

*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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Albania Manager:

Marash Rakaj

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

Phone: 541-230-1285

Email: albanianalpsinst@gmail.com

Website: www.albanianalps.org

MARASH RAKAJ



Marash Rakaj, Albanian Manager for the Albanian Alps Institute was born in Boga April 4, 1963 into a large family under Communism. Communism was hard on villagers. Many times there was not enough to eat. Marash excelled in school and became one of the very rare village students to be sent to university. He attended the University of Tirana, Faculty of Natural Science obtaining a BS degree in the year 1986. He taught school in Theth, which is over a

Mountain pass from Boga, walking back and forth each week to school, sometimes through deep snow, skiing on his feet down the steep mountainside. He then was transferred to Boga where he taught and was the School Director. In 1990 he began teaching Botany at the University of Shkoder.

Marash married one of his former students, Marjeta Vata in 1998. And in 1999 his son Gabriel was born.

After 20 years teaching at the University of Shkoder, he achieved the higher degree of Associate Professor. In 2003 he was instrumental in establishing the Albanian Alps Institute. He is the "man on the ground," known and respected by all in the Albanian Alps. AAI owes Marash a huge debt of gratitude for his enormous contribution to the organization.

NEWEST SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



Xhesika Bakaj



Ermela Celaj

University Scholarship Recipients 2019-2020 Academic Year

Ermela Celaj – First Yr - Fin/Acctg

Xhesika Bakaj – First Yr – Fin/Acctg

Denisa Pepaj – Second Yr – Math Ed

Gentjan Sterkaj – Third Yr – Bus Adm

Santuella Vulaj – Third Yr - Biochemistry

Juliana Kuquaj – Third Yr – Fin/Acctg

Jozefina Gjolaj – Third Yr – Sociology

Verarta Marvukaj – Third Yr – Math Ed

Stelina Vulaj – Third Yr – Math Ed

Vana Ulaj – High School

Note: A Bachelor's Degree is a three year program.

MEET ARIAN GOKAJ



When AAI was in its infancy we struggled to find a source of books and school supplies, then we found Arian Gokaj. He works hard to find the things AAI supported schools need. But also, to use the Albanian phrase Arian is “very correct” morally and ethically, keeping impeccable accounting of our money as he doles it out to our teachers and scholarship students. Arian lived many years under communism, attended the Industrial High School studying in the, electrical branch. With the fall of Communism, he followed his passion – books. He started the bookstore in 1992 and has been involved in the book trade for these past 27 years. “Books have always been my passion because my parents educated me in the culture of the book. I try to have special books in all areas of the bookstore, because I want the bookstore to have a good name and I believe I have achieved it”. Arian lives in Shkoder with his wife and they have two sons. We thank you so much Arian, for your help these past years.



Boga English Students

Check us out on Facebook



Happy Kindergartener

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

In this issue we are highlighting two people whose efforts behind the scenes keep our organization going. Our Albanian Manager, Marash Rakaj, will be stepping back a bit and one of our former scholarship recipients, Rregina Rakaj, will begin helping with some of the in-country duties.

Our programs continue, we are still supporting libraries in five schools as the national government provides few resources. Our five kindergartens have supplies only because of our efforts. And the ten students we support with scholarships might very well not be attending without AAI support. Playground equipment gets used, damaged doors and windows get repaired, gates fixed, only because of us. After 16 years, we are still a force in Shkrel school.

And of course, we still exist because of our donors who believe in what we are doing. I am deeply humbled by the confidence people have shown for our efforts to improve the lives of the students in northern Albanian mountains.



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