



ARMENIAN  
VOLUNTEER  
CORPS

# Newsletter

# IN THIS ISSUE

**Dear Alumni,**

"The Alumni team is here for YOU—every step of the way! We're expanding our support to our incredible alums, offering guidance, connections, and resources to help you thrive.

In this edition of the BR/DH and AVC Alumni newsletter, we're excited to share how we're making a difference together. During these challenging times for Armenia, let's stay united, resilient, and committed to the causes that inspire us all.

**Together, we're stronger. Keep the Momentum!**

**– Birthright Armenia/Depi Hayk  
Armenian Volunteer Corps**



Did you know how it all began? Dive into the inspiring journey of Birthright Armenia's establishment and meet our very first volunteer—the spark that lit a global movement. Watch the story [here](#).



## BIRTHRIGHT ARMENIA 2004-2024 20TH ANNIVERSARY

Can you believe it? Birthright Armenia turned 20, and we celebrated with an unforgettable 5-day journey across Yerevan, Gyumri, and Vanadzor! Alumni from across the globe reunited for an unforgettable milestone—two decades of cultural discovery, life-changing experiences, and uniting Armenia with its diaspora.

The festivities began with a powerful visit to Yerablur, followed by an inspiring summit and opening ceremony where alumni and staff celebrated two decades of connection and growth. Discovery Talks at the Matenadaran highlighted life-changing stories, and we planted trees, celebrated Vardavar, and opened a brand-new [center in Vanadzor](#) to support future volunteers.

In Gyumri, a scavenger hunt, traditional dance, and heartwarming moments with host families showed the deep impact of our program. We closed with a celebration honoring job sites, host families, and an unforgettable performance by Miqayel Voskanyan. Here's to 20 years of connection and transformation—and to an even brighter future! Check out our [Discovery Talks](#) and relive the magic and the [recap of the celebration week](#)

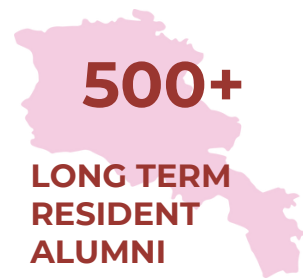
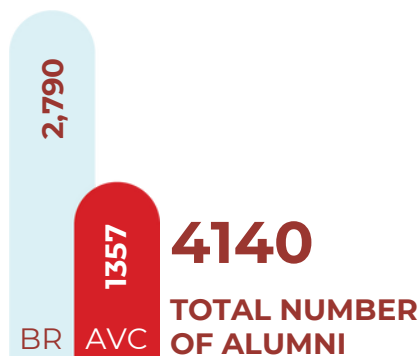
## Together, We Can Build a Brighter Armenia: From 2024 to 2025

As we approach the close of 2024, we at Birthright Armenia (BR) and Armenian Volunteer Corps (AVC) reflect on the incredible progress we've made, and the work that still lies ahead. Armenia's resilience inspires us, even through its most challenging times, and we are immensely proud of the contributions of our volunteers and alumni across all sectors.

This year has been transformational. We've expanded our reach by engaging a diverse range of volunteers—Armenian and non-Armenian, young professionals and retirees alike—who have poured their skills and hearts into uplifting communities across Armenia. In 2025, we aim to achieve even more. Together, we can drive change, foster innovation, and create opportunities.

Join us in making 2025 a year of greater impact! Your support spreading awareness about us fuels every step forward.

## Historical Statistics



Big dreams, real impact! Meet our Microgrant winners—alumni transforming innovative ideas into meaningful change across Armenia. Together, we're shaping a brighter future, one project at a time!

**Garren Jansezian**  
The Johanissyan Library

**Gevorg Badalyan / Oganess Minasyan**  
Inchkan Kmnas Podcast

**Mary Galstian**  
Rising Star

**Ezequiel Guiragossian**  
Social Circus Festival in Goris

Celebrating leaders who inspire! Meet the winners of our Leadership Awards—alumni making waves in their fields and driving change in Armenia and beyond. Here's to their dedication, impact, and commitment to a brighter future!

**Raffi Keuhnelian & Antranig Khachkhechyan**  
Professional Achievement Award

**Stacey Terterian**  
Valor Award

**Emily Mkrtychian**  
Artistic/Cultural Achievement Award

**Garni Baroni**  
Civic Participation/Public Service Award

**Armine Bazikyan**  
Civic Participation/Public Service Award

**Kyle Khandikian**  
Artistic/Cultural Achievement Award

Our alumni community has achieved incredible milestones, and we couldn't be prouder! In this edition, we're thrilled to highlight some of these amazing accomplishments—and we want to hear from YOU! Got a story to share? Inspire others by sharing your journey for future editions. Let's celebrate our impact together!



**ANOUSH BAGHDASSARIAN**

BR, 2018

## Making an Impact in Human Rights

After earning her law degree from Harvard, Anoush Baghdassarian worked at the International Criminal Court on cases of war crimes and human rights issues, particularly focusing on the Artsakh crisis. In 2023, she lived in Armenia, documenting the forced deportation of Artsakhtsis. She currently works as a lawyer in New York while leading her NGO, Rerooted, which celebrates Armenian identity and pursues justice for Armenian communities worldwide.



**ARMEN SARDARYAN**

BR, 2022

## Pioneering AI and Education

Armen Sardaryan is an AI/ML engineer at the Center of Advanced Software Technologies, focusing on UAV computer vision algorithms. While pursuing his PhD, Armen teaches Python, Robotics, and Computer Vision at Russian-Armenian University and leads courses in bioinformatics for oncology research. His dedication bridges innovation and education, shaping Armenia's tech future.



**ARMINEH BABIKIAN**

BR, 2017

## Advancing Rehabilitation Sciences

V. Armineh Babikian (Therapists for Armenia)- After leading several humanitarian and post-conflict rehabilitation initiatives with her organization, Therapists for Armenia, Armineh Babikian was nationally recognized by the American Occupational Therapy Association and Columbia University as an emerging leader in her field. She is now pursuing her PhD in Rehabilitation Sciences and Global Health at the University of Toronto, and is researching sustainable development of Armenian rehabilitation services through partnership with people with disabilities. Her research was recently awarded by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists. It all started with her volunteer experiences with Birthright Armenia!



**VATCHE TAGHALIAN**

BR, 2018

## Revitalizing Communities

The Karaberd House project is revitalizing a picturesque village in Armenia by creating a communal retreat. Initiated by 5 alumni members. The goal is to build a primary house along with five surrounding cabins that will operate on a timeshare concept. This allows members to experience the beauty of the Lori region while reducing the upkeep typically associated with vacation homes. 68 people have joined the project and helped with the initial phase of the construction. Ongoing collaboration will foster recreational opportunities, further benefiting the village's economy.



## ANI JILOZIAN

BR, 2007

### Championing Women's Rights

Ani Jilozian has been with the Women's Support Center, Armenia's leading domestic violence center, since 2015. In 2022, she assumed the role of Director of Development at the Center. Alongside her work advocating for women's rights, Ani balances life as a mother of two children, who recently started primary school and come home singing Komitas songs and reciting poetry. You can reach her at [ani@womensupportcenter.org](mailto:ani@womensupportcenter.org) to learn more about the Center and how you can get involved.



## ANAHEED SARIAN

BR, 2021

### Weaving Armenia's Story in Fashion

As a designer based in Gyumri, Anaheed Sarian merges her international experience with local traditions to create upcycled, handcrafted textiles. Passionate about developing regional Armenia, she has been researching Armenia's fashion heritage and collaborating with local dye-makers. Her work has been featured in major fashion showcases like YBAF in 2023. The products can currently be purchased through the brand's instagram or at Rage Garage Vintage in Yerevan. Anaheed Sarian has been featured in Artbox Incubator 2022



## ARMEN KHERLOPIAN

BR, 2005

## Innovating for Armenia's Future

Dr. Armen Kherlopien, CEO of Covenant Venture Capital, played a key role in accelerating Starlink access for Armenia through SpaceX partnerships. A BR alum, Armen is a visionary leader who connects AI literacy, technology diplomacy, and venture philanthropy, driving resilience and growth for Armenia through groundbreaking initiatives. In recent interviews on [CivilNet](#) and [ReArrange](#), Armen highlights how access to such technology is vital for nation building. As an active thought leader, from his highly viewed [TEDx on AI Literacy](#) to that of his past work in [Formula E](#) as featured in the [MIT Technology Review](#), Armen serves as a technology diplomat and visionary. He believes strongly that the future of philanthropy has equity investing at its core: fostering international competitiveness, sustainable growth and generational resilience.



## NARINE GHARASHOR AZIZIAN

AVC, 2002

### Transforming Education in Conflict Zones

After completing her time with the Armenian Volunteer Corps, Narineh moved to Chicago, where she began her tenure with Chicago Public Schools as an educator and later as a school leader, all while earning multiple graduate degrees in educational leadership and organizational change. Now the founder and lead consultant of [WholisticEdu](#), Narineh works globally to elevate educational systems, with a focus on leadership, healing and wellness, particularly in conflict zones. She is also the author of Education in Times of Change, a guide for Armenian school leaders, the first of its kind in 30 years, made possible through a micro-grant for AVC and Birthright volunteers.



## ROD GREIG

AVC, 2024

### Reconnecting with Armenian Roots

Rod Greig, a retired teacher from the UK, is half Armenian. Following suit of his two daughters who had previously done Birthright Armenia, he rediscovered purpose through volunteering with AVC's Senior Corps. An educator by profession, Rod was initially hesitant to teach again. He embraced roles at the History Museum proofreading and at the American University of Armenia's Extension and Team Time, facilitating English clubs and workshops. His greatest personal success, leaving Armenia 51% Armenian. Read more about his experience at [AVC Website](#)



## AREVIK VARDANYAN

AVC, 2015

### Revolutionizing Armenian Identity

With over a decade of experience in tech, Arevik Vardanyan now leads her consulting firm and Haikeon Armenology R&D Center. Her mission is to revive Armenian identity and systems for the next 1,000 years, guiding civilizations in rediscovering their essence. Haikeon represents a homecoming for Armenians, reuniting them with their true core. She's also the driving force behind the Haikeon Armenology R&D Center, on a mission to revive the true Armenian identity and systems, create/upgrade a new system for the next 1,000 years, and guide other civilizations in rediscovering their true essence. Haikeon represents a homecoming for Armenians and other civilizations, a return to their true core.



## LAURA AXELSEN

AVC, 2022

### Bringing Armenian Pride to the Global Stage

Laura Axelsen, an expert in stenography, joined AVC in 2022 alongside her husband, Kari. Training Armenian programmers sparked her passion to represent Armenia at Intersteno, where she achieved third place in the speech capturing speed contest under the Armenian flag. Laura shares, "It was an award I accepted gladly with love for Armenia." Read more at [Shant News](#). One of Laura's placements included training programmers in stenography, as she is one of the US's leading experts in the field. That work fueled her passion to represent Armenia in a competition at Intersteno, an association of shorthand writers and people who capture and transcribe the important words of court trials and parliaments worldwide



## ARTHUR AGHADJANIANS

AVC, 2023

### Building a Musical Movement

During the pandemic in Armenia, project manager Arthur Aghadjanians reignited his passion for music, founding Carpet Jam, a platform supporting local musicians and connecting the Diaspora. As an AVC Senior Corps volunteer, Arthur provides jobs for artists and fosters creativity. He joined AVC as a Senior Corps volunteer while Carpet Jam became one of 1,400+ partner organizations we serve in 2024. Through this initiative and his volunteer work with AVC, he provides jobs and opportunities for local musicians while fostering connections across the Armenian Diaspora. Learn more about his initiative at [Carpet Jam](#).

## ADVANCED DEGREES

We want to offer our warmest congratulations to our alumni who have achieved their PhD and MD degrees. Your dedication and hard work have brought you this well-deserved success, and we couldn't be prouder of your accomplishments!

**Emma Santelmann (BR, '17)**  
*University of Michigan*  
PhD in Linguistics  
2025

**Dennis Deemter (AVC, '16)**  
*Universitat Polytechnica de Valencia*  
PhD in Chemical Engineering  
2023

**Krikor Balabanian (BR, '22)**  
*Université de Montréal*  
MD - Doctor of Medicine  
2020

**Maral Dersarkisian (BR, '09)**  
*UCLA Fielding School of Public Health*  
PhD Doctor of Philosophy, Epidemiology  
2014

**Edward Nahabet (AVC, '12)**  
*Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine*  
MD Candidate  
2010

**Vahe Asvatourian (BR, '19)**  
*Université Paris-Saclay*  
PhD, Biostatistics, Doctor of Philosophy  
2018

**Lusineh Gharapetian (BR, '18)**  
*The Chicago School of Professional Psychology*  
PhD in Psychology  
2015

## FUTURE VOLUNTEERS



June 14, 2024

**Leyla Narges and Salpi Sossé**  
**MISAG BELIAN AND ELYSIA DARDARIAN (BR, '17)**



January 2, 2023

**Aren Pacacian**  
**HOVIG PACACIAN (BR, '18)**



December 20, 2023

**Edward Krikor Casabian IV**  
**ANOUSH TATEVOSSIAN (BR '04) & ED CASABIAN (BR '05)**



August 8, 2024

**Nazeh Ismailyan**  
**ARAZ ISMAILYAN (BR, '17)**



July 4, 2023

**Luciné Michaelian**  
**ANAHD MICHAELIAN (BR, '16)**

Still passionate about helping Armenia and sharing your expertise with the next generation? We've got exciting news just for you! Stay tuned for opportunities to make a meaningful impact and inspire young Armenians with your knowledge!



**Mercedes Alin Arslanian**

AVC, 2024

AVC launched a mentorship program with the support of another ProCorps AVCer Mercedes Aline Arslanian

The program is designed to connect AVC and BR volunteers with youth from Armenia's regions, ultimately supporting mentors and mentees based on shared interests, goals, and expertise, creating an enriching, collaborative experience for both.

Mentees come from Children of Regions/Մարզերի Երեխաները Մարզերում (MEM), a partner organization focused on developing young, educated, and cooperative leaders across Armenia's regions. MEM's mission is to nurture decentralized leadership for Armenia's balanced and sustainable growth.

Whether you're in Armenia or outside, you can apply to join the program and work with your mentee virtually once a week and take part in occasional group activities—online or in person—alongside other mentors and mentees. Over eight impactful weeks (with the option to extend), you'll share life lessons, professional insights, and practical skills to empower your mentee and support Armenia's development.

This program is more than mentorship—it's about building lifelong connections and fostering positive change. If you're ready to take part in this journey and help shape the future of Armenia, one mentee at a time, [apply here](#). Your knowledge and experiences can make all the difference!

## Inspiring Artistry: Narine Poladian's Impactful US Tour



**Narine Bolachian**

BR, 2018

Narine Poladian, Armenia's first female Khatchkar (cross-stone) maker, recently left a lasting impression on the Armenian-American community during her first visit to the US. From October 11-27, she delivered master classes and presentations across New York, New Jersey, and Boston, sharing the intricate art and deep cultural significance of Khatchkar carving.

Supported by the Hovnanian Foundation and hosted by St. Thomas Armenian Apostolic Church in Tenafly, NJ, Poladian conducted eight master classes at churches, schools, and cultural organizations, inspiring participants with her unique skills and passion.

From teaching students at the Hovnanian School to engaging with the Daughters of Vartan and holding her final class at the Armenian Church of Our Saviour in Worcester, MA, Poladian's journey was a celebration of heritage and creativity.

Attendees praised her sessions as transformative, with many deeply moved by her artistry and dedication. Poladian's tour highlighted the power of cultural exchange, ensuring the preservation of this ancient tradition for future generations.

# LOOKING *for* WORK OPPORTUNITIES *in* ARMENIA?

Many alumni look for work opportunities as an important element to facilitate moving to Armenia for long-term living. We are here to help you.

1

Explore these websites to kick-start your search! We're here to help—whether it's finding the right fit or providing a glowing recommendation letter. Just drop us a quick message, and we'll take it from there!

- [careercenter.am](http://careercenter.am)
- [staff.am](http://staff.am)
- [job.am](http://job.am)

2

Ready to be the next changemaker? Connect with us and share your bold ideas—we're here to guide and support you every step of the way. Dreaming of bringing a project to life? Apply for our annual Micro Grants (contact us) or Hovnanian Foundation Grants now! Apply [here](#) and let's make it happen together!

3

Got questions about citizenship, residency, work permits, or integrating into Armenian life? We've got you covered! Check out our support guidelines and let us walk this journey with you. Start here and take your first step toward a seamless transition! [View Guidelines](#)

4

"No place to stay? We've got you covered! The Pathway to Armenia program has already helped 126 alumni transition seamlessly into life and careers in Armenia. With cozy residences in Yerevan and Gyumri—and Vanadzor coming soon—you're set for success! Ready to write your next chapter in Armenia? Take the first step toward your future and apply today! [Join us here](#)

## OTHER WAYS TO GET INVOLVED:

**Connect** with us on various social media platforms including LinkedIn, the FB Alumni Community, and the WhatsApp group.

**Stay tuned** to learn more about our micro-grants which we anticipate announcing in Spring 2025 to continue your impact for Armenia.

### **Visit Armenia** and our office.

If you plan on visiting Yerevan, Vanadzor, or Gyumri, don't forget to schedule a visit to our offices. Email us to let us know you'll be visiting and we'll make sure to get you on our email list so that you can take advantage of the amazing opportunities – language classes, excursions, forums, and more.

### **Loved Your BR or AVC Experience? Share the Journey!**

Host an event at your church, in your community, or even online! Whether in-person or virtual, it's a great way to inspire others to take the leap. Our Next Step and Communications team will be with you every step of the way to make it unforgettable. Let's spread the word together!

### **Know Someone Who Can Make a Difference?**

Help us expand the impact for Armenia! If you have a sibling, parent, or friend (Armenian or non-Armenian) who's passionate about helping the country, encourage them to volunteer with us. Share their email with us, and we'll take it from there. Together, we can create lasting change! Recommend an [Applicant Here](#)

## REMEMBER YOUR CIP?

You may have forgotten what CIP was. That was your Continuing Involvement Proposal, you shared at the end of your volunteering experience.

Recently, we sent you your CIP via email and asked for your thoughts. Check your inbox and let's build on the mutual vision that connects and inspires us all.

## 2025 OUTLOOK: A YEAR OF GROWTH AND GRATITUDE

As we step into 2025, we're buzzing with excitement for the events, initiatives, and milestones ahead! From fresh volunteering opportunities to inspiring alumni success stories, we can't wait to see our community continue to shine.

A huge thank you to all our alumni for your unwavering support and dedication—your involvement is what makes BR and AVC thrive. Together, we're stronger, and we couldn't do it without YOU.

Here's to a year of growth, collaboration, and even more amazing achievements! Let's make it a good start to the next 20 years and beyond!