

TOP STORIES

\$2.35 Million Raised to Aid Children of Armenia at COAF Gala



NEW YORK, NY – The Children of Armenia Fund raised \$2.35 million during its annual “Save a Generation” awards dinner – an elegant affair held at Manhattan’s Cipriani Restaurant on Friday, October 20, 2006. Actress Jane Fonda, as well as

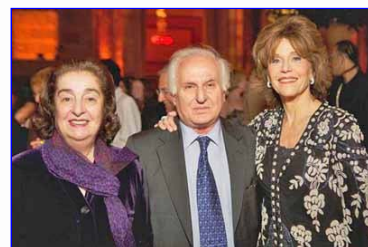
former U.S. ambassador to Armenia John Evans and his wife Donna, was among the dignitaries and Armenian community leaders who attended the function, alongside a sizable crowd of young Armenian supporters in various professions who had contributed \$500 a ticket to support COAF’s humanitarian work. In all, around 360 people attended. The evening culminated in an announcement by COAF founder Dr. Garo Armen that he was making a personal donation of \$250,000, to add to the \$1.5 million already raised in the run-up to the dinner. Subsequent pledges from the floor, as well as proceeds from a silent auction of Armenian celebrity artifacts that launched the evening, made up the balance of the \$2.35 million. COAF also expects additional contributions in the coming days.



Andrea Martin, the award-winning comedienne known for her quirky character creations (some evidently drawn from her Armenian background), emceed the award program. MSNBC anchor Alex Witt presented recognition awards. Dr. Armen himself made the award presentation to the evening's honoree, George Pagoumian, who has donated more than \$150,000 to COAF's programs, and whose foundation has directly provided significant aid to Armenia and its children. Pagoumian accepted the award, pledging to continue his support and adding that he is "proud to be doing God's work while on this earth." Recognition award-winners Eduardo Eurnekian and Pierre Michel Fattouche were profiled in a video showing their creative, far-sighted investment in Armenia. Mr. Eurnekian is building a dazzling new terminal for Yerevan's Zvartnotz airport; Mr. Fattouche (who is Lebanese) has built a state-of-the-art telecommunications system in Armenia. In an interview, Dr. Armen called their efforts "business philanthropy": long-term, for-profit ventures done to the highest standards, that will encourage growth and expand opportunity in Armenia. Jane Fonda, the award-winning actress and frequent political activist, delivered a keynote address that dealt in a broad way with her advocacy work on behalf of disadvantaged women and children, while touching on points of contact with realities in Armenia and COAF's work there. Remarking on the curiosity of her presence – Fonda has not previously been known for an Armenian connection – she said she was "not only happy but honored" to be associated with the COAF event, duly acknowledged the Genocide and denounced denial, and called the recent vote in the French Parliament "an important step." Ms. Fonda cited this year's Noble Peace Prize-winner Mohamad Yunis, who has achieved humanitarian objectives in some of the world's most desperate regions by stimulating local micro-economies, as a model for effective philanthropic work, and made favorable comparison with COAF's projects. In her most provocative statement, Ms. Fonda suggested that relief efforts targeting women and girls would prove more effective to societies as a whole, since females "form the basis of everyday life." In a subsequent interview, Garo Armen confirmed that in Armenia's villages, "much of the heavy lifting" of life is, in fact, done by women, owing to the departure of men looking for work. Ms. Fonda concluded by saying that COAF does not strive to provide a static safety net, but a way to help people reach higher. "Garo is providing people with a ladder." Dr. Armen ended the program with his announcement of the proceeds from the dinner. He was introduced by his son, Sam, now 18, who came to America through the Medical Outreach organization as a 4-year-old orphan from Gumri, to receive medical treatment for his eyes. His story, related in the *Armenian Reporter*, moved Dr. Armen to seek out the boy and adopt him.

REALITY WITHOUT DISTORTIONS

In an exclusive interview with the Reporter, Garo Armen said that, as a result of the October 20th dinner and other fundraising, COAF's budget for the next 12 months will be well over one million dollars – this, in comparison to its several-hundred-thousand-dollar budget at its inception three years ago. He said that the goal of these annual dinners, beyond fundraising, is outreach to greater numbers of people, to make them aware of the real issues in Armenia, and to "bring reality without distortion" to the attention of the guests. In Armenia's villages, he said, "There is a crisis that needs addressing immediately; conditions will slip day by day unless we intervene." He mentioned the need to shore up villagers' access to education, nutrition, and clean water, and to intervene in languishing village economies. "Our goal is to bring them up on their feet, to let them help themselves," he said. Optimistically, Dr. Armen wished "to impress [on people] how much can be done in a short period, with relatively modest sums of money, to make a dramatic difference in the lives of thousands of children." He stressed "the need for a plan, executed to superb standards." Indeed, it was this quality that had brought all the October 20th honorees to COAF's attention. Of Jane



Fonda's part in the evening, Armen said that she "dazzled the crowd with her persona," and that her fame, passion for helping children, and her outspoken nature added color to the evening. She had been approached to appear at the dinner through various personal connections, and was suitably impressed by the occasion and by COAF's cause. Armen said COAF received her commitment to reach out to other celebrities on the organization's behalf, and to incorporate information about its projects in her own efforts.

V.L. and C.H.Z.