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**PROMINENT MEMBERS OF ARMENIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY  
TO RECEIVE WALLENBERG HUMANITARIAN AWARD**

(Mahwah) -- The Center for Holocaust & Genocide Studies at Ramapo College will present Vahak and Hasmig "Paris" Hovnanian with its Raoul Wallenberg Humanitarian Leadership Award on November 18th at a dinner presentation at the Glenpointe Marriott, Teaneck, New Jersey. Dr. Joan Rivitz, New Jersey state commissioner of civil rights, will bestow the award. The evening will begin with a reception at 6 p.m. followed by dinner at 7 p.m. There is a charge for tickets. For more information, please call 201.684.7409.

The Raoul Wallenberg Humanitarian Leadership Award is given to individuals who have displayed outstanding leadership in advancing Holocaust studies and interfaith understanding. Vahak and Hasmig Hovnanian share a deep pride in, and strong commitment to, the preservation of their Armenian heritage. They have played prominent roles in promoting the educational, religious and cultural needs of the Armenian community in the northeastern United States. Since the end of the Soviet Union, they have been engaged in helping the independent Republic of Armenia.

Born in Kirkuk, Iraq, Vahak emigrated to the United States to study at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia. He graduated in 1956 with a bachelor of science degree in physics. With his brothers he formed the Hovnanian Brothers Corporation in 1959, where he served as vice president. Together, they developed thousands of homes in New Jersey, until going their respective ways ten years later. In 1969, Hovnanian organized his own real estate development company, Hovbilt, which in the ensuing years has developed many successful and award-winning residential and adult communities containing thousands of homes.

Hovnanian has been a vibrant advocate of the educational, religious and cultural needs of the Armenian community in the United States. He has been honored with a Knighthood in the Order of Cilicia by Khoren I, Catholicos of Cilicia, in 1969. He has served as an executive member of the Armenian Prelacy and as a national delegate to the World Council of the Cilician See since 1978.

Through the Kantz Foundation, which the couple founded, and the Vahak and Hasmig Hovnanian Foundation, they have supported over 100 young artists from both Armenia and other countries around the world in their pursuit of prominent careers in the fine and performing arts.

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Among other honors, Vahak also is a recipient of the Ellis Island Award for his noteworthy contribution to America and for his Outstanding Citizenship and the 1998 Humanitarian Award from the Interfaith Committee of Remembrance in New York City.

Mrs. Hovnanian, or "Paris" as she is known to many of her American friends, served as chair of the Ladies Auxiliary of St. Vartanantz Church from 1974 to 1976 and was a founding member of the Ladies Guild of the Prelacy of the Armenian Church, where she served as chair from 1976 to 1979.

"Paris" is currently chair of the Friends of the Hovnanian School. She is also a co-founder of the New York Academy of Art, a member of its board of directors, and an active fundraiser for that organization. Additionally, from 2000-2003, she served as a member of the New Jersey State Commission on Holocaust Education. Her efforts to improve teaching about the Armenian Genocide are now bearing fruit.

Perhaps the couple's greatest achievement is the founding, in 1976, of the Armenian School in New Milford, which was renamed the Hovnanian School in 1984 in their honor. The school has graduated hundreds of young Armenian Americans who have gone on to attend the finest secondary schools, colleges and universities throughout the United States.

The Raoul Wallenberg Humanitarian Leadership Award is named after the Swedish diplomat who became a legend through his extraordinary efforts to save Jews in Budapest from destruction at the height of the Holocaust. He is best known for his role in issuing protective "passports" to some 7,000 of the Hungarian capital's Jews in danger of deportation. As notable was his establishment of 31 protected houses, which together formed the "international ghetto" and provided refuge for nearly 35,000 Jews.

Dr. Joan Rivitz, who will present the award, began her term as a member of the New Jersey Commission on Civil Rights in 2003. She is an educational consultant in private practice and specializes in matters of bias and prejudice. Rivitz is the chair of the Advisory Board of the New Jersey Human Relations Council, a staff member of the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education and a committee member of the New Jersey Cares About Bullying Campaign. Rivitz was instrumental in the formation of the New Jersey Bias Crime Victims Support Service as well as the training of personnel.

An integral part of Ramapo College, the Center for Holocaust & Genocide Studies was founded in 1980 as an independent non-profit organization. It encourages and assists persons of all ages in learning the history and lessons of the Holocaust and other genocides in the hope that through education such tragedies can be prevented from occurring again.

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