

*Our Mission:  
Supporting improved  
educational opportunities for  
the children and youth of the  
isolated Malesia e Madhe  
region of Northern Albania*

President: Steve Cook, PhD

Secretary: Terri Cook

Board of Directors:

Karen Berg

Mary Alice Seville

Nancy Leeper

Kristina Milaj

Mona Jones-Romansic

Albania Manager:

Marash Rakaj

Albanian Alps Institute  
8600 NW Oak Creek Drive  
Corvallis, OR 97330

Phone: 541-230-1285

Email: [albanianalpsinst@gmail.com](mailto:albanianalpsinst@gmail.com)

Website: [www.albanianalps.org](http://www.albanianalps.org)

## AAI LIBRARIES & SCHOLARSHIPS



### The Joy of Books

Many children build their dreams from reading books, but some children dream of having books to read and that was my case growing up in Vrith. I remember when our school had no extracurricular books, and buying books was not in our family's budget or priority. The first time books arrived at our school was around 2003, when AAI started to mail picture books, translated and Albanian text taped on each page by volunteers, so we could have something to read. I remember the excitement in our classroom when the books arrived and we all checked out a different book to read, for some their very first "fun" book. Since 2003 AAI has been the only source of books for many schools. Our librarians share with pride the students' interest in reading and eagerly provide us with a wish list of books they would like to add to their libraries each year. If there is a gift I could make to every child, especially to the children of Malesia e Madhe, that would be the gift of reading and dreaming. Please consider supporting AAI in continuing to fulfill this mission.

Kristina Milaj, AAI Director  
Formerly a student at Vrith School

### Meet our newest scholarship recipient

"I am Mikelian Rakaj, and I am from Boga, a small but beautiful village in area of Shkodra. I have two amazing parents that raised me with love. I have three big sisters, and one little brother. Since when I was young, I liked to learn, and I still do. I am very happy that I have been accepted in the University of Tirana because only a few students in years go from this area. I hope I will succeed there, and make proud all of you that have supported me. Sincerely: Mikeli"

Mikel will be studying Business Administration and we wish him well in his new endeavors!



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

How many times have we all said “what a weird year?” The same for AAI. My planned trip to Albania got scrubbed. Schools closed. Opened. Closed. Opened. The University of Shkoder was even worse. Albania first claimed few COVID cases, but little testing. As I write this, cases are increasing dramatically, although nobody I know is ill.

This newsletter highlights two of our most successful programs: our library book program, and our university scholarship program. I recall when my wife Terri, an avid reader, accompanied me to Albania in 2002, she was appalled “there are no books in these schools!” Library book donations was our first program. Besides supplying books to libraries, we also provide basic art supplies to primary schools and pay for English, kindergarten and art teachers. Over the years we have provided university scholarships for twenty-eight students with Mikelian Rakaj being the latest. It is so cool to see these village kids far exceed their dreams by attending university.

Of course, we only are able to improve education for village students because of our faithful supporters. There is so much competition for donations, we greatly appreciate your continued support of AAI and our simple, effective village school programs in Malesia e Madhe, Albania.

### AAI FUNDED ART AND KINDERGARTEN CLASSES



AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support your favorite charitable organization every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), you'll find the exact same products and prices as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate 0.5% of the purchase price on eligible items to your favorite charitable organization.

On your first visit to AmazonSmile ([smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)), you log in just the same as you would at Amazon.com. Then you need to select a charitable organization to receive donations (we hope you will choose us). Amazon remembers your selection, and then every eligible purchase you make at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) will result in a donation to your chosen charity.

Just remember to go to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), log in just as you normally do and shop away!