

A.R.S. Social Services celebrates it's 30th anniversary

By Emma Basmadjian

On May 1, 1987, A.R.S. Social Services opened its doors to the Armenian Community of Toronto. It's vision has been "Strengthening individuals, strengthening communities". After 30 years their mission still stands true by serving as a connection point for community members to identify and access financial, health and other services and support.

On October 1, 2017, with over 130 spectators, we celebrated the 30th anniversary of A.R.S. Toronto Roubina Chapter's Social Services. As the guests arrived, they were welcomed with piano music played by Maria Davoudian and power point slides showing the history and testimony of individuals who benefited from the services offered by social services. The celebration began with our National Anthems after our M.C. of the day Mary Badalian welcomed the guests.



The first guest speaker, Ungerouhi Houri Najarian provided a summary of the A.R.S. Social Services history. Ungerouhi Houri reminded us that A.R.S. symbolizes "dzarayoutune" meaning servitude. Donating funds to charitable organizations, hospitals, A.R.S. Day school; supporting newcomers, the elderly and youth; supporting food bank drives and North York Women's Centre are just some examples of how Social Services serves its community. This spirit of serving our community, in my opinion, flows

naturally for the Armenian woman. I am not alone when I say we learned to help and strengthen each other from our grandmothers. Ungerouhi Houri counted the many accomplishments of Social Services. For example, securing 30 beds at Sienna Senior nursing home Ararat Wing and an additional 15 beds at North York Seniors Health Centre. With the unconditional help of our volunteers, our babigs and dadigs are served Armenian food, offered cultural events, together celebrate Christmas and Easter and visited by the clergy. Social Services has helped thousands of individuals with employment, housing, counselling, access to scholarships, translation, English classes, and much more. More recently, the office has been busy with supporting Syrian Armenians to transition to their new lives in Canada. Ungerouhi Houri concluded her remarks with suggestions for future endeavors and thanked the many volunteers, the A.R.S. Social Services and A.R.S. Toronto Roubina Chapter executive committee members for their hard work.

Our second guest speaker was Ungerouhi Natalie Manoukian, A.R.S. Regional member, who presented the impact and role of Social Services in our community. Ungerouhi Natalie counted the numerous ways Social Services assists the community and emphasized how one's self-esteem, self-confidence, and sense of independence is strengthened through helping hands, which is the branding of the Social Services office. Ungerouhi Natalie stated that people thrive when they have proper information, tools and resources to enhance their mental, physical, and emotional well-being and quality of life. She concluded her remarks by explaining how Social Services serves as the heart of the community and cares for its community.



Ungerouhi Iren Tilemian, the chair of A.R.S. Toronto Roubina chapter, thanked the guest speakers and presented them with flower arrangements. She also thanked all those who support A.R.S.

Six special individuals were recognized for their many years of service with our seniors residing in nursing homes. Ungerouhi Christine Avedissian, the chair of the Social Services committee, invited Hasmig Boyajian, Meline Karageosian, Hasmig Sarkissian, Betty Lousararian, Anais Orchanian, and Krikor Kaloustian to come forward and receive certificates of recognition.



Our guests were entertained with music by Carly and Jackie Sahagian.

The event concluded with Mary Badalian inviting our guests for the cutting of the cake and refreshments.

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