



A Celebration of
**AFGHAN WOMEN'S
ACHIEVEMENT**



August 28th, 2014
Sheraton, Pentagon City

Welcome Note

The very existence of the Afghan-American Women's Association (A-AWA) is a timely response to the growing needs of the Afghan Community residing in the Washington Metropolitan area, and the need to advocate for most vulnerable populations living in Afghanistan.

A-AWA was granted a Non-Profit charitable status on April 2009 by the state of Virginia. The A-AWA operates under section 501 © (3) code of the Internal Revenue Service.

Since its inauguration in October of 2009, a number of services and projects have been launched slowly but surely and sustained by the A-AWA. The roles played by Ms. Shahla Ahmadi, Dr. Homaira Behsudi, Dr. Hosai Hesham, Ms. Nillab Pazhwak and Ms. Nooria Faryar have been critical in founding and directing the A-AWA's services and projects. The challenge to run an organization based on volunteer services has not been a flawless process; nevertheless, with the help of dedicated volunteer members, the A-AWA continues to make positive impact every day.

Mission: The A-AWA is dedicated to serving as a platform through which we can assist the Afghan community to reach their full potential, and become productive individuals within our culture and society. The A-AWA's objective is to promote social, educational, cultural, and human rights awareness by providing community development and support services. It serves as the linchpin (hub) connecting the Afghan community, and

- Promoting and preserving Afghan tradition, culture and languages
- Developing leisurely activities and social relations among seniors with available mainstream resources.
- Humanitarian assistance and women's empowerment inside Afghanistan.

Vision: Our vision is to build a Community Center, which will serve as a permanent structural foundation where the Afghan community can benefit from coordinated services aimed at preserving culture and heritage. The A-AWA is committed to serving as a bridge that provides assistance to the most vulnerable populations in Afghanistan. The Afghan-American community would provide support in the form of humanitarian assistance and critical infrastructure building projects.

Goals:

- Building a Community Center for Afghan-Americans to expand services and promote unity;
- Collaborating with main stream community services and other Afghan based organizations;
- Providing support and resources for families in crisis including new refugees and immigrants;
- Strengthening relationships between parents, children and families;
- Raising awareness of and support for Afghans facing challenges unique to the Afghan community;
- Encouraging respect for diversity and individual differences;
- Educating and spreading physical and mental health;
- Advocacy for women's health, education and empowerment inside Afghanistan.

Services and Projects:

Humanitarian Programs:

- Winter Coat Drive (Afghanistan)
- Microfinance (Afghanistan)
- Women's Health Promotion (Afghanistan)

Women's Empowerment and Support Programs:

- Women's Support Groups and Senior Circle (VA, USA)
- Women's Leadership Development (VA, USA)

Youth and Adults Enrichment Programs:

- Language and Cultural Awareness classes (VA, USA)
- Adult ESL classes (VA, USA)

Community Services:

- Resettlement services to refugees and newcomer families (USA)
- Emergency assistance to vulnerable families (USA)
- Community Networking and Advocacy (USA)
- Civic Engagement Services [Civic participation education , Voter registration education and drives, Community advocacy and engagement education] (VA, USA)

A-AWA's Board of Directors



Shahla Ahmadi

Founder, President of the Afghan-American Women's Association

Background:

Mrs. Shahla Ahmadi was born and raised in Afghanistan. She left her home country due to the Soviet invasion. She arrived to Montreal, Canada in 1983. In 1994 she moved to Virginia along with her family. Her passion for helping the community resulted in the inauguration of the Afghan American Women's Association in 2009.

Mrs. Ahmadi has contributed substantially to the growth of the Association by providing direction, leadership, networking, advocacy, and overall management of membership, programs and services. Her contacts in the community have benefitted the A-AWA members and clients.

Mrs. Ahmadi is a married mother of three children, resides in Northern Virginia, and works for the Department of Defense. She also enjoys supporting other organizations in their humanitarian projects.

Key Achievements:

- Master's Degree in Business Administration, Business Management
- Member of the Afghan-American Chamber of Commerce (AACC)
- Fluent in English, Dari/Persian and French



Dr. Homaira Behsudi-Wali

Vice President, Co-Founder of the Afghan-American Women's Association

Background:

Dr. Homaira Behsudi is Board certified by the American Academy of Family Physicians and is licensed in the State of Virginia. She grew up in Afghanistan after earning her Medical degree (MD) from Kabul University, Faculty of Medicine, Kabul, Afghanistan. She left the country due to war and political threat to her family. After living in India for one year, she settled in the US in 1987 to pursue her career.

Key Achievements:

- Master's Degree in Public Health from Johns Hopkins University
- Residency in family practice at Bethesda Hospital in Cincinnati
- Assistant Clinical Professor of Health Care Science at George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences
- Founder of Vienna Integrative Healthcare in 2007
- Member, American Academy of Family Physicians
- Member, Northern Virginia Medical Society
- Member, Institute for Functional Medicine
- Past President and Member, Afghan Medical Professionals Association of America

Dr. Behsudi lives in Northern Virginia with her husband and two children. In her spare time, she enjoys tennis, reading, volunteering and spending time with family and friends.

Homaira Fahimi

Treasurer

Background:

Mrs. Fahimi has served in various Assistant Vice President and Financial Manager positions. She enjoys extensive experience in banking, with specialized skills in leadership, business development and team building. Mrs. Fahimi's professional experience extends to hiring professionals, implementing budget reductions and writing business plans.

Key Achievements:

- Associate Degree in Computer Information System and Business
- Member of Afghan American Chamber of Commerce
- Board Member of Reston and Dulles Chambers

Mrs. Fahimi is married to Mr. Khalid Fahimi, and is the mother of two sons, Joseph and Ali.



Nillab Pazhwak

Board Member, Co-Founder

Chairperson of the Community Services Program

Background:

Mrs. Pazhwak grew up in Kabul, Afghanistan where she completed her high school in Lycee Malalai. Nillab earned a scholarship to pursue higher education in Delhi University, India, where she earned BA and MA degrees in Political Science. She immigrated to Toronto, Canada in 1998 where she started her career in community services with non-governmental organizations. After settling in the United States in 2002, Nillab earned a MA degree in Education Management from Strayer University. Since then she has enjoyed several roles in academia as instructor and trainer.

Key Achievements:

- MAs in Political Science and Education Management
- Adjunct Faculty at Strayer University, Stratford University and American Public University
- Certified reviewer and trainer in e-learning and adult education
- Member, Afghan Women Organization, Toronto, Canada
- Member, Learning Resources Network (North American Faculty Club)
- Award recipient as United Nations Volunteer in Afghanistan, Ministry of Women Affairs, 2002.
- Award recipient as active community member serving Women's Rights and Afghan Community, Afghan Embassy, VA, USA, 2014

Mrs. Pazhwak lives in Fairfax, VA, with her husband, Mr. Barmak Pazhwak and their three young boys. In her spare time, she enjoys Afghan literature, political debates and nature walks.



Nooria Faryar

Board Member, Chair Person of the Language and Cultural Program

Background:

Mrs. Faryar grew up in Afghanistan where she earned her BA degree in English from Kabul University in Afghanistan. She taught at several high schools and was a faculty member at Kabul University. She also served as the principal of Sultana Razaia High School in Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan. Presently, Mrs. Faryar is a Professor of English and teaches at Northern Virginia Community College. Over the years, she has taught English at various institutions in the United States including T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria.

Key Achievements:

- Bachelors degree in English and Education from Kabul University
- Masters degree in Applied Linguistics from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

Mrs. Faryar is married and is the mother of two children and four grandchildren. She enjoys teaching languages and taking part in different Afghan community cultural activities.



Hosai Hesham, MD

Co-Founder of the Afghan-American Women's Association

Background:

Dr. Hesham grew up in Worcester, MA where she completed her primary and secondary education. She attended College of the Holy Cross, graduating in 2000 with a degree in Biology. Hosai obtained her MD from Albany Medical College in 2004. After graduating from medical school, she moved to Washington, D.C. to continue her training in Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery at Georgetown University Hospital.

Key Achievements:

- Board Certified in Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery
- Chief of Otolaryngology at the DC Veterans Affairs Hospital
- Past President and Member, Afghan Medical Professionals Association of America
- Assistant Professor at Georgetown University

Dr. Hesham is married and currently lives and works in Washington, D.C.



Palwasha Hassan

Board Member, Field Representative inside Afghanistan

Ms. Hassan holds a Master's Degree in Post-War Recovery Studies from York University, UK and has been former fellow in United States Institute of Peace. She is a dedicated Women's Rights activist pioneering many critical works for promotion of women's rights and civil society in Afghanistan that includes launching Roazana, the first women's legal support organization, Madadgar, a Women's and Street Children Center, Women and Children Safe Home Network, and Irfan Cultural Center, among others. She has extensively advocated for the role of women in peace building and political participation.

Ms. Hassan was born and raised in Afghanistan in her early teens. She migrated with her family to Pakistan where she completed her school and acquired under-grad degree. In her school years she volunteered with a Women's Refugee Center where she, with few other women, laid the foundation for the Afghan Women's Network. The Afghan Women's Network is a visionary organization that is currently leading the women's movement inside Afghanistan. This network has played a pivotal role in lobbying for women's rights for the last nineteen years.

Key Achievements:

- One of the 1000 women nominees for Noble Peace Award Initiative from Afghanistan
- Civil Society designated speaker in Afghanistan Development Forum 2003, 2004
- Civil Society designated speaker and representative in Tokyo (2002) and Kabul (2010)
- Civil Society nominee for Women Ministry 2010

MC to the Event

Ms. Tanya Henderson



Ms. Henderson is an international human rights and gender lawyer focused on advancing the rights of women and women's role in peace-building (WPS agenda) through U.S. policy, the United Nations, international multi-lateral agencies and civil society, and coalition building among global women political leaders. She recently founded a new international NGO, Mina's List, an on-line engagement and crowd-sourcing platform dedicated to realizing women's equal and substantive representation in national governments globally. Prior to starting Mina's List, Tanya was the Policy Director for Women's Action for New Direction (WAND), the U.S. National Director for the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), a legal consultant for the Ministry of Social Affairs in Lebanon on issues of gender based violence and women's political participation, and worked in Ethiopia as part of a research team in conjunction with the Harvard Medical School, researching and drafting policy related to gender inequality, economic development and health. Her work has been published in academic journals and various print and social media outlets.

Ms. Henderson received her Bachelor of Science (B.S.) from the University of Massachusetts Boston, her Juris Doctorate (J.D.) from Suffolk University Law School and pursued her Master's of Law (LL.M) in international law from The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. She has also earned several certificates in mediation and conflict negotiation. Her LL.M thesis, "Does International Gender Law Exist?: A Comparative Study of International Practice and Human Rights Law," sought to establish a legal basis for gender discrimination within existing human rights law framework.

Agenda

Opening music **Da- Zema Zeba Watan**

Opening Remarks 6:00pm
MC, Mrs. Tanya Henderson, Esq.

Welcoming Remarks 6:05pm
A-AWA President Ms. Shahla Ahmadi

Remarks by Congressman Jim Moran 6:10pm
U.S. Representative for Virginia

History of A-AWA 6:15pm
A-AWA Co-Founder Dr. Hosai Hesham

Guest Speaker: 6:30pm
Mr. Donald L. “Larry” Sampler
Assistant to the Administrator,
Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs, USAID

Keynote Speaker 6:45pm
The Honorable Shinkai Karokhail, MP

Afghan Children Musical Performance 7:00pm

Recognition of A-AWA’s Instructors 7:05pm
Ms. Nooria Faryar
BOD Member, Chair Person of Language and Cultural
Program

Dinner 7:15pm

“Influential Women” Awards Presentation 7:45pm
Presented by Sultana Hakimi and Nillab Pazhwak

Performance by 8:00pm
The Afghan Women’s Writing Projects

Closing Remarks 8:30pm
A-AWA Vice-President Dr. Homaira Behsudi-Wali

Guest Speakers



Congressman Jim Moran is currently serving his twelfth term as the U.S. Representative from Virginia's 8th District, comprised of the Cities of Alexandria and Falls Church, Arlington County, and parts of Fairfax County.

A senior member of the Appropriations Committee, Congressman Moran serves as the Ranking Member on the Subcommittee on the Interior and Environment and also serves on the Defense and Military Construction Subcommittees.

Throughout his more than two decades of service in the House of Representatives, Congressman Moran has demonstrated vigorous leadership in support of regional transportation solutions, the environment, women's issues, technology, fair and open trade, and fiscal discipline. He is also well known for his efforts to protect federal employees and military retirees.

Congressman Moran has left his mark on the region by boosting investments in federal research and development, particularly in Northern Virginia's defense and technology sector which generate high paying jobs. He has successfully advanced procurement reform at the Pentagon, helped authorize and fund replacement of the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Bridge, and played an instrumental role in resolving the 1991 real estate credit crunch.

Reflective of his commitment to the environment, Congressman Moran has advocated reducing harmful emissions from this region's antiquated coal-fired power plants, protecting green space and green infrastructure and restoring local streams to a more natural state. He continues to receive some of the highest ratings from the League of Conservation Voters and organizations committed to animal protection, gun violence prevention, and human rights.

Congressman Moran holds a leadership role in the Democratic Caucus as a member of the House Democratic Steering and Policy Committee. He also serves as co-chair of the Congressional Prevention Coalition and the Congressional Animal Protection Caucus.



Donald “Larry” Sampler serves as Assistant to the Administrator in the Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs (OAPA) leading USAID’s efforts for the agency’s two largest missions. Mr. Sampler brings his considerable experience in the private sector, the military, and in post and intra-conflict missions of both the Organization for the Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations. More recently, he served as a senior official in the US government focused on a whole of government approach to reconstruction and stabilization.

He has travelled to Afghanistan and/or Pakistan over 60 times since 2001 and lived in Kabul for several years.

From early 2011 to May 2013, Mr. Sampler was Senior Deputy Assistant to the Administrator in OAPA working on Afghanistan and management issues. From August 2009 through early 2011, Mr. Sampler was Vice President and Director of the Communities in Transition Division of Creative Associates International.

Mr. Sampler has substantial experience in conflict and post-conflict environments working for USAID, the U.S. Department of State, the Institute for Defense Analyses, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the OSCE mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2002, Mr. Sampler worked with the Afghan Constitutional Loya Jirga and the Afghan Emergency Loya Jirga. For his support to the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and key role in coordinating the two jirgas, President Hamid Karzai awarded Mr. Sampler the Constitutional Medal.

Mr. Sampler graduated from the Georgia Institute of Technology (GIT) with a degree in Physics. He also pursued graduate studies with GIT’s Technology and Science Policy Program where he examined the role of technology in quality-of-life improvements for developing nations. He also has a graduate degree in Diplomacy from Norwich University.

Key Note Speaker and A-AWA's Award Recipient:



Ms. Shinkai Karokhail is a well-known activist and elected Member of Parliament who has served Afghan women tirelessly for past 20 years. She is co-founder of Women Parliamentary Network and Women Caucus in Parliament. Ms. Karokhail served as director Afghan Women Education Center (AWEC) for four years and also has remained as an active board member of Afghan Women's Network. She was voted as "prominent leader" of women through a survey conducted by a Media agency and broadcasted by the 'AREZO' TV in 2013. Ms. Karokhail also received the Malali KaKar award for human rights in May 2014, presented by the Women for Afghan Women (a Queen's based advocacy group for Afghan women). Her active role in regional Network on Conflict Prevention and Peace has been remarkable. Ms. Karokhail was recognized along with a Pakistani counterpart for her value based leadership by East West Institute back in 2012, New York, United States.

Ms. Karokhail has supported women promotion and protection which put her in challenging situations many times. Nevertheless, she didn't give up her efforts that have resulted to much success enjoyed by fellow women. Her tireless lobbying for women's basic human rights and empowerment has raised the voice on behalf of underprivileged women in parliament house and within government circles. Her contributions include successful lobbying for endorsement of National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan, a gender based reform in Shitte Personal Status law. She supported civil society initiatives as well as several brave steps to bring synchronization among several parallel movements for Women's Rights Bill. Her role to coordinate between Parliamentarians, civil society agencies and the Ministry of Women was critical. As a result, the bill \ was endorsed by the President of Afghanistan as Ending Violence Against Women Law in 2009.

Ms. Karokhail is currently attempting to promote women's health issues in partnership with national and international agencies including A-AWA.

A-AWA's Award Recipient:



Ms. Suraya Sadeed founded Help the Afghan Children in 1993 after witnessing the effects the Civil War had brought to Afghanistan's children and their families. Her successful efforts in providing humanitarian aid, health clinics, and schools for girls, won her honors and recognitions both in Afghanistan and the United States including a Medal of Service from Afghanistan's Ministry of Education.

Ms. Sadeed's pioneering work in bringing innovative educational programs to Afghanistan (civic and peace education, computer education, environmental awareness, gender mainstreaming, and conflict management) have become blueprints in helping to enhance Afghanistan's educational system. Her work has directly benefited over 1.8 million Afghan children and their families during the last 21 years. She has a Masters Degree in Conflict Transformation from EMU. Her memoir, *Forbidden Lessons in a Kabul Guesthouse*, was recently published in different languages in the U.S., Europe, and Afghanistan. Ms. Sadeed believes that "Providing peace education to schools is a preventative strategy that helps break the cycle of violence and conflict in fragile states like Afghanistan." A-AWA takes this opportunity to honor Ms. Sadeed's tireless efforts to help the Afghan children have their basic human rights to education, health and dignity.

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