

SEMINAR FOR ARMENIAN SCHOOL TEACHERS IN SYRACUSE

The Armenian School of Syracuse, operating under the auspices of St. Paul's Armenian Church, sponsored a seminar dealing with "Innovative Methods of Teaching the Armenian Language," on December 6-7. Invited to participate were representatives of several upstate New York communities, Binghamton and Rochester, along with the school's staff, board of trustees, and other interested community members. The featured speaker of the two-day program was Miss Sylva Der Stepanian, Director of the Armenian Language Resource Center at the Diocesan Center in New York.

The response to the entire program was excellent. On Friday evening, Miss Der Stepanian met with about 45 students at the school, along with another two dozen parents, teachers, and school trustees. Within a matter of minutes Miss Der Stepanian had captivated her young audience by demonstrating a number of instructional games, with use of an overhead projector to show Armenian cartoons and pictures, and perhaps most important, by establishing a friendly rapport between herself and the students. Miss Der Stepanian's session with the students was very helpful and interesting, for the teachers who were able to observe her and the response of the children at the same time.

On Saturday, the seminar focused on the development of effective teaching methods. Miss Der Stepanian helped the participants prepare a number of instructional games and other teaching aids, and then demonstrated their use. Everyone was put to work; even the parish council chairman, Manoog Mikaelian, was seen preparing and testing out several of the educational materials. Of all the techniques and suggestions discussed during the seminar, one was stressed with special importance: A knowledge of the Armenian Language is not necessarily a prerequisite in teaching Armenian; however, a teacher who has prepared his material well and can interact with his students on a personal level to show how much he cares about each student, shall not only be a benefit to his students and school, but also to the community. Experience in Syracuse has shown that if responsible leaders can present good and interesting programs, community response is almost guaranteed.

The seminar closed with a luncheon and evaluation of what had transpired during the two days. Participants unanimously agreed that Miss Der Stepanian had significantly influenced their ideas on how to teach our young Armerican-born generation the Armenian language. In fact, seminar participants recommended that any Armenian community that wishes to undertake a serious step in the way of Armenian Education for our younger Armenians (4 years and up) would do well to sponsor their own teacher's seminar with the aid of Miss Sylva Der Stepanian. Also, the Armenian Language Resource Center at the Diocese is a unique place to discover the various methods of teaching Armenian now being used.

Special credits are due to Mrs. Ara Jeknavorian, the school's principal, who undertook the necessary arrangements for the realization of this seminar; and Mrs. Sarkis Khanzadian, who was responsible for the refreshments and luncheon during the program.

Ara A. Jeknavorian