

Elizabeth Agbabian Receives Ellis Island Medal of Honor

The annual event of the celebration of the awards of the Ellis Island Medal is significant news in the Armenian community of the United States.

This year, there were six recipients of Armenian descent. They were Elizabeth Agbabian, humanitarian and civic worker, Vartkes Barsam, engineer-industrialist and benefactor, Vahan Chamlian, entrepreneur and philanthropist, Jirair Hovnanian, builder and benefactor, Raffi Manoukian, mayor of Glendale, and Antranik Ouzoonian, engineer of international renown. The award ceremonies were held on May 13, 2006, in a tented hall on the grounds of Ellis Island.

Each year, the names of the recipients are listed in the Congressional Record.

Agbabian was recognized as a volunteer and humanitarian who had divided her time during the last 40 years between service to the

general American milieu in Los Angeles and to her Armenian community.

In gratitude to her American adopted heritage, Elizabeth has served as volunteer for the Los

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*Ellis Island Medal of Honor
recipient Elizabeth Agbabian*

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Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra raising funds for Philharmonic Affiliates by chairing the Pension Fund Concert, and she has served on the Board of Club 100 of the Music Center that supported musical education of youth in public schools. She has also been a member of the Board of the International Committee for 30 years chairing various positions raising funds for the Philharmonic.

Her commitment to the welfare of the Armenian nation was magnified after the devastating earthquake in Armenia in 1988 when she embarked on her multiple activities to ameliorate the suffering and pain of the population. She became the founding member of the Orphan and Child Care program of the Armenian Missionary Association of America in the West Coast. This activity grew to support 3000 children, finding foster homes and orphanages, providing food, medicine and clothing as well as counseling services for emotionally disturbed children.

She was also the founding member of the Nurses Training School at the Erebouni hospital in Armenia. She remains active in the Armenian Assembly having served on its Board, and she works on the Board of the Development Services of Armenia whose purpose is helping schools in rural centers of Armenia. Since the American University of Armenia was established 15 years ago, as an affiliate of the University of California and under the sponsorship of the Armenian General Benevolent Union, she co-chaired all the major fund raising activities of the University.

Elizabeth has been active in women's organizations, first as a founding member of the Ladies Auxiliary of Haigazian University in Beirut, then at the Merdinian Evangelical School in Los Angeles, as well as at the Armenian Women's International Association

(AIWA) whose purpose is to unite Armenian women worldwide and to promote their equal role in society.

Recently she has joined the Steering committee of the USC Institute of Armenian Studies and has served as co-chair of the fund raising banquets that led to the official acceptance of the Institute as an endowed center at USC.

Elizabeth considers a great honor for receiving the Ellis Island Medal of Honor. She is married to Mihran Agbabian (Ellis Island Medal recipient, 1995).