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

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS



Angjelin Olaj

AAI scholarship recipients have gone from grade school to high school and finally to university! At first we worked to improve the elementary schools in Shrekli Komuna. When a high school was established in Dedaj at the lower end of the valley, we gave scholarships to students to help pay bus fare to school. Some of those students have continued their studies at University of Shkodra. Here is an update on four of our university scholarship recipients. **Angjelin Olaj** started receiving an AAI scholarship while attending high school and now holds a Master's Degree in English from University of Shkodra. He has just been hired to teach English, Italian and computer technology in the villages of Boga (his home) and Xhaj. AAI donated two laptops to Angjelin to use in all three classes.

Donika Rakaj was the first girl from Boga to attend high school. Donika's family consists of her two older brothers, mother and father. She attended high school in Shkodra and continued on at the university there, where she is currently a senior majoring in Law. Donika says that "studying law has always been my dream, I always wanted to become a lawyer hoping that in this way, I could offer a bit of help to improve justice in my country. And I hope that I will be able to do that after graduating."

Toneta Durgaj is from Ducaj in the upper Boga Valley and has one brother, as well as her mother and father. Toneta graduated from Dedaj High School with perfect scores, but found



Donika Rakaj

the first year of university to be difficult. Being a conscientious student, she spent this past summer studying with the help of a tutor provided by AAI. Determined to catch up, her ultimate goal is to teach Math in the villages. "I hope to be a Math teacher helping the next generation of children of Shkreli be better prepared for the future than my parents."



Toneta Durgaj

Aurel Lekaj has also received AAI scholarships throughout his high school and university attendance. He is from the village of Qafe-Grade (Rec) and has two brothers. He is currently a student at University of Shkodra majoring in Economics.

To be eligible for an AAI scholarship, students must fill out an application and show that he/she has maintained a minimum

grade of 7 in all classes (the grading system is 1 through 10). They must provide a letter of recommendation from a teacher or school director and during the school year they must write two essays. The latter requirement allows us to hear from each student and keep in touch. While our application process is open to both boys and girls, the girls seem to attain better grades and therefore, receive more scholarships. It is gratifying to see the number of girls from the villages who are now attending high school when just a few years ago, none of them had that opportunity because of tradition.



Aurel Lekaj

AAI would like to congratulate these hard-working students and to thank all the donors who helped make it possible to change these young people's lives.

NEW BOGA VALLEY BUS



The Albanian Ministry of Education does not require students to attend school beyond the 9th year, so in the past it hasn't felt the need to help students attend high school. Previously, students rode the commercial bus, but many fathers were unwilling to send their daughters to school as it required them to wait beside the road in Dedaj for some period of time to catch the returning bus home. However, this year, Fredi Sterkaj, Shkrel Komuna Chief approached AAI about jointly sponsoring a bus to Dedaj High School for students throughout the valley. AAI agreed to participate in this new program. There are 27 high school students now riding the school bus from Boga, Ducaj, Makaj, Xhaj and Bzheta. The Komuna is paying 25%, the students are paying 25% and AAI is making up the remaining 50% of the cost. Long-time bus driver/owner, Rrok Rakaj from Boga is providing the bus.

Paloke Vrucaj, Dedaj School Director on the right with Students riding the bus

VERA RAKAJ, BOGA LIBRARIAN



One of AAI's original projects was to set up libraries in several of the village schools and Vera Rakaj has fulfilled the role of Librarian in Boga for several years. The idea of checking books out and returning them was a new one to students and Vera has done an excellent job of maintaining records and keeping the books organized. She is married to Gjon Rakaj, former Boga math teacher, who has more recently worked for AAI as a math tutor to the students in Boga. Vera's degree from the University of Shkodra is in Language and Literature and in Boga she teaches Albanian Language, Literature, History and Geography to the older students.

Other News

Current scholarship recipients 2012-13 school year:

- 3 University
- 4 High School in Shkodra
- 1 Early Intervention
- 14 Transportation Scholarships to Dedaj High School
- Supporting Boga bus – 27 students

Steve and the three trekkers from this year's trip installed swingsets in two more villages – Zagora and Dedaj

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.

Learn more about AAI at www.albanianalps.org

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