

RC QUARTERLY

SUMMER 2023

ISSUE 62

RCQ

ROBERT COLLEGE ALUMNI MAGAZINE



Resilience and Hope After the Earthquakes



İlave
Şeker
İçermez.

detoks

Kefir Serisi

Her yudumda yeniden başla



Amidst the devastation, the cover image serves as a powerful symbol of resilience, hope, and the indomitable spirit of a community coming together.

Photo:
İpek Tingleff from
@naturewalkingingleff



RCQ

ROBERT COLLEGE ALUMNI MAGAZINE

Alumni Journal published periodically by the RC Institutional Advancement Office for approximately 10,000 members of the RC community: graduates, students, faculty, administration, parents and friends.

In this issue

Turkey has been shaken to its very core by the earthquakes that hit Anatolia in February, and so has the RC community. RC's 62nd issue is dedicated to chronicling all the ways in which the RC community has responded and continues to respond to this disaster. The effects are long-term and far-reaching; continuous support is essential. Members of the RC community show many of the shapes effective support can take.

Despite the devastation and psychological trauma of the earthquakes, RC students, teachers, and alumni have continued to accomplish, create, and explore. The news of successes, accolades, awards, books, and exhibitions that fill the pages of this issue are a heartening source of inspiration.



Your feedback is crucial for the RCQ. As always, if you have any comments or would like to share news, please write! rcq@robcol.k12.tr

May the second half of the year come with more good tidings.

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Your feedback on the RCQ matters! Did you enjoy this issue? Write us at: rcq@robcol.k12.tr

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1,100+
Projects

15
Global
Awards

📍 ISTANBUL HQ

1,500+
Employees

1,000+
Engineers

📍 ANKARA

📍 DEN HAAG

📍 LONDON

📍 HYDERABAD

YOUR GLOBAL PARTNER

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Software Development

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Cloud

Quality Engineering & Assurance

Big Data & Analytics

DevOps

Managed Services

Systems & Network Monitoring

CRM

ERP

HCM

*RC '87



Message from the Head of School

Step by Step, Side by Side



With the proceeds from RC's fundraising efforts four classrooms for Yaylica Middle School in Samandağ, Hatay have been built

Dear alumni and friends of Robert College,

As I write, we are a little over four months from the terrible and tragic events of February 6. Raw emotions are still with many of us, including much pain, but the RC family continues to find ways to process its losses and move forwards. It is inevitably a slow journey, but at that measured pace, taking each step one at a time, cognizant of friends at our side along the way, we are progressing.

We are progressing in the journey of community healing. In our Closing Ceremony, marking the end of the academic year, we held a minute of silence to honor all those affected by the tragedy. A few days prior to that, RC 24 - our Juniors - celebrated their "Junior to Senior Day". To mark it, a student from the devastated region suggested to the faculty that we modify the traditional lunch on that day to include dishes from his hometown: Hatay-style chicken doner

kebab and künefe. We came together over food to celebrate the Juniors' transition, and at the same time to commemorate our losses.

We are progressing in our individual healing. Turkish Literature teacher Müge Gümüş, one of so many affected personally by the tragedy, wrote a poignant "Letter to Hatay", her hometown, which she shared with the community on our commemorative Zoom call. I include a brief extract:

Hatay'a Mektup

*Sana bir mektup yazacağım
aklının ucundan geçmezdi. Seni
sevdiklerimle birlikte kaybedeceğimi
hiç düşünmezdim. Senin binlerce
hikâyen vardı, ben onlardan sadece
biriydim. Binlerce yıllık hikâyelerinin
içinde kaybolmayı çok severdim. Hep
döneceğimi bilerek uzun yolculuklara
çıkdım.*(The English version can be
read in the cover story on p. 31)

We are progressing in making our school safer than ever. In early June,

we judged we had reached the right moment to hold a full earthquake drill and evacuation. On top of our own self-evaluation, we asked Dr. Feridun Çelikmen, a relief expert and former RC doctor who helped the school prepare our Emergency Management Plan following the 1999 earthquake, to monitor our entire process. His input was invaluable and enhanced our efforts to be safe and secure.

We are progressing with our work to help those fellow citizens who lost everything. Our donation campaign to support long-term school rebuilding in Hatay is making swift progress. Donations from our alumni and parent communities, from faculty, staff and students, and friends of RC have been wonderful, allowing us to purchase four high-quality prefabricated classrooms and construct them in the playground of Koyunoğlu Middle School in Samandağ, one of our partner schools. Thank you for your wonderful contributions and please do continue to support our fundraising so that we can continue furnishing these classrooms with desks, whiteboards, projectors and some computers.

The year has also contained wonders among its hardships. A remarkable production of *The Bacchae*; a superb modern dance performance; captivating concerts from the RC Singers and the RC Orchestra; our annual Film Festival; a superb Student Council-led Fine Arts Festival - these are just some of the many highlights that demonstrate our great school moving forwards in the face of adversity. It is an ongoing privilege to be part of that journey.

Adam Oliver
Head of School

AI is Now in the Classroom at RC

RC students learn to navigate the world of ChatGPT.

Artificial intelligence (AI)

is shaping up to be an important force in education. RC teachers Allison Finn, Head of Educational Research, and Pinar Kadioğlu, Educational Technology Coordinator, are leading faculty with the use of AI in the classroom. With ChatGPT currently dominating the cultural conversation about AI, Finn and Kadioğlu have created a ChatGPT TLC (Teacher Learning Community). Faculty had questions around two key areas: effective use of AI and potential misuse of AI. As a next step, they delineated how AI is already being used at RC. Here are some examples.

In the English Department, a team of teachers asked students to experiment with prompts and different voices in ChatGPT to generate different versions of their essays. This assignment started as a way to pre-empt plagiarism and turned into an opportunity for students to apply creative problem solving in the creation of their prompts.

Esin Pulathaneli, history teacher and head of RC's Social Sciences Department, reports they used AI in the classroom as a way of reinforcing the subject matter: "First, we discussed issues requiring synthesis and analysis and touched on cause-effect relationships. We then asked AI similar topics and discussed the answers. Improving and rewriting incorrect or inaccurate statements gave students the opportunity to consolidate and use what they had learned. We will continue using AI to develop skills around asking effective and exhaustive questions, to deepen superficial answers."

Burcu Çingay Culha, RC history and economics teacher, added: "I ask



The ChatGPT Teachers Learning Community gives participating faculty the space to explore their questions about integrating this new technology in their classes.

students to prepare a presentation on the history of various civilizations or geography between 1200-1455 using ChatGPT. Students understand that researching with it requires that they distinguish between accurate and inaccurate information. In doing so, students not only strengthen their research skills but also develop a capacity for evaluating the reliability of sources, a crucial aspect of academic work. Students found ChatGPT useful but encountered inaccurate and duplicated information."

Using the AI Guiding Principles, created by students and advisors from numerous schools during the "Artificial Intelligence for Social Well-being Summit" in May 2021, RC is ensuring that this technology is being used ethically.

In addition, Cara Keyman, RC's Head Librarian and Chair of the Academic Honesty Committee, says that the Committee is developing guidelines for teachers and

students on Academic Integrity and Generative AI to complement the school's existing Academic Honesty Policy: "Transparency in AI use is so important. AI tools should be aids to enhance student learning and the student's work must represent their own knowledge, skills and understanding. The library has posted guidelines on how to correctly reference the use of AI".

Kadioğlu notes: "We're focusing on developing skills to use the technology and how skills will change by using it, with the emphasis on critical and creative thinking."

Finn says RC faces important questions: "How can we use the technology to help deepen our students' knowledge and understanding of content? What are our parameters for its use and how do we involve students in their development?" There are no easy answers, but the right questions are actively being asked at RC.

Caps Off to the Class of 2023!

The 199 members of the senior class were celebrated at the commencement ceremony on June 20, 2023.

Members of the school community – families, Trustees and friends – gathered with excitement on Konak Terrace for this year's commencement ceremony. The students walked through campus one last time as RC students from Gould to the stage, while their teachers applauded them.

The ceremony opened with speeches by Turkish Director Nilhan Çetinyamaç followed by Head of School Adam

Oliver, who praised the class for their uniqueness, highlighting some of the cherished memories with the students. Noting that they are graduating in the centennial year of the Turkish Republic, he said, "[The] past is already written, but the years ahead are still blank; the pages of the future are your pages, and will be written by you... Your creativity and commitment and good citizenship will have a collective impact more profound than you might imagine."



Head of School Adam Oliver



Teachers applaud the Class of 2023 as they start their procession in front of Gould Hall



Turkish Director Nilhan Çetinyamaç



Commencement speaker Üstün Ergüder RC 57



Faculty speaker Aydemir Doğan

This year's commencement speaker was Üstün Ergüder RC 57, a Robert College Trustee Emeritus, former rector of Boğaziçi University, and founder of the Institute for International Relations at Sabancı University. He spoke about the long-standing values of Robert College, of a curious mind, hard work, respect and listening, and how they are needed to build the future.

The graduation class named Aydemir Doğan as the faculty speaker for the event. As their Level Dean, Doğan has worked closely with the class over the past two years, so it was befitting that he would be giving them a sendoff. "I learned something different from each of you. Thanks to you I also reviewed my skills and abilities... There is a group of talented students before me

right now." After Doğan, Tuna Sağdan gave the student speech in English and Ece Duygu Ekşi gave the Turkish speech.

Following the distribution of the diplomas and the singing of the Alma Mater, the students ended the ceremony on a jubilant note by tossing their caps in the air.



Student speaker Tuna Sağdan



It was an unforgettable evening for the families of the Class of '23



Student speaker Ece Duygu Ekşi



The traditional cap throwing marked the end of the ceremony

A Preview of College Acceptances

So far the Class of '23 has had admirable news about college acceptances. As of print time, students are waiting on results of their placement at Turkish universities. There are also those who are still on the waitlist for US universities, or are waiting for admissions news from universities in Europe. The final placements will be announced in the fall. Here are the acceptances as of June.

Matriculations of Robert College Class of 2023 (as of June 1, 2023)			
UNIVERSITY NAME	TOTAL	UNIVERSITY NAME	TOTAL
UNITED STATES	62	BELGIUM	1
Baylor University	1	KU Leuven	1
Berklee College of Music	1	CANADA	3
Boston University	3	McGill University	1
Bowdoin College	1	University of Toronto	2
Brown University	2	FRANCE	2
Carleton College	1	École Polytechnique	1
Carnegie Mellon University	1	Sciences Po Paris - Campus de Reims	1
Colby College	1	HONG KONG	1
Cornell University	4	City University of Hong Kong	1
Dartmouth College	3	IRELAND	1
Davidson College	1	Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin	1
Drexel University	1	ITALY	8
Duke University	1	Bocconi University	3
Emory University	2	Humanitas University	1
Franklin and Marshall College	1	Istituto Marangoni, Milano	1
Georgetown University	1	Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti Milano	1
Harvard University	1	Vita-Salute San Raffaele University	2
Johns Hopkins University	1	NETHERLANDS	11
Kenyon College	1	Amsterdam University College	1
Michigan State University	2	Delft University of Technology (TU Delft)	1
New York University	2	Eindhoven University of Technology	2
Northwestern University	2	Erasmus University Rotterdam	1
Princeton University	1	Maastricht University	2
Purdue University	2	University of Amsterdam	4
Rice University	2	UNITED KINGDOM	12
Stanford University	1	Imperial College London	4
Texas A&M University	1	London School of Economics and Political Science	1
Tufts University	2	Queen Mary University of London	1
University of California, Berkeley	3	University College London	1
University of California, Los Angeles	1	University of Manchester	2
University of California, San Diego	1	University of Oxford	2
University of Chicago	3	University of Warwick	1
University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign	2		
University of Michigan Ann Arbor	2		
University of Pennsylvania	1		
University of Virginia	1		
Vanderbilt University	2		
Williams College	1		
Yale University	2		
Grand Total			101

Özlem Akçakuş Scholarship Opens Doors for Art Students

Recipients explore their creativity in workshops around the world.

Since 2006, the Özlem Akçakuş RC 97 Art Scholarship has provided art-oriented students the opportunity to attend transformative summer workshops around the world. The experience brings new dimensions to recipients' work, as explained by Art Department Head Alex Downs:

"This award is one of the most important things we offer our students who are exploring studying art after RC. It gives them an immersive experience in the world of art-making: deepening their practice, taking classes, working alongside adults in the field, following passions."

Works by the 2022 awardees were displayed in the Gould corridor this spring.

Ayseli Karabekmez L12, who studied industrial design and architecture at the Pratt Institute, and learned computer-based 3D design, said, "The course offered a great insight into how college-level projects were made, and how important time management and deadlines are."

Defne Arghan L11 worked on the production of two short films at UCLA Digital Filmmaking Program. "This experience taught me that filmmaking



Students shared their works and their experiences from their courses with RC 97 grads Ayşe Büyüktür and Bora Tokyay

was mostly about the pre- and post-production processes rather than the filming itself. It was fascinating to see all my plans and the pre-production process come to life through the monitor of a camera," she said. Her desire to study film was confirmed through this experience.

For Ece Çıkım L11, her sustainable fashion course at the Amsterdam Fashion Academy was life changing. "Working in that environment with peers that shared my interest helped me realize a career in fashion can be fulfilling for me." Ece used her skills to

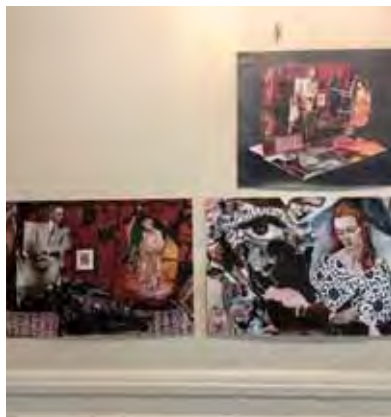
create the costumes for this spring's RC production of *The Bacchae*.

Art teacher Maria Sezer underlines how the scholarships help confirm or change the students' ideas about what they want to study. The fact that Ece Çıkım was able to connect with artist İrem Kaneli RC 89 in the Netherlands and visit her studio goes to show how these scholarships blossom into new connections.

The scholarship was established in 2006 by friends and family of Özlem Akçakuş RC 97, who was an art lover, to honor her memory.



Ayseli Karabekmez L12 explored 3D design through her industrial design workshop at the Pratt Institute



Defne Arghan L11 used what she learned on her course for her AP portfolio, preparing storyboards based on Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*



Ece Çıkım L11 used her course experience to create stunning costumes for the spring theater performance of *The Bacchae*

RCIMUN Gets Back on Track **After a Four-Year Hiatus**

I 600 Students from 52 Schools around the world participated.

Robert College International Model United Nations (RCIMUN) allows students from all over the world to have fruitful discussions on recent global issues. Since 2019, the conference could not happen due to the pandemic. Therefore, the 16th RCIMUN was particularly satisfying, as it hosted more than 600 participants from 52 schools around the world. Begüm Yener L11, one of the Deputy Secretaries-General and a member of the Executive Team, states that few people in the club had participated in RCIMUN physically which made this conference highly memorable: "During registration when we saw international students coming in, or while watching the opening and closing videos, I felt the proudest."

This year's theme was "The Monopolies Turning the Wheels of History: Recognizing Circularity in an Ever-Changing World." The keynote



The keynote speaker of this year's RCIMUN was Cihan Sultanoğlu RC 75, former UN Assistant Secretary-General

speaker was Cihan Sultanoğlu RC 75. The Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations between 2012 and 2018, Sultanoğlu held many key positions in her 35-year UN tenure. During her speech, she highlighted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations and international togetherness as the solutions forward.

Students created and debated clauses and formulated resolutions through committees. In the Historical Committee, delegates acted as real historical characters and re-wrote history through passing directives. In ICC and ICJ, students experienced real cases, in their roles as judges and advocates. In the Advisory Panel problem-solving, enthusiastic experts discussed the recent issues of the Middle East.

Salih Emre Demirkol L11, Vice-President of RC's MUN club, and the President of the Special Conference underlines the atmosphere of collaboration and shared thinking that makes people connect with each other and the conference: "RCIMUN will continue to provide a platform for high school students to share their ideas and brainstorm about current global events."

2023 Excellence in Science Award Recipient Announced

I The award goes to a Lise 11 girl who shows outstanding dedication to the sciences.

The Prof. Seyhan Nurettin Ege ACG 49 Excellence in Science Award for Girls was established in 2010 by Güneş Ege Akter ACG 52 in memory of her sister, who was an accomplished science professor and inspiration to her students. The award recognizes a bright Lise 11 girl student who is chosen by the science faculty as showing outstanding dedication to the sciences.

This year's award was presented to Evrim Sude Con at the Lise 11 Assembly on March 14, 2023, by Science Department Head Patricia Deo, who said, "Throughout her time at Robert College, Evrim Sude Con has shown commitment and dedication to expanding and sharing her knowledge of science by attending summer courses and working as a teaching

assistant. Moreover, she is a student who has managed to balance her pursuit of academic success with, as one of her teachers said, 'humility and respect to all members of the learning environment,' and exemplary kindness." Güneş Ege Akter, who lives overseas, as well as friends and students of Seyhan Ege, joined the ceremony online.

Speaking about the award, Academic Affairs Assistant General Manager at Hisar Schools and family friend of the Ege sisters, Gülçin Cırık Doğramacı said, "As a physics teacher, I believe and feel as strongly about gender equality as Professor Seyhan Ege. What she achieved in the 60s as a chemistry professor is an inspiration for all of us to do more."



Evrin Sude Con L11 (center) with Gülçin Cırık Doğramacı (left) and RC Science Department Head Patricia Deo (right)

After the ceremony, Evrim Sude and her family met with her teachers and RC administrators in the Feyyaz Berker Science Building foyer for photos by the plaque where Evrim Sude's name has joined the names of award previous recipients.

Demirkan Aşetey RC 76 Competition Celebrates Student Artists

Although there were fewer entries this year, they were of higher quality.



Award recipients, judges, RC art teachers and members of the Class of '76 by some of the award-winning artwork from this year's ceremony

Each spring the artworks of creative and talented RC students are showcased at the Demirkan Aşetey RC 76 Art Competition, established by the Class of '76 in 2011 in memory of their classmate who was an art enthusiast. This year's event took place after school on April 26, 2023, in the Suna Kırac foyer. The panel of judges was made up of experienced members of the art world: curator Merve Elveren Tayfun RC 05, curator Duygu Demir RC L12 04, architect Dilşad Anıl RC 09 and Eda Tekcan, owner of Imoga Art Space.

"We had fewer entries, but the quality was as high or maybe even higher than the previous years," says art teacher Maria Sezer. "Often our most experienced students don't submit because the show is right before the AP Studio Art submission deadline," explains Art Department Head Alex Downs. "Because of changes in the AP

portfolio, students are no longer required to submit the actual work. I think that benefitted the Demirkan Aşetey competition because those students were able to submit the work they developed for their AP portfolio to the show." When asked how students' work has evolved over the years, Downs says, "It has grown much more experimental. In the past our submissions focused mostly on manual skill. Today's shows are much more focused on concept and process. Students are getting more sophisticated." Merve Elveren Tayfun, one of the judges, agrees: "Although the number of works submitted this year was small in number, it was exciting to see how RC students are interested in using different mediums and tools and how they are invested in the process of art making. The Competition clearly shows that the RC Art Department encourages students to explore new ideas."

The students' artworks were from a wide variety of genres, from canvas oil painting to 3-D installations to photography. This year's winners were Ayşe Akçaylı L12, Ece Çıkım L11 and Elif Yağmur Uzunoğlu L12, with Honorable Mentions going to Sedef Gökçe L11, Meltem Ecem Kıldır L12, Elis Özdikililer L11, İdil Aybala Esmer L12 and Sarya Baran Kılıç L11.



This year's entries included a wide variety of themes and media

Spring Events on Campus

During the spring semester, the campus comes to life with all sorts of activities and events. Here are some of the highlights.



The phenomenal music at the RC Orchestra concert got people out of their seats in May



RC Theater Company's staging of Euripides' *The Bacchae* intrigued audiences in March



The RC Singers polyphonic chorus delighted listeners in May with a variety of songs



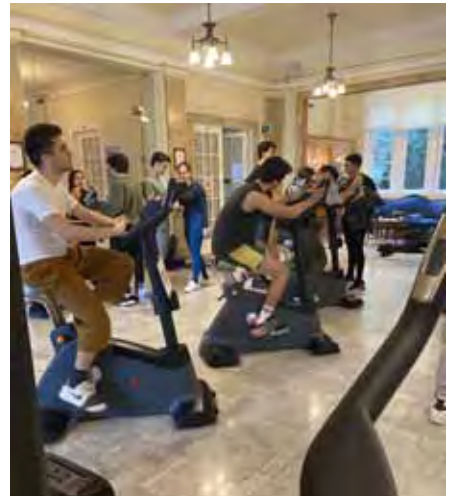
Stand up comedian, writer, actor and innovator Hasan Can Kaya was a guest speaker of the RC Mathematical Economics initiative on March 13



Seniors were sent off in style during their last day on campus, May 12



Maura Kelly, founder of the Jane Page English Writing Competition, announces this year's winners in April



L12 students enjoyed some friendly competition between sections during the Senior Cycling Day on March 23



The theme of the 18th Turkish Culture and Literature Symposium, held on March 18, was "New Literature, New Readers in the Second Century of the Republic"

New RC Scholarship Program Honors the 100th Anniversary of the Republic of Turkey

2023 is a significant year that marks Robert College's 160th anniversary and the 100th anniversary of the Republic of Turkey. As an institution which witnessed and contributed to the foundation of the modern Turkish state, RC adds to the celebration of the Centennial with a fitting contribution: the RC Centennial Scholarship Program.

The aim of the Centennial Scholarship Program is to enlarge the scholarship budget for the next five years, in order to offer scholarships to additional students who would otherwise not be able to enroll at Robert College.

The scholarship will cover a student's tuition during the full five years they're at Robert College. At this issue's time of print, six donors have joined the program – RC Trustee Kemal Aşkar RC 94, Ceyla and Kaan Karamancı RC 04, Jak Baruh RC 72, the Inal Family, Nahmani Grunder & Cie Ltd, and an anonymous donor. It is through their prompt support that the program was launched successfully.

The Centennial Scholarship Program reflects RC's beliefs in the role of education in making a country's roots stronger and the need for education to be wide and inclusive.



Jak Baruh RC 72 joined the cause without hesitation: "Robert College was the most important school in my life. I went to many schools, but when people ask, 'Where are you from?', I say I am from RC. Robert College is a character-building school; I saw this good fortune in my family as my father was also from RC. That's why I wanted to give this opportunity to another student."

Chairman and Co-Founder of Nahmani Grunder & Cie Ltd, Urs Grunder, has had family and business

ties with Turkey for decades. His motivation to contribute in this meaningful way was the following: "Robert College is the perfect institution to give something back by supporting smart young students who would otherwise not have the opportunity to study at the best college in Turkey."

If you'd like to know more about the Centennial Scholarship program, contact Burcu Berent in the Institutional Advancement Office at bberent@robcot.k12.tr

RC 90 Creates New Endowed Fund in Memory of Osman Evran



Osman Evran RC 90

When their classmate Osman Evran passed away in a car accident shortly after their graduation, the Class of '90 started an annual scholarship in his name, which they have been generously supporting for the last 27 years. At their 30th reunion, the class set forth to create a new scholarship, this time an endowed fund which would honor

Osman's name in perpetuity. Their goal is to raise \$200,000 in four years, and to date they have already received commitments to achieve that goal from their classmates. Class agents Okan Atilla, Aysan Sinanlıoğlu Sarmpezoudis and Mete Tuncel thank all their classmates who have contributed to the fund to date.

HOMECOMING '23

NOVEMBER 5, 2023
Sunday

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU!

Reminisce

Tour the campus, walk the Faralyalı Trail, breathe the air at the Plateau, enjoy the İbrahim Bodur Library, visit new and improved spaces.

Warm your heart

Reunite with friends, teachers and staff.

**SAVE
THE
DATE**

Roll Call

RC's traditional
Homecoming Assembly
at Suna Kiraç Hall

Special Events for the 160th Year of Robert College

Extreme marathoner Ahmet Uysal
RC 90 will run 160 laps on the
Plateau to raise funds for RC's
160th. Support a good cause and
join him for as many laps
as you wish.
Stay tuned for further
announcements!

Congratulations Class of '73 on your 50th reunion!

Reconnecting with KuzeyDoğa and Passionate People in Kars and Iğdır

| Students experience nature in enlightening ways.

By Marshall Hoovler, RC English teacher

Excerpt from the RC Journal of Environmental Education



Students enjoy the wide open space of Aras at KuzeyDoğa Bird Ringing Station

RC's newfound focus on environmental education has revitalized our connection with Çağan Şekercioğlu RC 93, and his conservation organization, KuzeyDoğa, located near Iğdır. A Community Involvement Program (CIP) project last visited KuzeyDoğa's Aras Bird Ringing Station in 2015. Nearly a decade slipped by without a return visit, until this year's spring break when CIP Advisor Kathryn Bourgeois and I took fourteen students on a four-day CIP project with KuzeyDoğa as the centerpiece.

The students began their community work upon arrival by visiting the Atatürk Children's Library. Bahar Bağ, the current librarian, gave the RC students a tour, and then twenty elementary-aged students joined for some reading time. Zehra Nehir Cihan L10 commented that when, "I met with the children and their parents in the library, I had hope for the future again."

The second day was entirely devoted to KuzeyDoğa - the main event for

the trip - and it did not disappoint. Students learned about conservation efforts, bird migration, and the human impact on nature, all while helping the incredible volunteers, led by Kayahan Ağırkaya. He showed the students how to clear birds from the capture nets and how to weigh, measure, ring, and release them without harm. Seeing the birds up close helped the students experience in person the importance of the

work done by KuzeyDoğa. As Defne Su Baysal LP said, "We were a world away from the hustle of the city, and we had the opportunity to witness a small but passionate community of people come together to protect and learn about the wildlife around us."

A visit to the Boğatepe village marked the third day of the trip. Here, students learned about the complexities of cheese making and the impact of farming on nature and animals. A tour of the historical site Ani concluded the day. Kafkas University's Wildlife Rehabilitation Center was the final stop on the journey. Seeing wild animals injured by human negligence or violence was an important capstone for the trip. Kafkas University staff and their dedication for animal welfare was inspirational.

Along with so many other passionate people in Kars and the surrounding area, the volunteers of KuzeyDoğa helped change the way fourteen RC students see the world by guiding them as they fully engaged with it.



A rare sighting of a kingfisher was one of the highlights of the project

Kids Learn to Channel Curiosity

| Six-week project was a chance to explore hobbies and interests.

Do you remember the absolute creativity and hunger for knowledge from the early years of your childhood? What Should We Do Today? (Bugün Ne Yapsak?) was a six-week project that aimed to give kids the opportunity to explore different hobbies and interests in order to help them channel their creativity and curiosity in various ways.

Participants, ages 8-10, came from Lion's Ataevi, a community center in Ataşehir run by the Yeşil Burgazada Lions Club, who collaborated with RC students on the project. The project took place both at Ataevi and at RC.

Throughout the project, participants had the opportunity to explore dance, music, theater, art, sport and science fields. This unique experience allowed some to find out about their love for



Participants enjoyed exploring spaces on the RC campus

badminton while the others discovered their passion for science or writing poems. In this project, they searched for an answer to the question that comes to their minds when they wake up and ask themselves "What should we do today?"

In an example of how RC students tried to balance the program, co-leader Öykü

Erciyes L10 said, "It was great to hear the children's feedback. It's nice to know that when they wake up one day and ask themselves, 'What we should do today?', something will come to mind. I think this CIP was very instructive and developmental for both us and them. I learned how to be flexible, to produce quick solutions, and how to prepare the best as a team."

Cemre Sanlav speaks for the project team with her takeaways: "Working together with other volunteers and participants from different backgrounds was an enriching experience. It reinforced the idea that true change and progress are often the results of collective action and collaboration. It also highlighted the importance of building strong and supportive communities."

Problem-solving Through Creativity

| Middle school kids tap into their imaginations.



Kids used creativity and teamwork to solve fun challenges

Destination Imagination (DI) is a program where students use creativity to solve open-ended team challenges. This spring, in the DI CIP, RC students introduced the program to 25 kids from Büyük Esmâ Sultan Middle School in

Beşiktaş over four weeks. Excerpts from the journal by Hande Selamoğlu L10 tell her experience:

"When I was in middle school, we had a limited number of clubs available, and Destination Imagination was one of them. My mother told me DI was fun and educational. But I was scared to try it, because I thought that it took too much intelligence and broad understanding.

"When I was in ninth grade, my friend begged me to choose the DI club because it was 'fun'. I wanted to try for my younger self. It didn't take extreme intelligence to attend the tournaments, nor did I have to know how to code or build robots; the only

things that it took to succeed and have fun were creativity and teamwork. And I wish someone told this to my eleven-year-old self.

"One day, I saw this CIP project about teaching younger kids DI, and I knew it would be perfect for me. I wanted to teach them how they can have a ton of fun while working with others and applying their creativity.

"As the weeks passed, I saw them being more involved in the teamwork and getting more creative each time. At the end of this project, I had taught them what it takes to be a part of DI, and seeing that they enjoyed it even more than me was the cherry on top."

RC Alumni Association Welcomes Summer

During the first months of 2023, the RC Alumni Association (RKMD) was a hub for earthquake relief, with the Istanbul RC community sending food, clothing and equipment for the earthquake survivors to Bizim Tepe, and many alumni offering support with organizing, boxing and sending off collected items, making sure they reached those in need. (see cover story on p. 24).

As spring arrived, events resumed at Bizim Tepe. Here are a couple highlights.



Learning to Cope with Fear

Prof. Dr. Serra Müderrisoğlu, RC 86 held a conference at Bizim Tepe on May 12, titled “Exiting Fear Response” in reference to the devastating earthquakes in Southeastern Turkey. She has recently retired from the Clinical Psychology Department at Boğaziçi University.

Traditional Mother’s Day Brunch

The traditional Mother’s Day Brunch, on May 13, brought many generations of alumni together at Bizim Tepe. Bestem Yuvarlak Trio with their fantastic jazzy tunes entertained the guests. During the day RKMD hosted İKSV which ran a special 20% discount for all members. RKMD and İKSV will continue to collaborate in the upcoming months.



We look forward to seeing you!

Pool season is in full swing! The pool will be open to our members after 13:00 during the week until August 25, and all day on weekends.

We have many activities for people of all ages in the works. For the latest news and announcements follow us @RobertKolejMD

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4-8 YAŞ ARASI ÇOCUKLARI;
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ÜYE: 25.500 TL **MİSAFİR:** 27.000 TL



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ROBERT KOLEJ MEZUNLAR DERNEĞİ

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American Alumni Network Goes from Strength to Strength

The Robert College Alumni Association of America (RCAAA) continues to grow the Welcome to USA Awards, along with mentoring, and events.

New Alumni Find Guidance and Support Through Mentorship Program

Young graduates coming to the States for their higher education find moral and community support through the RCAAA Mentorship Program. Started in 2010, under the leadership of Alpdoğan Kantarcı RC 86, the program facilitates a smoother transition for young alumni starting a new life in a foreign country by building a bridge between the new RC graduates and alumni already established in the States. Each interested graduate is matched with an experienced alumnus preferably residing in the same city as the student in a mentor-mentee relationship. This powerful alliance provides friendship, guidance, leadership, and, most importantly, a “home away from home” for newcomers.

Doğa İpek Bozkurt RC 22, who is a participant in the program and a student at Georgetown University, shares her experience of mentoring:



RC Head Adam Oliver and his wife, Rima, at a mini-reunion in Georgetown, Washington, D.C. with RCAAA Board Members, Arzu Çalış RC 83, Tolga Vural RC 82, and RCAAA Welcome to USA Award recipient and mentee, Doğa İpek Bozkurt RC 22, on November 10, 2022.

“When I arrived in America, I entered a new world and phase in my life. I felt the need for someone who could support me with their experience and wisdom. RCAAA’s mentoring program provided exactly what I hoped for. From course selections to career planning, and internship applications, the support of my mentor, Arzu Çalış,

has been priceless. As I pursue my dream career in sustainable economic development and political science, the mentoring support that I get helps me make my moves more confidently. I feel deeply grateful to be a member of the RC family that genuinely cares. I am eager to pay all the generosity I received forward.”

Boston Alumni Meet Up

Alpdoğan Kantarcı RC 86, who is the creator and manager of the RCAAA Mentoring Program, brought alumni together in Boston on June 6, 2023. The RCAAA team who is focused on keeping the RC Boston Region strong and thriving are İpek Salahor RC 72, Emre Şarbak RC 08, Erdem Aksu RC 09, Gökşin Kavlak RC 06, and Barış Heybeli RC 16.



Welcome to USA Awards Grow

I The number of recipients increased to 11 this year.



Ahmet Inal RC ENG 61 presented this year's Welcome to USA Awards at Graduation

Established in 1993, the Welcome to USA Awards have been helping new RC graduates ease into life as they begin their studies in the States. Recipients use their "happy landing check" for a variety of things including school supplies and travel to visit friends and family. With an increase in the number of applications this year RCAA is resolved to provide additional funding to RC's exceedingly qualified graduates. Under the leadership of Cengiz Hatiboğlu RC 81, the number of awards

has increased this year to 11, from 8 last year, and 3-4 in previous years.

This year's recipients along with their academic field of study in renowned colleges and universities are: Volkan Turan, astrophysics and computer science at Franklin and Marshall College; Arda Daren Aslan, economics at Vanderbilt; Ayseli Karabekmez, environmental studies at Colby; Batu Ozer, physics and engineering at Dartmouth; Sarp Turker, political

science and economics at University of Chicago; Berkay Kurnaz, neuroscience at Kenyon College; Mehmet Can Yilmaz, applied mathematics and economics at Dartmouth; Tuna Sağdan, materials engineering at University of Pennsylvania; Ayse Melek Keles, political science and international relations at Vanderbilt; Nihan Cedimagar, astronomy, physics and theater at Lafayette College; Ipar Kurt, management science and engineering at Stanford.

Welcome to USA Awards Reunion

In celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Welcome to USA Awards, presented to new RC graduates continuing their higher education in North America, RCAA is hosting a virtual event to honor the achievements of the 117 award recipients to date. The purpose of this event is to keep this thriving community well-connected with not only each other, but also the global RC community. All RC alumni and friends who feel inspired to meet these stellar ambassadors of RC in North America are welcome to join an online event scheduled for **Sunday, October 1, 2023, at 12:00 pm EST. For more details please contact Cengiz Hatiboğlu at chatiboglu@gmail.com**

Nevra Serezli ACG 65 Receives the İKSV Cinema Honorary Award

Of her numerous awards, this is the first that recognizes Serezli's film oeuvre.

Recognizing her outstanding efforts in and contributions to Turkish cinema, Nevra Serezli was presented the Cinema Honorary Award of the 42nd Istanbul Film Festival, organized by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (İKSV). A veteran of Turkish theater, Serezli has received many awards for her decades of theater work, but this is her first award that acknowledges her film oeuvre, which includes movies such as *Ne Olacak Şimdi* (What Happens Now), *Atla Gel Şaban* (Come on Over Şaban), and *Kocan Kadar Konuş* (Husband Factor). Serezli has also starred in numerous productions on TV and is one of the premiere dubbing artists in Turkey.

The awards presentation took place during the opening ceremony of the

Istanbul Film Festival, at Süreyya Opera House on April 6, 2023. In a surprise appearance, beloved actor Metin Akpınar who has shared the stage with Serezli many times, presented her the award. The two actors received a minutes-long ovation, and Serezli quipped that the pair need to get back to working with each other again, as they cause quite a sensation together.

Serezli's involvement in acting started at ACG. She took part in seven productions at ACG and garnered great acclaim as Eliza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady*. Legendary RC drama theater director Dorothy İz played a pivotal role in her life at this time, and Serezli recalls that they were inseparable. After an eleven-year hiatus, Serezli returned to theater in 2020 with *Ayaklar Ağaçta Ölüyor* (Trees



Fellow actor Metin Akpınar presented the award to Nevra Serezli

Die Standing), directed by Nedim Saban RC 86. The performances had to pause during the pandemic, but are now back on track, and Serezli has been touring during spring and summer 2023.

Works Written by Mert Dilek RC 14 Performed in London and Istanbul

Dilek's recent work ranges from the musical *1923* to an earthquake fundraiser.



Mert Dilek RC 14

Mert Dilek's work in theatre embraces many facets such as playwriting, dramaturgy, translation, criticism, and scholarship. Currently a PhD candidate at the University of Cambridge, Dilek has received acclaim for his involvement with an earthquake relief event at

Royal Albert Hall on April 15, as well as the musical he co-wrote, *1923*, which made its debut at Zorlu Performing Arts Center on April 23.

Dilek explains that the musical was in the works since early 2022 and necessitated an arduous preparation: "The producers were keen on doing something ambitious to commemorate the centenary of the Turkish Republic. After author Yekta Kopan came up with the narrative framework, director Mehmet Ergen and I joined the team as co-writers and crafted the script over a period of six months. We conducted historical research and development workshops with the creative team, including designers from the UK." Dilek's writing was inspired by his research into the concrete details of history, as well as the technical resources at their disposal: "I also re-read my history

notebook from RC while reacquainting myself with all the historical details." With a cast of over 100, *1923* is the largest piece of musical theatre ever produced in Turkey.

Dilek also contributed as a scriptwriter to the Turkey-Syria fundraiser at the Royal Albert Hall on April 15, organized by UK-based Turkish arts professionals, War Child and the Turkey Mozaik Foundation: "I jumped at this opportunity, as I was eager to support this crucial cause in any way I could. While writing the script for our hosts and performers, I made a point of giving the London audience a sense of the challenges experienced by many in the wake of the catastrophic earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. The literary texts we curated for recital during the event also structured and modulated my writing."

Genco Erkal RC 57 Receives the 22nd Vehbi Koç Award

“I have dedicated my life to theater.”

Vehbi Koç Foundation annually awards those persons and institutions that contribute to quality of life in the fields of culture, education and health with their exceptional work. This year the award on culture went to Genco Erkal and his theater company Dostlar Tiyatrosu (Friends Theater) which is celebrating its 64th year.

Speaking at the awards ceremony, Koç Holding Board Chairman Ömer M. Koç RC 80 stated that Genco Erkal and Dostlar Tiyatrosu have helped the love for theater to grow in Turkey and have contributed to the development of many theater artists. In his acceptance speech, Erkal said he reached the pinnacle of his 64-year career with this award: “I have dedicated my life to theater and wish to continue till

the end. This award encourages and also gives great responsibility. I have planned to donate the majority of the financial part of this award to the education of girls and to earthquake survivors.”

As the creative director of Dostlar Tiyatrosu, Erkal directed and acted in plays by Gorki, Brecht and Havel, as well as Vasıf Öngören, Haldun Taner and Refik Erduran. He has performed the poet Nazım Hikmet’s work throughout his career and states he first came across the poet’s work during his college years.

Indeed, Erkal has often credited his time at RC as solidifying his passion for theater. He had roles in eight productions, in English and Turkish,



Genco Erkal RC 57 received his Vehbi Koç award from Ömer Koç RC 80

and was the president of the Robert College Players. Erkal even came back to campus after his graduation to produce Jean Cocteau’s monologue during the 1959-1960 season.

Zeynep Ahunbay ACG 65 Shares Insights Into Maiden’s Tower Renovation

“Authentic form and substance needed to be protected with care.”

Zeynep Ahunbay was a professor of restoration at İTÜ’s Architecture Department for decades and has managed countless restoration and preservation projects across Turkey. She is currently on the advisory board of two World Heritage assets: the Hagia Sophia and the Great Mosque and Hospital in Divriği. She was also on the Advisory Board for the restoration of Maiden’s Tower (Kız Kulesi).

Ahunbay maintains that Maiden’s Tower’s authentic form and substance needed to be protected with care, as it is a prominent figure in the silhouette of Istanbul: “The original structure consists of a rectangular tower with a courtyard. A timber structure was added to the east in the 19th century by Sultan Mahmut II. Using the information about the history and from the inspection of the existing structures, proposals were made for



Zeynep Ahunbay ACG 65

improving the safety and presentation of the site.”

Ahunbay explains that the structure had suffered from earthquakes and undergone several repairs in the past: “Some of the timber beams reinforcing

the masonry walls had rotted. A fire in the 1940s caused damage to the upper section which was built in timber. After the fire, the upper part of the tower was reconstructed in reinforced concrete. Being exposed to harsh weather for more than 70 years, the reinforced concrete section had deteriorated. After evaluating its condition, structural engineers proposed to remove the reinforced concrete balcony and roof. The upper part of the Tower was rebuilt with timber and steel.”

The restoration also created a reveal: “In the late 20th century, the timber kiosk on the eastern side of the tower had been reconstructed in reinforced concrete. The advisory board decided to remove it and reconstruct it with timber. The removal revealed the eastern gate to the courtyard of the Tower. The project was modified to exhibit the gate.”



Solidarity

The RC Community Comes Together Following the Devastating Earthquakes in Eastern Anatolia

On February 6, 2023, Turkey woke up to a new reality. A virtually unparalleled natural disaster, the effects and repercussions of the earthquakes have been immense. It is important for the RC community to keep abreast of all developments, as well as come together in acknowledging the losses and traumas members of the community experienced at this difficult time. As Head of School Adam Oliver stated in his letter addressing the RC community on February 8, “we can turn the pain and energy we are all feeling into positive efforts to help those most in need.”





Residential students did creative activities like baking cookies



Walks off campus were a welcome change



Furry friends helped soothe students

The long history of RC encapsulates other times when earthquakes had shattering effects. In the 1894 Istanbul earthquake, records show that there was much devastation in the city and an outbreak of cholera afterwards. Albert L. Long, professor of natural philosophy at RC at the time penned an article in the *Zion Herald*, describing the earthquake and its aftermath: “The Robert College buildings bear a few marks but have suffered no serious injury. The American College for Girls, situated in Scutari, has suffered very seriously; many of the buildings and partition walls have to be renewed before the buildings can be re-occupied.”

In other reports it is confirmed that the RC buildings were “vigorously shaken but not seriously injured.” The school strived to keep the minds of the students on the work and not on the troubles all around. The 1999 earthquake, so recent in memory, was, of course, further away,

with no physical effect on campus, but nonetheless shook the RC community to its core.

This time around, the first earthquake struck just hours before school was to be back in session after the semester break. Tragically, the RC community lost one alumnus, Rana Kuseyri Salih ACG 70 (see p. 59), and RC teachers and students lost family members. However, the 54 RC students from the affected area and their direct families were safely accounted for. Although some of the residential students returned home after the earthquakes, a total of 100 residential students remained on campus including the students from the affected areas. Throughout the following two weeks when schools were closed, there were many activities for the residential students who stayed, like cookie baking, puppy therapy, visits to Ortaköy and Bebek, tea at the Deanery, and an open house with faculty and staff

bringing students homemade treats. The art studio also remained open for students who wanted to express themselves through art or just needed some creative therapy. There were also several opportunities for faculty and staff to come together and share their thoughts and feelings, including a zoom meeting the week after the earthquake, small group support sessions and a lunch gathering in the Murat Karamancı Student Center.

On February 20, when schools reopened, the flag ceremonies at RC were committed completely to coming together to remember those lost and acknowledge the heroic workers and volunteers. Collective feelings were shared. The support structures in place to help students were reviewed. Importantly, the initiatives RC started undertaking to support the affected people in the devastated regions were also articulated to motivate the community to take action.

RC Counseling and Emotional Well-Being

One of the important effects of such a disaster is, of course, on emotional well-being. Erkan Uğuzalp, Head of Counseling at RC at the time of the quakes, states that “emotional well-being hinges heavily on the world being predictable to a certain degree, and an earthquake will change that healthy illusion drastically. At Robert College we are convinced that where the oxygen mask goes first and how you prioritize your resources significantly determine the outcomes of the psychological trauma in the long run.”

RC counseling efforts began immediately. First, counselors, residential staff and level deans contacted students and families from the region and provided emotional first aid to those in need. Second, they reached out to RC teachers providing them with the necessary resources and guidance, so that they could be more resilient in the face of the unfolding disaster. Third, RC Counseling had



Erkan Uğuzalp

the task of preparing faculty, parents and students for their return to school and a safe routine which could be challenging due to anxiety for some and feelings of guilt for others. Guidelines were created for teachers to make sure the first day of school both allowed for a return to normalcy and an opportunity for mourning for those who felt the need. Similar informative messages were sent to

parents, and a screening survey was made for families who may have been impacted for reasons unforeseen.

Uğuzalp states that there was a full faculty meeting at the end of the first school day where faculty and staff had the opportunity to mourn and to reflect on the challenges at hand: “Counselors went on to do check-ins in classes and arranged many individual interviews for those deeply impacted during the rest of the week. The counseling department also provided multiple open sessions for teachers to discuss their own emotions and students’ patterns during the first week of school. In addition, an outside psychological health professional was made available to teachers and staff who felt they needed further support during the second week of the semester. The Parents Association also organized a parent meeting on campus where they hosted psychiatrist Yankı Yazgan and Osman Nuri Küçük, who guided families on how to navigate the emotional challenges created by the disaster.”

Relief and Fundraising Initiatives

Numerous RC relief initiatives, both immediate and longer-term, started right after the earthquake. At school, a committee of colleagues and members of the Parents Association was established right away for an aid campaign. Both the Student Council and many individual students proactively shared ideas to help this effort. The Ministry of Education in Beşiktaş was assigned to support Hatay, especially rural regions, and this has given RC a focus for relief efforts.

The Robert College community sprang into action to ensure aid was delivered to those in need as quickly as possible.



RC 83 classmates Serra Soysal and Claudia Hatem Sadioğlu organized collections at Bizim Tepe



Şeyma Arsel ACG 60 kick started RC's relief efforts



Donations were loaded and delivered to the Istanbul Municipality Aid Center

Through a drive started by the RC Alumni Association, relief materials such as heaters, power banks, blankets, sleeping bags, hygiene sets and clean clothes were collected and organized at Bizim Tepe. Arif Akdağ RC 88, President of RKMD, states that not only did the RC community contribute truckloads of goods, it also volunteered with the packing.

Şeyma Bilimer Arsel ACG 60 details some of these efforts: “I heard about the devastating earthquake in the early hours of February 6. Around 10 am, I called the Istanbul Municipality Aid Center and found out they were ready to accept quality goods from a list of necessities. I wrote a message to all RC reps, asking for donations. I also asked Arif Akdağ, if Bizim Tepe could receive these goods. Serra Mansur Soysal RC 83 and I drove what we collected to Bizim Tepe on Wednesday. Arif had already organized everything. On Wednesday by 2 pm, more than 180 boxes were already classified

and packed. Finally, after all the packing was done, the delivery was kindly organized by Aylin Barlas RC 87.” In addition, to the clothing and supplies donated by the entire RC community, 10 generators, 10 heaters, and 15 cement drillers were also sent immediately.

RC also coordinated a food drive with the support of the Parents Association. Donations were used to purchase 214 food boxes which were delivered to rural areas in Hatay.

For longer term support, a donation campaign for Hatay was started through the RC Earthquake Aid account. 650,000 TL was raised in cash donations, and the funds were used to purchase and deliver necessary materials for specific schools in the region to continue classes. Moreover,



From L to R: Ali Sancar RC 86, Serra Soysal RC 83, Şeyma Arsel ACG 60, Rezan Benatar RC 73, Aylin Barlas RC 87 and Arif Akdağ RC 88 in front of donations ready to be delivered

in collaboration with the Beşiktaş MEB, RC provided backpacks, stationery,



Within two days, 180 boxes of donations had been sorted and packed

and toy support to 100 students in the Nurhak district of Kahramanmaraş. The details of how these funds were generated and how they were donated are truly inspiring.

Students Quickly Respond

RC students made a dedicated drive to help the earthquake survivors. The Student Council sprang into action with an online meeting, where they started formulating a plan. Remaining funds from the 2022 Fine Arts Festival were immediately donated. The Student Council social media accounts were put to good use to rally support and raise funds. The Student Council's Dress for Respect day on February 21, gathered donations for RC's earthquake relief fund, with students dressing formally to show respect for the people who lost their lives and everyone affected by the earthquake. "It was truly heartwarming to see students, teachers, and staff coming together for such a worthy cause," said Student Council President Şems Polat L11.

A Black-Tie Event on February 24, also organized by the Student Council, incorporated a mini raffle with proceeds going to RC's earthquake relief fund. Some of the students performed placid tunes and Deha Akduman L11 performed Turkish folk music from the affected region, allowing attendees to experience the



The after-school event raised funds through a raffle



The Student Council arranged a day where students dressed formally and donated to earthquake survivors

healing power of music. Faculty and staff joined the students in these community occasions. Student Council treasurer Batu Yalçın L10 reports on the results: "We raised 99,100 TL from the Dress For Respect day and the Black-Tie Event. Along with these, we've donated 10,000 TL from the Student Council account. Thus, a total of 109,100 TL was contributed to our school's earthquake relief fund."

The Community Involvement Program was also active, with students raising over 20,000 TL through bake sales, subsequently used to purchase supplies and summer clothing for people in Hatay. In addition, the CIP office received donations of test books which were sent to Malatya Beydağı Konteyner Kent to help students in the region prepare for the high school and university entrance exams (LGS and YGS respectively). RC's HeForShe Initiative, a student-led initiative that works in line with the belief that every party in a society must play a role in the establishment of gender equality, also contributed to the relief efforts. They collected pads to send to the Samandağ region, aiming to help the women in the region with an essential but often dismissed need.

Support Extended to Connections from the Pandemic

It is important to note that RC's involvement with the region, in fact,

extends back to the pandemic, when several online community involvement projects were conducted with schools there. It is, therefore, even more meaningful that RC continues to support the students in the region, as they strive to continue their education.

With this spirit and thinking that it is also valuable to be present in the field, at the end of March, Turkish Director Nilhan Çetinyamaç, CIP Office Coordinator Elif Sönmez, and then-CIP Office Advisor Kathryn Bourgeois traveled to Hatay to deliver school supplies, clothing, and books donated by the RC community. Elif Sönmez explains:

"We met with Yusuf Olgun, the principal of Koyunoğlu Middle School in Samandağ, with whom we had facilitated online projects during the pandemic. Although their school was not damaged by the earthquakes, MEB has not yet given them permission to resume classes there. The school has become a distribution center of donations for the local community. With 20,097 TL from the RC Parents Association, we purchased locally produced hygiene supplies for the school, thereby also supporting the local economy. We plan to use the 20,750 TL our students generated from bake sales to purchase summer



Turkish Director Nilhan Çetinyamaç, CIP Office Coordinator Elif Sönmez, and then-CIP Office Advisor Kathryn Bourgeois met with Yusuf Olgun, the principal of Koyunoğlu Middle School

clothing and other items needed in the community. Money from the RC Earthquake Relief Fund will be used to buy containers that will be used on the spot in the school as classrooms until MEB gives permission to use the existing building. We would also furnish each classroom with desks, whiteboards, and possibly at least one projector and computer. These containers could be moved as needed to other schools or locations in the area when they are no longer needed at Koyunoğlu Middle School. Our students and teachers could also use these containers to facilitate future CIP projects such as summer camps or enrichment activities at the school or in local communities.”

Following the visit and discussions with local authorities, it was determined that the Yaylıca Middle School, located within the Samandağ district, required prefabricated classrooms. Therefore, a decision was made to purchase prefabricated classrooms to ensure the continuation of education for the students in that region. The collected cash donation enabled RC to acquire four prefabricated classrooms. Çetinyamaç states that RC students and teachers could also use these containers to facilitate future CIP projects such as summer camps or enrichment activities at the school or in local communities.

An Outpouring of Support from Overseas

In North America, RCAA's response was also swift. The day after the initial earthquakes, a team page titled RCAA - Helping to Rebuild Türkiye 2023, was created within the Turkish Philanthropy Fund framework. The link was announced on the RCAA



RC students worked with Koyunoğlu Middle School in Samandağ during the pandemic, so when the earthquake hit, it was natural for RC to reach out to them first

website, Instagram, and members' personal Facebook pages. The Alumni Association in Turkey also provided the link to those people inquiring on the RKMD Facebook page how to direct their donations in the United States. These modest levels of online announcements raised \$4610 within 2 weeks. As RCAA President Cengiz Hatiboğlu RC 81 emphasizes, these

efforts start as a sprint, but must and will continue as a marathon.

Although it is everyone's fervent wish that this devastation had not occurred at all, it is heartening to see the RC community come together and act in the immediacy and scope that it has, reflecting the humanity and integrity that are at the core of an RC education.



Four prefabricated classrooms were purchased for Yaylıca Middle School in Samandağ, Hatay with proceeds from fundraising efforts

In Loving Memory:

Remembrance and Healing from the Earthquakes

Robert College's Institutional Advancement Office, the RC Alumni Association of America, and the RC Alumni Association in Istanbul organized a virtual memorial on May 7, 2023, for the recent earthquake victims and survivors.

The event started with Head of School Adam Oliver, RCAA President Cengiz Hatiboğlu RC 81 and RKMD President Arif Akdağ RC 88 welcoming participants. After a moment of silence, stories and memories of loved ones and places lost were shared. Gülru Paksoy ACG 70, a classmate of Rana Kuseyri Salih, an alumnus that died in the earthquake, shared her fond memories of Rana. Ela Cenudioğlu RC L12 03, whose family is from Hatay, shared memories of lost family members. Müge Gümüş, RC Turkish Literature teacher, who grew up in Antakya shared her love of this ancient city in a stirring letter that she wrote as a step towards radical acceptance to initiate healing. Deniz Baysal, an RC music teacher, and his students performed "İnsan İnsan" by Fazıl Say allowing the participants to experience the transcendent power of music. Mehmet Uysal, head of the RC Turkish Literature Department, read "World's Strangest Creature" by Nazım Hikmet. Arzu Çalış RC 83,

guided the participants to express their experience of this unspeakable trauma in simple, yet, heart-felt poems of their own making.

The focus of the event gradually expanded towards collective action in the field. Nilhan Çetinyamaç, Turkish Director and Associate Head of School, summarized RC's relief and fundraising initiatives. Arif Akdağ underlined the significance of being personally present in the field. Şenay Ataselim, Executive Director of Turkish Philanthropy Funds in the United States, explained how alumni around the world donate funds and help channel resources to where they are needed the most. Burcu Berent from RC's Institutional Advancement Office emphasized the need for continued support for our school to expand its outreach.

The global gathering demonstrated the power of the RC community and how RC continues to be a force for good.

During the event, attendees were invited to share their experiences about the earthquakes through a poetry exercise. Participants shared their stories in a few sentences and distilled them into meaningful haiku-like poems.

Haberler...
Teyzemin sesi:
"Evimiz yok artık.
Seksen yaşımda bu yazılıymış:
Kader."

Birlik!
Deprem yaşatır.
Biz bize yeteriz!
Çürük binalar kader değildir.
Ahlak!

Amerika...
Sordular bana:
Kültür şoku yaşadın mı?
Kader mi? İrade mi?
Denge.

A Letter to Hatay

A native of Hatay, RC Turkish teacher Müge Gümüş lost many close friends and family members in the earthquakes. She began writing as a way to process her grief and trauma, and penned this letter to her beloved city.

I never thought I'd write a letter to you. I never thought I'd lose you along with my loved ones. You had thousands of stories, and I was just one of them. I loved getting lost in your thousands of years of history. I always went on long journeys knowing that I would come back. We used to ease our fatigue from the big cities by leaning on the existence of Antakya. Antakya used to say, "If you can't do it over there, come back, I'm always here."

The meaninglessness of losing everything and everyone you've worked hard for and held on tight to for your entire life slipping away in just a few minutes, and the helplessness of those waiting for good news from afar... So many people struggling in life... Many people from Antakya will come along, wherever you go, you will find Antakya and its people again... When I return, the desire and hope to invite all neighbors, friends, and family for a bitter coffee, to wave at them from the garden with a smile, and to organize gatherings in Arsuz during holidays to find my loved ones there will always be with me.

The soft-hearted people who were ready to embrace each other, invite



RC Turkish teacher and native of Hatay, Müge Gümüş

each other into their homes, and the jasmine-scented streets, with their unique recipes featuring pomegranate molasses, were left crestfallen, with broken hearts. The wind in Iskenderun is famous, and the split ground had swallowed the jasmine flowers that had fallen from the trees. The neighbors who lost their 40-year-old friend under the rubble had neither a table nor the mood. They had left the joy of the table behind and continued the broken path.

Our mourning is so strange. We mourn for thousands of people in our society and the land we consider sacred. Have the streets where I spent my childhood, the playful and festive times, and Antakya's "mosaic" culture been replaced by a pile of rubble? Losing oneself in grief while holding on tightly to that history and the multicultural structure of those ancient lands with hope and faith... Those who know Antakya, will know that in Antakya, at certain times of the day, the sound of church bells, the call to Muslim prayer, and the Jewish cantor blend into each other.

Farewell childhood memories... Farewell jasmine, bougainvillea, honeysuckle... Farewell to the windy and wavy Arsuz air and sea that the sunset leaves behind in the afternoon... Farewell to the burning sensation of carrying the tray kebab and to the smells of freshly-ground coffee on the whole street...

Farewell to everything that makes Antakya what it is. But only for a short time... Wishing to return to the roots as soon as possible, in a more cheerful, attuned-to-nature and resilient way than before...

Emergency Preparedness Always on the RC Agenda

After the 1999 earthquake, Robert College formulated an extensive emergency preparedness plan together with Dr. Feridun Çelikmen, founding president of AKUT Search and Rescue Association, who was the doctor at Robert College from 1997-2006. In addition, the buildings were inspected and Mitchell and Woods Halls were reinforced through seismic retrofitting in 2001.

Each year, the emergency preparedness plan is reviewed in detail and shared with the school community. Drills take place throughout the year so that everyone is prepared in case of an emergency. Following this year's earthquake, Dr. Çelikmen gave an earthquake preparedness training to the RC community and observed an earthquake drill on campus to ensure that the latest safety best practices are being exercised.



RC Students Win Hackathon for Earthquake Relief

| The pitch was for an invention that detects flaws hidden in the concrete within buildings.



RC's winning Hackathon team and jury members, from L to R: Çağan Meteris L12, Anıl Odabaşı L12, Zico Ufuk Batum RC 87, Avcılar District Mayor Turan Hançerli, Alp Niksarlı L12, Hasan Kaya Güneri L12

Lise 12 students Hasan Kaya Güneri, Alp Niksarlı, Çağan Meteris, and Anıl Odabaşı won the Earthquake Prevention and Search and Rescue Technologies Hackathon organized by Entertech İstanbul Teknokent. Their idea revolved around detecting the safety of concrete walls. They wanted to contribute to relief efforts and formed an impromptu group for

the hackathon. Alp Niksarlı relays the specifics of their success:

"Out of 27 teams and 40 individual applications, the RC group was selected as one of the eight final teams. All eight teams were entirely comprised of university or graduate students with us being the only exception. After we contacted

people who have been to earthquake zones, we realized that we needed to focus on a solution that would provide new information rather than something that just processes or transforms information. We pitched an invention that detects flaws hidden in the concrete within buildings. We achieved this detection by combining chemistry and engineering in an interdisciplinary approach to design a tool that is cheap, practical, and reliable.

"We were allotted a total of 48 hours to brainstorm, decide on our idea and then develop it enough to be able to finally pitch the idea to a panel of judges."

The group donated the prize money to RC earthquake relief efforts to buy container classrooms in earthquake areas.

The RC Alumni Response

RC alumni inspire in all walks of life, but it is their immediate and long-term efforts in the aftermath of the earthquake that truly reflect all RC values. Some were first responders, some were early supporters. Some are in the region for the long term, and others are chroniclers. All underline the need to keep supporting the region, as the effects will last long and be far-reaching.

Arif Akdağ RC 88 Recounts Search and Rescue Efforts

“Everybody should go to the earthquake region to understand the needs of those affected.”

Right after the 1999 earthquake, RC Alumni Association president Arif Akdağ helped coordinate foreign teams arriving at Atatürk Airport. The Malaysian team was one of the last to arrive, and they asked Akdağ to join them in Gölcük. They stayed in touch over the years, so when the earthquakes hit on February 6 and they returned to Turkey to help, they asked Akdağ to join them. The team spent 13 days in Nurdağ, Gaziantep. Akdağ shares the experience.

“Getting together with the same group of Malaysian rescuers after 24 years was incredible.

“Both the extent of the devastation and presence of volunteers from all over the country were astonishing. Everything had collapsed. In front of each building were 50-100 people waiting day and night for their families. They wouldn’t leave the



Arif Akdağ RC 88 (right) with a member of the Malaysian rescue team in Samandağ, Hatay

site, even though it was -9 degrees, sleeping on cardboard, trying to reach loved ones alive or dead. Volunteers showed up with whatever support

they could provide. For example, one person with a generator attached to his car showed up. One company who builds ships sent a container and was giving out soup.

“I believe everybody should go to the earthquake region to understand the needs of those affected. Each alumnus has the capacity to do something positive there. People will need to re-establish businesses, make money, re-build homes. Kids need to go to school. They will need all the help they can get from the unaffected populations.

“In addition, we all need to be more knowledgeable about earthquakes and how to prepare for disasters. The RC ecosystem (alumni, parents, administration, trustees) should prepare a plan on how to help our community and those affected in the event of another large earthquake.”

Aral Sürmeli RC 11 Supports Relief Efforts Through His NGOs

"The most important thing is to support the local nonprofits, through donations or fundraisers."



Aral Sürmeli RC 11 at MEDAK's camp in Adana

Aral Sürmeli is a doctor who has established two NGOs: MEDAK which focuses on medical rescue efforts,

and HERA - an app that connects displaced populations to local health services. They have set up a campus in Adana from where they're providing aid.

"On February 5 our team was actually in Adana because they were starting a pilot for HERA. When the earthquakes happened we quickly activated our systems and most of our medical rescue volunteers joined other teams. It took everyone couple days to realize the scale of the issue. Seeing the situation and having worked in disasters before, we knew what we needed to do.

"The need for help in the region will likely go on for many years, so after the first response, we started looking into becoming part of the community there, and that's how we ended up opening the campus in Adana, two

hours away from the affected zones (staying in a safe zone is a common disaster practice). We currently have four containers on the campus. We are expanding to 20 containers and planning long-term projects. Now the goal is to expand our health programs, connect them with development works and stay there for the long-term.

"The most important thing is to support the local nonprofits, through donations or fundraisers. A small donation can make a larger contribution to a local organization. The needs in the field change day by day. So flexible fundings and donations, and trusting in the local organizations, is, I think, the best way to go. It's going to take at least 5 to 10 years before everything is back to normal. So, people need to stay engaged with the relief efforts."

Pinar Sabancı RC L3 03 Underlines the Importance of Psychosocial Support

"Anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder are likely to follow such catastrophic events."

Pinar Sabancı is a psychologist who has been actively involved in the physical and psychological recuperation of the survivors.

I visited some of the tent cities with UCIM (an association that works to protect children from abuse and neglect) in Hatay and Kahramanmaraş. I also went to some hospitals and KYK's (High Education and Credit Housing) in Ankara to support the survivors. Some help got lost in the first weeks due to lack of proper coordination. We are now focusing on providing the right kind of help to the right places.

Timely material aid to survivors with severe losses is critical for better recovery outcomes. As everyone's basic needs are met, urgent and long-term psychosocial support is vital. Anxiety, depression and post-



Pinar Sabancı RC L3 03 visits a tent city in Antakya

traumatic stress disorder are likely to follow such catastrophic events. Making recovery plans based on

volunteering is not realistic, as that is almost never sustainable in the long term. Budget must be allocated for large-scale psychosocial support.

It is important to know how to talk and interact with earthquake survivors; the Psychiatric Association of Turkey (PAT) website (psikiyatri.org.tr) is a great place to start learning. In terms of financial help, we have all seen how important it is to donate to trustable foundations. For example, TEV helps those in need of financial aid for education. Füsün Sayek Association for the Development of Health and Education (fusunsayek.org) is doing great work in the area. UCIM has also delivered a lot of material goods to the tent cities. Personally, we can start ordering from local producers to support the businesses affected by the earthquake.

Tamer Tamar RC 92 Shares Tears of Hatay

"I thought about how big a role luck plays in our lives."

Tamer Tamar is a photographer for Magma magazine and penned his first-hand experiences at Hatay.

Merry Christmas to our Christian brothers and sisters.

I rubbed my eyes in astonishment and refocused at the poster positioned between the Greek Orthodox church and Ulu Mosque. Yes, that's what it said! It was Christmas 2010 in southeastern Turkey. Sensing my confusion, a shop owner gently said, "Brother, we don't know and care who's Christian, Arabic or Sunni around here." I should have known better, as this was Hatay, a city welcoming different civilizations and religions for 2400 years.

Fast forward to the tragic day of February 6, 2023. A city already debilitated by the decade-long Syrian refugee crisis literally crumbles after two deadly earthquakes. I felt an immediate responsibility to document this tragedy and also provide financial



Photo: Tamer Tamar RC 92

A boy in Kurtulus, Antakya recovers his cat eight days after the earthquakes

assistance to the families in need. I arrived in Hatay on the Sunday after the earthquake. Completely disoriented, I felt like an extra in an apocalypse movie. Hatay was crying, yet these tears should never have been shed. Listening to stories of incompetence and neglect from survivors, I thought about how big a role luck plays in our lives. Hatay was grateful to the İBB firefighters who rescued 600 people in Antakya

and Idea Universal, who brought containers to Iskenderun. And of course, to those tens of thousands of people who rushed to provide anything and everything. It is important for RC alumni to not only organize and support initiatives remotely, but also to travel to the earthquake region and see exactly what families need to carry on. In this land of earthquakes, we will all need a helping hand at some point.

Ela Cenudioğlu RC L12 03 Commemorates Her Loss of Family and Community

"I am grieving, yet I promise to do everything in my capacity to honor their memory."

Ela Cenudioğlu, a lawyer and mediator, comes from Antakya and remembers the Jewish community there.

As a native of Antakya, the city whose small Jewish community was demolished along with everything else, I have a specific story to tell. The earthquake took my uncle, who was the head of the Jewish community in Antakya, and aunt from me. Despite the deep sorrow and pain of losing them, we are all grateful that their bodies were found, brought to Istanbul and they were buried traditionally. I lost not just my aunt and uncle, but the apartment where I grew up, the streets I walked, the school I attended, our summer place, my synagogue. In other words, my past was now buried under the rubble. The home I grew up



Ela Cenudioğlu RC L12 03

in was a three-story family building called "Cenudi Apartmanı." "Ezan, Çan, Hazzan" was the city's motto, referring to the Muslim call to prayer, Christian church bells, and the Jewish *hazzan* (cantor), conveying the solidarity of these three religions. The Jewish

community in Antakya was 2,500 years old. When I was growing up, there were around 250 Jews living in the city. By 2014, the community had shrunk to just 14 people. The Antakya Synagogue served these few remaining members. A team saved its 500-year-old Torah scrolls from the rubble. My uncle was a visionary leader committed to this community. He did everything in his capacity to connect it with other communities. My aunt and uncle always supported each other, hand in hand. I am grieving, yet I promise to do everything in my capacity to honor their memory.

The full text of Ela Cenudioğlu's article may be read on Jewish Unpacked (jewishunpacked.com/a-tribute-to-antakya/)

Lara Selin Seyahi RC 21 Shares Views of the Earthquakes from Abroad

Seyahi interviewed a Stanford geophysics professor and wrote about her experiences.



Lara Selin Seyahi RC 22

Lara Selin Seyahi is studying computer science at Stanford University and interviewed Stanford geophysics professor William Ellsworth right after the earthquakes. The interview was published in Oksijen newspaper.

In response to Seyahi's question about the February 6 earthquakes, Ellsworth said that it was expected that an earthquake could have happened in the region in people's lifetimes due to the region being on a fault line. They discussed the similarities between southeast Turkey and the San Francisco Bay Area, in terms of earthquake susceptibility, noting that both regions are on fault lines. Ellsworth stated that if anything good comes from this earthquake it is that now perhaps people will understand why it is important that buildings are designed to survive earthquakes. Ellsworth also underlined that disasters did not need to happen to raise awareness.

Ellsworth further explained the scientific details as to how these earthquakes happened, describing

the process of the release of energy that causes tectonic plates to slip, which is built up through the slow movement of the plates over many years. Ellsworth also shared the technological advances in earthquake early detection and prevention that have been used in the Bay Area.

Ellsworth underlined that the worst thing to do is to try to run outside, which is a major cause of deaths, apart from poorly built buildings: "All new buildings should have survived the earthquake. After all, that is what building codes are there for."

Seyahi also wrote an article for the Stanford Daily titled "Heartache: Earthquakes in my Country," expressing her sadness about these tragic events and helping to raise awareness outside of Turkey.

Reşit Yıldız RC 91 Experienced the Aftermath Firsthand

"When survivors feel they are not alone they start gaining hope."

Between 2011 and 2017, Reşit Yıldız was involved in the development of one of the biggest international container terminals in the Eastern Mediterranean and continues to be a member of its board. During those years, he spent a lot of time in Antakya, Maraş, Osmaniye, Antep, Adıyaman, İskenderun and Adana. All these places were hit by the earthquake, so Yıldız moved to İskenderun and lived in the port full time for three months to help and to better understand the region's needs.

"Having lost almost everything, people are desperate. Providing them their material needs is vital. Just as important is the provision of 'hope' and 'feeling of progress'. Being with them physically and working with them hand in hand have a huge positive impact. I had nothing to eat

the first two days, no shower for two weeks and no bed for 2 months. When they feel they are not alone they start gaining hope. Hope combined with motivation brings progress, provided that there is a plan to follow. Yes, you are starting from nothing. Yet the aim is to have progress, so the key question is 'Are we better than we were yesterday?'. If the answer is yes, then everybody feels much better.

"On top of the earthquakes, we had a massive fire in the port triggered by the earthquake. Almost all the port and containers got burned. Our employees thought the port would never become operational again. We said we would do everything to resume operations and requested their collaboration. Only two months after the earthquake we started partial operation. It is beyond imagination how this partial



Reşit Yıldız RC 91 by a mobile education center in Adıyaman

progress boosted their motivation. Of course, it was not only the repair of the port that we focused on but also on providing container homes, cafeteria, laundry facilities and preschool education."

Ahmet H. Uysal RC 90 Raises Relief Funds Through a Global Marathon Challenge

"I raised enough funds to cover 7000 children's annual education costs."



Ahmet Uysal RC 90 finishing the marathon in South America

Ahmet H. Uysal has been running marathons for 20 years, as well as realizing life-long dreams like going to the North Pole. Here is how he turned another dream into relief for many.

The World Marathon Challenge is the ultimate running event in the world where runners complete 7

full marathons on 7 continents in 7 days, and I decided to do it. In my family, education is top priority, and, as before, I decided to run for TEGV, founded by Suna Kırış AÇG 60. I became the only Turkish person ever to join and complete this Challenge. I trained for almost two years, doing most of my long runs on the Plateau.

We started on January 31 at Novo, Antarctica, in brutal conditions. Then we flew to Africa in a cargo plane to run the second marathon in Cape Town, in less than 24 hours. The journey continued with marathons in Perth (Australia), Dubai (Asia), Madrid (Europe), Fortaleza (South America), and finally in Miami (North America) in the evening of February 6.

I had a ritual where, before each marathon, I read letters from TEGV children. They boosted my power. However, on my last day, I received news of the earthquake which added an emotional meltdown to my sore knees and depleted energy reserves. I still finished with a time of 13th overall.

I raised enough funds to cover 7000 children's annual education costs, and all these funds are directed to be used in TEGVs mobile facilities in the earthquake area.

Çağan Şekercioğlu RC 93 Commemorates Friend With Support of Classmates

"I am grateful to my RC 93 friends and the RC community."

Çağan Şekercioğlu is a conservation ecologist, ornithologist, tropical biologist, and nature photographer. He lost his beloved friend Önder Cırık, who became a victim of the Grand İsis Hotel in Adıyaman during the Kahramanmaraş earthquake. Cırık was a founding member of Şekercioğlu's environmental organization KuzeyDoğa and his frequent collaborator.

"My entire KuzeyDoğa NGO team drove to Mersin for Önder's funeral on February 10. I could not join them as I was teaching at the University of Utah. To honor Önder's memory, they identified unassisted mountain villages that were hit hard and under snow. Their most urgent needs were permanent tents with wood stoves.

On February 12, I asked my RC 93 classmates for their support. By February 15, 700,000 TL for 50 tents had already been collected with more donations coming. With the extra money, we hired two semi-trucks to carry the tents and stove parts, 5 tons of firewood, 2 tons of coal, essential supplies and lots of dry food.

Members of my team met in Fındıkköy, Malatya on February 18, and with the help of the woman village chief, handed out the tents in person to the needy families. Together with the villagers, the team set up a few tents and wood stoves to make sure they were done correctly. The tents are still providing vital shelter to this day.



Şekercioğlu's KuzeyDoğa team setting up much-needed tents in Malatya

I am grateful to my RC 93 friends, in particular Batubay Özkan and Seha İşmen, for their help in organizing this campaign and Gökhan Koç for his field presence and his most generous support, and to all my other classmates, their friends, families, and other RC graduates who supported this campaign.

Rana Özbal RC 93 Outlines Relief Efforts for Villages Near Archeological Sites

"We have a special bond with the region and its people."

Rana Özbal, an associate professor of archaeology at Koç University who has been conducting excavations near Hatay for many years, shares how they are supporting the local communities there.

"Immediately following the earthquake, we started a campaign through gofundme.com. Initially, our aim was to provide relief to Karahüyük, the village closest to our excavation site, but we were able to extend our help to Suluköy and Uzunkavak. For years, our excavations have relied on the help and friendship of local personnel from these villages. Our research at the site began in 1999. Although we conducted excavations in Bursa between 2007 and 2018, we returned to Hatay to address the many remaining questions about the prehistory of this region. We have a special bond with the

region and its people. Some of these friendships continue, but others are now memories: Our accountant, our driver and the farmer who has allowed us to store our excavation equipment in his barn have all perished, together with their families.

"While the earthquake caused more damage to the city centers, it is the villages that the survivors flocked to. The big gardens and fields that surround the village homes have become inundated with disaster relief tents sheltering city survivors. To date, we have been able to supply the inhabitants of these villages with 30 tents. We have also provided them with over 4 tons of food, medications and supplies, and more than 15,000 liters of drinking water, sourcing them from area merchants. In addition, we have set up a network with a local



Rana Özbal RC 93 during excavations at the Tell Kurdu Hatay in the summer of 2022

furniture store to provide credit for families who lost their homes and all their possessions."

Taylan Özgür Ercan RC 21 Reflects on Aid Efforts at Cornell University

"Our relief event showed that people can come together and help each other during a disaster."



Taylan Özgür Ercan RC 21

Taylan Özgür Ercan is currently studying economics at Cornell University and is the president and founder of the Turkish Student Association there. Both the Association and Ercan were commended by the Cornell community for their rapid mobilization after the disaster.

We organized an Earthquake Disaster Relief Fundraiser at Cornell in conjunction with the Arab Student Association, Muslim Educational and Cultural Association, and International Student Association and also held numerous fundraising events. Our relief event showed that people can come together and help each other during a disaster.

A range of activities were available, including a silent auction, tea station, traditional Turkish baklava, and games like tavla. All Cornell students worked together to make this event happen. The Turkish Student Association also organized bake sales and tables at various buildings on campus. Our fundraising events engaged 2,000 participants, and the Turkish Student Association at

Cornell raised a total of \$34,000, or approximately 645,000 Turkish Lira. We collected the funds from Cornell students, faculty, and staff and donated it to AFAD.

Our relief efforts were successful, and we were able to assist all Turks in need at Cornell. As the organizer of these events and the president of the Turkish Student Association at Cornell, I am proud of what we accomplished. Helping people during a disaster can make a significant difference in their lives. Many people were left homeless by the earthquake and needed assistance. In particular, three of our Turkish friends from Diyarbakır and Hatay lost their homes due to the earthquake. Our efforts helped ease their suffering and made their lives easier.

Mihriban Pekkülyüz ACG 71 Sr. Rallies Colleagues Abroad to Provide Safe Learning Spaces

“Our Montreal community tried to find ways to help.”

Mihriban Pekkülyüz is the Gerald Hatch Faculty Fellow and professor of materials engineering at McGill University. She was one of the RC alumni who contributed from far away and saw firsthand the difficulties and rewards in raising funds. She recounts the experience:

Our Montreal community tried to find ways to help. Doctors communicated with the Canadian government officials to organize relief efforts. In the forefront was Dr Selim Sarı. His daughter Prof. Aslı Sarı RC 09 and I collaborate on research projects; she is now an assistant professor of mining at Queens University.

Aslı's father is from Adana and Aslı's mother is from Gaziantep. When official avenues failed and we could not raise money, he and I bought two containers ourselves, and they are now at the Malatya Teachers Academy. They were first used for one month for the 8th and 12th grade students who are preparing for high school and university exams. The containers are now being used as classrooms for the official education programs that restarted at the school.

According to the Malatya Ministry of Education, the needs for the school and the region are containers for classrooms, stationery



A container classroom in Malatya that Mihriban Pekkülyüz ACG 71 Sr. and her colleague donated

(including educational materials for preschoolers and coloring books), and computers, laptops and tablets.

Halit Alper Tayalı RC 00 Brings Joy to Kids Through Toys

“My first formal volunteer work was during middle school at RC.”

Halit Alper Tayalı is an assistant professor of business at Istanbul University. He worked with his brother to deliver relief to Hatay.

“Following the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes, my brother ilker began collecting plush toys for children affected by the disaster. When I learned that my brother was heading to Hatay to deliver the last batch of supplies, and I joined him.

“The heavy feeling that had been weighing on me vanished when we loaded the rental car with dozens of plastic balls that a friend had sent. While a part of the donations we delivered went to an association in Iskenderun, we distributed a part of the balls right there for the kids



Halit Alper Tayalı RC 00 (right) and his brother at the Coast Guard Command in Samandağ, where they delivered toys for children affected by the earthquakes

living in tents. Our last delivery point was the Coast Guard Command at Samandağ.

“My first formal volunteer work was during middle school at RC. We were at the Kasımpaşa kindergarten with teachers and friends from Robert College. It is difficult to forget those moments. We chased a ball around the facility with the kids for no other reason than to have fun, solely for the sake of playing. It was not so different from what the kids in the earthquake zones do now.

“Everyone who has the means is aiding victims of disasters or traumas, and aid organizations are very much active. Donors who are concerned about whether their donations will reach the right people can deliver them to manufacturers or producers in the affected area.”

Payda Expands Programs to Children Affected by the Earthquakes

Their education support program is now in Hatay.

Founded in 2010 by RC alumni, Payda aims to increase interaction, communication and understanding between different regions and groups within Turkey. As part of their efforts, the organization provides scholarships, education and career guidance to over 350 successful students in need of financial support in Diyarbakır, Mardin, Batman, Malatya, Adana, Nevşehir, Sakarya, İstanbul, and now Hatay.

Following the earthquakes, Payda organized containers for earthquake survivors in Samandağ, Hatay. “We learned from a pharmacist about people who are struggling with diseases such as cancer and kidney failure who should not be housed in crowded spaces,” says Payda Vice President Dilbeste Alameddine RC 79. “Payda donated an additional five

containers that were placed next to their damaged houses so the patients could be isolated to avoid further illnesses.”

At the beginning of May, Payda volunteers visited the families they are supporting in Samandağ, and while they were there, they saw students returning to school for the first time since the earthquakes. Koyunoğlu Middle School noted that they needed space for their science labs, so Payda also provided them with a container.

Payda has brought their education support program to Hatay, and they are helping to educate 55 children in need, with the aim of increasing the number of students they reach in the province to 75. Payda has also added 30 more children to their program



Dilbeste Alameddine RC 79 (right) with a family in Hatay

in earthquake zones in Malatya. These students will receive financial aid as well as guidance about their education and careers through university.

If you want to find out more about Payda and how to support their work visit paydaplatformu.org

RC 02 Rallies for Relief Efforts

“We collected more than we originally aimed for in a short period of time.”

A month after the earthquakes Cem Oğuzhan RC L12 03 reached out to Ari Zalma RC 02. He shared photos of him personally delivering aid to the affected cities and asked if RC 02 would like to help. Cold weather and heavy rain meant survivors needed better shelter than tents. That is how a 10-day RC 02 fundraiser kicked off - to purchase a container house for a family in need. Zalma states “The reaction from the whole class was overwhelming, and we collected more than we originally aimed for in a short period of time. Cem also helped us find several container house

manufacturers through references. Everything looked set until we realized determining a family in real need and delivering our donation was another challenge.”

Right at that time a resident doctor working at one of the state hospitals in İstanbul reached out to Fitnat Topbaş RC 02 and told her she and her family lost their homes during the earthquake and had no means to secure a container. None of the NGOs in the region were able to come to the village for help. The class quickly organized the transportation of a

container to the village in Adıyaman, and the family was able to set up the container home that same week. Fitnat relays “Although in the greater picture of the disaster, this help might be minuscule, we know that we could at least help a family in need and find a temporary solution until they get the opportunity to set up their lives again.”

The remainder of the donations were passed onto Needs Map (İhtiyaç Haritası) for effective allocation of limited resources.

Mehveş Dramur RC 96 Urges People to Keep Remembering the Survivors

“The survivors constantly put me to shame by their resilience.”

No stranger to fundraising through her previous work in RC's very own Institutional Advancement Office, Mehveş Dramur has been developing fundraising projects outside of RC since 2013, via Türkiye Yardım Sevenler Derneği Kağıthane Şubesi (TYSD).

When the earthquake struck, she reached out to friends on site to learn about the urgent needs, provide them from near cities, hire drivers with small vehicles to bypass the checkpoints for big trucks and reach remote points where nobody could reach yet. Dramur put Instagram to good use, hunting down areas and people in need. She recalls that their first reaction was to send water, packaged food, sanitary supplies

and blankets: “In a couple of days it evolved to delivering sleeping bags, then to production and delivery of sleeping bags, which quickly escalated to large durable tents and heaters; now it's mainly containers.”

Dramur also makes heartbreaking observations: “The survivors constantly put me to shame by their resilience. They have nothing left. This is a very tough pill to swallow. They are always so kind and thankful to which I find myself non-deserving. Nothing we do seems enough to me.” Dramur underlines that the key thing is not to forget about the survivors: “Not everybody should donate money, we can donate our time and energy by finding somebody to reach out to, even just to ask how they are



A celebration for Children's Day on April 23 was held at the only kindergarten in Samandağ which was built by TYSD

doing. They want to be listened to and feel normal, share their lives with a stranger, to know that they are not alone.”

Senem Başyurt RC 88 Underlines That AÇEV Will Remain in the Earthquake Region

“We acted quickly but with the knowledge that we will be there for a long period.”

Senem Başyurt is the General Manager of the Mother and Child Education Foundation (AÇEV). The foundation focuses on early childhood development, working with children and their families. Most traits used later in life are established in early childhood. AÇEV works to minimize inequalities of opportunity in this stage and has been active in the earthquake region following the debilitating disaster.

Başyurt conveys that in crises like this, children suffer first and the most. They are the most vulnerable and have urgent health and developmental needs. In this disaster children experienced loss or separation from their caregivers and their support systems, their schools, and communities.



Senem Başyurt RC 88

AÇEV first catered to immediate needs such as tents, heaters, baby food, and animal feed. For the mid-term, it is building child and family centers in Gaziantep, Hatay and Adıyaman. Başyurt states that all centers are prefabricated and can be moved and used elsewhere in

the long-term. AÇEV will provide psychological support and art-based programs for children and their parents, then will move on to educational programs. She states that they also have a vehicle traveling to the hard-to-reach rural areas, where children have no access to early childhood services.

Başyurt underlines that recovery is a long-term thing: “This is an opportunity to acknowledge that we need better living spaces, better planned cities, and we need to think about the welfare of the children. We need to make sure the lives of children are not disrupted because childhood is such a short period of time. As AÇEV, we acted quickly but with the knowledge that we will be there for a long period.”

Kodluyoruz Helps Youth in the Earthquake Region Gain Technological Skills

“Our goal is to reach 3600 young people within one year.”

Co-founded by Emre Şarbak RC 08 and Onur Ünver RC 06, and with Zeynep Basmacı RC 06 as the director, Kodluyoruz Association, has been providing support to youth affected by the earthquake, with the aim of preparing young people for employment.

They established the Depremathon Civil Society Committee, which brought together NGOs, academics, entrepreneurs, and public institutions, to coordinate between different organizations and provide solutions to urgent issues. In addition, with the support of Patika.dev, co-founded by Emre Şarbak, they started the “6-Month Software Support Project” to assist young people aged 18 and above in the web development area. Zeynep Basmacı reveals the details:

“The project began in April and was launched with about 3000 participants. The participants started from the basics of programming and strengthened their algorithmic



Berat Kjamili and Zeynep Basmacı RC 06 meet with participants in Elazığ

foundations and are excited to progress to the front-end or back-end fields. Participants with a certain software background are advancing by acquiring content in the full stack field. We also organize events to help participants improve their soft skills.

“With the support of Microsoft Disaster Response, we have initiated the “Preparing for My New Job” project. We conduct face-to-face

employability workshops in 10 different cities. We provide training on digital visibility, CV-LinkedIn-GitHub profile creation support, job search techniques, and networking activities. During the online phase, we aim to prepare young people for employment through role model meetings and mock interviews. Our goal is to reach 3600 young people within one year.

“Through the Hi-Kod 2.0 project supported by the Emapower Foundation, starting from August, we will provide introductory software workshops in artificial intelligence, web development, and mobile application development. In addition to all of these, we continue to apply for funding to empower women affected by the earthquake or residing in earthquake-prone areas in the field of software and technology.”

To find out more about Kodluyoruz and how to support their work visit kodluyoruz.org

RC 04 Provides Hope to Those in Need

“We were and are working together to be the hope and the solution to those in need.”

In the hours after the earthquakes, the Class of 2004 rallied together to provide relief, and are continuing with long-term support. Özlem Pasin Ünsal tells the story.

“An awakening – it was as hours, days, weeks passed by. One by one we were called to service, a natural inner calling.

“As of Day 1, one of us sent out his team of operators and cranes as another one directed caravans and ambulances for rescue. On Day 2, three of us were concerting food, drinks and other materials

of need and were in search for semi-trailer trucks. On Day 3, a number of us found ourselves in the middle of the rescue calls and team organizations. On Day 4, the calls for tents and containers began and we were discussing relocation and transportation options. We were working together around the clock from Istanbul, NY, Montreal and beyond. By the end of first week, we were active in a lot of areas in multiple cities including organizing international aid distributions to cold chain medication and food storage. We put in a lot of effort to send out a voluntary team of physicians to Hatay

and when they reached Hatay that is when we realized that everything we have done has been changing lives on the other end.

“Since then, we are continuing our support with corporate hirings, educational scholarships and more. We were and are working together to be the hope and the solution to those in need beyond politics and everything, we did all from the heart. Our efforts and work may be a grain of sand when we think of the millions of people impacted by the earthquake, yet we were the light when people were waiting in the dark.”



The photo Reşit Yıldız RC 91 took at Kahramanmaraş shortly after the earthquakes perfectly symbolizes the resilience the region has shown and the hope that is our duty to keep alive with our continuous and long-term support.

Güvenç Özel RC 98 Showcases Digital Sculpture at Coachella

I “Holoflux” was summarized as a digital architectural opera.

Güvenç Özel is an award-winning architect, artist, and technology expert. Indeed, he refers to himself as a cyberphysics architect and is widely considered to be a leading expert in Extended Reality (XR) in architecture, interactive robotics and machine learning. Özel's technological sculpture was recently featured in the famous annual Coachella Music and Arts Festival.

Özel graduated from Bennington College and completed his graduate work in architecture at Yale University. He worked at the offices of leading architects such as Frank Gehry, Rafael Vinoly, and Jürgen Mayer, before founding his own, Özel Ofis. He is also an academic. He co-founded IDEAS, the graduate program and industry collaboration center of the UCLA Architecture and Urban Design Department. He teaches graduate



Güvenç Özel RC 98

classes in design and runs the Technology Studio, where research on design is conducted.

The digital sculpture Özel created for Coachella, “Holoflux”, was 18 meters high and was summarized as a digital architectural opera. The sculpture played with the perception of three

dimensions and changed according to the changes in the environment and light conditions. It also showcased videoclips of real-time Coachella moments. The sculpture was characterized as a “hyper-object.”

Özel views his work as embodying multiple disciplines ranging from art to architecture: “At RC, I learned how to synthesize multiple interests in a cohesive whole. Many of the extracurricular activities offered at RC allowed me to be able to communicate my ideas more clearly with confidence, along with being persistent about my passions.”

Özel had previously been in the news for having won third place in a NASA competition on colonization of Mars and possible living spaces there. He shared third place with the European Space Agency.



Güvenç Özel's digital installation “Holoflux” at Coachella changed according to the environment and showcased real-time videoclips of the event

Hayal Pozantı RC 00 Has New Work With New Spirit

I Pozantı draws inspiration from her natural surroundings.

Hayal Pozantı's latest solo exhibition, *The World For a Mirror*, was the inaugural show at the new Timothy Taylor gallery in New York, in April and May 2023.

For the past decade, Pozantı created abstract paintings based on a cipher alphabet she invented called "Instant Paradise". Inspired by ancient Sumerian, Arabic and Hebrew, she translated data statistics into geometric paintings that commented on society's reliance on technology.

Pozantı states that her paintings in the Timothy Taylor exhibition evolved into their own colorful, alien worlds in a way she couldn't have predicted: "I compare it to the difference between cells and DNA. The ciphers still appear in my paintings because I had internalized them so deeply. But for



Photo: Didem Cıvınoğlu

Hayal Pozantı RC 00

this show, I wanted those static forms to come alive and move like organic beings."

This change may have been triggered by her relocation: "Leaving New York transformed my practice. I'd always lived in cities, and my paintings reflected their urban hardness; I spent long periods of time on the computer to create initial designs. This analytical process began to feel claustrophobic. Then I moved to Los Angeles, later Vermont. Suddenly I owned a flower garden, rivers and mountains and streams flow by my studio window, and animals come right up to your hand. It feels untouched, which led me to stop using acrylics as I began thinking more about my responsibility to preserve this beautiful, open land. I create studies outside now, looking at the plants and sky all around me. This shift to painting with my hands, using oil sticks, has given me the freedom to create images that seem to come straight from the body."

Taner Şekercioğlu RC 86 Blends Design and Architecture to Create Unique Artworks

I The industrial designer creates 3-dimensional sculptures from paper.

Taner Şekercioğlu is a partner at Kilit Taşı Tasarım - one of the most awarded industrial product design practices in Turkey. After the lockdown, he chose to slow down a little and has begun creating unique works of art from paper.

"I fell in love with paper during the time I spent in my family's stationary shop as a child. Architectural models, especially abstracted terrains made from multiple paper layers, have always fascinated me. In my late twenties, I had a handmade paper-making adventure that lasted almost two years. Part of my interest in photography was fueled by the conventional darkroom processes that directly involve handling paper. Lately, I've started designing multi-layered wall sculptures using sheets of paper.

"Life progresses in layers; sometimes through external influences, but more often through our own choices, accumulating on top of each other. One should prevent these layers from turning into an uncontrolled pile, and instead be able to look back and see a meaningful whole. With layers of paper that I assemble on top of each other, I aspire to form meaningful entities with personal messages for each observer.

"The resulting works are like architectural sketches, viewed sometimes as facades, and sometimes as plans. The work currently on display at Bizim Tepe is a very special part of this series. It appears to be a flower in full bloom, incorporating multiple tiers of theater-like forms as its leaves. Harkening back to the first



Taner Şekercioğlu RC 86 with his sculpture which can be seen at Bizim Tepe

bouleuteria in the cities of ancient Anatolia, 'Spring Is Around The Corner' radiates the warm hope of peaceful days that this land deserves."

Book on Violin Virtuoso Gönül Gökdoğan ACG 61 Offers Glimpses into a Remarkable Life

| The book offers the opportunity to plot the journey of polyphonic music in Turkey.



Author Zeynep Keten (left) with Gönül Gökdoğan ACG 61 (right)

Gönül Gökdoğan is Turkey's first violin professor and one of the founders of the String Instruments Department of the Istanbul State Conservatory. Thanks to the pandemic Zeynep Keten gained the opportunity to write the book of her life, *Bir Gönül Hikâyesi (A Story of the Heart)*, Sözcükler Yayınevi). The confinement of the pandemic led to extended talks with Keten's neighbor of fifteen years, Gönül Gökdoğan, which in time turned into a book project. Keten recorded their talks during which Gökdoğan conveyed details of her life sincerely and truthfully, in the hopes that they would inspire future generations.

Gökdoğan was born into a remarkable family. Therefore, the book is not only about Gönül Gökdoğan but also about her mother Nüzhet Gökdoğan and her

grandmother Nezihe Pelit. Nüzhet Gökdoğan was one of the students Atatürk sent to Europe for higher education, and she was Turkey's first woman astronomer, first woman dean and first woman senator. The book also offers the opportunity to plot the journey of polyphonic music in Turkey. Gökdoğan's tremendous efforts in education upon her return to Turkey from Paris at the age of thirty remind the reader how much dedication and sacrifice went into creating the institutions of today's Turkey. Keten states that particularly the chapters, "Büyük Bir Mucize" (Big Miracle), "Hayal Kırıklığı ve Büyük Başarı" (Disappointment and Big Success), and "Bileğimin Hakkı" (Fair and Square) affected her deeply, when Gökdoğan relayed them, as they showcased the indomitable, just and proud personality of Gökdoğan.

Gündüz Vassaf RA 64

Writes a Love Letter to Art and Passion

| Vassaf's inspiration came from Caravaggio paintings.

Gündüz Vassaf describes his first novel, *Ressamın İsyanı (The Painter's Rebellion)*, Everest Yayınları) as a picturesque journey: "It is a voyage of discovery through our ephemeral mindscape. Incorporating fiction, biography, poetry and song, the novel questions what it means to be human, examining the role of art, literature, history, religion, and gender in dialogue with eminent figures across history. We are on a road trip of emotions, humorous incidents and vignettes from different countries and cultures that in turn lead to the character discovering himself, his own sexuality and mortality."

Vassaf's inspiration for the book came from the Caravaggio paintings



Gündüz Vassaf RA 64

themselves: "Caravaggio is to art what Dostoevsky was to literature. While in Sicily, I was mesmerized by the painting 'The Burial of

Santa Lucia', thus embarking on a seven-year journey, where I found myself immersed in the artist's life. Was he devout, as many would have us believe? Or are his beliefs shrouded in mystery, protecting him from the Vatican during the Inquisition at a time when Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake? The novel follows him through his century, while the narrator is also tracing his own life story. Old loves, dead friends and his experiences intertwine with events and people while on Caravaggio's trail."

Vassaf is currently working on "words... to slow us down" - his philosophy of everyday life in discussion with a much younger friend.

Neslihan Stamboli RC 77 Writes on Love Not Found

| The novel examines the lives of four women in the 1990s.

Novelist Neslihan Stamboli loves to research, and this time around, with her new novel *Aşkın Dört Hâli* (*Four States of Love*, Ayrikotu Yayıncılık) she wanted to write about a period she herself witnessed, the 1990s. The reason can best be conveyed by an excerpt from her book: “They said that the year 1993 would go down in history as the darkest twelve months of the country, but never mentioned that it would mark the beginning of an era when the women of this land, both in their private lives and in their careers, courageously and loudly gave expression to their freedom, fearlessly defended their rights and, shaking off their dependence on men, became aware of their own power.” The novel examines the lives of four women living in Istanbul in this interesting decade and their journey



Neslihan Stamboli RC 77

to self-awareness and liberation in their personal lives and careers.

Inspiration flows in from all directions for Stamboli: “A word, a scent, a taste, a sentence I read, a piece of news I hear, a flicker of joy imperceptible to the undiscerning eye wakes a fairy in me and with the touch of her magical wand stories start coming alive in my mind’s eye.” Stamboli has a trilogy, indeed possibly even a quartet in the works: “Like two of my previous novels, it also has a historical background, an epic novel spreading over a wide range of locations from Nevşehir to Istanbul, to New York, to Buenos Aires and finally to Athens.” When not writing, Stamboli paints, an activity she finds to have a magical effect.

Hakan Karahan RC 84 Finds Fresh Inspiration for a New Book During the Pandemic

| Karahan demonstrates the value of being an individual in his latest work.

Hakan Karahan is a prolific writer, actor, director who chose the creative path over his illustrious banking career many years ago. Karahan found himself sequestered at a farmhouse in the Trakya region during the pandemic, with not much to do at first: “I read, listened to music, watched Netflix, exercised and deeply thought about life, the good old days of the 70s, 80s and 90s, suffocating Turkey, refugees, harsh politics, corruption, getting old, family, death, career, my RC years, my University of Miami years, ex-girlfriends, and love affairs.”

After the first lazy three months, his creative instincts kicked in: “I started to imagine the farmhouse as my boutique hotel of four rooms, closed because of Covid-19. No personnel.

Just myself there. Trying to write my ninth novel as a struggling writer because there is nothing else to do. In my imagination, the front door opens and the film star of my adolescent years walks in and asks for a room to stay for a week. What would I do? What was the story? Who were we really? What would we talk about? Would we become friends? Would we have an affair? Why was she here? How could we have ended up in a small village in the pandemic? Was it a miracle?” All these questions had to be answered, so I started writing.” *Cennette Bir Hafta* (*One Week in Paradise*, Mona Yayıncılık) is the result.

Karahan hopes that through his novel readers realize the concept and value of being an individual -



Hakan Karahan RC 84

which he believes RC taught - rather than a lazy conformist. He believes this distinction changes one’s life forever.

Hikmet Hükümenoğlu RC 89 Explores Issues of Identity in New Novel

| *Harika Bir Hayat* uses the biography format.

Excerpt from review by Zeynep Karaarslan Başaran RC 88 at diken.com.tr

After his much-lauded novels such as *Körburun* and *Atmaca*, Hikmet Hükümenoğlu greets his readers with a historical romp, *Harika Bir Hayat* (A Wonderful Life, Can Yayınları). The novel is structured as a biography of a woman named Harika. The format allows Hükümenoğlu to bring to life many historical events, as well as famous persona during the first years of the burgeoning Republic.

The novel is full of multi-dimensional, strong female characters and also displays an interesting mother-



Hikmet Hükümenoğlu (left) at a talk in the RC Library to students in May 2023, with Turkish Department Head Mehmet Uysal (right)

daughter dynamic. The ending makes the reader hope that there will be a sequel, a possibility with which Hükümenoğlu concurs: “I

wrote the ending, thinking that I would continue the story. I roughly know which decade it will take place in but do not know much else yet.”

Duygu Balan RC 98 Pens Workbook to Help Process Trauma

| *Re-write* intends to raise awareness and reduce stigma.



Duygu Balan RC 98

Duygu Balan developed her expertise in intergenerational trauma as a clinical counselor in New York City. A licensed psychotherapist, she is the co-author of the number one new release and best-selling *Re-Write: A Trauma Workbook of Creative Writing and Recovery in Our New Normal* (Productivity Press).

Throughout the pandemic, Balan experienced a surge in demand for her work in her private practice, with many of her clients asking for more sessions to process their turmoil. In order to extend the therapeutic process beyond the fifty-minute session, she started creating mindfulness-based writing prompts and grounding strategies for her clients to use on their own. The collection of these tools,

along with theoretical, yet accessible, conceptualizations of trauma, became the foundation of *Re-Write*.

Balan's work juxtaposes dark existential questions with healing and hope and is intended to raise awareness and reduce stigma: “My purpose is to make difficult concepts accessible by providing interactive tools to promote psychic growth.” Balan is working on her fiction debut, a painful love story that takes a hard look at how childhood trauma impacts adult relationships and speaks to the idea that humans are harmed in relationships yet heal in them: “My desire is to give platform to marginalized but relatable voices and to tell bold stories of how people become who they are.”

The Future of Transportation is Electric

Barbaros Serter RC 10, the Co-founder of VoltiNet, explains the EV transformation.

The future of transportation is shaping up to be a real-life sci-fi movie, and the star of the show is electric vehicles. While traditional cars are noisy and not eco-friendly, electric cars are sleek, quiet, and green. They are zooming into the future with a speed that would make even Marty McFly proud. But what does the future of transportation look like in a world dominated by electric vehicles (EVs)?

Experts predict that by 2030, EVs could make up almost 50% of all new car sales worldwide. This expectation is based on the advancements in battery technology, making EVs more affordable, with longer ranges and faster charging times. EVs also foster broader societal and economic changes. As more people switch to EVs, a shift away from oil dependency and towards renewable energy sources is inescapable. This shift will help to reduce carbon emissions and create a more sustainable energy system for the future.

EVs are also changing the way we think about transportation. With their quiet motors and smooth rides, EVs offer a more enjoyable driving experience than traditional cars. With the advent of autonomous driving technology, we may soon not need to own cars anymore. Instead, we could use ride-sharing services, with self-driving EVs taking us where we need to go.

What about the challenges that come with owning an EV? One of the biggest concerns is the range - the fear of running out of power inconveniently. As battery technology continues to improve, this concern will become less of an issue. Many modern EVs can already travel up to 500 kilometers



Uygar Özdemir RC 13 and Barbaros Serter RC 10 by their charging station at Bizim Tepe

on a single charge, quite enough for most daily commutes.

Another challenge is the need for charging infrastructure. Charging stations will become more common in public areas, such as parking lots and rest stops. As more people switch to EVs, the demand for charging stations will increase, leading to a more extensive network. Fortunately, many companies and governments are investing in this infrastructure already.

With a population of over 80 million, there is a considerable potential customer base for EVs in Turkey. The Turkish market has witnessed the entry of various international electric vehicle manufacturers, as well as the launch of local manufacturers like TOGG and PilotCar. The number of registered battery electric vehicles in Turkey is around only 20,000 units so far. Combined with the

peaking interest in renewable energy investments such as solar powerplants and wind turbines, and regulatory commitments such as the Paris Agreement that aim to reduce carbon footprint, one thing is clear: the future of transportation is electric, and it's already here.

Inspired by the EV transformation, Barbaros Serter and Uygar Özdemir RC 13 started VoltiNet, an electric vehicle charging station operation company. VoltiNet stemmed from the research and development conducted by Serter's family business, SERTPLAS, which is now the manufacturer of high technology charging stations for electric vehicles, and Özdemir's operational vision honed at Amazon. They started with installing electric vehicle charging stations at the Bizim Tepe alumni association parking lot, and together they aim to bring them to people's doorsteps.

A Magical Musical Night | RC 78's 45th Reunion

Contributed by Doğan Şenocak RC 78

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."

Perhaps what Dickens said more than a century ago holds true for all ages but 2023 indeed was one of those for most of us. The year would mark the 100th anniversary of the founding of modern Turkish Republic, perhaps change the political scene after the elections and also give us a chance to celebrate our 45th reunion and more than 50 years of deep friendship as class of RC 78. Then the devastating earthquake of February literally shook the whole country, gloom prevailed rendering even the occasional smile an act to be embarrassed about; celebration of any sorts was out of question.

Eventually what is known as the "sociology of catastrophe" kicked in, helping us create a sense of solidarity and altruism and making us proud members of the RC family as so many of us tried to help as much as



The Class of '78 on the Gould steps

they could. Come May and we were ready to celebrate again, though a little broken hearted. Perhaps this is the reason why our 45th reunion was the least attended so far, but in the words of all 43 who attended, it

was the warmest, most intimate and memorable by far.

Yet there is no cure for most problems like music, that magical potion. Combined with the amazing ambiance of the newly created area at Bizim Tepe, memories of deep friendship and a sense of joy easily resurfaced with the help of live music sung by Ece Berker. Most were surprised to realize how easily those lyrics were remembered, and even more surprised to see what hidden talents were amongst us. There indeed was a song for all occasions that night; it was "one of those nights". As always we promised to make this a more frequent event.

Thanks to all who has attended and Selma, Işıl and Haluk for being part of the organization team.



Classmates couldn't contain their joy of being together again



Music and singing was one of the highlights of the evening

RC 93 Celebrates 30th Reunion



The Class of 93 started off in front of Gould Hall



Friends for decades spent an evening full of smiles

The Class of 1993 met on June 17, 2023, to mark 30 years since their graduation. Over 70 alumni from all around the world showed up to celebrate their reunion with drinks and appetizers at Bizim Tepe along with tunes from DJ Burak Susoy RC 90. It was great to see so many familiar faces after so many years. The event lasted from the afternoon until the early morning the next day and left the crowd wishing for more hours together soon.



The class reminisced on the Plateau before heading to Bizim Tepe

Ümit Sivrioğlu Özkan RC 73 Receives Top North American Catalysis Society Award

Özkan's research addresses many critical problems in energy and environmental protection.

Department Chair of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering and Distinguished University Professor at the Ohio State University College of Engineering, Ümit Sivrioğlu Özkan has received the 2023 Robert Burwell Lectureship in Catalysis award for her contributions to the area of catalysis research, the first woman to receive this award in its 40-year history. Özkan is an internationally recognized academic whose research addresses many critical problems in energy and environmental protection.

Özkan sees RC as the conduit for her career in research: "I was very much honored and humbled for this recognition, but it really belongs to the dozens and dozens of very talented young men and women who were part of my research team over the years. They keep me motivated. I also want to acknowledge the education I received at Robert College, which taught us, at an early age, how to think analytically and how to question everything. That education paved the way for my becoming a researcher."



Stella Afnaim RC 77 Helps Individuals Reach Their Full Potential Through Coaching

Afnaim combines coaching insights with strategic planning.

As a Meyler Campbell Certified Executive Business Coach, Stella Afnaim is deeply passionate about supporting professionals and individuals in finding their purpose in life: "After years of working in the corporate world, I felt a deep calling to create something more meaningful. I recognized the need for a comprehensive coaching approach that focuses on unlocking true potential and achieving lasting fulfillment." states Afnaim.

Through Re-Power Coaching, Afnaim offers personalized coaching programs



that create a safe and non-judgmental space where one can explore and grow. Afnaim feels her own experiences and entrepreneurial background have provided her with valuable insights into the challenges individuals face during their personal and professional growth: "By combining coaching insights with strategic planning, I offer a holistic approach that empowers people to conceive a clear vision and fulfill their potential." Beyond her coaching work, Afnaim is also an active consultant to several companies in various fields.

Serra Soysal RC 83 Launches a Unique Model Exhibition

The miniature model of historical Istanbul contains extraordinary details.



Istanbul Historical Peninsula model exhibition, located at Miniaturk

Istanbul, is a brand-new venture by Serra Mansur Soysal RC 83 and her husband Murat Soysal, who worked in advertising and printing for over 30 years. This unique exhibition is one of the world's largest moving model exhibitions and probably the only one of this size featuring a historical period. The exhibition, which represents the area between Topkapi Palace and Blue Mosque, took five years to complete and reenacts daily life of the period. Sultans stroll the pathways

of Hasbahçe, while Janissaries raise their cauldron asking for raises at Bab-üs-Selam, the gate of the Palace. A new story is told in every 30 cm2 of this 100 m2 model. 10,000 figures and more than 50 buildings were all individually 3D printed then assembled and painted by hand. 50,000 tiny LED lights recreate day-night cycles every 10 minutes in this miniature world.

www.modelport.com
www.miniaturk.com.tr

Yusuf Pişan RC 88 Receives Distinguished Teaching Award

The recognition comes from his students at the University of Washington at Bothell.

Yusuf Pişan is the associate teaching professor in the School of STEM at the University of Washington at Bothell and has received the 2023 Distinguished Teaching Award. The accolade recognizes the ability to engage students, exemplify an enthusiasm for and mastery of subject matter, and demonstrate innovation in the teaching and learning process.

Pişan states that he is honored to receive this award especially because the nomination comes from the



students. Pişan finds computers to be an enabling technology: “Computers let you do amazing things that otherwise would not be doable. Seeing students’ abilities grow, guiding them as they master new concepts is what I love about teaching. In the classroom, I try to create a community of learners that support each other. I use everyday examples, provide opportunities for creative puzzle solving and create a fun yet challenging environment to spark students’ interest in computer science.”

Toygun Yilmazer RC 96 Elected as Top Global Strategic Planning Leader

Yilmazer has been instrumental in advancing TBWA\Istanbul’s adoption of innovation.



TBWA\Istanbul Chief Strategy Officer Toygun Yilmazer has won bronze for Global Strategic Planning Leader of the Year in Campaign’s Agency of the Year Awards. Toygun is the only strategy honoree from Turkey and has been instrumental in advancing TBWA\Istanbul’s adoption of innovation and TBWA’s disruption methodology. Since

the early 1990s, Campaign’s Agency of the Year awards have recognized inspiring leadership, management excellence, outstanding business performance in advertising and brand communications. All Agency of the Year awards are judged exclusively by brand marketers, rather than by agencies.

Rana Babaç Çelebi RC L12 04 Creates Healing Herbal Elixirs

The medicine history researcher explains.

“Aromatherapy is a modern term for a several-thousand-year-old medical tradition of using the healing properties of aromatic plants for our wellbeing and treatment of dis-eases. As a medicine history researcher and the great-granddaughter of an Anatolian physician, I study medicine formulas from ancient Egyptian papyri to Ottoman scripts, as well as offer formulation consulting and design private events.

“We have aromatic plant gardens, a private wild harvesting area in the Ida

region and a production facility where we recreate ancient elixir and perfume formulas from our 100% pure raw materials. The first Ottoman perfume ‘Buhur Suyu’, ‘Eau de Milleflour’ (Bin Çiçek Suyu), 100+ year old family recipes such as ‘El Suyu’ as well as the original ‘edible’ Eau de Cologne exactly as Napoleon liked it are my most popular creations. Alumni who want to find out more can visit our social impact platform CerciYusuf.org, named after my great-grandfather.”



Sayat Özyılmaz RC L12 04 Launches New Restaurant

I Dalida, at the Presidio in San Francisco, has an Eastern Mediterranean disposition.

Sayat Özyılmaz is a restaurateur chef, who has worked in Mumbai and Istanbul as well as the formerly Michelin-starred Mourad. Sayat and his wife Laura, alumnus of the two-Michelin-starred kitchen at Saison and the Culinary Institute of America in New York, have launched a new restaurant at the Presidio in San Francisco - Dalida.

Özyılmaz did a work and travel trip to San Francisco in the summer of 9th

grade, was blown away and ultimately moved there seven years ago. He characterizes the restaurant, which is situated at the tip of the Western-most point of the Western world as “a destination restaurant worth a trip but also a restaurant that you can enjoy several times a month with your friends and family.” Özyılmaz also states that the restaurant’s disposition is Eastern Mediterranean: “This definition allows us wider creative freedom without cultural appropriation.”



Laura and Sayat Özyılmaz at their new location at the Presidio

Deniz Çam RC 11 Produces Popular TV Show and Podcast

I Çam has been working with Jon Stewart on *The Problem*.

Deniz Çam is a New York-based producer who has been working with Jon Stewart on his Emmy-nominated AppleTV+ show and podcast, *The Problem*, since 2021. After graduating from Brown University and Columbia Journalism School, she worked at a UN-affiliated magazine and then moved to Forbes as a reporter. “I had been working at Forbes for six years and writing fiction on the side, building my network in the theater community in NYC. In early 2021 I applied to be a



researcher at Jon Stewart’s new show. I was lucky enough that someone saw my resume and asked me to do an interview,” she explains.

Çam remembers RC fondly: “RC prepares you for critical thinking and life. I had encouraging teachers like Ms. Şamlı who allowed me to push the envelope and Mr. Hummel who introduced us to movies. I’ll always be grateful to Mr. Chandler for encouraging me to apply to college in the US.”

Karolin Ohanoğlu RC 07 Ties the Knot

Karolin Ohanoğlu and Sinan Çetinel were married on December 24, 2022, surrounded by family and friends. The couple met in med school and started dating in 2014. Karolin is an obstetrician and gynecologist at Başakşehir Çam and Sakura City Hospital. Sinan has his own practice and specializes in aesthetic surgery, acupuncture and pain management.



Sinan Çetinel and Karolin Ohanoğlu RC 07

Send us your news!

Do you want to let the RC Community know about your latest accomplishments and milestones? Share your news! Write us at rcq@robcol.k12.tr

Deniz Baysal's New Album Celebrates Unity of Humanity



The idea for RC music teacher Deniz Baysal's new album, *Bir*, came about when RC Modern Dance Club Advisor, Mercan Selçuk, asked Baysal to compose five modern dance pieces with the theme of Turkish music for the Mercan Selçuk Modern Dance Ensemble. Baysal states that, "The aim of the compositions was to carry the sound, smell and emotions of this land to the people, with the main theme being unification of humanity as one." Münir Nurettin Selçuk, Timur Selçuk and Hazal Selçuk compositions are also part of the album. The album constitutes the third collaboration between Baysal and Selçuk, and can be found on Spotify. An Açık Radyo interview about the album can be heard here: <https://archive.org/details/babilden-sonra-2023.03.20>



RC music teacher Deniz Baysal

Adil İzci Adds Three New Books to His Ouevre



Former RC Turkish teacher Adil İzci with his muse Karamel

Former Turkish Literature teacher and prolific author Adil İzci has three new books: *Yoklar Kitabı* (The Book of Absences, Oğlak Yayınları), *O Ada*

Senin Bu Ada Benim (This Island Is Yours That Island Is Mine, Oğlak Yayınları) and *Zamanın Ezgileri* (Tunes of Time, Pikaresk Yayınevi).

In *Yoklar Kitabı*, İzci breathes life into artists, writers, and friends who have passed on in an homage. *O Ada Senin Bu Ada Senin* has Verda Tunalıgil RC 84 to thank for its title and is a collection of short stories by various authors, including İzci, most of them revolving around the islands of the Marmara Sea. İzci's latest book *Zamanın Ezgileri* offers 40 thematic poems İzci wrote between 1997-2001. The theme of the collection is passion.

İzci says of his works: "I wanted to bring my family, relatives, friends, people of art and literature, who are no longer alive, to life, in a way, by writing. I publish 2-3 books a year, thanks to the fact that I now devote my time to reading and writing as much as I can."

Ali Nihat Gökyiğit RC ENG 46

Ali Nihat Gökyiğit passed away on January 25, 2023. Born in Artvin in 1925, Gökyiğit received his BA from Robert College in 1946 and his MA from the University of Michigan in 1948 in civil engineering. Upon returning from the US, Gökyiğit worked on airport construction projects before he and classmate Feyyaz Berker (RC ENG 46) and close friend Necati Akçağlılar founded a company which was the seed of Tekfen Holding - one of the leading conglomerates in Turkey today. Gökyiğit was among the founders of TÜSİAD and the Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK) where he took active roles for many years. Through the ANG Foundation, which bears his name, he established the Nezahat Gökyiğit Botanical Garden in Istanbul in memory of his wife as well as the botanical gardens of Çoruh (Artvin) and Çukurova (Adana) Universities. He was also the founder of Tekfen



Philharmonic, one of Turkey's few private cultural institutions.

Gökyiğit has received honorary doctorates from Çukurova, Boğaziçi and Gazi Osman Paşa Universities and was awarded the Order of Merit by the Turkish President in 1997 and

the Order of Merit by the Turkish Parliament in 2010, to cite but a few of his recognitions.

An engineer by trade, his love for nature since his childhood in Artvin remained with him throughout his life. He was the Founding Honorary Chairman of Turkey foremost environmental NGO TEMA and the Turkish Green Building Council for the protection of nature and biodiversity in Turkey. A dedicated supporter of Robert College, he instilled the love of nature in countless RC students through their numerous activities with TEMA and ANG Foundation.

In his final interview with RCQ, Gökyiğit said, "I am hopeful about the ecological future of our country because of my conviction that the number of people in love with nature and protective of it will keep increasing."

Neşet Baba Eren ACG 39



Neşet Baba Eren passed away in June 2022 at the age of 106 and was laid to rest at the Nafi Baba Şehitlik cemetery in Rumeli Hisarı.

The great-grand daughter of Nafi Baba, Neşet Baba Eren lived at the Bektashi Tekke during her childhood. She graduated from the American College for Girls in 1939, an achievement she said she took pride in all her life. The same year she married Nuri Eren and lived in countries like the United Kingdom,

United States and China, following his diplomatic career. She wrote culinary books on Ottoman, Turkish and Chinese cuisines. Her book *The Delights of Turkish Cooking* has been an important reference book on Turkish food in many countries.

She was a great lady who touched many lives in her long journey. May she rest in peace alongside her beloved husband.

Contributed by Gülgün Soyak ACG 68

Ayhan Bayrakdar Amal ACG 46

Ayhan Bayrakdar Amal passed away peacefully on January 25, 2023. She was a loving wife, devoted mother and grandmother, true friend with extraordinary qualities including righteousness, perfectionism, integrity and empathy - framed under a delicate exterior beauty that remained with her until the end.

A much-loved member of ACG, she was praised for her academic and athletic prowess, becoming the May Queen of 1945. She attended Istanbul University, until she married Fazil Amal RC ENG 46, in 1949, and went to the US. On

her return, she worked for the United Nations. Later, she was an assistant to Professor Ethel Kunkle, at ACG's Child Study Center.

She was an ardent bridge player and played excellent tennis, winning countless trophies throughout her life.

She is survived by her daughter Serap Amal Verdi ACG 70, son-in-law Murat, son Selim Amal, daughter-in-law Fatma and grandsons Kerim and Sinan.

Contributed by Serap Amal Verdi and Selim Amal



Gülseren Yelkenci ACG 47

Gülseren Rona Yelkenci passed away on August 7, 2022, at the age of 95. She kept her collegiate spirit throughout her life and was an avid singer of the college anthem. In her freshman year, she got engaged to Mithat Yelkenci RC 46 whom she married in 1946. They studied at the University of Pennsylvania together. She had three sons Vedat, Sedat and Nihat. She shared her alma mater with her mother Belkis Asim Rona ACG 18 and her aunt Neriman Subaşıoğlu Salman ACG 39.



Gülseren often said how her education shaped her vision and mentality. In the 1970s she was active at the Robert College Alumni Association and became the president along with her friends Nihal Pulat, Leyla Halman and Ayhan Amal.

Reading biographical novels, tennis, attending plays and meeting her classmates were her favorite interests. Ever-smiling, Gülseren will always be remembered with her kindness.

Contributed by her son Nihat Yelkenci

Semra Kent Lindmark ACG 51

Semra Kent Lindmark passed away on May 20, 2023, in Gothenburg, Sweden.

After finishing middle school in Ankara, Semra moved to Istanbul and was enrolled in ACG. An excellent student, she also took part in many activities, leading the basketball team and playing many main roles in school plays. After she graduated, she set off on a world

tour during which she met her husband in Sweden and settled there to start a family. She stayed in Sweden, working as an interpreter and tour guide. She remained close to her ACG friends over the years, especially Halide, İclâl, Ayşe and Andriana.

Semra Kent Lindmark is survived by her sons Anders and Sven.



Andriana Vlahopulos ACG 51

Andriana Vlahopulos passed away in early June of 2023.

Born in 1928, Andriana studied at Sainte Pulcherie before coming to ACG. She was a reliable friend who could always depended on her for help, advice and comfort. She was involved in theater and, as an active member of the ACG Sportsmanship Club, was remembered

for her basketball skills. She remained close to her classmates Halide, iclâl and Semra over the years.

After receiving her bachelor's in commerce from ACG, Andriana worked at Mobil Oil throughout her entire career. After she retired she moved to Athens to be closer to her family.



Metin Borahan RC ENG 54

Metin Borahan passed away on January 16, 2023. After receiving his bachelor's in civil engineering from Robert College, Metin went to Canada where he worked for several years. He was sent to Jordan by a Canadian company to help build the Queen Alia airport. When the airport was finished, he returned to Turkey where he worked for a while. When his health no longer permitted him to work,



he settled in Antalya, where he lived a quiet life for the rest of his days. Those who knew Metin loved him. He was a true gentleman and a kindhearted person. Metin Borahan is survived by his wife Oya, son Cem, daughter Suna and grandson Tarik. He was predeceased by his son Ali Talat.

Contributed by his wife Oya Borahan

Nurettin Sabuncu RC ENG 55



Nurettin Sabuncu passed away on March 2, 2023, in Istanbul. Born in Mersin, Sabuncu came to Robert College in 1943 and graduated with a bachelor's in civil engineering. He earned several sporting honors at RC. In 1959 he graduated from Syracuse University with a master's in civil engineering.

Nurettin returned to Turkey where he worked as a project engineer on the Hirfanlı dam and as head of the construction division of the State Highway Department. He moved back

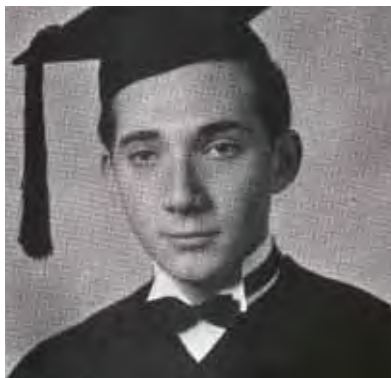
to the US and in 1972 started his own company, Nory Construction. He was the President of the Assembly of Turkish American Associations from 1995-97 and a board member.

Sports was always an important part of his life, and over the years he owned a North American soccer team, competed as a power boat racer and started the Special Olympics in Turkey.

He is survived by his wife Lia and his daughter Ajda.

Isy Haas RC ENG 55

Isy (Izi) Haas passed away on June 24, 2023. After graduating from Robert College, Isy chose to attend Princeton to study under Einstein, who unfortunately passed away three months before he arrived. He worked at Fairchild Semiconductor in California where he helped invent the integrated circuit. His name is listed on over 20 US and international patents, including the first microchip which opened the door to all electronic devices that run our world today. After leaving Fairchild, he went on



to consult for other major semiconductor companies, designing their circuits. Isy, always humble, never talked about his career accomplishments but always said his greatest success was his family. We will remember him not only for his brilliant intellect but for his sharp wit, ability to fix anything, and kindness and generosity towards others. He is survived by his wife of 63 years Lynda and his three children.

Contributed by his daughter Ilana Haas

Ünver Boduroğlu RA 61

Ünver Boduroğlu passed away on January 18, 2023. Starting with "On my honor..." he would quote his dedication to the principles laid down for the scouts by Baden Powell, and he led his life in parallel with this. Ünver was the Scoutmaster of Troop 58 of RA was the editor-in-chief of the monthly Echo.

His buddies and friends called him, fondly, by his nickname, örümcek (spider), and devised numerous on-the-spot pranks all centered on örümcek, which he took with

presumed anger, but in truth with unending tolerance and kindness he felt for his classmates.

Memories bring tears to my eyes in humor and then in sorrow realizing my tall and handsome friend is gone forever. His romantic trait is well remembered by his under-the-street light performance of "Chicky Chick Boom" in Yalova. Ünver is survived by his spouse Canan and his daughter Aslı.

Contributed by Alev Serçen RA 61



Mehmet Ergene RC ENG 63

Mehmet Ergene passed away on April 5, 2023. He was an intellectual with a kind heart and was a dear friend. We both lived in Cihangir and we sometimes met on the road walking to Taksim to catch the bus to school. Mehmet and I also took part in the preparation of the 1960 Record.

After graduation, he studied at Harvard School of Architecture. He had an almost continuously smiling face. He was very much liked and admired by his class and the whole RC community. His



friends described him as a Very JOLLY and a Very GOOD FELLOW!

Mehmet missed Turkey and especially Cihangir. He was very much interested in the politics of his home country. May he rest in peace.

He is survived by his wife Bonnie, his younger brother Ahmet and his nephew Can.

Contributed by Şeyma Bilimer Arsel ACG 60 and Mehmet's friends from RC

Rana Kuseyri Salih ACG 70



We are very deeply saddened by the tragic loss of our dear friend, together with her husband, mother and sister on February 6, 2023, during the earthquake in Antakya. Rana was born in Antakya and spent her whole life there, where her entire family lived. After her graduation from ACG and Istanbul University Faculty of Law, she worked as a successful lawyer in her hometown. A woman of accomplishment, an attorney, a loving mother, wife, daughter, with

a big smile and much love in her heart. Maybe there could have been time for us all to hug her once again, to say all those silly things that we tell each other when we meet.

Our beloved friend is survived by her son, her daughter-in-law and her grandson.

Contributed by her ACG 70 classmates Ligia Sarıçyan Jamieson, Fatoş Bozkır Balioğlu and Gülrü Selek Paksoy

Kahraman Tovim RC 76

We hardly believed it when we heard of the loss of our dear classmate Kahraman Tovim. The funeral was held on January 15, 2023. Having a unique personality, he will be remembered for his humility, kindness, simplicity, smile and special jokes. He was good at mathematics and particularly skilled at chess. He could play chess without a chessboard and mentally dictate the moves during the class

breaks. He was a well-known member of the Istanbul Chess Association. During our time at RC, he made many friends love chess and mathematics. After RC he studied physics at the University of Nebraska – Omaha and returned to Turkey in the 2010's. His talents included classical music knowledge and playing guitar. His memory will live in our hearts. May his soul rest in peace.



Ali Hoş RC 91

We lost dear Ali Hoş on October 28, 2022, a kind, real, warm-hearted soul, who we feel privileged to call our friend.

In 1988, Adil İzci entered the first class of our Orta 3A year. He pointed to Ali and said "I recommend that you meet and go onto know this gentleman well ... he is as likeable as his surname!" The memories are like sunlight through the trees. The summer football hours, the physics lab desk turned into a pro-level pingpong table, his smile, and



always welcoming gaze, considerate and caring approach to all details, endless discussions on philosophy and cosmology, years of continued friendship is what will remain with us and just as Bâki wrote, "...bâki kalan bu göz kubbede bir **hoş** sadâ imiş."

Our dear friend is survived by his wife Tuba and daughter Selin. We wish patience to them and to all of his family members.

Contributed by Seyfi Moroğlu RC 91

Erşan Öncel RC 91



We lost Erşan Öncel on February 17, 2023. Our dear Erşan was a very special person with a kind heart, a constant smile on his face, and understanding towards everyone. Erşan had a promising career, until he was diagnosed with a brain tumor in his 30s. He fought the cancer with unwavering determination for over 15 years, showing incredible strength and kept his positive attitude throughout his journey. Erşan was fortunate to have found true love in his beloved wife,

Başak. He leaves behind his cherished son, Arda, who is currently studying in Budapest. His love for RC was limitless, and he dedicated himself to serving our school as a board member of RKMD until his final days. Erşan's passion for education and his commitment to making a difference in the lives of others will always be remembered. Farewell, dear brother. You will forever live in our hearts.

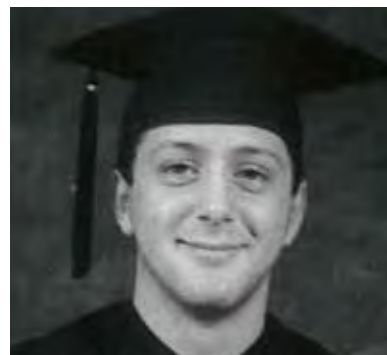
Contributed by the Class of '91

Onur Arna RC 92

Our story, which began in September 1987, continued for almost 36 years until you suddenly left this cruel world. Life has exhausted and worn us all down, but you perhaps more my friend. Every survivor continues to live with a sense of guilt because we can't avoid the passing away of our loved ones, but every person who leaves adds another scar in our hearts and we take the burden of those who leave, like an untiring porter of life. In the days

when we were drinking rakı at home, Zeki Müren always had the last word when talking about love, friendship, the future, or when you were playing "Wonderful Tonight" by Eric Clapton on the guitar and I was singing it. You are not my old friend but my timeless friend Onur and you will remain so forever. Don't let the place where you rest hurt your beautiful and delicate soul.

Contributed by Gökem Işık RC 92



Sirma Tunalı RC 00

Sirma Tunalı passed away in June 2023, following a serious illness. She will be remembered for her grace and goodness, her maturity beyond her age, intellect, unwavering determination, as well as her love for poetry and theater (she was also a collaborator with dear Kadir Abi; her play is fondly remembered by her classmates. Her remarkable writing skills were recognized in Orta 1 when she received the top prize for a nation-wide composition competition organized by the Council of Europe and



the Turkish Ministry of Education. She was devoted to many causes, including helping disadvantaged children. Sirma graduated from Smith College in 2004 and had a long, successful career with TSKB (The Industrial Development Bank of Turkey) where she worked on many international, regional and national development projects until her passing. She is missed dearly by her classmates and all those whose lives she touched with her piercing eyes and kind smile.

faculty and friends obituaries

Margaret Johnson, Former Interim Headmistress

Margaret A. Johnson, affectionately known as Margo, passed away on May 1, 2023, at the age of 103. She was a remarkable woman who lived a life full of adventure and accomplishment. Born in Washington, DC, Margo spent most of her school years in France, and went on to graduate from Radcliffe College. In 1950, she was appointed Principal of the Milton Academy Girls' School, where she remained for thirty years.

Margo Johnson served as interim head at Robert College from 1984 to 1986. During her brief tenure, she oversaw many projects that had a lasting impact on the school, as stated by Rodney Wagner, then Trustees Board Chair, in the Spring-Summer 1986 edition of Robert College alumni publication: "We are of course sad



that Margaret Johnson will be leaving us as Head. Her energy, intelligence, quiet determination and ever-present common sense have had a remarkable impact in the two years she has been with us. She has made substantial progress toward developing a new curriculum; planning a new gymnasium,

auditorium, and science building; reviewing teachers' compensation; and converting the plateau into a top standard field and track. All of this will be felt for many years to come. But most of all the intangible element of her presence, which has had such a profound effect upon so many of us, will be much missed. We wish her well in her retirement."

After Robert College, Margo returned to her family home in Jaffrey, New Hampshire, where she remained active in several local organizations. Throughout her life, Margo was an enthusiastic traveler and an avid reader with a strong interest in foreign affairs. She is survived by her brother, Vice Admiral John D. Johnson, sister-in-law Patricia, nieces, a nephew, and grand nieces and nephews.

Benjamin D. Williams III, Former Interim Headmaster



Ben Williams passed away on Tuesday, March 7, 2023. Born in 1936, Ben was raised by parents who were “the best possible examples of how to build a contributing and meaningful life.” His children would later note, “To grow up with Ben Williams was to understand

that the responsibility of any earnest citizen was to know the name of as many living things on the planet as possible. To know another living thing’s name, nature, and needs is to appreciate that your own desires and interests are far from paramount.”

Ben did his undergraduate work at Princeton. He married Nancy Nielsen in 1961 and they moved to Pomfret School in Pomfret, Connecticut, where they raised three sons.

Ben was the Head at Lawrence Academy for 15 years, then the Head of Worcester Academy, before coming to Robert College as interim head for the 1992-93 school year. Among the many memories from colleagues at Robert College at the time was Ben and

Nan’s weekly gatherings with faculty at the Deanery. In addition to being an exceptional leader in education, Ben was a nationally and internationally known entomologist, whose work was published in the *Lepidopterist’s Journal*.

He was a man who valued the people with whom he shared his life and work above all.

A truly remarkable teacher, father, brother, and friend, he is “beloved on the earth.”

Benjamin Williams was predeceased by his wife Nancy. He is survived by their three sons, Benjamin Williams IV, Frederick Williams and Joseph Williams, their wives and nine grandchildren.

Livingston T. Merchant, Former Headmaster

Dr. Livingston (“Livy”) T. Merchant, Robert College Headmaster from 2001-2005, passed away on March 2, 2023. A man of the world, Livy Merchant received a BA in Slavic Languages, an MA in Soviet Studies, and a PhD in International Affairs from Harvard University, as well as a MDiv from General Theological Seminary in New York, and a PhD in Chinese History from Brown University. He served as an administrator and teacher in several countries including Taiwan, Greece, the Netherlands and Belgium. He spoke eight languages: French, Dutch, Chinese, Spanish, Russian,

Portuguese, Greek and Turkish, as well as English. Livy Merchant always encouraged RC students to be thoughtful of what was going on in the world, and often emphasized their need to give back to Robert College and to society in return for the privilege of their education. After Robert College, Merchant taught international relations at Bilkent University. He loved to read, study languages, and listen to music. He also enjoyed exploring the neighborhoods in the different cities where he lived. He is survived by his wife Çiğdem, daughter Madeleine, son Charlie and his former wife Christa.



Landon Thomas, Sr., Trustee Emeritus

Landon Thomas, Sr. died at home in Lincolnville, Maine on March 18, 2023. Raised in Augusta, Georgia, he attended Middlesex School and then Harvard. From 1961 until his retirement in 1999 as Vice Chairman, he worked for Fiduciary Trust Company International in New York City.



Landon's affinity for Turkey, its history, culture and people, began in the early 60s when an interest in European military history led him to Ottoman history. Part of his honeymoon was spent cruising in the Aegean on a humbly appointed gulet. His first work for Robert College was in fundraising, and he served on the Board of Trustees from 1968 to 2008. During those years, he was engaged in all aspects of the school's development and advancement. He formed enduring friendships with

other members of the Robert College community, among them Aptullah Kuran, Ali Neyzi, Ali Mansur, Barbara Zinsser and Oya Başak. Having taught himself Turkish, he read

widely and deeply in history and was a significant collector of Ottoman coins and medals. He avidly attended the annual board meeting in Istanbul, often bringing his children and even grandchildren. Once retired, he was happiest strolling through the streets of Istanbul, photographing cats and lesser-known mosques, or sitting on his balcony watching the Bosphorus.

Landon is survived by his sister, Mary Darcy Thomas Burgund, his ex-wife, Gladys Roberts Thomas, his three children, Landon Thomas, Jr. (m. Mary Valaika), Stephanie Bowie Thomas, Frederic Western Thomas (m. Laongdao "Tak" Suppasettawat); and his three grandchildren, Cornelia Anne Thomas, Landon Thomas III, and Campbell Morgan Thomas. He was predeceased by his beloved second wife, Elizabeth Morgan Kinnicutt and his sister, Cornelia Anne Thomas.

Virginia Maxwell, Trustee Emeritus

Virginia "Ginny" Dorr Maxwell passed away peacefully on March 31, 2023, in Sleepy Hollow, NY. She was 85 years old.

The daughter of Russell Dorr and granddaughter of Goldwaithe Dorr, both long-time RC Trustees, Ginny represented the third generation in her family to serve Robert College, for 27 years, promoting educational excellence in Turkey.

Ginny moved to Turkey in 1948 when her father was appointed Director of the Marshall Plan. She got to know Turkey well, often traveling with her parents during her family's three-year stay.

In 1957 she received her degree in art from Bennett Junior College in New York. After friends and family, art was Ginny's love. She was an accomplished artist who painted

mainly in watercolor, drawing inspiration from landscapes of the many places she had visited around the world. Much of her work was exhibited in local art shows around New York including her beloved Point O' Woods, where many of her pieces are cherished in private collections. In the mid 1950s, Ginny joined the board of the Dorr Foundation, a family-directed non-profit organization started in 1950 by her great-uncle John Van Nostrand Dorr and served as an active member for 43 years. The Foundation supports science and environmental education, for students in grades 6-12.

Ginny is survived by her husband, Charles Maxwell, her four children, Christiane Wyckoff (Kurt), Ginna Sesler (Doug), Russell Wiese (Megan), and Peter Wiese (Deb), three stepsons, Bruce, Stephen,



and Brandon Maxwell, and ten grandchildren, Spencer (Dylan), Carden, Virginia (Brandon) Wyckoff, Russell and Julia Sesler, Bryson, Owen, and Arden Wiese, and Hannah and Mason Wiese, and her brother, Goldthwaite H. Dorr.



RC Faculty bid farewell to another academic year at Graduation on June 20, 2023

Hayata Değer Katan Fikirler Her Desteği Hak Eder

Deprem bölgesinde gerçekleştirdiğimiz faaliyetlerimizde yanı başımızda yer alan sosyal girişimcilerin yanında olmak, onların önlerine çıkan engelleri kaldırmak üzere el ele verdik, bir **Topluluk Destek Programı** başlattık.

Hibe programımıza başvurup hayata değer katma fırsatı kazanan Erişilebilir Her Şey, Anlatan Eller, Tospaa, Blindlook, Roof Coliving ve Microfon, Joon & This is Mana isimli sosyal girişimler, toplam 2 milyon TL'lik hibe desteği ile deprem bölgesindeki gençleri ve çocukları desteklemek, sosyo-kültürel hayatı yeniden ayağa kaldırmak için yıl sonuna kadar farklı projeler hayata geçirecek.

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