

CYSCA HOSTS YOUNG NGO LEADERS FROM ARMENIA

Follow-on Activities Planned

The Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association (CYSCA) hosted a delegation of young NGO professionals from Armenia late March, early April 2013, sponsored by the Open World exchange program of the U. S. Congress. Five young women and a male facilitator took part in a whirlwind week of meetings and site visits in the Boston area on topics covering NGO management, civic participation, the US legislative process, and civil society.

The group met with Harvard JFK School of Government professors; Tufts University professors; Federal, State and Municipal legislative/administrative heads; NGO leaders and their organizations; and local Armenian organizations. Highlights included a meeting with Harvard Professor Kenneth Winston, covering anti-corruption. He had provided the group with a case to study beforehand and during his meeting with them used it to demonstrate corruption issues in government. Another highlight was a panel discussion hosted by the Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA) involving the delegates as panelists. They discussed women's issues in Armenia and shared their hopes and concerns for the future of women in Armenia. They proudly commented that today there are more NGOs managed and staffed by women in Armenia than ever before. The group also met with staff from Congressman Edward Markey and Senator Elizabeth Warren's offices, as well as State Representative Jonathan Hecht, Cambridge Mayor Henrietta Davis and other Cambridge city officials.

Other meetings included an evening with the AGBU Boston YP group and a session with Jack Antounian founder and head of the Armenian Business Network. CYSCA project manager Alisa Stepanian commented, "It was a privilege to host these young NGO leaders from Armenia. We are indeed encouraged that several of the professionals whom they met expressed interest in a return visit to Armenia to continue their dialogue on civil society issues". Program director Jack Medzorian remarked, "I am pleased to report that during my visit to Armenia in May I was able to organize a meeting of the group with U.

S. Embassy Open World management, during which it was agreed to organize a conference with peer groups and invite return visits of the professional hosts our group met in the USA.”

This group was sponsored by Open World, a congressional legislative exchange program which brings groups of young professionals from post Soviet republics, on different topics, to the United States. During their stay, groups are immersed in a week of activities and meetings on their respective themes. CYSCA was very proud to host this wonderful, passionate group and looks forward to continued opportunities.

CYSCA was formed in 1987 as a non-profit corporation by a group of concerned citizens of Cambridge, MA. In the 25 years which followed, many citizen exchanges and training programs have taken place. In the past 15 years alone, CYSCA has hosted 20 professional groups from Armenia on a variety of themes, such as entrepreneurship, social work, education, theater management, museum management, university administration, historic and cultural preservation, NGO management, public health, environmental protection, as well as ten youth exchanges, school partnerships and school aid. For more information contact WWW.CYSACA.org