

*From the chair...*

Last month I had the privilege of attending a book launch by a Muslim woman activist in the community. 'From Behind the Veil - A Hijabi's Journey to Happiness' is a true story of struggle and the strength of character in the face of challenges posed by the circumstances of living in today's world. This event was one happy celebration in the backdrop of a sweeping legislation over the latest news about 'Niqab' in a Quebec classroom where a Muslim woman, dressed in her unique way, was learning French to improve her life skills in order to integrate in the society. It is surprising that a handful of Muslim women who wear a 'Niqab' in Quebec have 'prompted' the Quebec Government to pass a bill to dictate how one must dress in order to participate fully in all aspects of life.

While women are 50% of the world population, they are constantly struggling to find their true worth as persons and not in relation to 'others'. It takes a lot of courage to stand up for your convictions, regardless of what others think of them. Muslim women face discrimination, not just from those with lack of ability and understanding to acknowledge and respect their differences and therefore attempt to force them to fit in

with the standards set by the society. Oftentimes this cruelty is inflicted upon them from their own people who feel uncomfortable due to their own ignorance of and insecurity with their Islamic identity. *Today's Muslim woman is standing at the crossroads - between the forces that would like to presuppose that she is oppressed by her religion and/or culture, and therefore needs to be rescued, and on the other hand, by the narrow minded, one-dimensional approach and superficial interpretations of so called pseudo scholars within her own faith.* So, instead of becoming a source of strength and support for her, both become an impediment in her struggle for independence and true worth as defined by her Creator. These forces of 'control' work on her from inside and outside and that is what makes her experience even more complicated and her journey more difficult.

Muslim women will ultimately become stronger as a result of all these challenges which are multi-dimensional. We need to be proactive and find solutions within the principles of Islam by taking the intellectual approach to understanding our own religion and then educating others on that level. We can receive inspiration from role

models like the wives, daughters of our Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him, and other female Muslim and non Muslim scholars in history. Our solution lies within Islam itself and we need to find it *now*. Just as Islam elevated women from the inhumane and brutal practices of the *jahlia* in the seventh century Arabia and restored the dignity that God Almighty had bestowed upon her as one of His creations. It was no less than the Prophet Muhammad himself who said that 'Heaven lies under the feet of a Mother'.

**Federation of Muslim Women** shares with all women and men universal principles of humanity and commitment to dignity, in keeping with the true spirit of Islam, which not only recognizes diversity but also celebrates it as the manifestation of God's Will and Mercy. The difference of opinion within the parameters of Islam must be respected and cherished. It is with this spirit that we support the choice of women who wear 'Niqab' anywhere and anytime regardless of the debate whether it is necessary to wear it on religious grounds or not.

Zahida Murtaza  
 Chair

Federation of Muslim Women

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## From the vice chair... FMW Recognizes the Importance of a Heart-Healthy Lifestyle!

It is alarming to hear about the high rate of diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure among Canadian Muslims. This is in large part due to the unhealthy lifestyle that many of us lead. As we all know, maintaining physical activity and a healthy diet are important ways to reduce the risk of such illnesses. Unfortunately, Muslim women often experience barriers to participating in organized physical activity, classes or lessons due to the lack of privacy that facilities provided. Some women have signed up for gym memberships in women's-

only facilities, only to later find out that some classes are taught by men, or are surprised to find male technicians enter the gym to repair equipment.

FMW recognizes this need in the community, and has once again begun its Basketball and Fitness classes. At a new location, ISNA Islamic Centre, the program will run for a few weeks until we break for the summer months and Ramadan. We are grateful to ISNA's support of the program and look forward to utilizing their state-of-the art facility. Fitness classes run most Sundays from 11 am to 12 pm, followed by Basketball from 12 pm to

1:30 pm. We hope that this program will inshAllah benefit the Muslim women in the community by providing them

with a private space to get active!!  
Amira Younis  
Vice Chair  
Federation of Muslim Women

*We have enjoined on man to be kind to his parents. In pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth. The carrying (of the child) to his weaning is thirty months. At length when he reaches the age of full strength, he says, "O Lord! Grant me that I may be grateful for Thy favour which Thou has betowed upon me, and upon my parents, and that I may work righteousness such as Thou may approve; and be gracious to me in my issue. Truly have I turned to Thee and truly do I bow in Islam. ~ Surah Ahqaf, The Wind-Curved Sandhills (Verse 15)*

## Volunteers, Our Brightest Stars,

### Mariam Sutarwala

Charity, preached by every religion of the world, is a way of bringing justice to society, and justice is the essence of religion. Islam has therefore made charity i.e. Zakah, obligatory and binding upon all those who embrace the faith; it has been made into an institution in order to give in permanence and regularity. It is with this thought in mind that the Federation of Muslim Women organized its efforts and resources towards two projects very dear to our hearts this past fiscal year: **'Project Ramadan'** and **'Feed the Streets'**.

Project Ramadan was organized by the MPR Community Group in conjunction with the Muslim Welfare Centre. Project Ramadan created food baskets and donated them to the Muslim Welfare Centre in Toronto for distribution to needy families. Their goal was to get the community involved in supporting their fellow brothers and sisters in need during the holy month of Ramadan. FMW supported this commendable initiative through involvement of their

membership and donation of funds to create the baskets.

Islam teaches humanity to help the needy and less fortunate. Naturally, the Prophet Muhammad [peace be upon him], is the example of the perfect social worker, and would put others before himself and his family. Keeping the same spirit, FMW representatives became aware of the growing needs of people, particularly homeless in Toronto. As a consequence, FMW members established Feed the Streets where over 100 meals were distributed to Toronto's homeless. None of these worthy initiatives would have been a success on such a large scale without the help of the volunteers of FMW, and this is our way of thanking each and every one of the members who came out and helped us in any shape, way or form. The key to our success rests in people like you, who embody the spirit of greatness by saying, "Yes I can, and so can you!" Thanks for your inspiring

dedication and tremendous example to our youth. Volunteers are integral in every aspect of the services and programs offered within the social and global system they live in. Every charitable organization is mainly administered by volunteers. In fact the National Survey on Giving Volunteering and Participating reports that more than 1 in 4 Canadians volunteered through a charitable or non-profit organization, roughly equivalent to 1.05 billion hours during the year.

There are infinite ways for us to do volunteer work; we need only be open to our surroundings and really observe what goes on around us. Before we know it, we could already be in the middle of fundraisers; or helping those struck with natural calamities to rebuild their lives. Volunteering is a positive chain that goes around making the world a happier place for everyone. As the saying goes: *Charity begins at home!*



## Women and Financial Independence The Value of Your Public Library

Rubeena Malik

As someone who has been working in the financial sector for more than 10 years, it has been my experience that women in general and Muslim women in particular do not take active part in the decision-making process of their family's financial matters. These decisions impact them and their loved ones in the long run. My suggestion to everyone is to be aware of the complete financial picture of your joint family income and expenditure. Know the process, know what your discretionary and non-discretionary expenses are, and have a back-up plan if your traditional sources of income stop unexpectedly.

I highly recommend three to six months of your routine monthly expense funds saved up in an emergency cash reserve account.

Managing money effectively is an important life skill which can be learned with effort and interest. In our next publication I will highlight some basic rules to follow to become financially independent.

Rubina Khan

In the time it will take you to read this column over 50 people will use the Mississauga Library System. Each year residents enter a local library (there are 18 branches) over 4 million times. They go to the Library's web site over 6 million times over the year. That makes the Mississauga Library System "the biggest club in town" The Mississauga Library System offers something for everyone – from pre-schoolers to seniors, from students to hobbyists, from researchers to magazine lovers. And according to feedback, it does it well.

A library card is free. So it is always surprising that everyone does not have one. Your card offers access to a million books... over 100,000 DVDs and videos... over 100,000 CDs... over 10,000 magazines and newspapers... and over 100 on-line databases. And the Library adds about 2,000 new items every week! So there is always something new for users. The City's library system

has been well planned. All 720,000 Mississauga residents are close to a branch library. As well, all branches have extensive hours of service, are conveniently located to bus routes and all have free parking. For more details on your closest branch library visit [www.mississauga.ca/library](http://www.mississauga.ca/library).

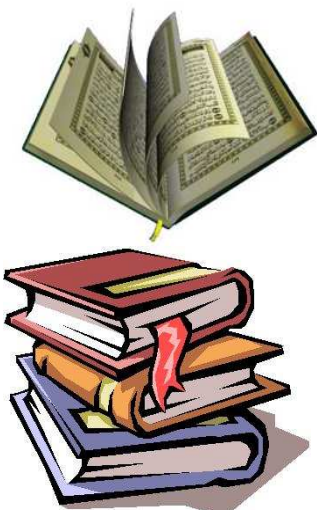
The public library is an essential asset for students of all ages and levels. Children and young people as well as adult learners, should make trips to the public library a routine. There is always something to support school studies – or to offer relaxation from school work. Children move through their reading and interest levels so quickly that they need to explore new areas of the Library each year. Young people move quickly to developing special skills or interests – from skate boarding to music - and eventually want information on college courses, university programs, job hunting and career planning. Adult learners can use the Library to borrow items from other libraries around the province and beyond. All students need a library card and need to use it regularly - to keep the "edge" in their education.

The Friends of the Library are a great support to the Mississauga Library System in terms of volunteer effort and fund raising. To show you appreciate the value of your public library, think about joining and lending your support to their efforts. Also consider making a donation, becoming a sponsor, contributing unwanted materials, or volunteering. Your contribution now can help the Library Board in making a great library even better in the future.

Today's world runs on information. Personal success requires keeping up to date and informed. Your library is the place to start. Get a free library card for every member of your family and use it regularly. Stay informed. Share the library experience with your family. Be an example for your children. Keep learning throughout your life.

*Read: In the name of thy Lord Who createth, Createth man from a clot. Read: And thy Lord is the Most Bounteous, Who teacheth by the pen, Teacheth man that which he knew not. Surah Alaq, The Clot (Verses 1 – 5)*

## La lecture avec nos enfants, Amira Younis



Comme professeur, j'encourage souvent mes étudiants à lire chaque soir chez eux. Je leur dit que même 15 minutes chaque soir sont assez pour qu'ils puissent développer l'habitude et l'abilité de lire. Bien que l'anglais et le français soient les deux langues officielles du Canada, il faut aussi montrer à nos enfants comment c'est important de lire dans leur langue primaire comme l'arabe ou l'urdu, par exemple. Nous sommes

bien chanceux d'avoir plusieurs bibliothèques publiques dans notre communauté alhamdulillah, et plusieurs livres et d'autres ressources sont disponibles aux niveaux de nos enfants. Il faut également que nous lisions avec nos enfants à haute voix. Quelques minutes chaque soir avant le souper ou avant l'heure de se coucher sont assez pour montrer à nos enfants qu'il faut passer du temps à lire juste comme ils passent du temps à jouer ou à regarder la télévision. De plus, il y aura plus d'impact si les

enfants voient leurs parents lire indépendamment chaque soir pour que nous soyons exemples à nos enfants. La lecture est liée à plusieurs avantages tels que la créativité, le développement de l'orthographe et de la grammaire, et une amélioration de l'écriture imaginative. Finalement, passer du temps à lire avec nos petits peut être une activité amusante pour les enfants ainsi que pour les parents!

## *Squash Dip Recipe, Mona Abu-Abid*

### **Ingredients:**

1 medium pepper squash  
4 tbsp light sour cream (Sealtest is Halal, has the kosher symbol)  
3 tbsp light Hellman mayonnaise  
3 tsp 2% yogurt  
1 cube chicken maggi cube (bouillon cube)  
1 stalk celery, external fiber peeled, then grated  
2 baby carrots, grated  
1 tsp dried onion flakes  
1 minced clove of garlic  
1/4 tsp Patak's madrass curry paste (available from No Frills)  
Salt  
Pepper

### **Directions for squash dip dish:**

1. Cut off the top of the squash (pointed end).
2. Remove the seeds, then start to spoon off the flesh of the squash, or use a paring knife to slice the inside off.
3. Don't remove all the flesh, half a cup of flesh is enough to use in the dip.
4. Wash squash with cold water, then cover and place in the fridge.

### **Directions for dip:**

1. Place the squash pulp in a baking dish, add some olive oil and bake for 15 minutes at 350°F.
2. Remove from oven, mash using a fork or use a hand held blender to puree.
3. Mix with the rest of the ingredients and then pour into the cored squash.
4. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour before serving.

## *Fun Ideas for the Kids*

### *Home-made Play dough, Mona Abu-Abid*

### **Materials:**

2 cups of flour  
1/3 cup of salt  
2 table spoons alum or cream of tartar  
2 cups of boiling water  
2 tablespoons oil  
Food colouring or Kool-aid fruit drink

### **Directions:**

1. Mix together dry ingredients.
2. Mix liquid ingredients in a separate bowl.
3. Pour water over dry ingredients.
4. Mix and knead until smooth.
5. Add more flour to make it less sticky if necessary.
6. Store in an air tight container for 1 week.

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## *Women's Aerobics (Fitness) Classes & Muslimah Basketball!*

Want to exercise with other Muslim women? Want to feel fit? Interested in losing weight? Whether you're a beginner or a pro, this is a great opportunity to learn some great skills, get fit and have fun! Join our Aerobics classes!

**Where:** ISNA Islamic Centre, 2200 South Sheridan Way, Mississauga, ON L5J 2M4  
**Registration:** To be announced **When:** April 4, 2010  
**Time:** 11:00 - 12:00 / 12:00 - 1:30 **Cost:** \$4/session

Open to girls and women ages 13+, with all proceeds to go to ISNA's Youth Program.

**Instructor:** Ayah Barakat, certified Personal Trainer & Fitness Instructor

For Basketball, please contact: Khadeejah @ 905-270-4807 or email @ saleh3@rogers.com

**For more info or to reserve your spot, please contact:**

FMW at 905-334-1908 or info@fmw.org

## *Mother Daughter Lunch Celebration – May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010*

*Make Memories with MOM - fun, games, trivia, prizes*

**Where:** Kara Mia (Mississauga - Dixie & Eglinton) 905-290-1190 **Cost:** \$ 20.00

**Time:** 11:00 - 2:30

**For further information call FMW at 905-334-1908, or email zahida@fmw.org or info@fmw.org**