

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

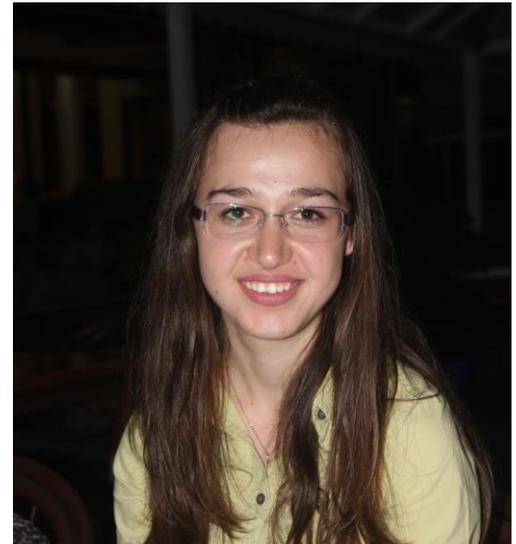
Meet two of our university scholarship recipients who have made us very proud. Congratulations to Vitjola Colaj and Rregina Rakaj for all of your hard work and



Vitjola Colaj is from the village of Zagora and received her first AAI scholarship to attend High School in Shkoder. She earned high grades there and was accepted at University of Tirana to continue her studies. AAI gave her a scholarship to help with her with college costs each year and she has continued to excel. She will be graduating next July and will become a Laboratory Technician. Currently she is doing a three month practicum at a hospital in

Tirana. As soon as she graduates, she hopes to go to work so that she can help her family which consists of her grandmother, her parents, one sister age 18 and a brother age 15. Vitjola is also engaged and her fiancé is an audio and light technician.

Rregina Rakaj is from Boga and was one of the first girls from there to attend high school. AAI has supported Rregina through high school and college. She graduated last spring with an undergraduate degree in Finance-Accounting and is now working on her Masters in Finance-Banking. When she is finished, she plans to take exams to become an Approved Public Accountant. She would like to work in a bank, eventually. Rregina's parents live in Boga and she also has two brothers, a sister-in-law and a nephew. It is not easy for students to come from village schools and accomplish as much as Rregina has. Her tenacity and hard work is an inspiration.



SCHOOL YEAR 2016-17 AWARDS

This year we are funding eleven university students and twenty-nine high school students. Congratulations and good luck to all of our scholarship recipients!

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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.*



Letter from AAI President, Steve Cook

I spent three weeks in Albania in 2016. The weather was cold and rainy, restricting my travels, however our programs are continuing on superbly. The School Directors are pleased with the library book donation program, the playground equipment is in good repair, water and toilets continue to function after AAI repairs in 2015. And we decided to purchase a large copy machine to be located in Dedaj and smaller ones in Vrithe, Boga, Xhaj, and Zagora. This will save much staff time.

As with 2015, the highlight of my trip was a second "Career Day." After listening to too-long speeches last year, I changed the format and had a dozen professionals sitting at tables, and the hundred high school juniors and seniors in attendance circulated among the tables

tables, talking with the fireman, doctor and nurses, current AAI scholarship university students, psychologists, school teachers. The 35 AAI scholarship high school students were required to visit five tables and ask questions. The idea of a "Career Day" is new in Albania, and this format totally new for any event. But everyone, both professionals and students deemed it to be a big success.

We continue to be able to help these students from these small villages because of generous donors. We thank everyone who has helped this past year and hope we can count on your continued support.
Happy holidays!

Volunteering Summer 2016

Brendan Wick, a senior at Oregon State University, traveled to Albania as an AAI volunteer this past summer. This is what he had to say about his experience:

"My time in Albania was unforgettable. The immersive nature of the AAI experience made it such that I was surrounded by the beauty of the land and the warmth of the people, while simultaneously seeing a culture with an identity crisis at the most crucial nexus in the history of their country. I gained a wholly new perspective on life and how I live. The people I met and friends that I made are my favorite aspects of this experience. My host family was so gracious with everything they had to offer, even if it was not much. The students were amazing, if not frustrating at

times. Many of them are bright and motivated, some just need help applying that knowledge. Working with them to find what inspires them was gratifying. I hope to go again, someday."



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