

Citizen Philanthropy in Action: The Armenia Giving Network Reflects on a Year of Group Service Learning Activities

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At VMware, we believe everyone has something unique to contribute to our society. Our culture of service influences the way we interact with others – inside and outside of work. As such, we are all Citizen Philanthropists, empowered to support what is most meaningful to us through VMware Foundation programs. VMware’s culture of service is a key pillar of the equity outcomes of **VMware’s 2030 Agenda**, as Citizen Philanthropy provides equal access to VMware’s charitable resources for all VMware people around the world.

To bring VMware Foundation programs to life, employee-led groups called Giving Networks inspire VMware colleagues (in their teams, sites, locations, regions, countries, etc.) to take action in their communities. As Giving Network members, people embody **VMware’s EPIC2 values** and leadership, demonstrating how we can all learn and grow personally and professionally through service.

This month we checked in with Ashot Harutyunyan and Mariam Avagyan, two active members of the Armenia Giving Network, as well as Gohar Avagyan, who is the Giving Network lead, about each of their Service Learning experiences.

Ashot Harutyunyan, Staff Data Scientist:

I spent many of my Service Learning hours this year contributing to the nonprofit academic community in my city. Using my specialized skills, I assisted with preparing scientific meetings that encouraged students and young professionals to engage and grow, as well as build bridges between the university and technology research groups. My 40 hours of Service Learning this year were focused on supporting an examination committee for students training in Artificial Intelligence, as well as volunteering to be a guest editor for a computer science journal. This included reviewing research papers, improvement recommendations of scientific works, and getting the research papers to the level of being selected for a high-quality journal publication. Such activities have already resulted in two special issues of the open-source **Journal of Universal Computer Science** with three volumes in the past 2-3 years.

“Our culture of service at VMware gives people an exceptional opportunity to accelerate positive changes in the communities we live in. I personally feel joy and pride from my contributions and impact.”

Gohar Avagyan, Office Manager:

When I joined VMware in 2018, I was pleasantly surprised to learn about our Service Learning and Citizen Philanthropy Investment programs, and the fact that each employee has the choice to decide how they want to give back to the community.

“I think the freedom of choice to do Service Learning activities that are close to your heart is something that makes VMware unique in comparison to other companies that I have worked with.”

As the lead of the Armenia Giving Network, I have helped plan many Service Learning events for my team this year, including planting trees, expanding urban green zones, and promoting sustainability efforts, which are all activities that our office is passionate about. I have had opportunities to organize group Service Learning activities for our staff on several occasions, and we usually join local municipality initiatives, but for the latest event, I approached the Armenia Tree Project, a nonprofit that specializes in forestation. Jointly we identified a venue, which was Arayi village in Aragatsotn province of Armenia, a picturesque sight with breathtaking views of Mount Aragats, the highest peak in Armenia, Arayi Mountain, which has a profile of King Ara the Beautiful, and Ararat Mountain! Local residents were interested in setting up a community garden around the

small church on the hillside, right at the entrance of the village. Together with my VMware colleagues we planted 350 trees of various types. I strongly believe that all of our actions matter and we can accomplish even more together, so I choose to organize group Service Learning activities and help colleagues get engaged.

Mariam Avagyan, Senior Engineering Manager:

I am a firm believer that education can empower the children of today to become the tech leaders of tomorrow. At Armath Engineering Laboratories, kids aged 10-18 are introduced to science, technology, engineering, and math education through interactive after-school classes, exciting competitions, innovative camps and more.

One of the key components contributing to the success of Armath are the teachers, who commit to learning new technologies and skillsets necessary for educating the kids within Armath labs.

“As part of the VMware family and a member of the Armenia Giving Network, I’m humbled to have the opportunity to share my technical skills by organizing and conducting technical courses along with my colleagues for teachers at Armath.”

Our team believes that sharing our professional skills will contribute to the success of the children attending these labs. There are 45 teachers attending our online 2-month courses, who are organized into 9 groups based on their knowledge and language of preference.

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