

To: St Hagop Armenian Church Family

From: George

Thank you everyone for making this an amazing winter bazaar. Our numbers this year exceeded last year by almost 50%. Almost 500 meals were served in a two day period. We actually ran out of food Sunday at 2pm! Most crafters were very pleased with their sales and asked to come back next year. The St Hagop Woman's Guild was equally successful with their sales of baked goods. Most importantly the bouncy house, pony ride and petting zoo were totally occupied by children from our church and the local community until the very end of the day. And that is what these events are all about....our future.

Events like this do not happen without a lot of hard work from dedicated people. It's easy to criticize and/or compare us to the more established Greek communities in Tarpon, Clearwater or St Petersburg or to other festivals you know from back home up north. The reality is we are a very small community and many of us are senior citizens. We are brittle and tend to get wounded easily lifting tables or taking out the trash. But the trash had to be taken out and the tables did have to get folded and put away. All of us multi-task to the best of our abilities.

There are many "thank you's" to go around. My apologies if I missed your name. Years ago the parish council decided no activity would take place unless the church would be indemnified against any financial loss. Therefore thank you to our 4 main sponsors: David Kazarian, Chuck Sarkisian, Greg Ekizian and Aram Megerian, without whose support this bazaar would be impossible.

First and foremost, thank you to our senior advisor Andy Anusbigian, his children Jamie, Drew and Ryan and mom, Terry for being there. For those of our St Hagop extended family who don't know, "being there" meant physically on the church grounds Friday to Sunday from 7am-6pm and countless phone calls and e-mails for 3 months before we ever roasted a pig or lamb. The Anusbigians were the first people there on Friday and they were the last to clean up Sunday evening.

"But if the bazaar didn't start until Saturday at 11am, why did he have to show up Friday?" you may ask. Because the tables don't appear by magic, the tents don't set themselves up, the display items from our second floor choir loft don't walk themselves down to the pavilion. And when everyone goes home at 4 pm, someone stays to clean up, take the trash out, put things away etc. That credit belongs to the Anusbigian family. All of them. Just amazing people. Period.

The food was delicious. The pilaf was amazing. We should all know that there were two main pilaf makers, Seta and Vickie. Losh Kebabs anyone? Thanks again to Lizette and the Dadekians.

Who needs Iron Chefs? The roast pig and roast lamb were incredible. For our meals we have to thank the culinary skills of David Eggleston, Dikran Kalaydjian, Bob Poladian, Aram Megerian, Greg Ekizian, Chris Sassouni and our two newest but very talented chefs, Zohrab and Avo Kotchounian.

"Ah, but they get to eat first, don't they?" Maybe or maybe not. But remember this, guys like Aram missed his daughter's tennis match to be with us that day. David refused an engineering job assignment that weekend to cook for us.

How did we get an increase in attendance this year? Kudos goes to John Ekizian for anything to do with computers and on line advertising and Diane (1/2 the twins) for creating an advertising booklet where she raised over \$1000

“It’s not a big deal to get an ad?” you claim. Think about being 18 years old and getting rejected over and over again just so your church can make a profit.

Thank you to Arman and Vicken for the music. Outstanding work for a full weekend of commitment...especially if you are getting married in two weeks. And for Arman to be away from his “350-Z” for all that time, wow!

Thank you Janae for being eaten by fire ants in the name of St Hagop as she worked the petting zoo. Thank you John and Holly and Alysia for being Starbucks Haiastan without any benefits.

Thank you to Freij, Yeretskin and Roubina for creating a bit of Armenia in Pinellas Park.

Thank you to Tanya and Michael for quenching our thirst. Thank you again to Michael and Artak for collecting \$ and keeping everyone honest. How many 18 year older’s do you know who would give up their birthday weekend to help the church? Thank you to Movses and Matthew Mangasar for all their help.

Thank you Ani for bringing in half of Seminole High School to keep you company making lamajoun sales. Thank you again to Aram for arm-twisting his poker buddies to eat with us on Sunday. Thank you to Diane and Ara from Michigan who made a pledge to our church building fund even though they are not members of St Hagop. Thank you Alex for proving with your Taboulee, once and for all, that you are ready to be married. Thank you to our galley slaves, Eileen, Lori, Greta, Thelma, Araxi, Mirella and Karen, for keeping the food line going and Women’s Guild sales seamless. Has anyone ever seen Eileen without a hat before? And can you believe Dr Mike didn’t wear a tie all of Sunday. Thank you to Sezar and Edmond for being our muscle. We know it’s not rewarding to take out the trash but you both did a lot more than that. Thank you Father Hovnan who will, from this day forward, forever be known as “Jonah” to the Bayou Club.

Thank you to my co-chair, Teresa, who agreed to put her name and reputation on the line for this event when there was no other takers and where many said it couldn’t or shouldn’t be done. How many phone calls and e-mails did you make to see this event to it’s success? How many cigar boxes did it take?

Thank you to Sandra Oliva, our “loaner” from David Kazarian’s office who does our church financials who had to sort out the chaos of the vault on Monday morning to reconcile all the accounting. Thanks again David for your *tourshee*.

In the end, we are one big family. I am amazed by the dedication and hard work and sacrifice of so many. I am encouraged by the work of the new generation who proved they can easily step in at any time to fill the void their parents and grandparents leave behind. In particular: Artak, Michael, Arman, Vicken, Vasken, Janae, Ani, Holly, Melanie, Sevan, Jamie, Ryan, Drew, Jack, Diane and Christine, Alex, Zoharb and Avo, Sezar and Edmond. Thank you to all those whose names I have forgotten.

With sincere thanks,

Dr. George