

WOMEN'S SUPPORT CENTER

March 2016 Newsletter

Welcome to the second edition of our quarterly newsletter! Every day we work with survivors of domestic violence to ensure their safety and wellbeing by offering social, legal, and psychological counseling and shelter support as well as skills training. With 2016 now well underway, we are implementing a number of new initiatives with a focus on primary prevention and continued assistance to survivors. Engage with us and join our mission by following us on [Facebook](#), our [website](#), and [contacting](#) us. We would love to hear from you!

OUTREACH

Crowdfunding campaign

Over the holidays, we launched a crowdfunding campaign to raise funds for our shelter. With your support, we were able to raise \$11,370, which far exceeded our original goal! Your kind gesture is being felt by each and every woman and child who has received clothing, hygienic items, warm food, and a place to call home this year. The campaign was able to generate such an outpouring of support from friends of the WSC that some even took the initiative to put together clothing drives to benefit our women and children. Check out our crowdfunding campaign by clicking [here](#).



West Coast tour

Executive director Maro Matosian, in collaboration with Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA) and friends of the WSC, held a series of successful events in San Diego, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, where she spoke about gender inequality and obstacles that battered women face in Armenia as a result of the absence of legislation to support them as well as the advocacy work of WSC towards systemic change. We are so thankful to AIWA, who organized book signings and auction to complement Maro's presentations, and the Armenian Relief Society of San Francisco for their support and interest. These events served as an important opportunity for knowledge exchange and recruiting active community members to join our mission.



Hearts of Armenia

WSC supporter Meghedi Melody Nazarian, who published a picture book filled with 87 hearts, is graciously donating half of the proceeds to support our programs. Describing the vision behind the book, Meghedi writes, "Whether romantic, platonic, or familial, the warmth and hospitality that's exchanged in Armenia is palpable. So it's fitting that as soon as I arrived, I started seeing hearts everywhere I looked: in the shape of leaves,

rocks, flowers, as graffiti and art, and in so many other forms.” You can purchase a copy of this beautiful book on the [Hearts of Armenia](#) website.



A FOCUS ON PREVENTION

Capacity Building

At the start of the year, we launched an exciting two-year program with support from UN Women entitled “Creating a coordinated response mechanism to prevent and combat domestic violence in Armenia”. Over the course of the first year, we are offering comprehensive trainings on domestic violence to 200 social workers, psychologists, police officers, priests, school teachers, students, and women’s rights activists in Yerevan and throughout Armenia’s regions. Our comprehensive trainings provide key information on the causes and consequences of domestic violence and how best to assist victims and their families. Following the training course, we will be drafting and publishing a manual on standard operating procedures for social workers in the hopes of strengthening Armenia’s multi-sectoral response.



Training of Trainers

Through a collaboration with Open Society Foundations, we have trained Yerevan-based police officers and have recruited a number of them to take part in a Training of Trainers (ToT) program, where we will not only share valuable information and experience but also equip them with the means of carrying out similar trainings in the future.



COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

EVN community theatre

Within the framework of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, our staff and beneficiaries took part in an initiative to shed light on women's issues through 24-hour theatre, where writers, actors, and directors came together and produced three pieces on gender equality, domestic violence, and trafficking. The result was both emotional and captivating. For our beneficiaries, in particular, performing on stage was an empowering and exhilarating experience.



SURVIVOR SPOTLIGHT

Lusine Ghapuzyan, a mother of five from the Lori region, suffered abuse at the hands of her husband for 17 years. She fled her home over half a year ago and is living at the WSC shelter with two of her children. You can learn more about Lusine's recent court hearing, the growing severity of cases we see, and institutional challenges to combating domestic violence in Armenia by clicking on the following links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CaAOrGCXT7k> (English)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XgIUfsKqd84> (Armenian)

