



March 31, 2020

To our Mer Hooy friends and supporters:

Many of you have asked about the welfare of our staff and children at Mer Hooy during this unusual time in our lives. We are grateful that, as of today, our Mer Hooy family in Armenia is safe. We are making every effort to avoid these children going through another trauma in their young lives.

Like those of you who are home with 2 or 3 children under the age of 18, these girls are similarly becoming restless and sometimes depressed that they cannot interact with their mother or family, where those exist. Most private homes are not suitable for the girls to live in full time, especially right now.

We are grateful to program director Nouné Geghamyan, social worker Gayane Saribekyan, psychologist Narine Tovmassian-Abrahamyan, and our pedagogue, talented mentors and other support staff. Because of their dedication, the girls continue to receive psychological and social emotional support. They have learned how to communicate by Zoom using our computer lab and are receiving supervised online instruction. They recently received craft supplies from the Burbank High School Armenian Club in California. Those gifts keep them active and productive. Some are learning to play musical instruments and carpet weaving thanks to the skills of our talented mentors. Others are learning to cook meals, assisted by our kitchen staff and mentors. Others are enjoying the improved spring weather and are playing outside. Our older teens are working with our nighttime mentors to support the younger girls.

We recently arranged for a pen-pal relationship between some of our 13-14-year olds and a similarly aged girl in San Francisco, California so they could practice their language skills and social skills through supervised telephone and video conferences.

Our staff have families - their family businesses, and family income, have been greatly impacted by this disaster. Yet, our dedicated staff are still working to make sure that the children at Mer Hooy stay mentally healthy, safe and active. We are SO grateful to each and every one of them.

For now, our staff will continue to receive their monthly pay during this crisis, for as long as we can afford to do so. We have shortened their work hours to allow them to spend time with their families, without deducting their pay. Our executive director, Mihran Mirijanyan, fortuitously

pre-purchased enough supplies to allow us to keep the facility clean and safe, and fed. No visitors are allowed at the Center.

Thanks to one of our benefactors, we can fund a private driver who is a family friend of Mer Hoos. He is transporting our staff from home to work, eliminating the need for bus or taxi transportation, to ensure their continued health and safety and that of our children.

Mer Hoos relies one hundred percent on the donations of our supporters to keep the program alive. Thank you to those who have continued to send donations. If you can donate, please do so either from the Donate button on Facebook (donations come directly to our account with no fees), through our website donate page, or by mail to our Post Office Box.

Watch our Facebook page and website for continued updates -- we are lucky to have a talented staff member in Armenia who is helping to keep all of you informed of our girls' activities, with video and photos. Thank you Lilit Sargsyan!

God Bless our staff and our donors - you are all helping us make a difference in the lives of these children!

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