

Albanian Alps Institute
1620 NW 23rd Street
Corvallis, OR 97330

Phone: 541-753-3066
Email: albanianalpsinst@gmail.com
Website: www.albanianalps.org

President: Steve Cook

Secretary: Terri Cook

Board of Directors:

Karen Berg
Sharon Carlson
Mary Alice Seville
Nancy Leeper
Alcyon Lord

Albania Manager:
Marash Rakaj

*Our Mission:
Supporting improved quality of
educational opportunities for
the children and youth of the
isolated Malesia e Madhe
region of Northern Albania.*

AWARD CEREMONY



Near the end of Steve's 2011 stay in Albania, a ceremony was held at the Boga School to honor Steve with a Certificate of Gratitude "for his many years of contributions to the education of students, especially those with economic needs, providing English classes; repairing schools and supporting general education in our district."

The head of the Komuna Council, Rrok Gegaj and the elected Komuna leader, Fredi Sterkaj attended and spoke. Ardian Ulaj, Head Teacher in Boga organized the event, with the help of Komuna School Directors. Speeches were also given by Ardian and AAI Albanian Representative Marash Rakaj, as well as a few words of thanks by Steve. Aleks Vulaj did an excellent job of interpreting remarks in both directions throughout.

About fifty people attended the ceremony, including many current and former AAI scholarship students and their parents, as well as many teachers from Boga, Xhaj and Vrithi. A reporter/videographer from Shkodra TV attended, and the event was on TV the following evening for 30 minutes. Following the award ceremony, seventeen people retired to Gjelosh Gegaj's restaurant for an excellent meal, where several impromptu speeches by others were given, accompanied by much hoisting of raki and beer glasses with shouts of "Gezuar" (Cheers!) in a near continual salute to Steve.

SUMMER VOLUNTEERS



This year three students from Oregon State University, Charlotte Roehm, Jake Elliot, and Eric Saylor, volunteered in AAI's summer Conversational English classes. Charlotte stayed in Boga with AAI scholarship student families. As the only foreigner in the village (other than Steve who was there part of the time), Charlotte got joyfully and eagerly immersed into the culture. She even milked a sheep! The girls all cried when she left. Having a young female college student from the U.S. come to the village provides a great role model for the village girls. Jake and Eric stayed for nearly a month in Vrithi. They taught two classes each day, six days a week. Volunteers in the AAI summer Conversational English program pay little more than room and board for this experience, and the benefits go both ways. All three of these students marveled at how much the Albanians appreciated their coming, and they commented at the end that they weren't sure who benefitted the most—the Albanian students or themselves.

Read letters from these students about their experiences on our website.

NEW PLAYGROUNDS!

"The children are really enjoying it, they stay in queue for ages to get on them. It looks to them like a miracle that they are able to play on the equipment."

Thank you to all who donated!



ENGLISH PROGRAM



AAI English Teacher, Aleks Vulaj continues to teach English in Vrithi, Xhaj, and Boga. This fall he has 60 students attending his multiple classes at the three schools.

Aleks is also including one session each month that emphasizes speaking in English, which of course requires *thinking* in English. Verbal communication in a foreign language is difficult, but Aleks makes it fun and uses themes like "sports" for the students to work within.

It was most gratifying to see one student who moved from Vrithi to the Albanian capital of Tirana in the 9th class, and even though he had no English language classes on his official transcript, via an interview, he was able to

demonstrate a knowledge of English similar to his classmates who had had English in their "official" classes in Tirana. AAI is very grateful for the work that Alex is doing.

This year at the request of School Directors, we offered to include two sessions each week in Xhaj and Boga, allowing the more advanced students to acquire more skills, and in return we were to be allowed to hold English classes during the day, and not after school. But the Ministry of Education denied our request, and at this time we are trying to find a solution.

Currently we have several students in need of donors to help them go to school. We screen the applicants for need and ability and let you know of the student's progress throughout the year.

Only \$180 will pay for the bus ride to and from High School for a year.

Thank you to all who donated items for our fall yard sale. It was a great success. Save your items for next year!

Learn more about AAI at www.albanianalps.org

Become a fan of our Facebook page and receive updates of our activities throughout the year.