

Governor George Deukmejian Receives Doctor of Laws Degree



Former California Governor George Deukmejian, a champion for education and state law, was conferred an honorary Doctor of Laws degree on May 29 during the 2008 Commencement Exercises at California State University, Long Beach. Elected the 35th governor of the state in 1982, Deukmejian increased higher education funding by 90 percent during his two four-year terms. Included in the photo from left to right are CSU Board of Trustees member Peter Mehas, Deukmejian, CSU Board of Trustees member George Gowgani, and CSULB President F. King Alexander.

Annie Totah Breaks All Records Raises \$2.25 Million For Cancer Center

Washington, D.C. Under the dynamic and innovative leadership of community leader and international healthcare advocate Annie Totah, Sibley Memorial Hospital's Seventh Annual Celebration of Hope & Progress Gala was an exceptional celebration, achieving new levels of excellence for the hospital, for its supporters and for its patients. Farah Pahlavi, the wife of late Shah of Iran, and Ambassador Nancy G. Brinker were among the distinguished honorees attending the Gala.

Totah launched two new Awards of Medical Excellence to be given to two

Sibley Cancer Center."

Ambassador Brinker, the founder of Susan G. Komen for the Cure, former U.S. Ambassador to Hungary was honored with the Mars Family Quality Care Award for her exceptional contributions in the field of cancer care and cure.

Farah Pahlavi was honored as a distinguished guest for her efforts in the areas of social welfare, culture and women's rights in her home country, Iran, and in healthcare advocacy in the United States where she and her family have lived in exile since 1980.

Medical Oncologist Frederick P.



Annie Totah, Farah Pahlavi and Robert Sloane

individuals for their meritorious service in cancer care and cure. The awards were named after June and Leonard Abel, and the Mars Family. The event was totally sold out and Totah made sure that the evening's program with its special guests and honorees, and with the dynamic mistress of ceremonies, Andrea Roane, of WUSA Channel-9, was truly a beautiful night to remember.

"It's been a privilege and an honor for me to chair Sibley's Seventh Annual Celebration of Hope & Progress," said Totah, "and I'm grateful to the Gala Host Committee and to each and every one of you for helping us raise \$2.25 million for

Smith, M.D., received Sibley's first Meritorious Service Award for his dedication to providing care and treatment to oncology patients.

For his closing remarks, Robert Sloane, President and CEO of Sibley Hospital said, "We are so fortunate to have Annie Totah chair our Annual Gala. Her energy and enthusiasm are contagious! Her vision, style of execution and networking is impeccable, and she is an inspiration to us all. She is truly a miracle worker for having raised so successfully \$2,225,000 for our Hospital's Cancer Center. We are forever grateful to her."

P.S. Annie Totah is a cancer survivor

Shoghig Choir Of Armavir Captivates Audiences

By Ani A. Janbazian

Armavir, a city just about a half-hour drive west from Yerevan, once was the capital of Armenia in 331 B.C. during the country's first dynasty, the Orontid Dynasty. Perhaps it is quite fitting that a humble and talented group of singers and musicians known as Shoghig Choir, is from this region of Armavir. This ensemble, like the city itself rich with history, performs those Armenian folk songs of old, which resonate the stories and spirit of the ancient homeland.

Shoghig Choir began as a small children's choir in 2000 at the Armenian Evangelical Church in Armavir, Armenia, under the direction of Rev. Garush Antonyan, the Artistic Director of the

popular songs such as, Araradyan Tashd (The Plains of Ararat), Adanaee Voghp (Lament of Adana), Kamancha, Noubar Noubar, Hoy Nar and Havadkes Chem Moranah (I will not forget my faith). In addition to the talents of the choir, the program incorporated other treats for the audience: Mareta Kirakosyan performed a few solos as part of the program and possesses vocal cords that reverberate mesmerizing rich tones in emotional songs such as Cheknegh Eem Yergir (My Pretty Country), Groung (Crane), Giligya, Eem Ani and Kehnah Groung (Go Crane). 18-year old Suren Avoyan, another talented soloist of the group, was featured in the songs Arakil (Stork) and Hye Aghchig (Armenian girl). Accompanying the singers were



Shoghig Choir performing in Toronto

choir and the pastor of the church, and through the years had talented singers come and go. The group, which used to perform during the church's worship services, grew to become an ensemble that incorporated Armenian patriotic and folk songs as part of their repertoire and eventually grabbed the attention of other Armenians. After powerful and unforgettable performances throughout Armenia, Karabagh and France, the group, along with Rev. Antonyan and the choir director, Mareta Kirakosyan, was invited by the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) in celebration of its 90th anniversary, to give their first concert tour in North America to benefit AMAA's various children's programs in Armenia and Karabagh. It is for this reason that Shoghig Choir generously gave their hearts and voices in their performances in Toronto and Montreal (May 4 & 11 organized by the Armenian Missionary Association of Canada and the local Armenian Evangelical Churches), in Boston (May 17 organized by the Armenian Children's Milk Fund) and in northern New Jersey (May 18 organized by the AMAA's Summer Camp/Christmas Committee).

The members of the group comprise of sopranos Arusyak Aleksanyan, Kristine Avetisyan; altos Vergine Aleksanyan, Yeranouhi Kalajyan; soloists Suren Avoyan and Mareta Kirakosyan; duduk and zourna player Aghvan Grigoryan; violin and keyboard player Vagharshak Grigoryan, with poetry recitations by 12-year old Arus Antonyan, who is the youngest member of the group. The programs began with a beautiful rendition of the Hayr Mehr (the Lord's prayer in Armenian – Arthur Mechjian version) and included many

the haunting drones of the duduk played by Grigoryan who joined in with Horovel (Farmer's Plowing Song) and other songs. After the intermission, the young women of the group entered the stage dressed in breathtaking authentic Armenian folk dresses, elegantly dancing Armenian folk dances. Arus Antonyan, daughter of Rev. Antonyan, came on stage a few times during the program to recite Armenian poetry.

After receiving buzzing positive responses following their performances in Toronto and Montreal, the choir was asked to perform additional unplanned encore concerts. The choir also visited and performed in local Armenian schools and Armenian old age homes throughout Toronto, Montreal, Boston and northern New Jersey. Each performance gave a taste of favorite and unforgettable songs and poetry of Armenia, which was welcomed with much applause by the packed audiences. The singers and musicians of Shoghig Choir of Armavir take their gifts and talents of music and performance seriously just as they take their heritage seriously, which is evident not only in their delivery, but also when they are invited to perform additional encore concerts. Shoghig Choir desires to hold on to our Motherland's rich roots and history through music and invites their audiences to embrace their love for Armenia and her surviving music, a lifeline that unites all Armenians, those living in the Homeland and as part of the Diaspora. As Arusyak Alexanyan, the 18-year old soprano of Shoghig Choir beautifully put it: "When we sing, we'll do everything possible to pass the warmth of Armenia and our warm sun to the audience. In our thoughts we'll soar together like our cranes above Armenia's high mountains."