

# THE ANDZNAGIR

*News for the American citizen community in Armenia*



## **Volume 2, ISSUE 3**

The warm days of summer have set upon us, and Yerevan in particular is abuzz with activity. Lively chatter surrounds tables at sidewalk cafes and you can hear the laughter of children fill the evening air. For American diplomats, summer can often mean packing up their families, bidding sad goodbyes to friends and colleagues, and preparing for a new life at the next post.

It is in this spirit that we say goodbye to our current American Citizen services Chief, Frank Lavoie, and welcome our incoming chief, Shane Spellman. Shane previously served in China. He currently serves as Vice Consul in Yerevan, and will be working in conjunction with Anahit Movsesyan to keep American Citizen Services central to the lives of Americans abroad whenever they need assistance.

I too, your editor and Consular Associate Merrari Abdiani, must bid farewell. It was my pleasure to assist you and interact with you daily as part of the ACS team here at U.S. Embassy Yerevan. I'll miss your friendly faces. I'll miss congratulating you on your new marriages, your newborn children, and your shiny new passports! I'm off to Indonesia for the next adventure, but I can truly say that two years in Armenia was just not enough.

And with that, let's get on to the good stuff...

## Meet Our New Ambassador, Lynne M. Tracy



Lynne M. Tracy is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service. She previously served as the Senior Adviser for Russia in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs at the Department of State.

From 2014 to 2017 Ms. Tracy served as the Deputy Chief of Mission at Embassy Moscow, Russia. She served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Central Asia in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs from 2012 to 2014, and as Director for Central Asia at the National Security Council from 2011 to 2012. Other overseas assignments include Deputy Chief of Mission in Embassy Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, Principal Officer in Peshawar, Pakistan, Principal Officer in Astana, Kazakhstan, Political Officer in Kabul, Afghanistan, Consular Officer in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and Political/Consular Officer in Peshawar, Pakistan. Domestic assignments include Desk Officer for Kazakhstan and Georgia in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, and Staff Assistant for the Special Envoy for the Newly-Independent States at the Department of State.

Ms. Tracy received a Distinguished Honor Award in 2017 for her performance as Deputy Chief of Mission in Moscow, and the Secretary's Award for Heroism in 2009 for her performance as Principal Officer in Peshawar. Ms. Tracy graduated from the University of Georgia with a B.A. in Soviet Studies in 1986. She graduated from the University of Akron, Ohio with a J.D. in 1994. She speaks Russian and is learning more Armenian by the day!

## Access to the Embassy Shuka (Classifieds)

Questions were raised at our recent Town Hall with Ambassador Tracy, asking why the American community at large doesn't receive the embassy's *Bari Newsletter*. Due to updated regulations the newsletter cannot be disseminated beyond the embassy. Ambassador Tracy, however, heard your concerns and as a result you can now find the **Shuka** or "Classifieds" section of the Bari News at Issuu.com (<https://issuu.com/>). Interested individuals can sign in, search "Bari News" or "Bari Shuka" and browse to find various services or items for sale.

## A Call for Volunteers



Photo credit: rawpixel.com

### Helping Hands Orran Center

The Orran Center works with underprivileged children ages 5 -17 and is located in downtown Yerevan.

If you or your family members have skills and talents to share with the children, the center could use you!

Helping Hands also accepts donations of gently used clothes and toys.

For more information, or to plan future activities for Helping Hands, please contact Maritsa:  
HovhannisyanM@state.gov

### Mother Teresa Orphanage

A dedicated group of Catholic nuns run an orphanage for disabled children in Nork Marash, a neighborhood in Yerevan.

They are always looking for volunteers to spend time with the children. They have a wonderful local staff and international visitors who come to work with the children periodically.

The children LOVE it when volunteers bring their own children.

For more information please email  
Debbie Grieser: grieser.d@gmail.com

## Groceries to Go!

Did you know that there are several markets around town that provide Grocery Delivery services here in Yerevan? Make your life easy, go on-line!

### Grocery Delivery

- ✓ NEW! Parma Supermarket - <https://parma.am/en>
- ✓ SAS Supermarket - <https://en.sas.am/?full>
- ✓ Online Groceries shop - <https://shopon.am/>
- ✓ Online veggie and fruit shop - <https://gazar.am/shop>
- ✓ Online wholesale store (mostly non-traditional for Armenian produce, hard-to-find items, organic and gluten-free products) - <http://am.gogreenarmenia.com/>
- ✓ Online Organic Store - <https://greenday.am/?lang=en>



Photo Credit: Daria Shevtsova

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **I am planning to get married to an Armenian citizen: how can I take my (future) spouse to the United States to live with me?**

Whether you are engaged or married, you will be applying for a visa for your partner. In both cases, you start by going to the website for the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service, [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov). If you are engaged, find the **I-129F** form and follow the instructions to complete it and send it to USCIS with the fee and the supporting documents listed.

If you are married, follow the same procedure, except use the **I-130 petition**. The petition will be processed by USCIS and then sent to the National Visa Center. The NVC will, in turn, send the paperwork to Yerevan, where your spouse or fiancé will be interviewed at the embassy. Among other requirements, the paperwork will need to show that you, as the American citizen sponsor, are domiciled in the U.S. and that you can financially support your spouse/fiancé. For further questions about these visa categories, please website: [http://armenia.usembassy.gov/immigrant\\_visas.html](http://armenia.usembassy.gov/immigrant_visas.html)

### **Where can I seek medical care while travelling or living in Armenia?**

The Consular Section maintains a list of local hospitals and doctors to assist American citizens who require medical attention. The Consular Section updates the list regularly and takes no responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of the persons or firms listed. You can find the list here at <https://am.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/doctors/>

### **What happens to an American citizen child born in Nagorno-Karabakh?**

Because Nagorno-Karabakh is not internationally recognized as either independent or as part of Armenia, the State

Department must list the place of birth in the passport as Azerbaijan. In most instances, regulations permit the parents, if they object to a birth country, to replace it with the name of the birth city, though this could cause the child some problems when traveling with a U.S. passport to a third country. However, in this instance, the city name Stepanakert, for instance, could not be used; its Azeri equivalent, Khankendi, would have to appear. The paperwork for the Report of Birth Abroad will have to be sent to the embassy in Baku for final approval.

If you object to this policy, please plan for births to take place in Armenia.

### **Can I travel on a passport that will not expire for another three months to Russia/China/France? Will I need a visa?**

Always check the expiration of your passport before you book your tickets for travel abroad. Passport validity and visa requirements vary from country to country.

France, for example, requires no visas for U.S. passport holders who stay under 90 days, but requires 3 months of passport validity beyond your date of departure from the Schengen area. Russia on the other hand requires a visa and 6 months of passport validity for U.S. citizens.

What if your passport expired and the embassy issued you an emergency passport with one year validity? Can you travel on it? Some countries like China refuse to issue a visa to limited validity/emergency passport holders. This is because the emergency passport is a passport issued to help U.S. citizens get back to the United States. Many countries do not consider it valid for travel with a visa. Please check with that country's consulate.

You can also check, [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) where you will find country specific visa and passport requirements, as well as security alerts and a plethora of important information on your country of destination.

## Don't Forget to Sign Your Child's Passport!

This is a reminder that when picking up a passport for your child or children after a passport renewal, the Department of State requires the parent's signature inside the full validity 5 year passport of a minor under the age of 16. As of age 16, the passport will be issued with ten year validity, and the minor can sign the passport.

**On the signature line, please print out your child's full name. Sign your signature next to their name. Above your signature, or next to it, in parentheses designate the relationship: "mother," "father," "parent," or "legal guardian," for example.**

Border officials, like TSA agents, are trained to spot victims of kidnapping and child trafficking, and closely examine a child's passport when it's presented. Assuming it's valid and signed correctly, you and your child should be on your way without issue.



## DID YOU KNOW?

The Armenian government launched a mobile-phone app to allow the Mobility-impaired to contact 911 emergency services more quickly and easily. It is called "911SOS" and is available for Android and iOS smartphones. Users can simply push the SOS button in lieu of dialing, and the emergency operators can gather better information about their location using GPS. It is free of charge, so download it today!

## The American Liaison Network

**Think you have what it takes to lead in times of crisis?**

**The American Liaison Network is always looking for American Citizens to serve as Civil Liaison Volunteers. For more information please email**

**[ACS.Yerevan@state.gov](mailto:ACS.Yerevan@state.gov)**



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## Beat the Heat on Vardavar!

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Get ready for one of the most beloved holidays in Armenia- *Vardavar!*

Vardavar, like many of Armenia's holidays, has its origins from pagan times. Originally dedicated to the goddess of love, Astghik, Vardavar is now celebrated on the day of Christ's Transfiguration, 14 weeks after Easter.

In 2019, Vardavar will be celebrated on July 28th. During the celebration, you'll find people all over Armenia splashing (or rather throwing) water on one another. You may find yourself driving past rivers filled with friends and families, splashing one another with great revelry, as entire towns and villages participate in the great spectacle.

In general, don't expect to leave your house that day and stay dry. All throughout Yerevan, people splash others of all ages, but you'll want to keep an eye out for the children in particular, who take great delight in drenching strangers.

During Vardavar, apartment dwellers will splash those walking below. Children will gather in parks to drench one another. Cars driving through neighborhoods will be doused with buckets of water. This is a fun holiday for those who don't mind a little cool down in the summer heat.

# Signs of Culture Shock

By Diane Schmidt  
As written for the Spruce.com

Culture shock is a very real experience for many people who move to another country. Anyone who has lived or studied or even traveled extensively in another country has tasted and lived through some level of culture shock. At the time it may feel more like homesickness, but what most people who haven't undergone any kind of adaptation program don't know are the stages one goes through when adjusting to a new language, country, and culture.

## **Culture Shock**

Understanding what culture shock is and how it comes about will help you identify it more easily and make your international move a little easier. The online Oxford Dictionary defines culture shock as disorientation experienced when suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture or way of life. This is a good summary; let's break it down a bit further. When you move to a new country, everything is unfamiliar; weather, landscape, language, food, dress, social roles, values, customs, and communication - basically, everything you're used to is no longer in place.

You'll find that the day unfolds differently, that business is conducted in a way that may be hard to understand, and the stores are opened and closed at hours you could never predict. Your patterns are off-kilter, the smells, sounds, and tastes are unusual, and you can't communicate with the locals - not even to buy a loaf of bread. This is culture shock, and like any form of shock, there is a definite and almost certain reaction.

## **Symptoms of Culture Shock**

- Feelings of sadness and loneliness
- Over-concern about your health
- Headaches, pains, and allergies
- Insomnia or sleeping too much
- Feelings of anger, depression, and vulnerability
- Idealizing your own culture
- Trying too hard to adapt by becoming obsessed with the new culture
- The smallest problems seem overwhelming
- Feeling shy or insecure
- Become obsessed with cleanliness
- An overwhelming sense of homesickness
- Feeling lost or confused
- Questioning your decision to move to this place

## **The Honeymoon Stage**

Like any new experience, there's a feeling of euphoria when you first arrive in a new country and you're in awe of the differences you see and experience. You feel excited, stimulated, and enriched. During this stage, you still feel close to everything familiar back home.

## **The Distress Stage**

Everything you're experiencing no longer feels new; in fact, it's starting to feel like a thick wall that's preventing you from experiencing things. You feel confused, alone, and realize that the familiar support systems are not easily accessible.

## **Re-Integration Stage**

During this stage, you start refusing to accept the differences you encounter. You're angry, frustrated, and even feel hostile to those around you. You start to idealize life "back home" and compare your current culture to what is familiar. You dislike the culture, the language, and the food. You reject it as inferior. You may even develop some prejudices towards the new culture. Don't worry, this is absolutely normal; you're adjusting.

## **Autonomy Stage**

This is the first stage of acceptance. It's the emergence stage when you start to rise above the clouds and finally begin to feel like yourself again. You start to accept the differences and feel like you can begin to live with them. You feel more confident and better able to cope with any problems that may arise. You no longer feel isolated and instead, you're able to look at the world around you and appreciate where you are.

## **Independence Stage**

You are yourself again! You embrace the new culture and see everything in a new, yet realistic light. You feel comfortable, confident, and able to make decisions based on your own preferences. You no longer feel alone and isolated. You appreciate both the differences and similarities of your new culture. You start to feel at home.

## **How to Help Yourself**

There are several things you can do to help yourself through the stages of culture shock. First, fight the urge to retreat and instead join a club, try out for a sports team, volunteer, attend a local church, or take a language class. Meeting new people and forcing yourself to become part of the community will help you through the re-integration stage.

Also, it's important when you're settling into your new home country to ensure your home space feels good and comfortable. Settling into a new home is the same in a foreign country as it is in your own country. Take the time you need to feel good in your space.

Get out. Walk around your new neighborhood. Be seen. Smile. Visit the same coffee shop or bookstore or market. You'll soon be recognized. There's nothing that says you're at home, like a neighbor saying "good morning" in any language.

Go on tours. Be a tourist in your own town. Sign up for local excursions. Get to know your city, its history, and culture. This will help ease you into the autonomy stage, and eventually, the independence stage.

**You can find this article at:** <https://www.thespruce.com/culture-shock-from-international-move-2436081>

## About Us...



Here at American Citizen Services we're working hard to build our American community abroad. For us that means greater involvement from our American citizens in Armenia. With that in mind, we invite you to become contributors to *the Andznagir*.

If you've had a great meal somewhere and would like to write a review; if you discovered a great café or coffee shop in your neighborhood; if there are cultural traditions and celebrations you'd like to highlight, or historical sites you'd like to write about; we'd love to hear from you.

We will not be accepting solicitations to advertise businesses or services, and this will not be a platform for branding or advertising. What we want are the experiences you'd like to share with others through the written word.

Please send all submissions for consideration to [ACSYerevan@state.gov](mailto:ACSYerevan@state.gov)

**Shane Spellman** serves as our new American Citizen Services Chief. Shane and his family have previously served in China.

**Anahit Movsesyan** is an Armenian native and has worked at the U.S. Embassy for 11 years. She previously served as Protocol Assistant to the Ambassador. She speaks fluent Armenian and Russian and English.

### Fees for Services

Notaries--\$50  
Marriage Letter Notary-\$50  
Birth Abroad (CRBA) - \$100  
Adult Passport Renewal-\$110  
Child Passport/Renewal-\$115  
First Time Adult/Lost or Stolen-\$145

*All fees can be paid at the time of your appointment in either U.S. Dollars or Drams*

For those who receive an email from our office indicating that your passport or CRBA is ready for pick up:

### ACS Passport/CRBA Pick-Up Hours

**2:00p.m. - 4:30p.m. M-F**

**(Excluding holidays)**

**As always, we welcome your comments, questions and feedback. Please write to us at [ACSYerevan@state.gov](mailto:ACSYerevan@state.gov)**

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1 American Ave, Yerevan 0082,  
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Phone (M-F 8:30a-5:30p):  
(374-10) 49-45-85

Emergency Phone (after hours):  
(374-10) 49-44-44