



Late Summer-Early Fall Greetings to All!

from MEAAG Chair, Debbie Trent

Thanks for taking the time to browse the Middle Eastern American Advisory Group's second e-newsletter. It is brought to you by our 17 volunteer members, two summer interns, and Middle Eastern Liaison. MEAAG (MEE-ag) was established in 2008 by the [Montgomery County Office of Community Partnerships](#) to better connect the linguistically and culturally diverse Middle Eastern American communities with county government and to encourage greater participation of Middle Eastern Americans in local, economic, civic, and cultural life. We are a non-political, non-religious, welcoming intergenerational group. Our monthly public meetings feature guest speakers and discussions of our communities' interests. We implement demand-driven projects to facilitate connections with county service providers, businesses, and ongoing nonprofit projects. Our members engage with and advocate for our community, representing our shared interests with the County Executive (who appoints each advisory group member) and other elected officials. MEAAG represents one of the smaller heritage population groups in MoCo, but we make up for that geographically, stretching from Morocco to Pakistan and Turkey to Sudan. Visit us on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) to check out our latest news.

MEAAG traditionally skips our monthly public meeting each August and we have not met virtually this past month. We were busy, though... [continued on page 6]

Members

Sara Abdel (Egypt), Lina Abdul Wahid (Iraq), Karim Chaibi (Tunisia), Amjad Chaudhry (Pakistan), Sahar Fahmy (Egypt), Sughra Hussainy (Afghanistan), Muntaz Jahan (Pakistan), Farideh Jahanbin (Iran), Karen Leggett Abouraya (Egypt), Zaffer Mirza (Pakistan), Shahrzad Nakhostin (Iran), Subhi Rawi (Iraq), Mahasty Sharifi (Iran), Sam Shihadeh (Palestine), Gihan Tammam (Egypt), Debbie Trent (Lebanon), Akhtar Zubairi (Pakistan)

Interns

Tina Pasha (Iran), Mehak Sukhera (Pakistan)



Inside this issue: A Message From Us All • Community Initiative Corner/Career Development and Job Placement Organization Announcement • Current & Upcoming Events • 2021-2022 Voter Education Project • Member Snapshot • Membership & Internship Information • Message from the Chair (continued)/Reconnectresources.

A Message From Us All



MEAAG members and interns extend heartfelt condolences to all who have faced challenges and loss during the novel coronavirus pandemic. We've tried to do our part, helping out at food banks, holding virtual educational and cultural programs, sharing accurate [pandemic-related information](#), and spreading some [joy](#).

We also extend our thoughts and whatever support we can offer to those affected locally by the tragic suffering in Afghanistan, Haiti, and elsewhere in the past month.

As well, our hearts are heavy as we mark the 20th year since the devastating attacks of 9/11. We send wishes of sympathy to those who suffered loss due to the events of that day that have left scars, forever.

Standing for local-to-global, intercultural peace and understanding,

The Middle Eastern American Advisory Group

Community Initiative Corner

Career Development and Job Placement Organization Announcement

MEAAG member and ambassador for the Community Advocacy Institute, Sara Abdel, has founded [Thriversonthemove Philanthropies](#) -- a social enterprise and non-profit organization, to provide career development incubator programs and job placement services. These programs and services will advance the economic and financial stability of 1) women who are skilled immigrants and professionals from the Middle East and North Africa living in the USA, and 2) women who have been victims of sexual- or gender-based violence. If you know a candidate looking for a job, or an employer who has a job for a woman immigrant, please email info@thriversonthemove.org.

Current & Upcoming Events

September 22, 5:00-6:00 pm, is MEAAG's next community meeting date. Contact our [OCP Middle Eastern Liaison](#) to inquire/receive the Zoom link.

Calling All Immigrant Women!

The weWomen Plus Research Study at Johns Hopkins University is evaluating the impact of adaptive technology-based interventions on safety, mental health, and empowerment of immigrant women. Visit [here](#) to learn if you are eligible to participate and earn up to \$160 for completing four surveys over the next year.



Voter Education Outreach Initiative

September 2021-June 2022



MEAAG, of the [Office of Community Partnerships \(OCP\)](#), plans to partner with [Montgomery County Board of Elections \(MCBE\)](#) and a number of community-based organizations to launch a nine-month civic engagement initiative titled *Voter Education Outreach Initiative*.

Goal: Strengthen local communities' knowledge and skills about voting procedures and processes to enable citizens in making informed decisions about electing their official representatives.

Activities: MEAAG will partner with MCBE, educational institutions, and relevant non-for-profit organizations, including those working with marginalized and under-represented groups, to implement the following activities:

1. Launch a digital outreach educational campaign titled "Every Vote Counts" to disseminate information about voter registration, voting timetable, voting venues, and other related matters, and encourage community members to vote.
2. Disseminate the MCBE flyers widely.
3. Organize a number of voter education virtual webinar sessions.

The initiative is intended to support voter administration services of MCBE, including recruitment of volunteers to facilitate access to the polls. Volunteers will assist with transportation, babysitting for single moms when they go to vote, and other efforts to make voting easier for all. The Maryland Board of Elections will be adding two early voting sites in the county, and MEAAG will place special emphasis on preparing especially newly registered women voters to prepare and submit their ballots in 2022.

Member Snapshot

Mumtaz Jahan

Mumtaz Jahan, one of MEAAG's first members, is from Pakistan. Before moving to her current home in Silver Spring, she lived in Germantown for about 20 years. She has been working as a paraeducator with Montgomery County Public Schools for two decades. About ten years ago, when Mumtaz was interested in volunteering in the county, she met Lily Qi, then a Senior Liaison with the Office of Community Partnerships, and was invited to join MEAAG. Since then, Mumtaz has enjoyed arranging with other members the celebration of Middle Eastern American Heritage Month each March, book displays at local libraries, and other community service projects.



As a Muslim, from the very beginning of her membership in MEAAG, Mumtaz has worked to strengthen recognition of Ramadan -- the Islamic month of fasting, prayer, and charity, with people of other religious and cultural traditions -- within and outside the Middle Eastern American community of the county. Mumtaz acknowledges the facilitation of Lily Qi -- from the time she was at OCP until now, as a Maryland State Delegate -- with this intercultural sharing of traditions and advocating for Middle Eastern Americans in the community.

Mumtaz has enjoyed volunteering in the spirit of Islam on other projects, too. During the pandemic, she distributes handmade masks to hospitals and nurses, plus other people in need who have limited resources. Among the four organizations for which she helped to design and distribute handmade masks and scarves is the American Muslim Senior Society, in which Mumtaz is a certified Advanced Care Outreach Ambassador. Among her other community projects are helping out to serve food to those in need, planning and coordinating iftar (banquet) parties during Ramadan for people walking in.

One of Mumtaz's most high-impact and personally meaningful projects is teaching volunteers to sew, to manage their own volunteer activities, and how to save money. Her future will no doubt include continuation of this project and leading and following elsewhere in the community.

@Mehak Sukhera

MEAAG Summer Intern



Membership & Internship Information

Adults interested in exploring membership in MEAAG, and middle and high school students interested in earning Student Service Learning credits through internship, should visit the [Montgomery County Volunteer Center](#).

Message from the Chair (continued from page 1)

A dozen or so fully vaccinated MEAAG members and friends held an outdoor potluck in Rockville Town Square on August 1st. It was great to assemble in person. It was the first time members who were appointed earlier this year to become better acquainted with “older” members.



Sahar Fahmy initiated the 2021-2022 Voter Education Project (learn more on page 3).

To prepare the county’s welcoming of Afghan citizens recently evacuated during the U.S. military draw-down, OCP is building an inventory of local NGOs conducting refugee resettlement and other humanitarian support. This inventory includes organizations providing assistance to Haiti. MEAAG members have helped gather useful information and identify non-profits that support refugees and asylees.

Like so many in the county, we are encouraging folks to get vaccinated and stay safe during the surge caused by the delta variant of the COVID-19 virus. Our local go-to source for the most accurate pandemic information is the county’s [COVID-19 portal](#).

Fortunately, [66.1% of county residents have completed their full dose schedule against the Covid-19 virus and 72.6% have received their first](#) dose. However, from July to August, Covid-19 cases increased from 1,257 to 4,068; these data and other up-to-date information about the number of cases, disaggregated by month, age, and sex, are available at [this link](#). We all want to start getting back to something closer to “normal” but we need to continue taking precautions when resuming prior community activities or considering new ones. **Check Out [this Video to Reconnect](#) safely.** There’s even a social media contest to contribute your ideas!

~ Have a productive and happy month ~

