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

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**Secretary:** Terri Cook  
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Karen Berg  
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Nancy Leeper  
Kristina Milaj  
Mona Jones-Romansic  
**Albania Manager:** Marash Rakaj

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**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

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**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

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