit Mikaelyan, 28, is glad to show their new home. He proudly opens the doors of the rooms and says: “Here I share the room with Roman. Look. We have everything,” as he drags the drawers open....”

(Armenia Now, Independent Journal)



OUR GRATITUDE

Woven by Davit



“Beloved Sassoon... This is my prayer – that somehow, cross the span of dusty, trash-laden streets, shouting voices and protocols, you will know that you slide down the cheek of an American woman who loves you with her tears.”

(Excerpt from a poem by Susan Barnes after visiting one of Warm Hearth's residents while he was in a short-term psychiatric clinic)

Warm Hearth welcomes individuals, communities, churches, organizations, businesses and governments to participate in our endeavor through many means other than financial. We recognize that this home is made possible by people from around the world joining their hands with the conviction that our residents deserve a life of peace and nurture.

We make every attempt to receive whatever a person might have to give with the same gratitude, whether it be \$10 a month or \$1000, graphic design skills or the gift of songwriting. We believe that what the world sees as small gestures are essential and meaningful. We recognize the kindness in all gestures, in the words of affirmation from those who hear of our stories, in prayers, and in commitments of time.

From the beginning we have affirmed an idea of Henry James: “We work in the dark. We do what we can. We give what we have. Our doubt is our passion. Our passion is our task.” This holds so much significance for us as we began without knowing what the end of the story would be for our residents. We joined together to do what we could, to give whatever we had to give despite our doubts. This work has brought us to where we stand today – with a home, with eight residents, with a staff who care deeply and with a circle of volunteers and donors who stand around us, whom we now call friends.

We are blessed.



Handmade by Davit

TELLING OUR STORY

Susanna sang an old Armenian lament for a few quiet guests. It used to be commonplace. Susanna's gift of music was recognized when she was a young girl. As is typical in Armenia, if someone is recognized as a musician, she is often asked to sing for visitors, guests, birthdays and events. This day was no different.

Susanna has an artist's temperament. She notices beauty more than most, hesitatingly pointing out the budding spring leaves. She looks deep into people's eyes. Susanna is one of the residents of Warm Hearth, which sits on a quiet alley in Yerord Gyugh (Third Village) and holds the coveted view of Mt. Ararat in its western windows.

Too often in this region of the world, the Soviet mindset lingers. If a child is considered abnormal, parents sometimes feel obligated to leave their child at an orphanage, overcome by societal pressure or their own inability to conceive of how to provide for their child.

When I first met Susanna, she was living in one such state orphanage in the southernmost region of Armenia. She had stopped singing long before I met her. By this time, too old to be considered for secondary education, but too "lost" to gain employment at the school (which is the best that an orphan with a disability can hope for in this town), she had been left to her grief.

She still had a roof over her head, as the director of the orphanage had given her a room on a fairly empty floor. Food was provided her but only when she remembered to go to the cafeteria or was well enough to do so. Her mind fractured along the boundaries of rejection and suffering, and her psychotic depression worsened.

Sometimes Susanna was found wandering the road that ran beside the orphanage, unaware of the trucks on their way to Iran honking and rushing past her, within reach of her very life. Not knowing how to care for her, the orphanage director did the only thing she knew to do with such scarce resources. Susanna was sent, time and again, to the psychiatric hospital on the outskirts of town.

"When guests like the [U.S.] Marines visit [Warm Hearth], the whole community takes notice and the neighbors realize that individuals with disabilities need not be shunned."

(Bari News, Armenian Embassy, Yerevan)



Painted by Alina

"It is comfortable here and I like it. It is much better than life before. The hospital in Kapan is very bad. But it is free and restful here."



SUSANNA

There she was over-medicated and confined between hospital walls. A few years went by in this way. Her seasons were not as they should have been. They were marked by waves of depression, months at a time in an inhumane facility and the long loneliness of living on a mostly abandoned floor of the orphanage. She was also on the waiting list to be sent to a long-term psychiatric institution.

This long-term institution is one of few outdated psychiatric hospitals in Armenia, built in Soviet times when those with disabilities were shuffled out of sight—or sometimes even euthanized—and not allowed to partake in community life. And though Susanna lacked consistent care and stability, this fate was even worse than she had experienced. For the most part, the institutions are places of no return.

In January of 2005, Natalie took the marshutka, a rickety public mini-van, to visit the institution when she first learned that Susanna, among seven others from the orphanage, was to be sent there. An older woman leaned over to her on the journey and asked, "Sweetheart, where are you going?" Natalie answered and the woman clicked her tongue with Armenian vigor, shook her head sadly and said, "Dear, dear. God is not there."

It was shortly thereafter that she decided, with the help and hope of many, to create Warm Hearth, a home for Susanna and others with similar needs. Susanna has lived at Warm Hearth for almost two years now. It is in the living room of Warm Hearth that she has begun to sing again.

In November of 2006, one of the other Warm Hearth residents, Anna, had been removed from the home for a brief time. Due to the upheaval in the days proceeding her temporary removal, a group meeting was held in the living room of Warm Hearth to give the residents the opportunity to voice their fears and concerns. Anna was due to come home the next day. Susanna had rarely spoken at previous meetings but on this day, she lifted her hand into the air and asked to be heard. She took everyone back to those days in Kapan when she lived on the second floor and was alone much of the time.

She spoke frankly. She said that Anna's behavior had frightened her at times, and that it disturbed her to see Anna spiral out of control. She even hesitantly admitted that it would be easier to live without Anna. "But," she said quietly, "This is her home. Warm Hearth is her home. And she should come home soon. When I was alone in Kapan, and unwell, Anna was the only one who remembered to bring me food from the cafeteria. Yes, she must come home."

"Recognizing the valued existing and potential contributions made by persons with disabilities to the overall well-being and diversity of their communities, and that the promotion of the full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of their human rights and fundamental freedoms and of full participation by persons with disabilities will result in their enhanced sense of belonging and in significant advances in the human, social and economic development of society and the eradication of poverty..." (United Nations, 2006) ¹

The issue of disability is important in any society that aims to care for its most vulnerable citizens. The World Health Organization estimates that 10% of the world's population has some form of disability, which it defines as "impairments, activity limitations, or participation restrictions."² Disabilities typically manifest as developmental, physical, mental or psychosocial disorders and mental illness.³ The Armenian government considers people with disabilities a vulnerable group.

Community-Based Rehabilitation

Warm Hearth believes the group home model can provide a viable alternative to institutions in Armenia. Since our inception we have held regular meetings with Armenian government officials to advocate for the broader population with disabilities in Armenia.

A 2007 analysis found the Warm Hearth model to be an extremely effective means of caring for individuals with disabilities. Using community-based rehabilitation, which aims for the rehabilitation, equalization of opportunities, and social inclusion of all persons with disabilities,⁴ the Warm Hearth model could be easily replicated throughout Armenia as a way to care for individuals with disabilities.

¹ Text from the Preamble of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; opened for signature by Members on 30 March 2007.

² WHO, 2007. *Disability and Rehabilitation Team* website: <http://www.who.int/disabilities/en>.

³ WHO, 2001. *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health*.

⁴ ILO, UNESCO, and WHO, 2004. *CBR: A Strategy for Rehabilitation, Equalization for Opportunities, Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities*. <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills/download/jointpaper.pdf>.



"I feel free, restful and calm here at Warm Hearth. I'm very busy. I have learned how to do everything in this house. I'm slowly learning how to cook, even. I really love our village. I trust the staff. I know that they will help me if I need it and I would help them. I would love to live on my own someday."

ALINA

ADVOCACY

“The project is meeting a dire need. Many countries in the former Soviet Union lack the infrastructure to adequately care for individuals with disabilities and mental illness. The Ministry of Social Welfare and The Ministry of Education are supportive of Warm Hearth due to the pressing need in Armenia. Chief Specialist of the Secondary Education Department, Anahit Muradyan, emphasized the importance of projects such as Warm Hearth for the Education department as they face the challenge of what to do with orphans who reach the age of 18 but struggle with disabilities. She is optimistic about collaboration and the development of this model in the future.”

(News Release, Embassy of the U.S.A.: Yerevan, Armenia)

Armenians with Disabilities

Nearly four percent of the Armenian population—an estimated 115,000 people—is believed to have some form of disability.¹ A 2003 survey by the Armenian National Statistical Service found that 42,609 individuals with disabilities were receiving the poverty family benefit. The majority had either a long-term illness or was born with a disability. According to the survey, the top five causes in Armenia are:

- Long-term painful illness (33%)
- Congenital disability (18%)
- Other long-term illness (13%)
- Accident outside the workplace (10%)
- Accident at the workplace (10%)

The survey also showed that 63% of individuals with disabilities living in six caretaking institutions had been diagnosed with chronic mental deficiency. Prior to being placed in the institution, 37% of individuals with disabilities lived with their families and 16% lived alone. The majority (67%) said the “need for regular care” was the primary reason for moving into the institution. Thirty-six percent of respondents entered the institution because their family either could not or would not support them.

Clearly, the need is great. Viable, sustainable community-based models are part of the movement toward greater equality for people with disabilities in Armenia. Our part is to ensure that our home is providing quality care. We want to be a symbol of hope. We want Warm Hearth to show that a better life is possible for these individuals. This is just the beginning of a journey and dream to provide peace, quality care and dignity to this vulnerable population. Warm Hearth will continue to analyze and advocate for the best solutions to care for individuals with disabilities in Armenia.

¹ The Ministry of Labor and Social Issues, Republic of Armenia.



Painted by Alina

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Embroidered by Susanna



“Everything is fine here. I have learned a lot about living, especially cooking, which I have always wanted. I want to visit Kapan and the people I love there. But then I want to come back here. I feel free here.”

DAVIT



U.S. Staff

Natalie Bryant Rizzieri, *Executive Director*
Bridget Anderson, *Associate Director*

Armenia Staff

Hripsime Kirakosyan, *Country Director*
Alya Kirakosyan, *Program Manager*

Partnering Organization

Mission Armenia

Board of Directors

Natalie Bryant Rizzieri
Founder & Executive Director of Warm Hearth
President (Tempe, Arizona)

Bridget Anderson
Founding Member, Special Education Consultant & Advocate
Secretary (Abuja, Nigeria)

L. Marshal Bryant
Financial Advisor & CPA
Treasurer (Prescott, Arizona)

Jessica Barrett Simpson
Program Analyst for the U.S. Department of Education
Member (Washington, DC)

Lee Ann Odabashian Williams
Occupational Therapist
Member (Moraga, California)

“I feel real compassion for [the residents] and want to do everything to help them and improve their lives.”

(Spoken by a Warm Hearth Community Assistant)

STEWARDSHIP

"And we know that this idea will be the first, and it will continue, and that more children and more young adults will be able to live in places like this instead of in institutions. [Natalie] told me that the reaction [she] got from donors, from people who were opening up their hearts...was an act of God. I agree. It was an act of God, but it was also an act of people. And that's you... and all the people who are now a part of this Warm Hearth family."

(Anthony Godfrey, U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission in Armenia)

The resources of Friends of Warm Hearth have totaled more than \$320,000 since project inception. Material aid and grassroots fundraising have enabled us to purchase, open and sustain a home & provide holistic care for our residents.

Ensuring that these resources are wisely spent is an integral part of our values.

Efficiency

Because we are a small and focused project, we are able to maintain efficiency, in part by securing in-kind donations. To date, our in-kind donations total almost \$80,000. This is only possible because our friends have invested time, skills, energy and their hearts. They have made Warm Hearth their own.

Transparency

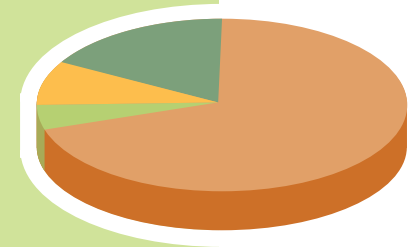
We value the trust of our friends and supporters. And we consider it our responsibility to be exemplary stewards of the resources we have been given. We are proud of the way we maximize donations and ensure that donations reach the residents directly. We are always open to questions and inquiries. In addition, full financial statements and accompanying notes are always available upon request.

Accountability

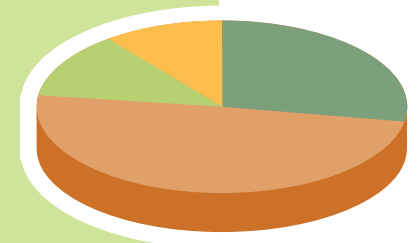
In order to ensure that resources are used properly and in our residents' best interests, we carefully review the mandatory quarterly expense reports from the group home in Armenia. We monitor spending carefully and require that funding be used as allocated. All receipts and records in Armenia are available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

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

Sources of Contributions Since Project Inception



How Our Resources Were Spent Since Project Inception



FRIENDS OF WARM HEARTH, INC.

Comparative Statements of Financial Position

As of July 31, 2007, December 31, 2006 and December 31, 2005

Assets	7/31/07	12/31/06	12/31/05
Current assets			
Cash	\$37,318	\$8,309	\$11,477
Property and equipment			
Land in Armenia	7,400	7,400	7,400
House in Armenia	72,326	72,326	66,000
Less accumulated depreciation	(2,863)	(1,808)	—
Net property and equipment	\$76,863	77,918	73,400
Total assets	\$114,181	\$86,227	\$84,877

Liabilities and net assets

Liabilities			
Accrued payroll taxes	306	2,018	1,224
Total Liabilities	306	2,018	1,224
Net assets			
Unrestricted	113,875	84,209	83,653
Total liabilities and net assets	\$114,181	\$86,227	\$84,877

Comparative Statements of Activities

For the seven months ended July 31, 2007 and the years ended December 31, 2006 and 2005

	2007 (7 Months)	2006 (12 Months)	2005 (12 Months)
Revenue			
Cash contributions	\$72,356	\$73,203	\$95,265
Contributions of goods	4,252	10,481	10,517
Contributions of services	7,846	38,078	8,110
Total contributions	84,454	121,762	113,892
Expenses			
Facility and program	38,947	84,862	16,350
Promotion and fundraising	7,787	19,044	8,739
Management and general	8,054	17,300	5,150
Total expenses	54,788	121,206	30,239
Changes in net assets	29,666	556	83,653
Net assets, beginning of period	84,209	83,653	—
Net assets, end of period	\$113,875	\$84,209	\$83,653