

**St. Leon Armenian Church
ACYOA SENIORS**

**2023 ACYOA General Assembly & Sports Weekend
COMMITTEE REPORT**

**Submitted by:
St. Leon ACYOA Seniors
2023 General Assembly & Sports Weekend Committee
Rev. Fr. Diran Bohajian, Pastor**

2023 ACYOA General Assembly & Sports Weekend
Committee Report

Introduction:

The ACYOA Seniors of St. Leon Armenian Church were extremely excited to host the 2023 General Assembly & Sports Weekend, from May 26-29, in Fair Lawn, New Jersey. Our committee of hardworking volunteers embraced our Armenian roots and Christian spirit to plan a memorable weekend of ACYOA tradition for hundreds of expected guests to enjoy.

Under the guidance of our pastor, Rev. Fr. Diran Bohajian, and Parish Council liaison, Serda Belekdanian, the committee worked diligently to achieve our mission: to welcome Armenians from across the country to a weekend celebrating the ACYOA community. By adapting a tenacious work ethic, our committee organized a series of unique events that allowed for a weekend of rekindling friendships, competition and camaraderie, evening dances, and embracing our Armenian Christian culture. With over 200 package plans sold, and an overflow of additional guests at our evening events, we were humbled by the success of such an incredible weekend!

Committee Members:

Rev. Fr. Diran Bohajian, *Pastor*

Serda Belekdanian, *Parish Council Liaison*

Aline Tashjian, *Chairperson*

Lori Aram, *Secretary*

Celine Belekdanian, *Events*

Christine Beylerian McNally, *Ad Booklet*

Lucine Beylerian, *Events*

Anastasia Bohajian, *Transportation*

Meliné Derderian, *Registration & Athletics*

Christine Derian, *Hospitality*

Jack Hamparian, *Treasurer & Athletics*

Maddy Kachikian, *Social Media & Art Design*

Preparation:

After the very real fear that there might not be an able parish to plan the 2023 General Assembly and Sports Weekend, the St. Leon ACYOA Seniors considered hosting. Motivated to celebrate yet another annual ACYOA Memorial Day Weekend, a solid core committee was formed to host the 2023 weekend by August!

With under a year of planning time, our committee members were driven by passion and enthusiasm to plan a memorable weekend for hundreds of expected guests. We held meetings regularly to ensure the committee was working cohesively, and everyone was kept up to date on progress. Individuals on the committee worked on their respective tasks and checked in with the chairperson between meetings. By March of 2023, meetings became more frequent, and by late April, our committee was meeting weekly. Dedicating countless hours to the planning process of this weekend was well worth it!

HOTEL:

Participants stayed at the Park Ridge Marriott in Park Ridge, New Jersey, which also served as the location of the General Assembly on Friday. This was also the location of the banquet hall for our Sunday night dinner and dance. The Marriott has a spacious lobby, restaurants, conference space and other amenities ideal for hosting a General Assembly and Sports Weekend. It is also in walking distance to a grocery store, many shops, and quick-service restaurants, which we thought would be helpful to our attendees.

Lessons Learned: We took advantage the hotel's recommended security team. Fortunately, this hotel has their own security, and we were able to use them every evening at the hotel throughout the weekend at no extra charge since they were already patrolling. The only night we needed additional hotel security was during the Sunday night dinner/dance since there was cash on hand. These security team members walked the halls and ensured that noise levels were kept down. We never received any complaints from the Marriott about noise disruptions.

SPORTS:

We were able to utilize a local high school's gyms for our Saturday sports competitions. River Dell High School has two gyms, which allowed up to 4 volleyball games to occur simultaneously. Once volleyball was over, two basketball games were able to occur simultaneously between the two gyms. Individual sports, including tavloo, chess, and e-sports, were set up in a large open space just outside of one of the gymnasiums. We had a table where we sold concession items such as water, Gatorade, chips, and candy. We had access to the high school's cafeteria where we provided free pizza to our athletes.

After Badarak on Sunday, we were fortunate to use the St. Leon Youth Center's gym for our sports competitions. The court allowed for our final games to start and end on time. We also had a large turnout from our church community! We also had access to a kitchen where we sold drinks and snacks to our guests.

EVENTS:

Friday, May 26: General Assembly at Park Ridge Marriott, Primate's Luncheon, followed by Welcome Night at Stumpy's Axe Throwing

The General Assembly occurred on Friday, May 26th in the Grand Ballroom Salons A, B, and C of the Marriott, with a break for the Primate's Luncheon. At the conclusion of the General Assembly, Sports Weekend kicked off with our first event: Welcome Night at Stumpy's Axe Throwing. The event hosted at Stumpy's Axe Throwing in Upper Saddle River, NJ, which is an enclosed event space. The venue is very welcoming with string lights, numerous lanes for axe throwing, life-size games such as Connect Four, a cash bar, and more. It was the perfect opportunity for our attendees to hang out, catch up with old friends, and make new friends. Food was provided from World Flats and Al Shami Shawarma.

Saturday, May 27: Evening at Carpaccio

Following the day's sporting events, participants were bused from the hotel to the Carpaccio Restaurant, a relatively new restaurant, which we transformed into a venue for dancing and lounging. Guests enjoyed music from a live DJ, a dancefloor, and a free drink ticket to use within the first hour and a half of the event start time. There was a cash bar available throughout the evening.

Sunday, May 28: Divine Liturgy at St. Leon Armenian Church, Fair Lawn, NJ; Sports Finals; Evening Gala, Dinner & Awards, Park Ridge Marriott

Sunday morning began with Divine Liturgy at St. Leon Church, celebrated by our Primate, Very Rev. Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan. Following Divine Liturgy, the Primate officiated the ACYOA Central Council's Installation of Officers.

After Divine Liturgy, guests moved to the St. Leon Abajian Hall to refuel before the championship games. We provided salad, sandwiches, fruit, and cookies to our guests. The final games took place at the St. Leon gymnasium. Athletes took part in basketball and volleyball finals, and spectators watched eagerly, cheering from the sidelines. Individual sports finals took place in the foyer outside the gym.

Following the sports championships, athletes and weekend guests attended an awards banquet at the Park Ridge Marriott. Our Primate, Very Rev. Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, presided over the banquet, and distributed trophies to all the winners. Following dinner, a dance took place with Harout Bedrossian and his band taking the stage. Guests continued to enjoy the evening, as live music flowed throughout the ballroom.

Lessons Learned:

Issue	Description	How to Avoid
Different methods of payment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was hard to keep track of the different payment systems throughout the weekend. We allowed people to pay by cash, Venmo, credit card (via Square), and check. Venmo is especially hard to keep track of because not all users mention in their payment what they are paying for. It is very easy to accept a Venmo payment in the moment; however, when completing final reports after the weekend concluded, it was difficult for us to know what payment was for what item. Additionally, it's hard to keep track of this many payment methods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future host committees may want to limit the method of payment options in the future. If you are going to accept Venmo, it may be best to ensure that the customer is including what exactly they are purchasing in the memo of their payment. Additionally, each station that is accepting payments should have at least 1 device that is logged into the Venmo or other account(s) to ensure all payments are being received at the correct times.
Bus Schedules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bus drivers followed an hourly schedule, acting as a shuttle between the hotel and each respective venue. However, there were times when a bus would hesitate to travel with only a couple passengers. In addition to this, there was an unavoidable conflict (Taylor Swift concert) that forced a few of the busses to stand in traffic for long periods of time. This made passengers upset. Even though we communicated that the concert was occurring next door to our event a handful of times prior to the weekend occurring, some busses were still affected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage the bus drivers to follow the schedule so guests and drivers know what to expect. Share this schedule with the guests so there isn't any confusion, and guests can plan accordingly. We did so on Yapp and updated the times if they changed. Also, it is imperative to have a point of contact between the committee and the bus driver to answer any questions or in case of a schedule change. Lastly, while searching for bus companies to assist during future Sports Weekends, try to contact the local dispatch offices for quotes rather than the charter office. If you book through the charter office, the local dispatch office, who is supplying you with the busses and drivers, will not be able to help you out with any last-minute changes. An example of this that we ran into was adding another round of busses from the Saturday night venue to the hotel. Since we booked through the charter office, the drivers were unable to assist us, and some attendees were left on their own to find rides back to the hotel.

<p>Late Attendance (Evening Events)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite having later start times to our evening events, guests typically arrived 1-2 hours into the events. • Busses were overcrowded at these late times, which caused a large crowd of guests at check in. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff the check in desk from 10-11:30 PM with more volunteers is encouraged to keep the crowd manageable. • Offer an incentive for guests to arrive early could motivate an even distribution of attendance (i.e., free drink ticket from 9-11 PM) • Keep in contact with guests via Yapp to broadcast about arrival details and provide incentives if necessary (i.e., "Free drink ticket hour is ending soon! Arrive ASAP if you'd like to use it!").
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SUGGESTIONS:

- 1. Contracts:** In addition to the Core Committee, have attorneys and contract specialists on advisory committee to review contracts review before signing. Also be sure to review the contracts in detail and negotiate points to best suit your committee's needs.
- 2. Insurance:** Make sure to contact your Church's insurance company well in advance of the event to find out if additional insurance will be required.
- 3. Audio-Visual:** Be sure to speak with your contact at the hotel or venues for any AV/technical needs, as fees add up quickly. Try to negotiate the prices or bring in your own equipment (projectors, microphones, etc.)
- 4. Proximity:** Keeping our hotel in proximity to the gym and night events made it easy for guests to go to and from locations throughout the weekend. It also kept transportation costs down. Additionally, when looking for a hotel, check to see if there are food locations, shops, etc. within walking distance of the hotel for the guests.
- 5. Transportation:** We strongly encourage to have one person designated as the point of contact for bus drivers through the weekend to help with communication regarding scheduling, directions, and payment. See above for more suggestions on bussing.
- 6. Offering Free Beverages (the 1st Hour):** Previous Sports Weekend Committees mentioned offering free drink tickets to attendees who checked in within the first hour of the event. If you need to purchase drink tickets from a vendor (i.e. hotel for Sunday night banquet), try to purchase as little drink tickets as possible up front and buy more if needed as the night goes on. That way, you are not purchasing more tickets than needed.
- 7. Advertising:** Keep advertising steady and strong leading up to the weekend. During the weekend, we HIGHLY recommend the use of Yapp, or a similar service to be able to send guests updates and reminders throughout the weekend. While we had guests sign up for this during check in, a more practical sign-up time would be to embed this in the registration page. However, please note this is hard to do because the site must be live for attendees to download it. We did not want to push our site live until we had more concrete details listed.
- 8. Central Council Communication:** Ensure that communication between the committee and the Central Council follows a chain of command, so communication remains clear and consistent. Review all Assembly needs well in advance to ensure everything is covered and there are no last-minute surprises on either side.
- 9. Ad Booklet:** Reach out to potential donors as early as possible. All donations are appreciated, and it is better to get in as many donations as possible earlier on, so you know how much money you have in your budget. Additionally, to keep costs down, try looking into virtual ad booklets that can be hosted on a website. We had the idea to do this, but it was after communications went out that there would be a physical booklet. We did not want to upset our donors.
- 10. Budget for Hotel Fees:** Most hotels add fees on top of your final bill depending on the different types of events that are hosted at the hotel. For example, we incurred banquet manager fees, AV tech fees, bartender fees, etc. It is best to plan for a certain percentage of fees to be added on to your bill, so it may be best to add this buffer in your budget.

HIGHLIGHTS:

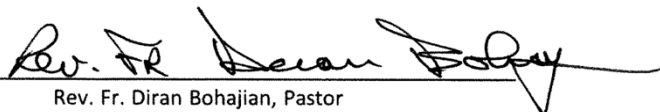
- 1. Home Gym Facilities:** Our committee was fortunate enough to utilize St. Leon Church's youth center gym, keeping our costs down, and making the sporting competitions easily accessible from our campus.

2. **Location Accessibility** was an important factor in our decision making. We felt the location of the hotel and venues made them very accessible, both physically and by providing amenities that benefited our participants and program. Additionally, it was easy for those with their own cars to get to and from the various locations throughout the weekend.
3. **Social Media:** We were also active on Instagram, Facebook, and Yapp. We posted updates for sports schedules, events updates, and photos. Attendees interacted with our Instagram page the most and tagged us in their content leading up to, during, and after the weekend. This boosts excitement!
4. **Photographs:** We wanted photographers at each event but tried to keep costs down. Luckily, we had a few great photographers within our committee, and they took turns taking photos during sports and most evening events. We only hired an outside photographer for the Sunday night event. We uploaded all photos to a Google Drive and the church's SmugMug account for all participants to see. We posted some pictures soon after the weekend ended, and the remaining pictures were added a few weeks later. This gave attendees a great opportunity to reminisce on the events.
5. **Online Registration:** We had an online registration page for general weekend registration, clergy registration, and sports team registration. This allowed for ease of organizing registrations, database development, online payments, etc. We used www.123formbuilder.com (\$38.37/month) and recommend the application for future organizers.
6. **Commemorative Ad Booklet:** Our Ad Booklet was included in the welcome packages that guests received upon check in. It was full of supporting messages and incredible signs of sponsorship from family and friends who helped our weekend come to life!
7. **Donations:** We had a generous amount of financial support from our local parish and ACYOA community at large. In addition to submissions to our Ad Booklet, we held several fundraising events leading up to Sports Weekend. These were highly attended and helped us raise money for a successful weekend.
8. **Budgeting:** By reviewing the figures of several prior Sports Weekends, we prepared lower anticipated numbers for attendees, athletes, and fundraising, offering a more conservative budget for our weekend. This helped us to stay on track and keep losses in check. Keeping track of all incomes and expenses, no matter how minimal, were crucial to our record keeping.
9. **A Supportive Parish:** Having just revitalized our ACYOA Seniors chapter, we were blessed to have the support of our parish. Working with parishioners and ACYOA supporters helped yield a successful weekend and helped our ACYOA Seniors chapter flourish. We are humbled by the financial and spiritual support from all who helped our cause.

Respectfully Submitted,



Aline Tashjian, Chairperson



Rev. Fr. Diran Bohajian, Pastor

St. Leon Armenian Church ACYOA Seniors
2023 General Assembly & Sports Weekend Committee

General Assembly and Sports Weekend Participation	
Hotel Rooms Sold	
Thursday	30
Friday	80
Saturday	85
Sunday	88
Total	283
Number of Attendees	
General Assembly	
Clergy/Staff	13
Delegates	32
Observers	17
Total	62
Event Attendance	
Friday Night	283
Saturday Night	346
Sunday Night	372
Registration Information	
Non-athlete package	95
Athlete package	173
Friday night only	8
Saturday night only	27
Sunday night only	40
Saturday/Sunday nights only	44
Clergy	3
At the Door Sales	
Friday Night	7
Saturday Night	7
Sunday	16

Financial Report

Income:

Registration		
	Individual registration (including partial refunds)	\$71,558.00
Donations		
	Ad Book and Sponsorships	\$9,670.00
	Other donations	\$126.00
Fundraisers		
	Palm Sunday Fundraiser	\$1,520.00
	Super Bowl Fundraiser	\$2,496.00
	Bingo Night Fundraiser	\$2,822.00
Concession Sales		
	Food and beverage sales	\$237.00
	Shirt Sales	\$305.00
Miscellaneous Sales		
	Venmo sales	\$591.00

Revenue: \$89,325.00

Expenses:

General Assembly	
Friday Breakfast	\$1,197.00
GA Room	\$500.00
Audiovisual	\$1,675.00
Wireless Internet	\$200.00
AV Technicians	\$1,615.00
Facility/Banquet/Event Tech Admin Fees	\$1,384.56
Friday Event	
Setup, food, and security	\$7,008.00
Venue	\$5,000.00
Saturday Event	
Venue	\$17,500.00
Entertainment	\$3,000.00
Permitting fees	\$300.00
Security	\$300.00
Sunday Event	
Championships games food and beverage	\$342.82
Food and beverage	\$18,948.00
Entertainment	\$6,275.00
Sound system	\$2,500.00
Bartenders	\$450.00
Banquet Admin Fee	\$4,139.98
Athletics	
Referees	\$3,410.00
Trophies	\$353.15
Athlete food and beverage	\$757.27
Fees	
Yapp App	\$299.25
123Form Builder	\$154.09
Other	
Transportation	\$6,452.00
Hotel security (Sunday night only)	\$336.00
Photographers	\$100
Miscellaneous	\$324.53
Promotional materials (ad book, schedules, signage)	\$1,175.96
T-Shirt Printing	\$2,325.00
Welcome bags and snacks	\$961.39
Gratuities (bus drivers, entertainers, contract contacts)	\$590.00

Total Cost: \$89,574.00**Profit: \$-249.00**