



Alumni of the Month April 2018 **Mark Kazanjian**

Central Council Chairperson Mallory Maslar interviews former ACYOA member and Central Council Chairperson, Mark Kazanjian, about his involvement in the ACYOA, the impact it had on his life, and his current parish involvement.

Mallory Maslar: How did you first get involved in the ACYOA?

Mark Kazanjian: I remember seeing the ACYOA in my church when I was 10-12 years old. They were very active and held different kinds of events. Two events in particular that I remember were a talent show and an Armenian play. I always wanted to be a part of what they were doing, so I could not wait to be a member of the ACYOA. Once I became of age, I joined and immediately became an active member.

MM: What impact has the ACYOA had on your life?

MK: It has had an unbelievable impact, to say the least. I was a member of the ACYOA Juniors and learned all about the different responsibilities that a Chairman and a treasurer had. We also had something in New England called the New England Regional Board. The board was made up of one representative from each of the ten churches in Massachusetts and Connecticut. This New England Regional Board was very supportive of each other and held many events, becoming a very strong group throughout the region. I also held the position of Central Council Chairman in 1981, and that experience had a big impact on my life. By traveling and meeting all of the different chapters throughout the country, I still have some great friends throughout the country from the East coast to the West coast to this day. All of the different people that I had the pleasure of coming in contact with have had a very large impact on my life.

MM: What are some of your favorite memories being involved in the ACYOA?

MK: There is not enough space here to put some of my favorite memories because there are so many. But all of the fourteen Sports Weekends that I went to from 1971 to 1984 created many great memories that we still talk about today. My term on Central Council was fulfilling, especially the ability to start three new ACYOA chapters in churches that did not have one in existence during my term. All of the people that I have met, including all of the Clergy over all of the years, hold many wonderful memories.

MM: What have been some of your influences in your Christian life?

MK: I have to say that it started with the late Hayr Ghevont Samoorian from the Sts.Vartanantz Church in Chelmsford, Massachusetts, back when I first got involved with ACYOA in the early 70's. I

would also say that attending St. Nersess in Elberon, New Jersey during the summer of 1972 also had a great influence on my Christian life, along with all of the participants in that group. Working with the late Archbishop Torkom Manoogian while I was on Central Council, in addition to meeting and working with our current Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, played an important role in my life.

MM: Are you still involved in your parish community?

MK: I am still very involved in my parish, the Armenian Church at Hye Pointe in Bradford, MA. I have served as a sub-deacon since I was ordained in 1988. I have been involved in the ACYOA as a participant and then as an advisor from 1971 to this day. I have served on our Parish Council for many years, serving as Chairman, Vice Chairman, and advisor. I am currently serving as my church's Diocesan Delegate in my third term for the last eight years. What I am most proud of is the project that my Parish has been working on since 1992: merging two churches, St. Gregory of Haverhill, MA and Holy Cross of Lawrence, MA and building a whole new community and complex. The merging of two churches has never been done before in the Eastern Diocese, so it has been a huge challenge. I was on the initial committee to find land, which we purchased in June 2000. We then raised enough money to build the foundation by 2008, and the Catholicos came on a visit in 2009 to bless the four cornerstones. We finally finished building our Family Life Center and opened it on April 16, 2017. Thanks to a wonderful donor, we have been very lucky to be able to continue and to start the process of building our sanctuary. The steel structure of our design should be up by summer of 2018.

MM: Any advice for current and future ACYOA members?

MK: The best advice I could give to future members is to get involved and stay involved. It has been an invaluable asset in my life, with so much of my life experiences being directly tied to my church. I know that constant involvement and participation will eventually bring such great life experiences, as it did for me. Involvement is the key.