



International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education



REPORT

On trip to the USA – Boston and New York Cities for strengthening the relationships with existing donors and supporters and establishing new relationships

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Yerevan
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Background information

The long-term financial sustainability of ICARE/ATC depends on establishment of an endowment fund: a widely accepted method for educational institutions to assure continued financial support. The InnovATE Armenia project explores the possibilities and legal frameworks for establishing the ICARE endowment fund. The project also explores possibilities for increasing scholarship and other funding. The Armenian Diaspora is viewed as an important potential contributor for ICARE, therefore, active communication and relationships are needed with the Armenian community in the USA.

During the period of June 5 - 16, 2016 the ICARE Director visited Boston and New York City to strengthen the existing relationships and establish new relationships with potential donors and supporters. The trip was planned in the scope of InnovATE Armenia project *Activity 2: Increase the Capacity of ICARE/ATC to Increase Revenue and Decrease Costs*, in particular in line with sub activity 2.2 *Establish Endowment Fund* and 2.3 *Establish and Expand ATC Alumni Network*.

Goal of the visit

The main goal of the visit was to conduct 2 networking events in the USA aimed at strengthening the existing relationship with potential supporters and to establish new relationship with Diaspora organizations, family foundations and agribusinesses in the Boston and NYC area.

June 6-8, 2016

Pembroke, Blacksburg, VA

Activities and Outcomes

During the first days of my visit I was able to participate in the InnovATE workshop “AET Institutional Transformation: A Project Design Review Workshop” at the Mountain Lake Lodge in Pembroke, Virginia. I attended round table discussions, participated in the poster session and presented the ICARE InnovATE Armenia poster.

Then I had a meeting with Dr. Van Crowder, Executive Director, Office of International Research, Education and Development (OIREED) and Dr. Walter Witschey, fundraising expert. We discussed the priorities and actions to be concentrated on during InnovATE Armenia year 3 activities. It was agreed to further activate the fundraising efforts and find a consultant/facilitator who can manage ICARE’s fundraising efforts in the USA. Walter Witschey provided additional insights about communication strategies with potential donors and supporters. I also met with Mr. Adam Short, Associate Director for Corporate and Foundation Relations University Advancement. He provided useful insights on grant-making database of the Armenian foundations.

I visited the new Food Science and Technology complex at Virginia Tech accompanying with Dr. Joe Marcy. We reviewed the modules of the Food Safety Systems Management program that are under development by Penn State and VT. The new FSSM program will be launched in January 2017 as an additional certificate program at the Agribusiness Teaching Center.



June 9 -12, 2016

Boston, MA

Activities and Outcomes

The main goal of Boston visit was to organize a networking event with the Armenian Business Network (ABN – www.armenianbusinessnetwork.com). The agreement on organizing a networking event jointly with ABN was made during my last visit to Boston. The ABN Executive team members provided valuable assistance in the whole process. Without the kind efforts and assistance of Karina Demurchyan, Arlette Yegumians, Jack Antounian and George Haroutiounian the event wouldn't be possible.

About 100+ people attended the event. I made a presentation on Wine Making and Agribusiness Education in Armenia. The announcement of the event is available in Appendix. The outreach went beyond the list of participants. The event was featured in the Armenian Mirror – Spectator: <http://www.mirrorspectator.com/2016/06/16/armenian-wines-win-over-kgb-crowd-at-abn-event/>. The editor of The Armenian Mirror – Spectator, Mr. Aram Arkun was also attending the event. The full article is available in Appendix.

I met with ATC alumni Tatevik Zohrabyan who just graduated from MIT with MBA. We explored ways of cooperation with ATC and she agreed to actively participate in executive seminars and videoconference based training offered by ICARE. Soon she will conduct an executive seminar at ICARE on Social Media Management.

June 13 -16, 2016

New York City

Activities and Outcomes

The New York City networking event (Luncheon presentation) was organized by Carnegie Corporation (see announcement in Appendix) on June 15. Ms. Deana Arsenian, the vice president of Carnegie Corporation was the local host providing a great assistance for organizing the networking event. Among the participants were Mr. Zohrab Mnatsakanyan the Armenian Ambassador to UN, Patrick Sarkissian from OneArmenia Nicole Vardanian from COAF, Rachel Najarian from IDEa Foundation, Irina Lazarian from Karagheusian Foundation, Tavit Najarian of Najarian Associates, Vahan Tanal, Mark Malkhasian, Yelena Nersesyan, Michael Ansour from March Global Advisors, Andre Berge from Fund for Armenian Relief, George Bournoutian from Iona College. Many of the participants were planning a trip to Armenia and I invited them to visit ICARE and learn more about our programs and activities. The event went very well. The participants were impressed with ICARE success story and expressed willingness to support ICARE fundraising efforts.

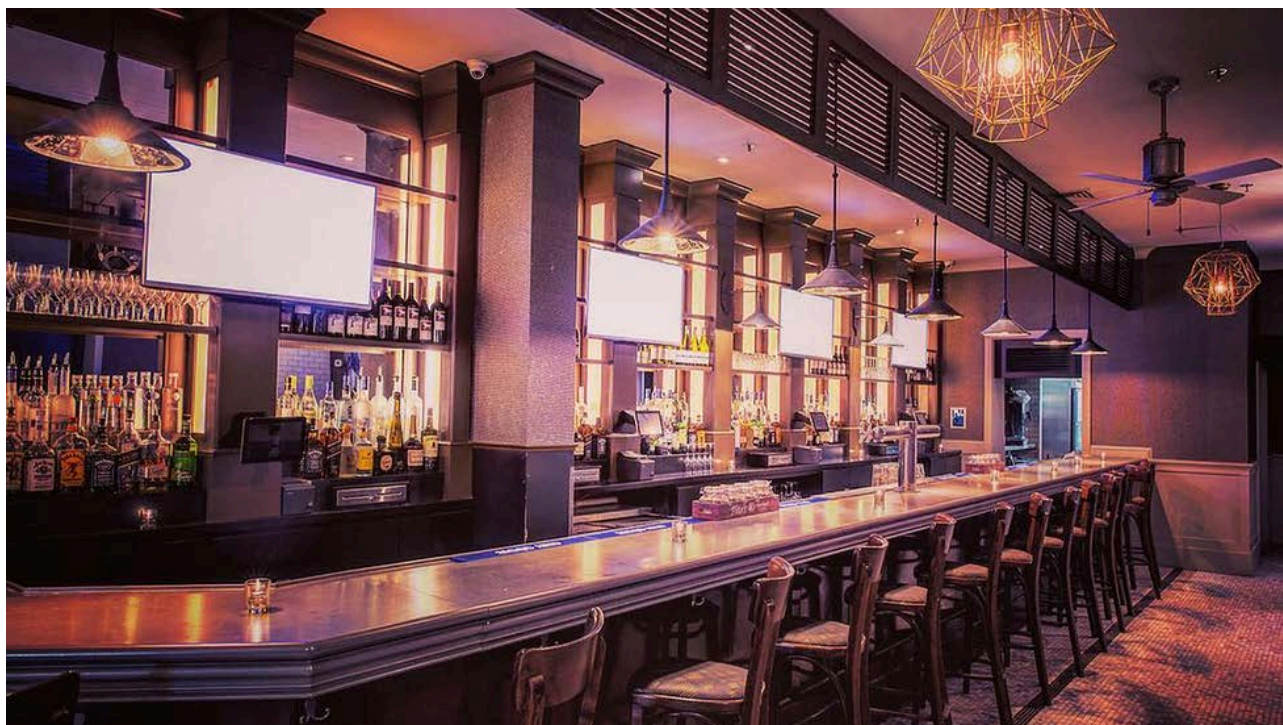
Dr. John Nichols, chairman of the ICARE Board of Trustees also participated in the event travelling all the way from College Station, Texas. The ICARE Development Office will continue following up with the new contacts made during both events in Boston and NYC.



Acknowledgements

My deep gratitude goes to Ms. Deana Arsenian, Ms. Karina Demurchian, Ms. Arlette Yegumians, Mr. Jack Antounian. Without their kind support and dedication the ICARE networking events in Boston and New York City wouldn't be possible.

Appendix 1. Announcement of the ABN Spring Networking Event.



**ABN SPRING BUSINESS
NETWORKING EVENT**
featuring speaker **Dr. Vardan Urutyan**

June 9, 2016 @ 6pm @ Kingston Grille & Bar (KGB)
25 Kingston St, Boston 02111

Please join us **Thursday, June 9, 2016 @ 6pm** at the new & hip KGB ([Kingston Grille & Bar](#)) in Boston for the ABN Spring Business Networking Event and Speaker Presentation with Dr. Vardan Urutyán on “Wine Making and Agribusiness Education in Armenia”.

In most recent years, Armenian wines have been competing on the world stage with some of the best wines and winemakers from around the world. In 2012 Bloomberg listed 2010 [Zorah Karasi Areni Noir](#) in their [Top 10 Wines](#) lists. “I was wowed by my first-ever taste of an Armenian wine, this stylish red made from Areni noir grapes and aged in traditional clay amphora.” said Elin McCoy/Bloomberg.

ABN is excited to feature **Dr. Vardan Urutyán**, Director of International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education ([ICARE](#)) and Co-Founder of **EVN-Wine Academy** in Armenia. Founded by Texas A&M, ICARE provides innovative education in agribusiness through best international knowledge, research and developments in the field. ICARE has been one of the catalysts of the growing agribusiness in Armenia, specifically the wine industry and wine making, through education of food and agribusiness industry professionals. The employment rate of the graduates of ICARE programs within the first year of graduation is 92%. Dr. Urutyán will share his insights on ICARE, Agribusiness education, and the wine industry in Armenia. You will also have the opportunity to taste a few of the exclusive wines from Armenia.

Watch these two short videos on [EVN-Wine Academy](#) @ <https://goo.gl/eq2KOC> and [ICARE](#) @ <https://goo.gl/81xOPr>. You can learn more about the programs at www.icare.am.

As always this event is free of charge with complimentary apps provided by KGB and a cash bar. Please feel free to bring your business cards and collateral for display.

We are grateful to Mr. Dimitri Petrosian, Mr. Shahrokh Reza and the entire KGB Team for sponsoring ABN's Spring Networking Event!

We look forward to seeing you all on June 9th! Please RSVP to ArmenianBusinessNetwork@gmail.com by June 6th.

SCHEDULE:

6pm – Registration

7pm – Dr. Vardan Urutyán's presentation “Wine Making and Agribusiness Education in Armenia”
Networking immediately after presentation.

VENUE: KGB (Kingston Grille & Bar) @ 25 Kingston St, Boston, MA 02111

Kingston Grille & Bar serves bistro cuisine in an urban, old-world atmosphere. Guests can lounge at the bar and front café area, or relax in the dining room. Top notch service and a mouth-watering menu set the stage for a memorable Boston dining experience. Please find more information on the venue at www.KGBBoston.com

If you are not currently an ABN Member you can join at the link below, however, membership is not a requirement for attending the June 9th event. Please feel free to extend this invitation to your Armenian contacts in the New England area, as you deem appropriate.

To join ABN visit <http://www.ArmenianBusinessNetwork.com> and request to join on the ABN homepage, through the LinkedIn and Facebook icons.

THE ARMENIAN Mirror-Spectator

Armenian Wines Win over KGB Crowd at ABN Event

BOSTON, MASS. | JUNE 16, 2016 1:29 PM



Armenian Business Network's Karina Demurchyan introduces Dr. Vardan Urutyun



Tekeyan's Aram Arkun

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON — The Armenian Business Network (ABN) sponsored a networking event with a presentation by Dr. Vardan Urutyun on winemaking and agribusiness education in Armenia on June 9 at the Kingston Grille and Bar (KGB) in downtown Boston. The event also included presentations from two organizations fundraising for aid to Armenia and Artsakh – the

Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada (TCA), and the Memory Dignity Justice Association. As many as 120 people were present.

Karina Demurchyan, a member of the ABN executive council, served as master of ceremonies in the lively, crowded environment. After briefly speaking about ABN, she introduced this writer, Aram Arkun, TCA executive director, who pointed out that Tekeyan's new program is small and transparent. It sends aid directly to victims of the recent fighting in Artsakh and Armenia, including wounded soldiers and the families of soldiers killed during the fighting, through its representative in Yerevan, and it obtains receipts. It will report on the distributions, which are now beginning. It does not charge any administrative costs, which the organization itself absorbs (see the TCA-Boston Facebook site or call 617 924-4455).

Manoog Kaprielian then spoke about the Memory Dignity Justice Association (MDJA), which strives to achieve the three goals embedded in its name concerning the violence against Armenians in Azerbaijan from 1988 to 1990. One of its members, Eduard Fandunyan, recently donated an ambulance and a bus for people with physical disabilities, to Artaskh. The Association is raising funds as well as collecting certain items necessary there such as medical supplies or clothing as donations. He said that MDJA will post details for donation drop-off arrangements and financial contributions on its Facebook page. Interested parties can also contact Garen Bagdasarian (garen1562@gmail.com, tel. 401 569-7305). The shipment is expected to be ready at the end of this June.

Representatives of the government of the Republic of Mountainous Karabagh as well as the association's local contacts will make the final delivery of the shipment. Donations and delivery will be fully transparent and reported.

Urutyman then made his presentation, accompanied by slides. He is the general director of the International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education (ICARE) in Yerevan, established by Texas A&M University in 2005 to run the Agribusiness Teaching Center (ATC) previously created in 2000 as part of the Armenian National Agrarian University (ANAU). ATC offers undergraduate and graduate programs, including the Master of Agribusiness program from ANAU, and a graduate certificate from Texas A&M University. In 2015, it had 127 students.

Urutyman's focus, however, was about wine as part of agribusiness in Armenia. It is one of the most important exports of the Republic of Armenia along with the rest of agribusiness.

About one-third of the population of Armenia is involved in agriculture and it produces 26 percent of the gross domestic product, according to Urutyman. Agriculture is important for national security as well as the economy, as it provides a livelihood for people in the villages near the borders of Armenia.

The wine sector has recently been growing well, especially exports. The discovery of the oldest winery of the world, 6,100 years old, in the Areni caves has stimulated world interest in Armenian wines. The number of wineries has increased so that today there are 35 in Armenia.

It is not only wine exportation that has increased. Wine consumption per capita has been rising in Armenia with the creation of new wine bars and restaurants serving wine. Consumption in Armenia per capita per year today is 8.8 liters, up from 1.4 in 2010, while imported wines are decreasing in quantity.

There are some 400 native varieties of grapes in Armenia but only 70 have been preserved, and of these, 12 are being cultivated. Urutyman brought several types of Armenian wines, both red and white, and offered them for tasting to the guests. They included Zorah, Karas, ArmAs, Vanardi and Zara. Urutyman was assisted by Arthur Grigoryan, the development director of ICARE.

They also brought the first wine made by three students from EVN, who happened to all be women. It took the students approximately 8 months to make the wine and about 6 months to do the necessary paperwork so that the wine would be ready by their June 1 graduation.

In the old days, Soviet winemakers did not use advanced technology. Back then, Armenia focused on cognac. ICARE created the EVN Wine Academy two years ago in cooperation with Semina Consulting. It offers an 18-month enology program taught in English with instructors from the German Geisenheim University. The first graduation took place this June, and the 14 graduates all already have been placed in jobs. One is Mariam Saghatelyan, the founder and manager of the first specialized wine shop and bar in Yerevan, In Vino.

EVN has a Wine Laboratory which is the only educational wine laboratory in the Caucasus region. Contributions from the German Development Corporation (GIZ) and the Boston area couple Judith Saryan and Victor Zarougian made it possible.

Urutyman said that ICARE and ANAU could draw upon 15 years of general experience to make EVN Wine Academy successful. It all began in 2000 with ATC. The United States Department of Agriculture and Texas AM helped make the organization more mature and in 2014 USAID and Virginia Tech began assisting it. Virginia Tech, Penn State and the University of Florida are helping add more educational programs. In 2015, Geisenheim University in Germany decided to

support the wine academy. It is the top European wine research and education institute. EVN offers short courses and a professional certificate program in enology and wine business jointly with Geisenheim.

Many ICARE ATC graduates have become professors in US and other Western universities or have jobs in corporations. One, Armen Harutyunyan, is the deputy minister of agriculture today in Armenia. It has approximately 92 percent job placement of the 455 graduates of the ATC undergraduate and master's programs. It continues to collaborate with Texas A&M University, which gives certificates to its graduates. Their salaries are two to three times higher than the industry sector average.

With a student-centered environment, Urutyan stated that the curriculum is in the Western style, with highly qualified instructors and extracurricular activities, while the programs are industry-driven. Urutyan said, "We are very closely tied with the industry." Aside from economics and finance, leadership and other "soft" skills are stressed to build emotional intelligence. Students are given opportunities to meet with CEOs.

Boston area Armenians Judith Saryan and Victor Zarougian were present in the audience. Urutyan pointed them out and explained that in addition to the aforementioned wine laboratory, they supported the establishment of the largest solar panel system in Armenia at ICARE. This saved much money as well as helped the environment.

After the event, Zarougian said that he was so impressed by the work done by Urutyan and ATC that even without meeting the latter in person, after doing some research, he decided to help in the creation of the solar panel system. He was amazed that up until that time, 2011 or 2012, there was no such system in all of Armenia despite the advantage of having great sunlight to power it. Now, the technology has begun to proliferate.

Zarougian and his wife supported the EVN laboratory a year ago because they felt it would be a useful spur to the Armenian economy. Zarougian said, "This is one of the sectors that has a very, very bright future. It is a sustainable and self-dependent field." The soil and climate are favorable for growing grapes, and now better quality wines are being created, Zarougian said.

He added that in addition to the direct benefits for the Armenian economy through job creation, the creation of wine bars and other outlets for wine consumption might lead to a more attractive environment for tourism. Interestingly, there may also be domestic health and societal benefits. The increased domestic consumption of wine seems to be replacing vodka drinking to a certain extent.

Ralph Yirikian and Viva Cell helped establish a video conference facility for ICARE so that executives in the US and elsewhere can teach students in Armenia. Internally there is fundraising in Armenia to get a modernized computer lab.

Among its other projects, ICARE runs the Agribusiness Research Center, which gets funding from various private and governmental American and European agencies and organizations to conduct research and rural development projects.

To ensure its long-term success and viability, ICARE is building an endowment fund and soliciting support from the Armenian diaspora for this and a fund to sponsor student tuition (for more information, see www.icare.am).

Institutional Sustainability Campaign @ <https://www.ICARE.am/donate/index.php>

Dimitri Petrosian and Shahrokh Reza of Kingston Grille and Bar sponsored the ABN event, with the support of their staff, while Ara Sarkissian procured the Armenian wine provided for the tasting.

Appendix 3. Announcement of the Luncheon Presentation at the Carnegie Corporation



CORDIALLY INVITES YOU TO A LUNCHEON

WITH

VARDAN URUTYAN
DIRECTOR OF ICARE ARMENIA



Wednesday, June 15, 2016
12:30 – 2:00 p.m. Luncheon and Discussion

Carnegie Corporation of New York
437 Madison Avenue, 31st Floor
(Between 49th & 50th Streets)
New York, NY 10022

R.S.V.P. by June 3, 2016
to: nn@carnegie.org

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