On August 6, 2013, the United States Ambassador to Armenia John A. Heffern, Mrs. Libby Heffern, and members of the Embassy’s Helping Hands organization joined the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia (FCHA) in the village of Ujan (Aragatsotn Region) to build the home of the Aleksanyan family, who are currently living in substandard conditions.

The U.S. Embassy and FCHA have partnered since 2008. Every year, staff of the U.S. Embassy works together with FCHA’s local and international volunteers, in a special collaboration to help people in need.

The Aleksanyan family, including the father, Gagik, a teacher of physics at the local high school, the mother, a housewife, and their four children, ages 15, 14, 4, and 3, have lived with 12 family members in one small house. In the beginning, the family lived in harmony, but over time the house became very crowded with so many people. At one point Gagik moved his family to a separate house to give everyone more space. But because of financial difficulties he could not manage the expenses, and they moved back to live again in his parents’ home.

“To have a home where my children can have a happy and sustainable life, that’s my greatest dream,” said Gagik.

For many years, Gagik saved money to build a house for his family. Last year he started construction but unfortunately his savings were not enough to complete it, and he was losing hope of ever having enough money to provide a home for his family. In the spring he approached FCHA for support and assistance, and was thrilled to be selected as a partner family. The house is now well on its way to becoming a home.

FCHA President Ashot Yeghiazarian stated, “We are all united in our conviction and dedication to making a difference in the lives of people who are in need of a decent house. This is a basic human right that is vital in everyone’s life. On August 6th, we were honored that Ambassador & Mrs. Heffern, along with members of the Embassy’s Helping Hands organization worked with us to build the Aleksanyan’s dream home, creating a strong foundation for a happy and stable Armenian family.”

“The U.S. Embassy’s Helping Hands group was delighted to join the Fuller Center for Housing today to assist the Aleksanyan family in the village of Ujan. It was gratifying to see first-hand the good work that Fuller does for needy Armenians and to make a modest contribution to that effort. Helping Hands is a volunteer community service group, through which Armenians and Americans from the Embassy work together on a variety of projects,” shared the United States Ambassador to Armenia, John A. Heffern.
The 2013 summer building season hosted four Global Builders volunteer teams from the U.S. They are back in their country, but the work they did in Armenia will never be forgotten. The families who will soon move into their newly built houses will always remember those working with them side by side, giving their time and effort. 

“I couldn’t believe my eyes! People from the other side of the world—not our friends or relatives, just foreign people—came to help us build our house, doing really hard work,” said Artavazd Manukyan, a partner homeowner from the village of Irind in the Aragatstotn region.

There are many reasons people come to Armenia to volunteer as a member of a Global Builders team, but there is one inspiration for all of them: to be a part of the transformation that decent housing gives to families.

“My inspiration for coming to Armenia and take part in the generous acts of the Fuller Center is my connection to the Armenian culture and language. I look at the families we are helping and supporting today and realize that their need for help lured me to this beautiful country. I want to ensure that the families of this nation can live with similar conditions that we do back at home,” said Andrew Yenicag, Manhasset, New York.

“It has been a wonderful experience helping my fellow Armenians. I feel so comfortable here and am so happy to give back for all I have been blessed with. I want to teach my teenage children the same thing...that we are so lucky and need to always lend a helping hand to those less fortunate. This experience has been so rewarding and I will surely pass my experiences on to others back home,” said Serda Belekdanian of Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

The four FCHA teams this summer were led by Leo Manuelian, Cynthia Reimers Erickson, Suzanne Daghlian and Abraham Ouzounian—people who have been coming to Armenia over and over and urging others to join in the life-changing work they do. Most of the team members are from the communities of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America.

They build more than homes. They leave a lasting positive impact on the lives of the families they grow to love during their time working together. They come with the gift of faith and take back precious memories.

Teams working, enjoying Vardavar, learning to cook Armenian dishes, socializing with families...
Now Faith is the Substance of Things Hoped for, the Evidence of Things Not Seen” Hebrews 11:1

Church Teams Building Homes, Building Faith for Families in Need

St. Gregory of Narek Armenian Church team, OH

This year three teams from two Dioceses -- St. Gregory of Narek Armenian Church team, led by Fr. Hrach Sargsyan, and a team through the Armenian Service Program, led by Fr. Abraham Malkhasyan of the Eastern Diocese, and the Christian Youth Mission to Armenia team of the Western Diocese, led by Fr. Avedis Abovian—joined FCHA in building homes in Armenia.

The three teams of young and enthusiastic people worked in the village of Kakavdzor in the Aragatsotn region, helping the Shekikyan family realize their dream of having their own home come true. The teams did tremendous work pouring concrete in the house for floors and the sidewalk, as well as plastering the walls of three rooms.

The two teams of the Eastern Diocese came through SIMA Tours, a travel agency which has been collaborating with FCHA for many years and making a great difference in many families’ lives.

The collaboration with the Armenian Church of North America is a unique way of serving both communities and has become a strong bridge between the youth of the Diaspora and the Motherland. It provides an opportunity to young people to discover Armenia and make a difference in the lives of families in need and take back the sense of accomplishment.

Fr. Avedis Abovian said, “Working on the Shekikyans’ home with the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia was a great opportunity for our young pilgrims. I am very happy that this partnership is already in its second year. The CYMA participants learned not only about Armenia, but by giving something to a needy family in a small village, they also became an important part of the Motherland and her daily life and culture. We thank FCHA for this opportunity and look forward to closer collaboration in this God-pleasing mission. We are only truly able to become part of Armenia if we are willing to put hard work, sweat, and blood into the Armenian soil, thus making a difference in people’s lives.”

St. Gregory of Narek Armenian Church team, OH

AGBU Discover Armenia

The success of FCHA is deeply connected with the success of all the communities we serve. FCHA is committed to supporting these communities and providing tools for their growth by building affordable housing. And we can proudly say we are not alone in our commitment.

Since the inception of FCHA in 2008, Armenia Marriott Hotel Yerevan, AGBU Discover Armenia and KPMG Armenia have been helping build more affordable housing for low-income families. Participating in programs that strengthen our communities is fundamental to the core values of all these organizations.

The General Manager of the Armenia Marriott Hotel Yerevan, Ami Miron, mentioned: “It is very important for us to be a part of such initiatives because we know the importance of high social responsibility. We will be happy to see people’s smiling faces and realize that we are doing extremely important work to make them happy.”

This is the perfect way of demonstrating a company’s commitment to helping improve the communities they serve. It is also a wonderful way of team-building—employees are away from the office, united around a good cause, supporting their communities and improving the life quality of families.

Together we are be able to reach and help many more families and communities. We are deeply grateful to our partners for joining us in our mission of creating safe, decent, affordable housing for low-income families, and for building homes, communities and a homeland.

AGBU Discover Armenia

www.fullercenterarmenia.org

Church Teams Building Homes, Building Faith for Families in Need

Armenia Marriott Hotel Yerevan

AGBU Discover Armenia

KPMG Armenia

Building for the Prosperity of Our Communities.
Armenia Marriott Hotel Yerevan, KPMG Armenia & AGBU Annual Build Days
The mission of the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia greatly depends on selfless giving from supporters and volunteers. Thanks to them, hundreds of Armenian families have found peace living in their own safe and decent homes, while they try to raise their children in the 21st century.

To honor all of our supporters and volunteers on our 5th anniversary, the FCHA flag was raised on Mt. Ararat on August 22nd by FCHA board member Gevorg Gasparyan (the organizer of this 16-member mountain trek) and FCHA Development Director, Gohar Palyan, as well as on Mt. Aragats (the highest peak in Armenia) on August 11th.

The majestic Mt. Ararat is a dream and cultural symbol for every Armenian as well as many people around the world. Even at the height of summer, Mt. Ararat, the highest peak in the region at 5,165 meter/16,945 feet, is snow-covered. For Christians it is a sacred place because it is described in the Holy Bible as the place where Noah’s ark landed after the flood. Every year, explorers climb Mt. Ararat looking for the ark.

“The ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.” Genesis 8:4

“This experience had significant meaning for me,” shared Gohar Palyan. “Every morning for years, when the weather was clear, I would gaze at Mt. Ararat through my house window for a few seconds before heading to a busy day’s routine. I always felt it was calling me.

With much appreciation, I reflected on how much time, effort, and resources each of our supporters dedicates to the Fuller Center. Instead of just going to a nice resort to relax, our supporters donate their vacation money to help us build homes or join one of our teams and come to Armenia to do the physical work themselves. They inspire others to participate, bringing their entire families - spouses, kids, parents, uncles, aunts, and extended families. This kind of dedication and spirit can’t be forgotten. I am inspired by this example, and I feel blessed by the great people around us. I could not think of any better gift for all these people dedicated to the FCHA mission than raising the FCHA logo on Mt. Ararat.”

Our sincerest thanks and congratulations to all our supporters and volunteers who have joined or will join this vital mission of building homes for Armenia’s less fortunate. With our 2013 Global Builders season drawing to a close, we miss you all and look forward to seeing you in Armenia again very soon.

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**2014 Schedule for Global Builders Teams**

**Vanadzor**
June 22 - July 6, team leader, Cynthia Erickson, open team

**Yerevan**
July 16 - July 28, team leader Leo Manuelian, open team

To join one of the GB teams, please send an e-mail to: volunteer@fullercenterarmenia.org

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**To support our programs,**
please make an online donation through our website: www.fullercenterarmenia.org/get-involved/donate

Or send a check to:
The Fuller Center for Housing,
PO Box 523, Americus, GA 31709, USA

Please add ‘Armenia’ in the memo line.

Donations are tax-deductible. THANK YOU

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Happy 5th Anniversary from the Summits of Mounts Aragats and Ararat

**Mt. Aragats - 4,090 m (13,419 ft)**

**Mt. Ararat - 5,165 m (16,945 ft) (far right is the peak of Mt. Sis)**

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www.fullercenterarmenia.org