

## **ArmeniaFest is a Smash at St. Sarkis of DFW**

By Mary Mukhtarian

The 22<sup>nd</sup> annual ArmeniaFest was a major success during the weekend of October 13-15, 2017, mainly due to the dedication of many groups that worked tirelessly for months to bring this event to life.

Each year the Armenian community comes together to celebrate our culture, history and faith by filling a weekend with dance, music, food, presentations, videos to name a few. Not only is everyone in the community involved as a volunteer or a participant, but we keep reinforcing our message of an outstanding community that has a rich and long-standing history to communicate to others.

This year, the theme of the 2017 ArmeniaFest was "Armenian Rugs". This beautiful theme was so wonderfully evidenced by actual Armenian rugs lent by Manas Sherenian that represented the most beautiful of designs woven over 100 years ago, and selected specifically because they all included dates and Armenian writing in the rugs. There are no examples of any other culture that has incorporated writing in their rugs. In addition to the artful display of Vicky Bozikian of many rugs in the Kechejian Hall, there was a representative video prepared by Diran Aznavourian, and an informative presentation made by Mary Mukhtarian to educate the audience about the specific superiority of Armenian rugs and their historical value through the centuries. A touching moment was spontaneously created when Mrs. Azniv Altounian came over to demonstrate on the loom how she used to weave rugs as a young girl.

The most affecting story about rugs pertained to the one that was woven by orphans who had survived the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Out of more than 250,000 orphans placed in different countries, many were taught weaving to support themselves. 400 girls in an orphanage in Lebanon spent one and a half years working on a rug that was eventually presented to President Calvin Coolidge as a "Thank You" to the American people for saving their lives. The rug has not been on display, and it is hoped that such a great gift to the American people deserves to be seen and admired by them.

Again this year the community undertook the generous donation of time, money and expertise in order to prepare delicious foods and desserts that are representative of the best in Armenian cuisine. The Women's Guild prepared and baked all the foods that were offered during the weekend. The variety and quantity of foods were representative of countless hours that these marvelous women dedicated to the success of the festival. People lined up to order the heavenly boreg, dolma, rice pilaf, lahmajoun and countless others. In addition, all grills were fired by expert grill masters who spent the weekend on their feet keeping up with demand for all kinds of delectable Kebabs. Desserts were so popular that Serena Gostanian had to make an urgent plea for more baked goods, which miraculously appeared after a sleepless night by many bakers in the community.

The entertainment included Armenian dances performed by the Group dancers of St. Sarkis trained by Kristina Kheshvadjan. They had dedicated their free time to keeping these most beautiful artistic expressions alive, and their efforts were rewarded with the admiration of the audience.

There were so many activities, contests, and attractions, that all were able to enjoy themselves. Sonia Pierce commented: " My heart was full of pride watching all the youth of our community and guests

enjoy the Family Fun Center.” Annie Graham, who with Elizabeth Klachian had made the Raffle booth and silent auction a success commented that we achieve success by working together because we cannot clap with one hand.

Perhaps the most memorable comment came from Father Ghevond Ajamian, who said that he had attended many such festivals, but this was the best for the way the community pulled together to make everything possible! Well done everyone, especially Maral Aznavourian who managed all the teams!

Plans are already underway for making 2018 even better.