The 450th home milestone is reached. 450th family in Armenia will have a home and hope and the happiness of safety.

On 8 August, 2015 the Armenia Marriott Hotel Yerevan staff members, led by the General Manager of the Hotel, Hendrik Beye, joined the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia team in the Pokr Vedi Village of Ararat Region to help build a home for the young family of Grigoryans.

It’s already the 7th year, since 2009, the Armenia Marriott Hotel Yerevan team helps build homes for Armenian families with FCHA advocating the person’s right to a decent shelter.

The day was distinctive as it corresponded with the construction of the 450th home of the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia. Less than two months has passed since the construction of the 400th home, and now the 450th home floors are being concreted.

“Taking care of our communities is valuable part of Marriott’s culture and Marriott International. We are very proud to belong to thousands of communities around the world. We believe that strong neighborhoods, towns and cities are vital to the well-being of our society and economy, we feel we have a special responsibility and role to play in helping our communities thrive. Marriott’s social responsibility and community engagement programs not only benefit our communities, but strengthen our culture and we reach our hands to support our communities with all the possible ways we can. We are excited for lasting cooperation with Fuller Center for Housing Armenia and for being part of the 450th house building project,” said Hendrik Beye, General Manager of the Armenia Marriott Hotel Yerevan.

“The spirit to serve the communities for Armenia Marriott Hotel Yerevan is expressed not only in the daily work but also out of it through helping the families in need of decent house morally and physically and with the deep sense of corporate social responsibility.

The Grigoryans live in the family father’s, Avetis’s paternal house. In 2014 Avetis started the construction of their own house, but could build only the foundation and the walls; they could not afford even building the ceiling due to lack of financial means.

“Our team has built many homes in this community. The young family of Grigoryans is one of the strong cornerstones in this community, who will develop their Homeland, who will stay and create in the land of their ancestors under the auspices of Mount Ararat,” said the President of the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia, Ashot Yeghiazaryan.
The FCHA mission would not be possible without the support of those who share their time and their financial resources. It was back in 2007-2008 when a partnership started with Armenia’s leading telecommunications operator VivaCell-MTS. It was a new but promising partnership.

In 2007-2008 owing to the generous support of VivaCell-MTS 28 families were assisted through decent housing; families who had been living in metal containers, basements, dilapidated houses or other temporary shelters. In 2014 the partnership restarted, and 25 families from the borderland regions of Armenia were assisted in a year. 2015 was even more fruitful, the partnership gained momentum with the number of families to be supported reaching 40.

By the end of 2015 the total number of the families assisted will reach 93 - the lives of 93 families changed, the lives of almost 500 people improved in all the communities of Armenia.

Now VivaCell-MTS is the largest partner of Fuller Center for Housing Armenia in terms of providing families with decent housing.

Yet the support of the VivaCell-MTS Family was not limited to finance - hundreds of volunteer staff members, led by the General Manager of the company Ralph Yirikian, regularly joined in the construction works, made their hands dirty with cement, worked shoulder to shoulder with and for those families and when leaving said “Օղություն զույգիր իջույց” (may your home prosper!). This is the evidence of the highest sense of corporate social responsibility the company is guided by.

In Armenia over 64,000 families need improvement of housing conditions, 26,199 families are homeless (Social Reforms in Armenia; Hrayr Marukhian Foundation, 2011). And those families are determined to leave Armenia in search of a better life.

In 2015 a survey was conducted by Fuller Center for Housing Armenia to evaluate the impacts of the partnership and none of the assisted families has left Armenia. This means the partnership has had its positive influence on decreasing emigration from Armenia. Along with the improvement of housing conditions the financial stability of the families has increased by 34%.

Before being included in the housing project none of the families had assessed their lives as “better” in comparison with the other families in the society. Now 47% of the surveyed families consider that after being included in the project they live better than other families of the society. The 42%, who considered that their housing conditions were worse than the housing conditions of other families in the society now consider it “good” or “equal”.

“This year it is the 10th anniversary of VivaCell-MTS, our largest partner, a company where each employee is guided by the highest sense of corporate social responsibility. To honor the 10th anniversary of our largest partner our partnership flag was raised on the top of the biblical Mt. Ararat, 5165m high/16,945 feet. With much appreciation, we reflect on how much resources, time and efforts VivaCell-MTS has dedicated and continues to dedicate for more and more families to live decently,” shared Fuller Center for Housing Armenia President Ashot Yeghiazaryan.
As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands, one for helping yourself, the other for helping others.

~Audrey Hepburn

The effects of poverty housing reach far beyond leaking roofs, sanitation, heating problems... It damages a family’s health, education, sense of security. And the mission of FCHA is not just building houses but homes where families can live psychologically and physically healthy and safe.

And we can proudly say that we are not alone in our mission. Since the inception of the organization our Global Builders volunteer teams come to Armenia with the mission of making a tangible difference in the lives of Armenian families in need. This is a physical and emotional experience - people of different ages and nationalities come together, work closely with and for families of another culture, make friends and a real difference in the lives of those families who do not have basic, decent shelter.

This summer the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia hosted 3 Global Builders Volunteer teams - St. John Armenian Church of Greater Detroit team, led by Jacqueline Elchemmas, and two teams, led by Cynthia Reimers Erickson and Suzanne Daghlian. All the 3 experienced team leaders lead teams to Armenia already many years. It was the 10th year of leading teams to Armenia for Cynthia Reimers Erickson and during these years she has led 10 teams with 109 team members altogether. For experienced team leaders Jacqueline Elchemmas and Suzanne Daghlian this was the 7th year of leading teams and during these years they have led 7 teams with 87 and 89 members respectively. Many of these team members keep coming to Armenia with the mission of helping more families and making more friends. This means that this is also a perfect way of making strong bridges between Armenians and other nations of different countries.

The teams worked directly with the families making a generational-level change in their lives. Two more teams are going to be hosted in Fall. Two more families will feel the happiness and safety of owning a home.

“"I am very much impressed of Armenian culture and history. People are so amazing and hospitable. I liked to be here and getting this experience which is the best one in my life. I would like to do as much as possible for those who are less fortunate to have their decent place to live in, which is the right of every human in this world. Thanks God that gave me this chance to come here and to have my part in this human mission. Helping them we do help ourselves to be a good person,” shared Grace Elizabeth Wu Caulo, a volunteer member of Suzanne Daghlian’s GB team.

For the families, the volunteers worked with and for, the housing support was only a part of the happiness. The true happiness for them was to feel the kindness and the philanthropy of people who were not their relatives, neighbors or friends, but who became like family members for them at the end of the trip.

There are so many ways to be happy, but the true happiness comes when a helping hand becomes a hand of rescue and our Global Builders volunteer teams prove it.
Since its inception, the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) preserves and promotes the Armenian identity and heritage through educational, cultural, and humanitarian programs. The goal is to establish a union that would in every way assist the Armenian people.

One of the ways, AGBU has its contribution in the development of Armenia, are the youth programs. This year two teams of AGBU joined FCHA helping build homes for Armenian families.

AGBU Montreal team of 37 members joint Fuller Center for Housing Armenia team for 2 weeks to help build homes for two families – Manukyan family from Kakavdzor village of Aragatsotn region and Antonyan family from Mayakovky village of Kotayk region.

10 days of hard and productive work-5 days with each family.

AGBU Discover Armenia team of 50 members joint Hayrapetyan family from Pokr Vedi village of Ararat region working 3 days, helping them with the construction of their house.

It was pleasant to recognize that these young people came to Armenia with the humanitarian mission and did fantastic work helping 3 Armenian families have the blessings that many of us have – a decent house to live in. The homeowners kept telling that the work the young people did they would have done in several months. It was obvious that these young people were leaded with the famous words of the founder of scouting movement, Lord Baden-Powell, who asks to leave the world a better place then when you found it.

They really left a better place to live for three families who will move to their new decent homes sooner thanks to the tremendous work done by AGBU Montreal Rovers and AGBU Discover Armenia teams. Many of the team members were born and grown up in different parts of the world and it was their first experience of visiting homeland. It is wonderful to see how the third and sometimes the fourth generation comes to his/her homeland not just like a tourist but a volunteer and not only gives, but gets something back. “You have a home whenever in Armenia” – these were the words of the family members to all volunteers, and these are more than just words, this means the mission is done. They built homes for others but get a home, friends and lots of nice memories for themselves.

To remind, it’s already the eighth time that volunteer teams from AGBU Discover Armenia and the third time AGBU Canada teams (back in 2010 and 2012) are joining Fuller Center for Housing Armenia with the humanitarian mission of helping families feel the happiness of homeownership.

ARDI is a 5-year program funded by the USAID and being implemented by FCHA and Heifer Armenia. The program aims to increase rural employment by tackling constraints to rural economic development of select rural communities in the Syunik, Vayots Dzor and Lori regions of Armenia. The program supports interventions in three main rural economic sectors/Value Chains involving Dairy Processing, Fruit Processing and Rural Tourism. To read ARDI program updates please click here.

To support our programs, please make online donation through our website: www.fcharmenia.org

Or send a check to:
The Fuller Center for Housing, PO Box 523, Americus, GA 31709, USA
Please add “Armenia” in the memo line.

For “Honoring 100 Years by Saving 100 Families” project please add “Armenia-100”
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