Executive Director’s Message

Mustafa Hussaini

My goal as the Executive Director of Star Educational Society is to elevate the quality and values of Star. Star is an organization that promotes a constant sense of creativity, ownership, language skill, communicability and responsibility. I have dedicated a major part of my life to making Star a place of integrity and uncovering latent abilities. I have an oath to continue to strive and struggle towards this end as long as I breathe. My life is devoted to Star and Starians. It is devoted to building a better future, a brighter outlook and a more comfortable place for all staff members and students who pass through our doors. Star Educational Society is a Society where idealism and realism, tolerance and dedication, sacrifice and precision are encouraged and enhanced. The strategies employed at Star, however challenging, are all meant to make Star a school where professionalism and commitment intersect. Star contributes to social mobility and changes the daily ordinary lives of its students into advanced, progressive and vibrant ones.

When I started working at Star, I was a very simple support Staff member. Now, upon the completion of my tenth year of service, I am the Executive Director, standing third to the founder, standing first in his eyes as the one appointed responsible for all the six branches. Where I am standing today might be your place in the future. Who knows where our paths will lead, but I know we have big dreams, and a high level of motivation, where the sky is the only limit for how far the Star may shine. So, study with the sweat of your brows. Burn the midnight oil, learn well and always endeavor to stand at the top of your class, your family and your community. Only then, you may think of joining us. “Join us to make a difference,” join us to gain and convey, and once you join, let your glory merge with the glory of Star to make Star shine even brighter in the sky of academic opportunity and educational excellence.

Best,
Mustafa Hussaini

S.E.S
Join Us for A Difference

The Top Students of “A-Z” Semester C Branch

Star High School

A Branch

See Inside

Vol. 1, No.3

Saturday, August 15, 2015

Quote of the Week

“It is easier to come down the hill than up it but the view is much better at the top!”

-Henry Ward Beecher
Bad and bitter days - an opportunity to make our future better

By: Leil Shafiyee

When I was in 12th grade, I was very small and unfamiliar with the environment outside of Bedak Village and Jaghory District. My first trip outside of Ghazni Province was when I graduated from high school in 2008 and I came to Kabul for Kankor preparation. During my trip to Kabul city, I saw many Taliban and terrorists on the way and it was a terrifying journey.

When I arrived in Company, the first bus station of Kabul, one of the first things I saw was a gruesome suicide attack. It was extremely shocking and upsetting. The car we were travelling in was stopped in traffic at the scene of the attack. I will never forget the sight of the suicide bomber’s head. There was no sign of his body – only half of his burned head between two slices of metal from the attacker’s destroyed car. I stared at the attacker’s head for more than five minutes thinking to myself: “Who are they so cruel? Even a human with the brain of a donkey can’t do this.” I remember that day as being very cruel? Even a human with the brain of a donkey can’t do this. I remember that day as being very cruel? Even a human with the brain of a donkey can’t do this. I remember that day as being very cruel? Even a human with the brain of a donkey can’t do this.

After the long wait for our results, my friends and I learned that we did not get good numbers and were not able to succeed in our favorite faculties. My father thought that I was lazy and not motivated. He tried very much to encourage me to study at the Oil and Gas Institute but I didn’t agree because it wasn’t my favorite field of study.

My father decided to punish me. He ordered me to go back home and help my uncle to construct a new addition (gooombeiz) on our house. I worked the whole year. Then my father agreed to send money for me to return to Kabul to participate in another Kankor exam preparation course. I finished the work with my uncle, returned to Kabul, studied for two months in Kabul and went back to Jaghory for another two months. Then I returned to Kabul and took the Kankor exam for the second time. My hard work and studies helped me to pass the exam with a score of 275 and be admitted to the Agriculture Faculty of Kabul University.

My studies at Kabul University started in 2010 and in the same year I began to study at Star Educational Society. I could only study two levels of English per year due to economic problems, so my progress was slow. I finally graduated from Star in the first semester of my senior year. I graduated in 2013 from the Plant Protection Department, Agriculture Faculty of Kabul University. I have been unable to find a job in my field, but I have been teaching two classes at Star since ten months ago. Star has been the best for me because I have learned a lot from its coursework. I received good marks and I didn’t face any serious problems in English class at University. Although I have passed many difficulties and am still struggling to build my career in water management, Star has kept me optimistic. Star gave me the hope, self-confidence and commitment to be strong and stay constant in order to solve my problems for a better future and to remain focused on my final goals.

“you are the only person who decides who you want to be”

About the author:
Ali Reza “Bill” Nazari is a Kabul high-school student. He prefers the name “Bill” because Bill Gates is someone he admires and wants to emulate. As you can see from Nazari’s “Life Map,” he aspires to be a successful business man and his map shows the path to realizing his very big dreams. Scoring well on the TOEFL exam will lead the way to attending a prestigious private high school in the U.S. and then going to Harvard. His diary entry follows.

Hey! You must be so lucky that you are reading my diary, I am sure that you are wondering why. Do not worry! I will tell you. You should consider yourself so lucky because the person’s diary that you are reading now, he is not an ordinary person. How? I will tell you now. The author of this diary is an extraordinary person. I do not need to answer each of your questions, because as you read through this diary, you will get the answers to almost all of your questions. Before those other wandering and irritating feelings annoy you, you should focus deeply on the diagram drawn there. Go and do it! Have some patience, and I am here to tell you the rest.

Yes, I very much think you are badly confused! Aren’t you? I think that you are badly confused, aren’t you? I knew you would be. Do not worry at all, because if I were you, I would be confused also! You might think I am very crazy. Don’t be mad. Maybe your thoughts are right! Because I live in my own world, and that is really amazing to me. I do not blame you for these irritating feelings because in a city where we all walk improperly, people will adore the person who is walking properly. Please! Do not think that I am being defensive. Because I am not being defensive at all, I am just being myself. Like everyone should be. By writing that proverb, I just wanted to convey something very important, but unfortunately, most of our young generation does not care about it. What I am trying to convey is that you are the only person who decides who you want to be. In your way of achieving your goals, you will face countless problems. Your job is to stay focused because people do not think about you all the time. Why should they? You are the one who decides where and who and how you want to be in, let’s say, five years’ time. Don’t let the engineers draw the map of your building, be the architect of your own fortune. So, always follow your dreams and live your life to the fullest moment. Let your best come out and, that way, no matter what may happen, you will have nothing to lose.
Lying on the rooftop of an old house located in a small town in southwest Iran, I stared at the starry, summer sky and dreamed of a future that seemed as far away as the blinking stars. How would I make those dreams come true? I still remember those dreams: becoming a computer software engineer, starting a software company and creating jobs for many people. I dreamed of becoming rich enough to buy a house and a car, taking my parents on trips around the country and proving to everyone in my community that a young Afghan refugee girl could be a successful, highly educated, and independent person whose priority was not getting married and washing the dishes.

Now, a decade later, I no longer aspire to be a software engineer. My worldview has expanded and I have had the opportunity to explore different options. I discovered what I am truly passionate about. Now, a decade later, I have been to six different countries and three continents. I have met inspiring young people from around the world – young people from different cultural and religious backgrounds. I have received advice and consultancy on my projects from great social entrepreneurs and constant feedback on my research papers from my passionate professors and mentors. I have attended many conferences and seminars on a variety of social issues from environmental sustainability, to violence against women, to LGBT rights. I have participated in and organized campaigns about children’s education, street harassment, rights of minority people and many others.

How did an Afghan refugee who worked in a small carpentry business to pay for her computer courses end up at the Asian University for Women (AUW) in Bangladesh? A generous scholarship gave me the world class education that makes me dream about changing the world. I majored in Politics, Philosophy and Economics (PPE), with a focus on development studies and graduated in May 2015. Growth up with education systems based on rote memorization, new students, like myself, found it very challenging to think critically and analytically, be creative and original, and communicate effectively. However, AUW professors create an inspiring and supportive environment that makes this transformation a precious experience. At AUW, we learn that our ideas matter, no matter how big or small, sophisticated or simple. We learn to express our ideas and respect others’ opinions. We learn to evaluate our values and stand for our rights. More important than that, AUW students are vocal human rights advocates in their families, communities and societies. They have gained self-confidence and courage to speak out and strive to empower other women or any marginalized groups through different means such as blogging, performing arts, holding awareness campaigns, voluntary activism and so on.

The passion for bringing positive change and transforming obstacles to opportunities is prevalent among AUW students. Unemployment is a big concern for every graduating student in the world right now and AUW students are not an exception. However, we are getting the quality education that makes us competent enough to find our way in the world. In addition, summer projects, internships with world’s top organizations, and fellowship programs supported and coordinated by AUW prepares us to face real social challenges and enhances our ability to overcome them. I wish all Afghan women could have the opportunity to enjoy such a quality education. What are my dreams now? Well, I still want to be financially independent, but that is not a dream. It’s a possibility. Now, I want to be a social entrepreneur and to improve the education system in Afghanistan. I dream of building a system where Afghan students are encouraged to build up their creativity and unlock their talents and potentials in a supportive environment. I want Afghan students to practice tolerance and appreciate diversity through educational curriculum that teach them to think critically. I want to see the day when seeds of peace are planted, protected and harvested by all Afghans, especially students. I have many dreams, but more important than that, I have hope. I believe in my values, and I have confidence that I can bring my dreams to reality.

About the author:

Masooma Maqsoodi attended Star Educational Society in 2009 before beginning her studies at the Asian University for Women (AUW) in Bangladesh. She learned about the scholarship opportunity at AUW from Ali Reza Yasa and is grateful to him for encouraging her to apply. She spent the summer of 2014 as an intern with the EXIM Bank in Seoul, South Korea Economic Cooperation Development Fund Department. She graduated from AUW in May 2015 and will be returning to Kabul this month to begin her career.

The Benefits of Learning a Second Language

Many studies have reported on the benefits of learning an additional language. One research project by the U.S. National Education Association (NEA) is titled “Regarding World Language Education.” In the study it states that:

“Second language study ...
...benefits academic progress in other subjects ...
...narrow achievement gaps ...
...benefits basic skills development ...
...benefits higher order, abstract and creative thinking ...
...enriches and enhances cognitive development ...
...enhances a student’s sense of achievement ...
...helps students score higher on standardized tests ...
...promotes cultural awareness and competency ...
...improves chances of college acceptance, achievement and attainment ...
...enhances career opportunities ...
...benefits understanding and security in community and society.”

Answers to last week’s puzzle.

Across
3. A deep Blue gem that is native to Afghanistan
4. A national sport
5. The national dance
11. The first religion of Afghanistan prior to Islam
13. A favorite past-time of Afghan children
14. A percussive instrument highly common in Afghan music
15. A religious month of fasting
16. The unit of currency

Down
1. A musical string instrument that is featured in many folk songs
2. A quintessential dish that includes browned rice with sautéed carrots and raisins, served with lamb
6. Thank you in Dari
7. A region of Afghanistan known for its scenery
8. Please in Dari
9. The festivities following the month of fasting
10. A veil or scarf used by some Muslim women to cover their heads or faces as a sign of modesty
12. A conqueror that invaded Afghanistan in 1220

Fun Logic Puzzle

Asadullah was looking at a photo. Someone asked him, “Whose picture are you looking at?” He replied, “I don’t have any brother or sister, but this man’s father is my father’s son.” So, whose picture was Asadullah looking at?
The head of the provincial council of Badakhshan said that these forces surrendered to Taliban after being under the siege of Taliban for several days butBadakhshan security officials rejected what the officials’ claim and said that two commanders had made a deal with Taliban. By the mediation of local elders, two border police and local police commanders compelled the soldiers to surrender to Taliban. Now, what must be done to abolish such perilous bargains? Submission is being done under some certain circumstances when forces are aware of their inability to defend and are hopeful to stay alive after surrendering. Such submission has been rare in these past years. This is, however, not obvious, but some (local and national army police officers) have surrendered willingly and individually due to ideological and political reasons. Surprisingly, some infiltrators had been working very effectively to provide information together with spying on the officials. Finally, they have joined Taliban militants or been killed in outbreaks. Whereas the recruitment is not as perspicacious and credible than in past years, Taliban’s infiltration is not dangerous. Officials must be confident to set the right mechanism in recruitment in order not to have the same story of Wardooj. Higher authorities must not be given the allowance to interfere in recruitment. Furthermore, those who have been introduced by the officials and senior officials must not be treated carelessly. Such unconditional surrender including dishonest commanders could lead Afghanistan to immeasurable damages if officials are treated inattentively. Soldiers will be disappointed when it’s not clear who the commander is and whom he fights for! This is why the government must be committed to determine the main causes of Wardooj’s local police officers’ surrender to Taliban and must apprehend those who were in charge.

Masuma Muradi: Daikundi needs improvement in all sectors

Masuma Muradi, the new governor of Daikundi province, who three days ago entered the province and began her work officially, says that Daikundi is one of the deprived provinces of Afghanistan and needs improvement in all sectors. Muradi also said that after a review and classification of all of the affairs, she would start working with help and cooperation of the central government and donors.

In her talk with Pajwak, she said that there are many priorities and she will do her best for the development of this province. Muradi said: “I plan to review all of the administrations and categorize the priorities to move them forward with the help and cooperation of the government.” She added that from the day she entered this province, she noticed that many government offices and buildings of the districts are working in rental buildings and the province is facing many problems.

More than a month ago, Ms. Muradi was introduced as the new governor of Daikundi province by Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) of Afghanistan, but there was some reactions from a number of representatives in the parliament and residents of the province. A number of residents and women in this province with the presence of representatives in the parliament and provincial council members, sat in tents in opposition to the introduction of the new governor and continued it for several weeks. But in this case Ms. Muradi said, “There was some opposition, but it is the right of the people in a democratic government to make their own decisions about their destiny and people have the right to voice the advantages and disadvantages.”

Nasrullah Sadeqizada, Daikundi representative in the House of Representatives who is one of the opponents, said, “Our opposition to the new governor is not that women can’t work in Afghanistan, but as Daikundi is a deprived province, a person with high ability should be assigned as the governor.” He accused the government of ignoring the people’s will and he is insisting that the government imposed the governor on the people of Daikundi. But, Ms. Muradi said that inability is not a matter of gender and there are many successful women who have worked in high levels of the government; the ability and competency of a person is not related to his/her gender.

Also, Zahra Bakhshiari, head of social network of Daikundi’s women, said that women are able to contribute actively and all efforts could be done to increase their contribution. She added, “Women are facing many challenges in Daikundi and the district governor absolutely understands the women’s problems and she will solve them.”

Daikundi is located in the center of Afghanistan and is one of the most deprived provinces, which during the past fourteen years, has not been improved in any sector: construction, economy, roads and infrastructures.

Plan to install security cameras at the border of Afghanistan and Uzbekistan

Afghanistan and Uzbekistan officials discussed the plan to install high quality security cameras on the border areas between the two countries. According to the central news agency, the two sides have agreed that, in addition to this, the border authorities of both countries will collaborate to address security threats together.

The agreement between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan took place due to the increasing insecurity in several Northern provinces. The rising insecurity in the Northern provinces in the country during the last few months has created anxiety among the officials in neighboring countries, such as Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, for the advent of DAISH in this country. Government officials of the country will address security threats, pursue anti-DAISH cooperation and equip regional security forces in the country.

Meanwhile, Hanif Atmar, the national security adviser, visited with authorities in Uzbekistan to discuss the fight against terrorism. He entered Uzbekistan’s capital, Tashkent, on Monday and will return to the country today. Thawab Ghurzang, security cooperation, coordination and exchange of prisoners, and the border between the two countries were discussed in the meeting.

Mr. Atmar said to improve the stability in the countries of Central and South Asia there must be peace and stability in Afghanistan. According to Atmar, security cooperation between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan will be critical after the withdrawals of foreign forces. Atmar met with Uzbek officials during the past fourteen years have been working very effectively to provide information together with spying on the officials. Finally, they have joined Taliban militants or been killed in outbreaks. Whereas the recruitment is not as perspicacious and credible than in past years, Taliban’s infiltration is not dangerous. Officials must be confident to set the right mechanism in recruitment in order not to have the same story of Wardooj. Higher authorities must not be given the allowance to interfere in recruitment. Furthermore, those who have been introduced by the officials and senior officials must not be treated carelessly. Such unconditional surrender including dishonest commanders could lead Afghanistan to immeasurable damages if officials are treated inattentively. Soldiers will be disappointed when it’s not clear who the commander is and whom he fights for! This is why the government must be committed to determine the main causes of Wardooj’s local police officers’ surrender to Taliban and must apprehend those who were in charge.
After many years of prospect, the reservoir filling in the biggest dam of Afghanistan started on July 26th. Mohammad Asif Rahimi, the provincial governor of Herat, stated that the reservoir filling has begun and this process will take 9 to 12 months. The Indian Consulate in Herat has approved the starting of reservoir filling and also added that the diversion tunnel gates had been closed the day before.

The Salma dam is located in Chasht e Sharif District of Herat province, which has 20 km length and 7.3 km width, 640 million cubic meters water storage capacity and 42 megawatts capacity of electricity production. This dam was constructed with USD $300 million of financial support of India.

The Salma dam is one of the principal national projects, which started at the time of Dawood Khan’s governance, but was stopped in 1958 due to internal problems. The second phase of construction started in 2004 by the financial and technical support of India, and yesterday the water storage began.

Salma dam is expected to resolve the electricity problem in Herat and surrounding provinces. The government formerly announced that the pole fixing from the dam to the center of Herat city in length of 170 km is completed.

The Indian official has acknowledged that the construction of Salma dam is one of their principal and fundamental projects in Afghanistan. The development aids program of India paid the construction fund for this project. The construction of this project frequently faced insecurity and logistic constraints that caused delays for many years. Almost 7 years before, as a result of an attack on the security guards of the dam by some gunmen, 11 guards were killed and 2 were injured. Formerly, another security guard was also killed by gunmen. The insecurity, especially in 2007 and 2008, was one of the biggest barriers which caused delay for the completion of the project until after that the government strengthened the security situation around the dam.

India, after the collapse of Taliban regime in 2001, supported more than USD $2 billion for the rebuilding of Afghanistan. The funds were used for the construction of Salma dam and the new parliament building.
He was beaten and dragged back to the markets. The Mullahs, however, caught the apprentice, who was only a young boy. They made fiery speeches shaming the locals for doing nothing. They seized the opportunity, and gathered a mob of some people, a free people. A land where flowers bloom in streets, rubab music plays in the samovar tea houses, and kites fly in the skies.

The mullahs go mad when they gain power. They have done horrendous things to our own people, things only an enemy like the Taliban would do.

In the days just before you were born, they did something really horrible in Sang-e-Masha, something with no precedence. A shopkeeper in Tameer had been accused of having an illicit relationship with his apprentice. This accusation quickly caught the attention of the local Mullahs. They seized the opportunity, and gathered a mob of some locals, shopkeepers, and other people with nothing better to do. They made fiery speeches shaming the locals for allowing such a thing to happen in their midst. The enraged mob chased the shopkeeper but he managed to flee. They, however, caught the apprentice, who was only a young boy. He was beaten and dragged back to the markets. The Mullahs formed a court, and issued a prompt religious decree. The mob then spared no time in carrying out punishment.

They dug a ditch in the middle of the Tameer bazaar. They tied up the badly beaten up boy and threw him into the middle of that ditch. Then they filled the ditch with firewood and bush. After a sprinkle of Kerosene, the ditch was set alight amid horrifying screams for help. The boy begged the bystanders to save him, but no one did anything. The mob was overjoyed, the crowd watched in silence. The boy’s father, who had rushed to the bazaar to rescue his son, was chased away with sticks and stones. The fire burned, and that poor boy was burned alive. Witnesses said that the fire ended in a bang. It was probably the boy’s head or abdomen that exploded in the fire.

On another occasion, the locals in Dawood chased and caught a young couple that had tried to elope, intending to run away to Pakistan. Again, the mullahs formed a court and issued a religious decree for the punishment of the two. The young boy and girl were buried in the ground down to their chests. Then by religious decree, the local mob, the young and the old, pelted them with stones, big and small. They were pelted with stones until they bled, until their cries stopped, and until they were dead. It is said that the girl had survived the first stoning. She had asked for help but the mob smashed her head with a big piece of rock. She died. Again, no one came to their help. The mullahs act like gods. May God curse them.

"Mullah" = Islamic cleric; slang for an excessively religious person.

The tide rises, the tide falls.
The twilight darkens, the curlew calls;
The traveler hastens toward the town,
Along the sea-sands damp and brown.

The little waves, with their soft, white hands,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Along the margin of a bay:
What wealth the show to me had brought:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
A Poet could not but be gay,
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
And dances with the daffodils.

And the tide rises, the tide falls.
And the tide rises, the tide falls.
And the tide rises, the tide falls.
And the tide rises, the tide falls.
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

The waves beside them danced, but they Out-did the sparkling waves in glee: A Poet could not but be gay, In such a jovial company: I gazed—and gazed—but little thought What wealth the show to me had brought: For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye When all at once I saw a crowd, A host, of golden daffodils; Beside the lake, beneath the trees, Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.
Continuous as the stars that shine And twinkle on the Milky Way, They stretched in never-ending line Along the margin of a bay: Ten thousand saw I at a glance, Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd, A host, of golden daffodils; Beside the lake, beneath the trees, Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.
Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the Milky Way, They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay: Ten thousand saw I at a glance, Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

Poetry Definitions
• Poem: a piece of writing that resembles both speech and song and is usually rhythmical and metaphorical. Most poems have formal elements such as meter, rhyme, and are divided into stanzas, groups of lines.
• Stanza: a group of lines forming the basic recurring metrical unit in a poem; a verse.
• Couplet: a couplet is a two-line stanza that traditionally rhymes.
• Quatrain: a quatrain is a four-line stanza that traditionally rhymes.

Stories
My Grandmother Told Me

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.
People led simple lives. We were all farmers. People were good to one another.

My first born was a son. Jaan Mohammad and other villagers came to our place for shaw-shini. They stayed up all night long, sang ghazal, ate, and laughed. Early the next day, they were dined fruit and naan-boota, and then returned to their own homes to sleep. 12 days later, my first born died.

"Shaw-Shini = A tradition wherein relatives celebrate the birth of a son with a night of songs, games and festivities.
"Naan-boota = Traditional Hazara dish made with butter, yoghurt, and ground dried bread.

About the Author:
Hadi Zaher was the first graduate of Star Educational Society in the year 1999. He is the nephew of the founder of Star in Quetta, Mr. Nabi Atiq. Hadi is also among one of the first Star graduates who together with Mr. Hussain Yousufi, was selected as a language teacher. Hadi Zaher has an BA from university of Wollongong, Australia in Economics and Politics. He is a post-graduate student of Juris Doctor at the University of New South Wales. His job includes being para-legal employee at Playfair Visa and Migration Services in Sydney. He is also currently the president of Zaheristan, a virtual world of professional photography that he describes in these words: “A land of good people, a free people. A land where flowers bloom in streets, rubab music plays in the samovar tea houses, and kites fly in the skies.”

Writing Competition:
Please write a summary and analysis of one of the following two poems and send it to haidiszaher1@gmail.com by midnight on 22nd August, 2015. Use “writing competition” in the subject line. Requirements:
1. 50% summary and 50% analysis, do not write just the summary
2. Maximum 500 words
3. Apply all the rules of “how to summary writing”
4. Proper referencing and word selection needed

Note: winner will be announced on 28 August.

The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls
By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The tide rises, the tide falls,
The twilight darkens, the curlew calls;
Along the sea-sands damp and brown
The traveler hastens toward the town,
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

Darkness settles on roofs and walls,
But the sea, the sea in the darkness calls;
The little waves, with their soft, white hands,
Efface the footprints in the sands,
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

The morning breaks; the steeds in their stalls
Stamp and neigh, as the hostler calls;
The day returns, but nevermore
Return the traveler to the host.
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

The Daffodils
By William Wordsworth 1770 - 1850

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.
Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the Milky Way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A Poet could not but be gay,
In such a jovial company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:
For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.
Visiting Star Educational Society and experiencing the special program on Thursday, August 6th helped me to escape from the shadows of terror I have been feeling in Kabul lately. It was one of very few events which make me hopeful for a better tomorrow. Star glowed brilliantly on the day of the speech contest. It glowed on the cheerful faces who greeted and guided guests and students inside. It glowed with the soft melody of local music that welcomed people before the entrance.

Many students waited enthusiastically for the program to begin. I was not accustomed to such enthusiasm for a school-organized event – something that, in my experience, has been commonly long and boring. I discovered Star’s secret that day. It attracts many students and guests with the diversity in their agenda. The whole program was entertaining and productive. Not only were speeches delivered, but also poetry was recited with soft Persian melody and soft background music to add to the beauty of the program. Fulbright scholars delivered their well-prepared speeches for the judges and audience members. In the first round, four students from levels one, two and three addressed the topic, “Should students be engaged in politics?” In the second round, four students from levels four, five and six expressed their views on “Do Islam and democracy go together?” After the jury panel considered the competitors’ pronunciations, body language, content of their essay, intonation and other important factors, they selected one best speaker for each of the rounds. Rubaba Rajabi was chosen as the best speaker of the first round and Mehrdad Rezayee won the title for the second round. Rajabi and Rezayee were awarded appreciation certificates and prizes.

Shawkat Sabor, a talented local singer, mesmerized the audience with his melodious voice and magical Dambora playing skills. Though the Dambora has only two strings, he played it as if he was accompanied by a full band of musicians. Poetry readings also added to the diversity of Thursday’s program. Sayed Reza Mohammadi, a young and talented poet, recited some of his poems and moved the guests and students into deep thoughts and emotions. Sabor and Mohammadi were appreciated tremendously by the audience.

Mr. Hassan Rezayee, a university administrator, sociologist, researcher and poet, praised Star Educational Society for not only its success in teaching English but, more importantly, for its role in causing a change in society. The selection of many students from Star as Fulbright Scholars elucidated his point. He explained that Star goes beyond promoting limited social change by challenging students to consider issues such as the engagement of students in politics or the relationship between Islam and democracy. These kinds of questions can cause huge changes in a society and Rezayee applauded Star’s efforts to be an educational center that serves the community in such a broad sense.

Mr. Ali Reza Yasa, the founder and chairman of Star, began the conclusion of the program outlining Star’s achievements and introducing forthcoming new programs in Russian language and computer classes offered by Star’s new Compu-Aid department. He also awarded certificates to students who attended the Teacher Training program after which diplomas of students from advanced classes were awarded by Mr. Najibullah Rezayee. Thus ended a stimulating, fruitful program at Star Educational Society engendering hope in all the people who attended.
Tell me about yourself. I am Jalil Ahmad Jamily. I am a risk-taker and adventurous person. I am always willing to try new things without fear. I have a bachelor degree in Engineering and I will pursue my Masters in Civil Engineering.

Why did you choose to teach at Star? When I got my English diploma from Star Educational Society, it was very common for eligible students to teach at Star. It was a public wish. Therefore, I began working at Star as an English instructor.

How did working at Star impact your life? When I joined Polytechnic University of Kabul majoring in engineering, which is a challenging field, my English skills were very useful because many terms in engineering fields are in English language. Knowing English helped me to obtain very high grades in my classes. English was a plus for my major. Also, since I was supposed to support my family financially, I solved my economic problems through working at Star also.

Who are you most grateful for your success? I am thankful for my family. She supported me emotionally for me. Especially, I am grateful for my dear mom for assisting me to achieve my goals. She supported me emotionally through her love, and she supported me literally by providing me what she could for my education. For instance, whenever I got up early to go to school, she would be awake earlier than me to prepare breakfast for me. Her encouragement gave me inspiration and motivation to try harder and to go further.

What sports do you play? I swim very often and I love it. I am very glad that we have many newly opened pools in Kabul.

What are you most looking forward to in the USA? Since I am a studious student, I am looking forward to study my lessons well at University. Especially, education system will be so much better than I have experienced in Afghanistan, and I am very excited to use this opportunity to add to my knowledge and improve my skills in my field. Also, I want to be a cultural ambassador of Afghanistan. Most importantly, I am very excited to make new friends in the USA.

What is the formula of success based on your experience? The formula of success is trying your best and working hard continuously. Success is not final. What is the secret of your success? Becoming a Fulbright finalist seemed impossible for me and I wasn’t even willing to try it. It was Mr. Hussain Yousofi who encouraged me to apply to Fulbright. He guided me through the process and I applied for it. As it is obvious, working hard plus opportunity resulted in my success. My previous knowledge and preparation also made me a good candidate for Fulbright. Also my TOEFL score, personal statement, and essays were good enough that helped me to be a stronger applicant. Actually, when I was called for interview at US Embassy, I was pretty shocked and super happy!

What else are you busy with besides teaching? When I began teaching at Star, I was studying at university too. In 2012, I worked with the World Health Organization on a project to reconstruct a hospital in Sar e Pol Province. During 2014-2015, I worked for ECCI-Metag as a Hydrologist and Hydraulic Engineer in Badghis Province.

About the interviewer:

Qamar Nisa is a Star alumna who is currently a junior at St. Margaret’s School, a private high school in Virginia, U.S. She is supported by the Afghan Girls Financial Assistance Fund. This is the final in a series of three interviews that Qamar conducted for the Interstellar Bulletin while in Kabul for her summer break.

In this issue of the Interstellar Bulletin, Qamar interviewed Jalil Ahmad Jamily who began studying at Star Educational Society in 2005 and has been a Star teacher since 2008. He was recently chosen as a finalist for the prestigious Fulbright Scholarship.

An Interview with Jalil Ahmad Jamily by Qamar Nisa

Becoming a Fulbright finalist seemed impossible for me