

Diplomatic Association visits COAF SMART Center

On November 23, members of Welcome to Armenia Diplomatic Association recently paid a visit to Saghmosavank and the **Children of Armenia Fund (COAF)** SMART Center located in the Lori region. The initiative included a visit to the monastery of Saghmosavank, along with the COAF SMART Center. This aimed at presenting both the past, as well as the present of Armenia.

The association, consisting mostly of diplomatic spouses and international representatives serving in Armenia, had the opportunity to tour the Center and learn about offerings such as robotics, science, blockchain, software programming and coding, foreign languages, theater, music and dance, agriculture, fine arts, web/graphic design, and app development.

Irina Igitkhanyan, the President of Welcome to Armenia, mentioned that the association was established to introduce the rich cultural and historical heritage of Armenia to diplomatic corps stationed in the country.

This year it was decided to give a new dimension to the initiative, introducing Armenia to foreign partners in the light of the rapidly developing information and digital sphere in the country in recent years, and the visit to COAF SMART Center was the best opportunity.

Irina Igitkhanyan particularly emphasized that innovation and creative education are the development agenda pillars of Armenia, as well as stressed those spheres were becoming the business card of Armenia in the international arena.

"Our guests were impressed to get acquainted with the programs and the students of our Center. Especially that they witness such a unique thing in Armenia, namely in rural communities. The role of these women in the dissemination of the COAF SMART model of rural development can be key," mentioned **Garo Armen**, the Founder and the Executive Director of the Children of Armenia Fund.



***The Children of Armenia Fund (COAF)** is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that employs community-led approaches aimed at improving the quality of life in rural Armenia, with a particular focus on children and youth. COAF's target development areas are education, healthcare, social and economic development. COAF launched its programs in 2004, starting in one village and expanding to 44 villages in Armavir, Aragatsotn, Lori, Gegharkunik, Shirak and Tavush regions, impacting over 75,000 people.*

Since 2015 COAF has developed and started implementing a new vision – SMART Initiative. SMART is designed to advance a generation across the rural world through education that will benefit individuals, societies and the environment. SMART will become an exemplary model of development and will be replicated in other regions and communities throughout Armenia. The first COAF SMART Center was opened on May 27, 2018, at the village of Debet, Lori region.