

Press release

10.03.2018

English poetry contest for schoolchildren of Lori and Tavush regions

On March 10, the SMART Center of **Children of Armenia Fund (COAF)**, located in the Debet community of the Lori region, launched its programs of English poetry.

Schoolchildren, 7-12 grades, studying English in Lori and Tavush regions, gathered to compete in the National Poetry Recitation Contest (NPRC). It is the first large-scale event held at the COAF SMART Center.

"It is so touching to see our children have the chance to recite in a cutting edge environment," mentioned **Caleb Houben**, an American Peace Corps volunteer who organizes the championships of the Lori and Tavush regions. *"Participating in the competition shows that English-speaking children are not only able to use the language, but also that new doors are opening for the development of their lives and careers. It is wonderful that our students will have the opportunity to stand out in such a unique educational environment. We are proud to be the first guests of the COAF SMART Center."*

Innesa Grigoryan, the Deputy Director of Children of Armenia Fund, mentioned, "The contest organized by the Peace Corps at the COAF SMART Center is an additional opportunity for us to get to know the brightest and smartest youngsters of Armenia who the future belongs to. It is particularly significant that the contest will be held in the birthplace of the most celebrated Armenian poet Hovhannes Tumanyan."

Michael Chen is also a volunteer at the US Peace Corps. He is the chair of the contest commission. *"This year the pre-election stage will be held in 10 regions. We expect about 500 participants from 7-12 grades from all over Armenia. The Debet competition is one of the first ones, and we are setting high standards with it. I hope that the interest in the contest will be particularly high in the northern part of Armenia. This year's theme is "What Makes Us Human?". I will be happy to follow the work presented by the youngsters, especially the discussions on relationships, self-confidence, compassion, and inclusiveness."*

You can find the details of the poetry contest by visiting this website: nprcarmenia.com. The competition was first held in 2010 in Hrazdan by volunteers from the US Peace Corps. This year it is celebrated for the 8th time, and the organizational work is carried out by Partnership and Training NGO and the Peace Corps volunteers. The final will take place on May 5 at the American University of Armenia (AUA), the sponsor of the competition, that helps schoolchildren to improve their English, critical thinking, and public speaking skills.

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The Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that employs community-led approaches aimed at improving the quality of life in rural Armenia, with a particular focus on children and youth. COAF's target development areas are education, healthcare, social and economic



development. COAF launched its programs in 2004, starting in one village and expanding to 44 villages in Armavir, Aragatsotn, Lori, Gegharkunik, Shirak and Tavush regions, impacting over 75,000 people.

Since 2015 COAF has developed and started implementing a new vision – SMART Initiative. SMART is designed to advance a generation across the rural world through education that will benefit individuals, societies and the environment. SMART will become an exemplary model of development and will be replicated in other regions and communities throughout Armenia. The first COAF SMART Center was opened on May 27, 2018, at the village of Debet, Lori region.