

Armenian American Museum celebrates historic groundbreaking



Armenian American Museum Board of Trustees and Board of Governors at shovel ceremony

GLENDALE, Calif. – The **Armenian American Museum** held a festive celebration to mark its historic groundbreaking ceremony at the future site of the museum in Glendale Central Park on July 11, 2021. More than 1,000 guests joined to commemorate the start of construction on the landmark cultural and education center that will serve generations to come.

The program began with warm welcoming remarks by renowned KTLA5 News reporter Ellina Abovian who served as the esteemed host of the event.

The live show featured interviews with Ambassador Armen Baibourtian, Consul General of Armenia in Los Angeles; California Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian; Executive Chairman Berdj Karapetian; Executive Vice Chairman Zaven Kazazian; Board of Governors member Levon Filian; Aram Alajajian of Alajajian Marcoosi Architects; Vahram Davtyan representing sponsor Pacific BMW; and a special video message by Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, Board of Governors and leadership of the museum, executive director Shant Sahakian took to the stage to welcome the in-person attendees and the worldwide audience watching the broadcast.

Alexandra and Lilia Yaralian of AGBU Los Angeles choir delivered an exquisite performance of the national anthems from the main stage.

The Armenian American Museum Board of Trustees co-chairs led the invocation of the ceremony including co-chair Archbishop Hovnan Derderian representing the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, co-chair Bishop Torkom Donoyan representing the Western Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Father Armenag Bedrossian on behalf of co-chair Bishop Mikael Mouradian representing the Armenian Catholic Eparchy, and co-chair Reverend Berdj Djambazian representing the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America.

Glendale Mayor Paula Devine and City Councilmembers Ara Najarian, Vrej Agajanian, Ardy Kassakhian and Daniel Brotman delivered remarks on behalf of the City of Glendale which has dedicated a premier location for the landmark center in the heart of the city and has served as a valued partner for the cultural and educational center.

“Today’s groundbreaking is a testimony of the work of our unified community,” stated chair Talin Yacoubian who represents AGBU Western District as the co-treasurer of the Board of Trustees. “The museum will bridge our past and shape our future – what an incredible privilege that is. I am proud to say that our hope is well on its way to becoming a reality. Soon, we will all be gathered here again to cut the ribbon and open the doors for the Armenian American Museum!”

California Senator Anthony J. Portantino, who has been a champion for the museum and has helped secure millions in state funds in support of the project, delivered inspiring words on the promise of the institution to impact generations of children through school field trips and generations of families by connecting them to their roots. His remarks were followed by special video messages with warm congratulations by Senate President pro Tempore Toni G. Atkins and Governor Gavin Newsom.

Congressman Adam Schiff celebrated the Armenian American community as an important part of the national fabric of the country and discussed how the museum will bring people together to embrace cultural diversity. He announced his efforts to advocate for federal funding in support of the project to resounding cheers throughout the audience.

Executive Chairman Berdj Karapetian thanked the museum’s generous supporters for making this momentous occasion possible and invited Kevin and Alexia Kevonian to the stage to deliver a special message on behalf of their family.

“This building, which will be erected very soon, will reflect what we are made of,” expressed Alexia Kevonian during her powerful and emotional remarks from the stage. “The need for cultural preservation is imperative now more than ever. That need can be met right here, on this very soil beneath your feet. Join us and when you do, the world will see what our collective efforts can achieve – a standing legacy.”

Following the remarks, Executive Chairman Berdj Karapetian announced a generous \$1 million gift by the Kevonian family and a generous \$1 million gift by the Arakelian family to ensure that the next generation has a world class institution that preserves and celebrates Armenian culture, history and heritage.

The event concluded with the Board of Trustees and Board of Governors joining together on stage for the shovel ceremony to mark the historic groundbreaking. Museum leaders with ceremonial hard hats and shovels in hand officially broke ground and rejoiced at the community’s collective achievement.

Guests at the event enjoyed live entertainment by the Ara Dabandjian Quartet of Element Band and refreshments courtesy of Arvest Catering.

The event was sponsored by Armen Living, Athens Services, Jack and Maro Kalaydjian, Bank of America, The GASKA Alliance Foundation, Pacific BMW, Dickranian Foundation and David and Margaret Mgrublian.