

Shant Kevorkian is a 22-year-old American Armenian running for the Glendale Unified School District (GUSD) Board. His family moved from Baghdad to Glendale before he was born, an experience he says shaped his values from a young age. As he explains, their journey “wasn’t just about surviving, but about thriving.” After the Armenian Genocide, his family’s path took many turns. They fled to Lebanon seeking refuge, but war broke out there as well. From Lebanon, they moved to Greece, then to Philadelphia, and eventually to Los Angeles.

As a first-generation Armenian American, Kevorkian founded the GUSD Alumni Association because, growing up, he found it difficult to access mentorship. His hope was to provide today’s students with the guidance he lacked. “My parents couldn’t guide me through applications or choosing a major. The Alumni Association was meant to provide mentorship, internships, and career pathways.” With a strong foundation already established, he believes the Alumni Association is well positioned to continue and grow.

Kevorkian began giving back to his community at a very young age. His first opportunity to serve on a larger scale came when he joined Glendale’s Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Commission. “We worked on programs like summer camps, accessible playgrounds, green space expansion, and family night initiatives.” He shared that, as he now runs for the GUSD Board, his guiding priorities, particularly environmental sustainability and green space for students, are directly informed by his commission work.

Kevorkian joked that his trick to balancing so many commitments is his calendar. “My calendar is my best friend. I prioritize what I care about most and give 110% to everything I commit to, while still protecting time for family and friends. Balance is essential.”

Growing up as a first-generation Armenian American in Los Angeles meant standing on the stories of his ancestors. “Those stories are the foundation I stand on. My involvement in the community really starts with remembering my roots and honoring my family’s sacrifices.” Reflecting on his childhood in Glendale, Kevorkian believes it provided both opportunity and a strong sense of Armenian identity. “In public schools, many of my classmates and teachers were Armenian. Our bakeries, hospitals, and small businesses were Armenian-owned/run. My world revolved around being Armenian American.”

He participated in Armenian protests from a young age and even skipped school to attend Genocide Remembrance marches when the genocide had not yet been officially recognized by the district. “Growing up around people who fought for those rights really shaped me. As a kid, seeing our community organize and succeed made me proud to be Armenian American and proud to be from Glendale.”

Kevorkian believes Armenian Americans need greater local visibility so students can see people who look like them in leadership roles and so Armenian voices are represented in policy

conversations. “Many issues need attention. First, Armenian language education, particularly Western Armenian dual immersion. Second, representation. Losing Armenian representation on the school board would be devastating.” He is running for the Glendale Unified School District Board as the current Armenian board member is retiring. “Over the past 25 years, there was always Armenian representation, at one point, even four members. Now there’s only one, and I’m running to replace that seat.”

The district serves approximately 25,000 students, many of whom are Armenian. “My childhood experiences, seeing community advocacy firsthand, pushed me to take action and run.” Many of Kevorkian’s formative experiences were rooted in education, particularly through teachers such as Dr. Linda Junge, Ms. Orenda Tuason, Mrs. Lena Kortoshian, , all of whom were trailblazers and played pivotal roles in his success. “In my senior year, I applied to the National Honor Society and was initially denied. I appealed to Dr. Junge, and without hesitation, she approved my membership. That moment meant everything, it showed me that hard work gets recognized.”

Speaking to Armenian American youth, Kevorkian emphasized resilience and courage. “Our ancestors survived genocide because they didn’t give up. Whatever path you choose, public service, medicine, business, fight for it. Pushback will come, but persistence wins.” He also reflected on the future of the community, saying, “The opening of the Armenian American Museum in Glendale will be a beacon for our diaspora. As long as we protect representation and uplift the right leaders, those with integrity and heart, we’ll continue moving forward.”

Kevorkian earned his Bachelor of Science in Healthcare Administration and is currently pursuing his master’s degree in the same field at the University of Southern California. “Healthcare and education are both people-centered. In healthcare, you serve people at their most vulnerable moments. In education and community work, you shape futures. At the core, it’s all about helping people.”

When asked what Armenian dish or tradition feels most meaningful to him, Kevorkian didn’t hesitate. “Food is everything, it brings us home. Nazook, lahmajoun, dolma, manti, khash... I can’t choose just one.” For him, Armenian food is more than sustenance; it carries memory, comfort, and connection, much like the community he hopes to serve and protect.