

# Focus on the future - Melkonian celebrates 78 years

For 78 years, the historic buildings of the Melkonian Educational Institute in Nicosia had stood as silent guardians of an evolving society, welcoming millions of visitors to the capital.

The diverse international background of the academic staff and more than 200 students that attend each year, has added “spice” to the already colourful society of Cyprus, with the word “Melkonian” synonymous with diversity and fellowship, while the school has also contributed significantly to the economy.

Managed by the New York-based Armenian General Benevolent Union, the school has fallen on trying times in recent years, struggling to cope with a rapidly evolving worldwide Diaspora subject to political upheavals in many countries. This has also been a great financial burden on the school that until recently had to rely on the contributions of its main sponsor to survive.

Now, the Worldwide Alumni are making efforts to raise funds to sustain the school and safeguard its financial independence.

The Cyprus Government

too, appreciating the historic contribution of an international boarding school to the wellbeing of a nation, has pledged its support, while the Town Planning Commission, recognising the architectural and engineering importance of the unique buildings, has sought “National

The greatest legacy the founding brothers, Garabed and Krikor Melkonian left to the Armenian nation, was the establishment of an academic sanctuary for future generations, some of whom arrive on the island with a poor idea of their history, culture or language, but

returned to their homes as new Ambassadors for the Cyprus Cause, with ample knowledge of the problem that has divided this island and its people. They mix with the overseas Cypriot communities of Great Britain, Greece, Canada, Australia, and the U.S. and join hands in demonstrations in Armenia, Russia or Lebanon, to condemn the 1974 invasion (when the Melkonian too was bombed by Turkish military aircraft).

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This year’s [2003] graduating class of 27 students, while all of Armenian descent were also an international mix — a quasi United Nations in its composition. Between them — apart from Armenian — the students spoke seven languages and brought to Melkonian a diverse array of cultures and traditions.

Established in 1926 by the Krikor and Garabed Melkonian brothers, MEI is AGBU’s largest education institution which has been a magnet for generations of young Armenians from across the Middle East, and of late, Eastern Europe, Armenia and Russia.

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— David Zenian, AGBU Director of Media, New York, 7/7/2003

Heritage” protection for the school’s facilities. Furthermore, the Forestry Commission aims to protect the unique Melkonian woodland to ensure that one of the few remaining natural stretches of green are preserved.

graduate from the “school of life” with knowledge and skills with which to face up to the challenges of a demanding world.

The legacy that the school’s founders left to Cyprus was the thousands of graduates that

***The Melkonian Alumni of Cyprus, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Britain, Bulgaria, Canada, Dubai, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Romania, Russia, Singapore, Switzerland, Syria, the U.S. and everywhere else thank the people of Cyprus, the present and all past Governments, for their support in maintaining this boarding school as a national jewel of priceless cultural and educational heritage.***