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## **Recycling a Playground for Orphaned Armenian Children**

Armenian Relief Mission & Zera Construction team up with Wilmette to disassemble and ship the village playground set to Armenia



**Niles, IL — June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009** — The Armenian Relief Mission and Zera Construction have once again joined together, this time with the Chicago suburb of Wilmette, to disassemble the village's used playground set so that it can be sent to Armenia and rebuilt to benefit orphaned children.

Following a process they initially created a few years ago in suburban Northbrook, volunteers from both the Armenian Relief Mission and Zera Construction disassembled the town playground in Wilmette to make way for a new one. The playground parts were then transported by Zera and loaded into a shipping container along with other donations collected by the Armenian Relief Mission. The container was then shipped to

Armenia, where a team of volunteers from the U.S. will re-assemble the playground as part of a visit in October of this year.

The idea to re-use the playground began when the husband and wife team of Dr. Stephen & Rozik Kashian of Winnetka, who founded the Armenian Relief Mission in 1998, learned through a friend that a playground in the suburb of Northbrook was being replaced and slated for demolition. Uncomfortable with the idea of these playground parts being thrown into a landfill, and ever-mindful of the plight of children from their ancestral Armenia, the Kashians called upon Alex Zera, their friend and chairman of Zera Construction, to see if the playground could instead be quickly disassembled and shipped to Armenia. After a brief examination of the equipment, Alex realized that the skills of his workforce—being a leading structural concrete restoration contractor in Chicago—would lend themselves nicely for the project, especially as the work had to be completed within 48 hours of hearing about it. The playground was then disassembled in a single day, and the parts were subsequently used to rebuild three new playgrounds in Armenia, now located at both a clinic and an orphanage in Vanadzor, and at another orphanage in the capital city, Yerevan.

A former Soviet republic, Armenia borders Turkey to the west and Georgia to the north. An earthquake in 1988 left up to 75,000 people dead and 500,000 homeless, and much of the aftermath still plagues the country today. Armenia's economy was further devastated when the Soviet Union pulled out along with much of the country's industry in 1991. These rebuilt playgrounds give Armenian children a chance to have fun despite very challenging circumstances.

If you know of a playground in your area that will be replaced soon, please contact the Armenian Relief Mission so that it too may be used to benefit Armenian children instead of being thrown into a landfill.

### **About Armenian Relief Mission**

Steve Kashian, a North Shore physician, and his wife, Rozik, created the Armenian Relief Mission as a registered charity in 1998 to aid Armenia. Since then, the Mission has secured donations from hundreds of people around the country and international organizations like Rotary, and have recruited more than 50 area residents who have traveled half way around the world to lend a hand in Armenia, some as many as five times. The charity has twice won national awards from the Republic of Armenia for its efforts. Their effort is also remarkable for its long-term commitment to the country. [www.armrelief.org](http://www.armrelief.org)

### **About Zera Construction**

For over 50 years, Zera Construction is a family-owned business that provides structural concrete restoration and waterproofing services for parking garages, plazas, stadiums, rooftops, and historical landmarks. Structural engineers and property managers rely on Zera Construction to repair damage and implement measures to prevent corrosion due to water, salt and normal wear & tear, in accordance with the U.S. Green Building Council's *Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design* (LEED). [www.zeraconstruction.com](http://www.zeraconstruction.com)