

The Judges of Interfaith Harmony Week

A Testimonial on behalf of Ms. Shaheen Akhtar

It is a privilege for me to write a reference on behalf of a long-time colleague Ms. Shaheen Akhtar. I have known Shaheen since the mid-90's when she served as a teacher at the Islamic Center in Boston (Wayland) at which I had been President on three different occasions. Over this period of interaction I have had an excellent opportunity to gauge Shaheen's unconditional commitment to the many responsibilities, in addition to teaching, that she took on or self-initiated. She was both self-driven and a team player.

In her role as a teacher she focused not only on ensuring that her children were given a sound grounding in Islamic studies, but also reinforced the notion of how to engage with peers of different religious backgrounds with respect and mutual understanding in our pluralistic society.

While engaged as a formal educator, Shaheen, also made time to pursue her passion in promoting inter-religious harmony. She was a regular presenter or participant at interfaith meetings organized by the Islamic Center of Boston and the Islamic Council of New England. More significantly she created the initiative to develop outreach programs with the local Jewish and Christian communities. The following is a list of her accomplishments in the area of interfaith work:

Member- Abrahamic Trialogue in Natick

Member-MetroWest Dialogue Project

Massachusetts Council of Churches and Islamic Council of New England Interfaith discussions

Adviser - Students Together Opposing Prejudice (STOP) Program, an Interfaith Youth Education Program

Member - Wayland Interfaith Leaders

Member - Framingham Interfaith leaders

Open Spirit Center Advisory Committee and Multi-faith Council, Framingham

Framingham Interfaith Book Club

Dialogue with American Baptist Community

Boston Workmen's Circle Jewish organization

September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows

In all of these engagements she was as concerned about educating the general public about what Islam really stands for, and correcting misconceptions and the erosive Islamophobia unleashed by the anti-Islamic acts of ISIS and those of its ilk, as she was genuinely interested in enhancing her personal knowledge of all within the Abrahamic family.

Given her proven track record in promoting interfaith respect and harmony, I am hard pressed to find any other person within the Muslim community who is more dedicated to the further advancement of these enriching goals than Shaheen Akhtar. If recognized for her work and awarded the prize that goes with it, it will allow Shaheen to expand her invaluable work well outside the current geographic boundaries she is confined to through lack of resources. For this reason I give my unconditional support to Ms. Akhtar's application to be considered by the Judges of the Interfaith Harmony Week.

Yours truly,

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