

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, PhD

Secretary: Terri Cook

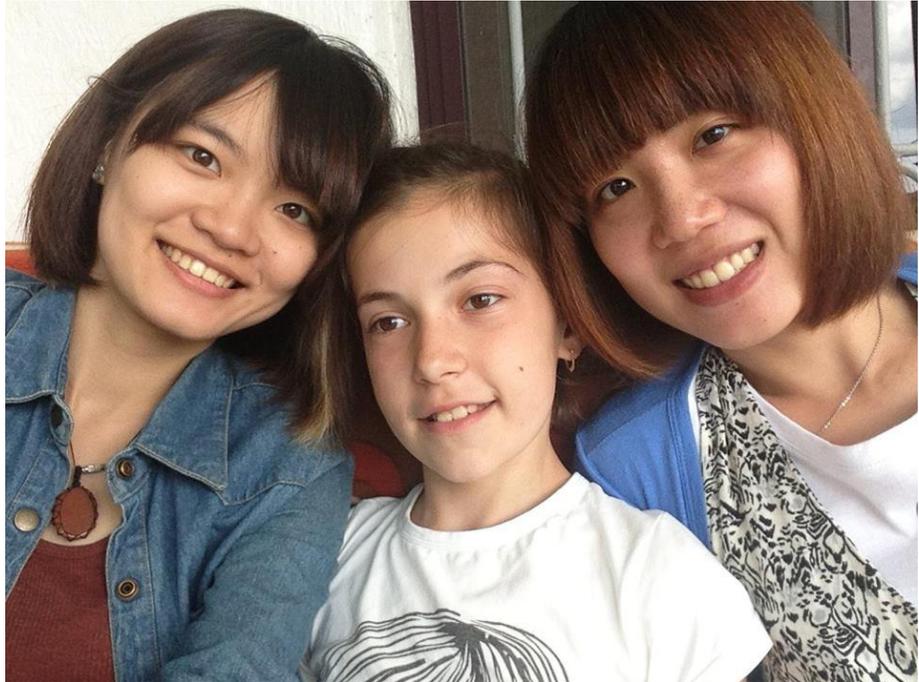
Board of Directors:

Karen Berg
Sharon Carlson
Mary Alice Seville
Nancy Leeper
Alcyon Lord
Kristina Milaj

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.*

TAIWANESE STUDENT VOLUNTEERS



For the first time ever, two Taiwanese women traveled to Vrithe to teach Conversational English under the AAI volunteer program. They stayed with my mom, Violeta Milaj, and I was their companion and interpreter. The people in the village kept asking me “why have they come here?” Kla and Yi-ning taught English in Vrithe in the morning and then traveled to Xhaj in the afternoon. AAI English teacher, Aleks Vulaj provided transportation between the villages. In their free time, we climbed mountains, visited the church, and the surrounding villages. They were very curious about our lifestyle, our food, and our culture, and they liked taking pictures of people working in their gardens and around the village. Village life was much different than their Taiwanese experience. We enjoyed their English classes because they used drawings and songs to teach us.

Submitted by Robert Milaj

A Word from President Steve Cook

The Albanian Alps Institute has been improving education for the children of the Shkrel Komuna School District since 2003. We have had many successes including establishing lending libraries where there were none in five schools; providing an English teacher in three villages; awarding scholarships for bus fare to high school; supporting four kindergartens; and covering expenses for students staying in Shkoder to attend high school (we gave scholarships to the first girls ever to attend high school and university from Boga and Vrithe). But 2013-14 may be our most difficult year. Donations have seriously declined and we are greatly in need of funds to carry on our basic programs. For those of you who have supported us in the past, thank you, and please consider our need when donating this year. For those who have not donated before, let me assure you that all donations go to our programs, we have no administrative or overhead expenses—my wife Terri and I cover those costs personally. On the back are letters from four of our scholarship students.

LETTERS FROM UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

My AAI scholarship began in the eighth class, when you paid a helper for my injured mother, allowing my sister and me to not miss a single day in school and to learn more. You and my father agreed to send me to high school in Shkoder, a dream come true. I and my friend Rregjina were the first girls from Boga to *EVER* live away from home to attend high school. This was a valuable and unforgettable experience for me, although it was also a great sacrifice being away from my family. I am profoundly grateful for your help. Now I am in the first weeks of university study, majoring in Psychology. I so want to find a job and be useful to society. For me, this scholarship has affected not only my education, but my personality, my knowledge and a fulfillment of a great desire. The AAI scholarship has been irreplaceable in my life so far, and leaves a bright future for me.

Dafina Rakaj

Since I was a child, I had a big dream—to have a University degree. The economic condition of my family made this dream seem impossible. But, I hoped for a miracle, and studied hard in school. I tried to forget my biggest dream...but thank God, this dream isn't a dream anymore, it's a fact because an AAI scholarship helped me attend High School, and more recently, the University of Shkoder, where I am now in the third year pursuing a degree in Math.

There are no words to express how grateful I am for my AAI scholarship. But I am sure about one thing: I will help others when I am in a position to do so, as Professor Steve and AAI did for me. I wish all the best for everyone who made my dream come true, and I know I'll work very hard to make those who supported me very proud.

Toneta Durgaj



My AAI scholarship has been, and remains one of the main incentives to keep me in school. You have supported me for eight years, beginning in high school, and now in university. I thank you so much for not only the scholarship to offset my expenses of staying away from home, going to a high school that emphasizes economics, where I am now in the third year of the Faculty of Economics, Department of Business Administration. Thank you very much for your contribution.

Aurel Lekaj

I went to high school, because Professor Steve convinced my father that he should accept an AAI scholarship. This scholarship meant three things to me: opportunity, stimulation, and a big support. To become someone in life, requires an opportunity, stimulation from someone, and the support to pursue this opportunity. My AAI scholarship gave me the chance to learn—something that I yearned for. I've now finished high school and am a student at University of Shkoder, all thanks to my AAI scholarship. I had a dream: To study. And now this dream is a reality, I am studying my favorite subject, Economics-Finance. In life nothing is easy, but if I work hard, someday I will be someone. I will never forget who gave me the first “hand up” and I am so grateful to AAI and to Professor Steve. Thank you very much.

Rregjina Rakaj



A Story of Firsts

AAI's newest board member is Kristina Milaj, whom we've highlighted in previous newsletters. Kristina was the first AAI scholarship recipient, the first girl from her village to attend high school, the first girl to attend university and the first Albanian on our board. She will be graduating in Civil Engineering from Oregon State University spring 2014. While she is eager to find a job in her field and perhaps one day get a master's degree, one of her main goals in life is to help give others opportunities like she has had. As an AAI board member Kristina says “My aim is to initiate collaboration between the Albanians living in the US and AAI to make small investments in my country's most valuable resource – its youth.”



AAI Programs

- Scholarships
- Books for libraries
- Kindergarten support
- English program