

Edward and Helen Mardigian Foundation Pledges \$250,000 for the Wellness Center in Armenia

By Christina Yagjian

WASHINGTON, DC - The Armenian American Cultural Association (AACA), US-based sponsor of the Armenian American Wellness Center in Yerevan, Armenia, recently announced a generous pledge of \$250,000 from the Edward and Helen Mardigian Foundation of Michigan. This heartfelt contribution will help to realize the Wellness Center's largest transformation to date - the complete renovation, expansion, and seismic reinforcement of the six-story building that currently houses the Wellness Center. The expansion project will cost an estimated 3 million dollars and is expected to be completed by October 2007.

The Wellness Center, originally founded in 1997 to provide previously non-existent breast screening services to Armenian women, expanded its services in 2001 to include Western-standard cervical screening through Pap smears and basic gynecology, facilitated by its state-of-the-art pathology lab.

Upon completion, the renovated Center, in addition to the quality female-centered services it already provides, will be home to the most modern primary health-care facility in Armenia, emphasizing family medicine and providing quality diagnosis and on-site treatment. The building will introduce seismic reinforcement techniques developed in California, Western building standards, and environmentally clean energy generation through solar power and an innovative energy system known as Combined Heat & Power.

In honor of the Mardigian Foundation's gift, the fourth floor of the renovated Wellness Center will be named the Edward & Helen



Helen Mardigian, philanthropist and supporter of the Wellness Center's expansion and renovation.



The Armenian American Wellness Center in Yerevan as it will look when completed in October 2007.

Mardigian Outpatient Surgery Complex, signified by a plaque placed at the floor's entrance. Additionally, they will be recognized by an individual plaque displayed in the main lobby of the Center. The fourth floor will house an outpatient surgery complex, introduced in Armenia for the first time, which will include a fully equipped surgery room, preparation and recovery area, sterilization room, and post-surgery observation rooms. The floor will also include a chemotherapy treatment area and a medical conference room.

"I believe that all of us must work to ensure Armenia's future, and an essential piece of the puzzle is developing the country's capacity to provide primary health-care services to everyone," said Helen Mardigian. "The Wellness Center has done an excellent job in preventing breast and cervical cancer in Armenia, and I fully support them as they expand their services to provide quality health care to families

as well. The renovated Center will serve as a model for all other medical facilities throughout Armenia."

As philanthropists, the Mardigians have long been dedicated to improving access to quality health care and are longtime supporters of issues related to the Armenian religion, culture, education, and social welfare. Most notably, they have supported Saint John's Armenian Church in Detroit, the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, the Armenian Assembly of America, and the University of Michigan at both the Ann Arbor and Dearborn campuses. Helen Mardigian recently made a donation to the Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, Michigan in memory of her daughter, Marilyn Varbedian.

Reflecting on the Mardigian family, Rita Balian, AACA President and Wellness Center Founder, explains, "Helen Mardigian and her late husband Edward are highly respected among Armenian and American communities for

their humanitarian spirit, philanthropy, leadership, and kindness. Helen has been a role model to me ever since I first met her in the late seventies when we were working with AGBU/USA under the dedicated leadership of her husband, and I am simply elated that she has decided to reach out and support the life-saving work of our Wellness Center in Armenia, in which I am so deeply involved."

Prior to his retirement in 1985, Edward Mardigian served as the Vice President of the AGBU International Board and as President of its U.S. Central Committee. Helen Mardigian has supported the Wellness Center since 2002, and shares in the Center's mission to save, prolong, and improve the lives of Armenian women and their families, through early and accurate detection of breast and cervical cancer and the provision of primary health-care services.

AACA is currently seeking sponsors to fund the construction of individual

floors, with each floor dedicated in honor of its benefactor. The construction of each floor is estimated at over \$250,000 and, to date, AACA has secured sponsors for the second, fourth and fifth floors of the building.

Although partial funding for the Center's expansion is being provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which has supported the work of the Wellness Center since 2000, AACA is responsible for raising over \$2 million on its own through grassroots fundraising. Without the help of generous donors such as Helen Mardigian, Anoush Mathevosian, the Balian, and others, this project would not be possible.

For more information about the Wellness Center, or to make a donation, interested persons should contact AACA, a US-registered 501 (c)3 non-profit organization, at info@aacainc.org, or by phone at (703) 416-2555.



Hasmik Davtyan, Head Radiologist at the Wellness Center in Yerevan, concentrates as she performs a breast ultrasound.



Wellness Center gynecologists and support personnel prepare a screening room for the next patient.



Tyler Maas, of the California-based Fyfe Co., instructs the Armenian crew in seismically reinforcing the building.