

Spring 2013



WELCOME TO THE AFGHAN-AMERICAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION...

Message from the Board

A-AWA has been continuing to grow in membership and activity through 2012-2013 year. With the leadership of our President, Ms. Shahla Ahmadi, A-AWA has made valuable and sustainable contributions to the Afghan diaspora living within the United States. In addition, the charitable work of A-AWA continues to focus on internally displaced refugees within Afghanistan.

In December we wrapped up another very successful Coat Drive. We managed to get coats, sweaters, jackets and jeans to be delivered to Afghanistan. We also raised \$5000 and bought coats, boots, hats, and gloves from Kabul directly and donated to two schools and one orphanage inside Afghanistan. Many children received these garments to help them through the winter.

Our networking and partnership efforts continue and has been in full force in 2012.

On July 23, Ms. Ahmadi attended The Institute for Economic Empowerment Of Women (IEEW) and met with Dr. Terry Neese and Dr. Kevin G. Fegan the president of Northwood University in Texas and all different organizations. The program called PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS® program. This program sponsored women business owners in both Afghanistan and Rwanda. These women had the opportunity to change their lives, their families' lives, and the lives of those in their communities and regions of the world by enhancing their education, and practical experience in their various fields and industries. Our members attended their graduation at US Institute for Peace, where they met and supported these pioneering women. (Photo next page)

A-AWA also attended the Annual Afghan Arts and Culture Festival at George Mason University in October. We had a (continued next page)

MISSION STATEMENT

A-AWA is a result of the growing Afghan-American presence in the US, especially in the greater Washington, DC metropolitan region. A-AWA's mission is to serve as a platform for organizing Afghan-American women through cultural, educational, charitable, and social activities. The needs of the Afghan-American community are many, as are the potential resources to address those needs. A-AWA will serve as the connection between the needs of the community and available resources.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Promotion and sharing of Afghan traditions and culture;
2. Partnership with community groups and other Afghan-focused organizations;
3. Respect for diversity in individual values and religious faiths; and
4. Awareness of and support for Afghan women facing challenges unique to the Afghan community.

GOALS

A-AWA's primary goal is to obtain funding and construct a community center to serve the various needs of the community. In addition, we will continue to serve the local community by providing opportunities for educational, cultural, and professional growth.

booth at the event and introduced our organization to the student population. We had a warm reception from the students and continue to receive support and involvement from them.

On December 2-4, 2012, AAWA took part in the 8th Annual U.S.- Afghanistan Business Matchmaking Conference in Washington DC. Our participation played a vital role for the future of AAWA, by providing us the opportunities to interact and build relationships with other organization such as IRAD, USAID ARG and so forth— both locally and abroad. AAWA members Shahla Ahmadi and Nargess Latifi network and obtained useful information from government officials and private sector individuals in anticipation of growing AAWA. Furthermore, AAWA was able to sponsor a booth amongst all other well-established firms, to promote our cause.

Finally, On December 8th Ms. Ahmadi attended the annual AMPAA meeting and dinner. Networking at this event was successful in bringing awareness and gaining support for A-AWA and our mission.

The A-AWA board is very proud of the progress by Mrs. Nooria Faryar in the area of education. In September we held classes for Dari for children ages six to twelve, Dari II for adults, English for adults, Dari for non-native speakers, Cultural Arts for children, Cultural Arts for adults, Dari for youth, Pashto for all ages. Eight volunteer teachers getting together to teach fun classes. As an organization we made the biggest difference in our community by way of education.



General report on support groups in 2012

AAWA's Senior Circle and Women's Support Group have met side by side throughout 2012. Programs have contained guest speakers covering health, social and cultural topics. There were special programs for the Afghan New Year in March, Mother's day in May and Eid festival in September.

Special features included collaborating with AAWA's language classes allowing Afghan children to present their musical and dance performances. Also, Senior Circle initiated a best volunteer award. These events provided the platform for networking including promotion of community involvement in 2012 election session by conducting voter registration efforts. As the Program Director, Ms. Nillab Pazhwak went on maternity leave in summer 2012, she chaired an organizing committee that ensured events in her absence - special thanks to Shahla Ahmadi, Homaira Behsudi, Nooria Faryar, Wida Amir, Nargess Latifi, Mariam Rusta and Durkhanai Ranzooryar for their endless efforts serving on this committee in addition to their other responsibilities.

Ms. Nillab Pazhwak and Ms. Mariam Rusta conducted a formal program evaluation in December 2012. Participants shared feedback in an open discussion forum as well as in written. The most favorite item was voted as the "Breathing and Relaxation" sessions provided by Ms. Durkhanai Ranzooryar. Participants voted for more interactive items such as poetry recital, story telling, and other activities such as forming a book club, regular news update, documentaries, etc. AAWA's Senior Circle and Women's Support Group is growing its membership as it continues to meet on monthly basis at the West Springfield Community Center and Fairfax Library.

AAWA's News Bulletin

AAWA Board of Directors and Senior Circle volunteers and members organized a baby shower in June 2012 for Ms. Nillab Pazhwak who coordinates this program. Participants had a great time appreciating their friendship in the strong community they have built together. Ms. Nillab Pazhwak thanked AAWA for its thoughtful and kind surprise! Baby Amun was born on July 9th, 2012 in good health and Ms. Nillab has returned to her Board responsibilities.

AAWA congratulates Ms. Shahla Ahmadi for obtaining a Master degree in MBA in 2012. Way to go!

Ms. Qudsia Faryar also obtained her Masters in Business Administration with Concentration in Management from Strayer University.

AAWA congratulates Ms. Nillab Pazhwak for obtaining her second Master degree, in Education Management and start of her teaching career in undergraduate courses with Strayer University.

We are proud to announce the selection of Ms. Homaira Fahimi into our Board of Directors. She fills a vacancy left by the departure of Ms. Valerie Zargarpur. A-AWA would like to thank Ms. Zargarpur for the years of hard work and dedication. We will truly miss her and wish her the best. We look forward to working with Ms. Fahimi in the years to come.

Congratulations to long term and very active A-AWA member, Ms. Raihana Noorzad RN MSN for being elected as president of AMPAA. She has the honor of being the first nurse to hold this prestigious position.

Mother's Day Celebration and Best Volunteer Award, May 2012

On May 6th, 2012, Senior Circle and Women Support Group hosted a special program in honor of Mother's Day. Participants were welcomed with flowers and had the opportunity to share their personal stories as mothers and daughters. The Afghan kids attending AAWA's Dari and Pashtu classes presented their song in Dari language wearing national Afghan clothes. Participants seemed to enjoy celebrating together as a close community. Afghan music and food added to the festive atmosphere. For the first time, the Best Volunteer Award was introduced.



The Board of Director based on her active involvement in Senior Circle programs for the past 2 years selected the first recipient, Ms. Mariam Rusta. She received a certificate and gift presented to her by Ms. Shahla Ahmadi, President, Ms. Homaira Behsudi, Vice President and Ms. Nillab Pazhwak, Board Member and Community Outreach Chair. AAWA intends to recognize volunteers annually as part of its Mother's Day Celebration.

Community Outreach Committee Update

AAWA's Community Networking Project

Ms. Nillab Pazhwak has continued to receive requests from various community organizations and groups to help in promoting their programs and activities through AAWA's large electronic network to spread the word e.g. Sham-e-Orphan, Education for Better Tomorrow, AAMPA, etc.

AAWA's Settlement Services

AAWA has received increased number of cases in need of settlement services such as translation, cultural interpretation, housing, referrals and informal counseling. AAWA has been able to find and organize volunteers to help these cases within the limitations in the system. AAWA accept cases after Board of Directors' review and approval. Currently, Ms. Nillab Pazhwak is coordinating a case that involves a single mom with 5 children who has recently arrived in Richmond, VA. AAWA has been able to assist in coordinating the efforts to ensure the family receives all the services possible. AAWA's role is to welcome the family to the Afghan community and offer some basic support by finding volunteers to arrange for home visits, and help with family's needs related to school issues, parenting, budgeting, health and nutrition.

A-AWA is looking forward to hearing more from our beloved Afghan Community as well as benefitting from their increased involvement and support.

Dari Classes

A-AWA educational program was very successful during the fall of 2012 term. Our first big step was to expand the program and offer our services in an educational facility. We were able to rent classrooms at the Annandale Campus of Northern Virginia Community College. As we advertised our course offerings around the Washington Metropolitan area, we had a tremendous amount of interest. We had such high enrollment that we were able to offer a Dari class for adult native speakers, a Dari class for children between ages 6 and 12, a Pashto class for adults, English to seniors, and Dari to non-native speakers. This ten-week term ended in late November.

As this was the presidential election year, Ms. Zheela Noori from Voice of America paid us a visit and interviewed several of our volunteer teachers and students about their interest in the American election and their choices. This was experiencing democracy at its best and getting the feeling that we are part of this great nation and our voices are heard. Ms. Noori also observed our classes and interviewed several of our instructors. Both went on the air and we got very positive publicity not only here, but also in other parts of the world where VOA broadcasts in Dari.

No project can succeed without a collective effort by individuals who sacrifice their time and energy to achieve a sacred goal and this has been the case with A-AWA educational program. Our sincere thanks go to Ms. Rahila Roshna, Ms. Friba Alizai, Ms. Seddiq, and Ms. Amir, our volunteer instructors, for their time and dedication. I would also like to express my appreciation to Dr. Homaira Behsudi and Nazifa Sawez for assisting the instructors and Mr. Akbar Nowroz for sharing his teaching material.

My gratitude goes to the Afghan community for supporting our program and believing in the importance of our services. Please contact aawaclass@gmail.com. We are right here looking forward to serving you.

By Mrs. Nooria Faryar
A-AWA board member and educational program supervisor

