



# NEWSLETTER

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## In This Issue

Welcome

Land Use

Planning for  
Armenia

4-H: Teach the  
children,  
strengthen the  
community

The Enlightenment

Shirley M. Funt,  
editor

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## Welcome

Richard C. Funt



This is the first newsletter for 'Uplift Armenia'. We wish to inform and keep our members up to date on our activities. Therefore, it is appropriate to tell who we are and our wishes for Armenia.

Newsletters have a character all of their own. They present a timely and informative message in a short and concise manner, and provide a

connection between groups of people who are interested in the same topics or plans of action.

As an extension fruit specialist at Ohio State, I wrote ten monthly newsletters per year for ten years; these were distributed to over 25,000 Ohio fruit growers and home gardeners. The intent was to connect these growers with the latest research based information and best management practices from the Land Grant University for increasing production, reducing pesticide use, and increasing the quality of fruit. The newsletter was a one-page (front and back) piece of paper with several topics relative to the expected upcoming monthly activities. It was intended to be read between the mail box and the kitchen table. The utilization of this information helped provide a wholesome supply of food into the kitchens of all people regardless of economic status.

This newsletter will follow a similar style. It is about us (USA), you and me, and the children of Armenia who live in poverty with few opportunities to prosper in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We will describe what we have seen (see the following article entitled *The Enlightenment*) and our proposed objectives for assisting in correcting these issues. This is about Armenian children, and more recently refugee children, living in poverty, attending schools with little heat, and needing shoes and warm coats so they can leave their homes to attend school.

It is for us to "Uplift Armenia" and help provide each child an opportunity to be the best and most productive no matter where they live. Thank you for connecting with us.

*Richard C. Funt, Ph.D. is a professor emeritus from Ohio State and has spent many months in Armenia working with NGO's and farm families. He is a former 4-H member, 4-H advisor, and extension fruit specialist. Currently, he owns and operates Carobeth Berry Farm in rural Coshocton County, Ohio. Article photo: Armenian children with their grandfather and Dick Funt.*

## Land Use Planning for Armenia

By Joe Clase, AICP



With an extensive family history in farming in Central Ohio, I was the first generation to go to college and found my professional passion in urban planning. During my days studying at the University of Cincinnati School of Planning it was clear that my agricultural roots were unique to the profession. So, why would a farm boy from Ohio study urban planning? Simple, as suburban development has spread across the state... our farmland is quickly getting replaced by sod. In fact our family's farm has been negatively impacted by area development for the last few decades and my family has seen undesirable development impacts on agricultural production that my ancestors never could have expected. After graduating with a Bachelor in Urban Planning, I continued my studies at The Ohio State University John Glenn School of Public Affairs to graduate with a Master of Public Administration, including academic study of managing non-profit organizations. My emphasis was using existing infrastructure to develop sustainable communities with a career focus on conservation development where we can promote agriculture without fighting development pressures.

I have joined the Armenian Childrens' Support Fund Board as Assistant Director to assist with promoting communities in Armenia that can blend agriculture with development. My primary interest is to promote advanced agricultural systems in Armenian villages and planning for academic STEM schools as community development resources. Promoting access to quality food and education in third-world nations like Armenia is the basis for bringing a higher quality of life that we enjoy in developing nations, like the United States. It is my interest to use my education and 15 plus years of professional planning experience to design and work with our development team to build quality community resources in Armenia.

As the first nation in the world to adopt Christianity as their state religion in 300 AD, we also have much to learn from Armenian community administration. Their influence of the church in government is not accustom to us in the United States as it is in Armenia. Though, we observe religious influence in politics to be a successful system for Armenia to maintain its independence and sense of unity. At a time when the United States has become extremely politically and religiously divided, we can and should use our partnership with the nation of Armenia to build our own understanding of community and economic development.

So, I find it in my interest to serve this important role of helping to administer our nation's relief efforts and promoting sustainable community development in Armenia. As a Christian disciple, I believe in a religious foundation for our efforts to Uplift Armenia! In fact, the effort of lifting up this honorable nation with rich biblical antiquity humbles my local efforts to create sustainable communities that blend conservation with human development. We should locally aspire to build a sense of place and community identity around such a common heritage. Many of our developing American communities today lack that sense of legacy that we can help to build by partnering with the Republic of Armenia. I look forward to using my academic and professional experience to uplift the children of Armenia and invite others to volunteer their experience and resources to our growing team!

*Joe has served as a member of multiple non-profit organizations, planning commissions, public works committees, public safety committees, as well as an appeals board, zoning commission, health board, transit board, along with various other boards and committees. He brings passion, energy and experience to his role as Assistant Director of the Armenian Children Support Fund, a pending 501(c)3 charitable organization.*

*Joe Clase, MPA., operates a family farm, Sunny Kid Farm, in Radnor, Ohio with his wife, Stephanie, and children Andrew and Abby. His children are active in 4-H and he takes pride in their efforts to advance projects in raising Boer goats, laying hens, rabbits, gardening and woodworking. They are the fifth generation of the family to farm the land. Article photo: Joe, wife and children*

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## 4-H: Teach the children, strengthen the community

Vicki J. Schwartz



In the United States, more than 150 years ago, the government had the foresight to create “land grant colleges” which are to be the public institutions of higher education; they belong to the citizens. These universities also involved with research about science, agriculture, health, and education to improve the quality of life for the people living in the U.S. About 50 years later, the Smith Lever Act was established to help to deliver the new research improvements that were being discovered by the Land Grant Universities directly to the people. The new farming techniques could be taught to the farmers. New ways of preparing food safely could be shared with home makers. And youth could be taught the same new discoveries through the youth education program now known as 4-H, in which they too could learn new agriculture methods and home management skills, AND could share that knowledge with their parents.

While learning how to produce better crops, raise healthier market animals, or prepare more nutritious foods, the youth involved in 4-H also gain personal skills such as leadership, decision making, and public speaking. Today the focus of 4-H Youth Development is to enable the youth to become capable citizens, helping them develop the skills they need as adults. The focus is not necessarily the agriculture and homemaker skills, but the children gain the skills they will need as adults while learning better agriculture and nutrition methods.

As a child, I, too, was a member of 4-H. I was in the Lucky Clovers 4-H club and took different kinds of projects such as clothing construction, nutrition, vet science, and photography. These projects were taught by volunteer adults. I gained leadership and problem-solving skills as I served on committees and in officer roles, elected by my club members. I served as News Reporter, Recreation leader, Vice President, and President.

As an adult, I became a youth development educator with Ohio 4-H, recruiting adults to teach projects to youth members, and organizing clubs of youth with these adult volunteers. I have many memories of watching a small child join a 4-H club, and then as they continued in the club for 9-10 years, see them become capable, and responsible citizens of their communities.

A program like 4-H can help all in the communities. Interested and caring adults can be recruited and trained to teach children. The children can learn things like food production and preparation, animal care, and healthy living that their parents will also learn from the children. The children will develop the skills they will need when they are adults in the communities, serving in adult leadership positions. It is the original plan of 4-H when it started in the U.S. in 1902. Teach the children, strengthen the community.

*Vicki Schwartz, M.Ed., Associate Professor Emeritus and Associate State 4-H Leader at Ohio State University is the Youth Leader of the Armenia Children's Support Fund, pending nonprofit charitable corporation 501c3.*  
Photo: 4-H member in action

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## The Enlightenment/Armenia, November, 2003

Richard C. Funt, Executive Director, ACSF



As I walked into my office (United State Department of Agriculture/Marketing Assistance Program (USDA/MAP) in Yerevan, Armenia on a Monday morning in November, 2003, I spoke to a best friend from my 4-H days (he was dairy and I was beef) in Adams County, Pennsylvania. Dave Slusser had to insist three times for me to attend a ceremony on Saturday morning. I told him that I'd have to get a vehicle and my interpreter and that the office was closed on Saturday - a lot of excuses. He insisted that I needed to go, so I travelled about 100 miles – some on good and some on not so good roads (deep holes and eight miles per hour) with my interpreter, Hosvera (pictured). After three hours we arrived.

I was greeted at the school and immediately asked to address the crowd of parents and children between ages 8 to 16 years. Here I was treated as a US government official needed to 'say a few words'. The children were waving US flags. I truthfully said "that this was a great day for Armenia". Quickly we went into the stream area, passed the fruit tree nursery, and planted apple trees with the Armenian parents. Parents were teaching their children to plant apple trees much as I had done as a young boy on my father's fruit farm. I was home.

The participants left and I was invited to lunch inside the lunch room of a school which had no windows and no doors. An older gentleman, who was very slim and old-looking, shook my hand and greeted me inside the main entrance. There was no glass in the door way. There was an attractive salad on a table covered with a cloth. As I sat down at the table, an 'American' English speaking gentleman, whom I believe was from the Armenian Tree Project, sat across from me at the table. He immediately began to speak, telling me that several months prior a nine-year old girl collapsed at the steps of the school because she was hungry. He also told me that the small wood stove had been purchased five months previously so that the children could have a meal before they left school at four PM. I stopped eating the salad. Then he said, "We have to make 12 apples grow where six used to grow."

He went on to tell me that the two girls who came in late to the ceremony were 12 and 13 years of age and that they were refugees from Azerbaijan. They lived a house without doors or windows and each night their mother and her children (seven total) would go to a corner and wrap themselves with rugs and fall asleep.

This was November and winter was setting in. I asked how they would survive the winter. His answer was that "Some will die." We continued to eat our meal that was cooked on the new stove and ate in silence. What more could be said?

I had tears in my eyes as I left the village with my interpreter. On the way out I saw that a gas line had been connected to the village houses, but wondered who could afford the gas for the cold winter. We arrived in Yerevan about three hours later with the street lights turned on and well fed people walking the streets. However, the electricity was cut off at midnight and turned on around 7 AM since they were repairing the atomic power plant. There was no fresh meat in the Yerevan stores due to the lack of electricity for refrigeration.

While many things have changed for the better since 2003 in Yerevan, many people in the villages far from out into the country remain much the same today. Moreover, five years ago 13,000 refugees arrived from Syria with more continuing to arrive even today. And thus, many live in two and three family homes. The government does place the children in schools. The Syrian refugees arrive today as they did in 1991 from Azerbaijan.

*Richard C. Funt, Professor Emeritus, Department of Horticulture Ohio State University spent 22 weeks in Armenia with the USDA/MAP (United States Department of Agriculture/Marketing Assistance Program) from August 2003 to March 2004. He provided technical advice to individual farmers throughout Armenia on rodent control in orchards, pruning of fruit tree, seminars on best orchard management practices and organized the first International Drip Irrigation Conference in Armenia. with speakers from Israel and the US.*

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