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1966 - 2017

51st Annual Awards Brunch

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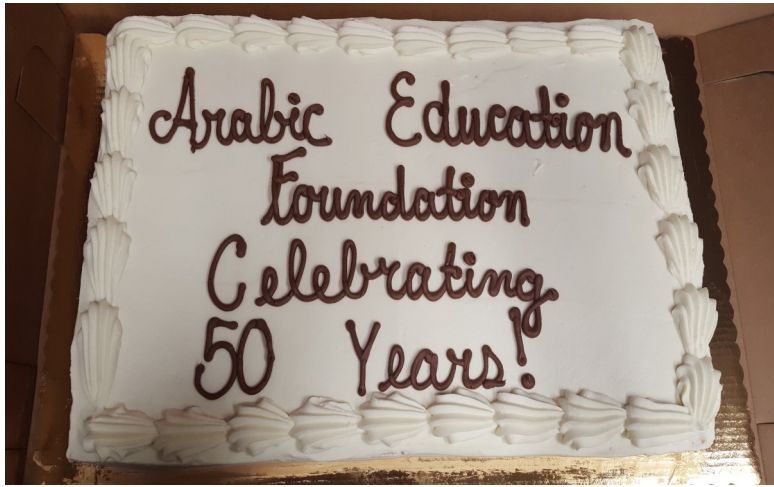
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Message from the *Arabic Educational Foundation*

Welcome, clergy, recipients, parents, family members and friends to the 51st Annual *AEF* Scholarship Awards Brunch Ceremony. It is with great pride that we acknowledge and congratulate the 2017 *AEF* recipients.

Our founding members in 1966 were wise and dedicated Blackstone Valley Educators and Businessmen, setting high standards for the organization. Our mission continues today, as we offer financial assistance to Arab American high school or college students that are furthering their education. We are committed to fundraising for education. The future of our organization is dependent upon the next generation.

To truly celebrate our 51st year we are awarding 34 students *AEF* scholarship based upon the following criteria:

- Arabic descent
- Financial need
- Academic performance
- Student's written essay
- Community service/volunteering

Recipients with an * denote recognition for academic honors (GPA above 3.25)

The organization is an established non-profit and every Board Member is a volunteer with the highest ethical standards.

Our sincerest appreciation for your attendance, support and contributions today and throughout the year.

Arabic Educational Foundation Board

Mission Statement:

The purpose of the organization shall be to offer financial assistance to high school and college students of Arab American descent. Assistance is based on an established set of criteria approved by the *AEF* Board to determine each applicant's eligibility.

- The organization has no political or religious affiliations and depends solely on public donations
- Please excuse misspelled or omitted information

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MICHAEL DAOU *
University of Rhode Island
Finance Major

My Arabic heritage has largely affected the way I view the world and the global tragedies. I am dismayed by the amount of displaced Syrian refugees due to the civil war. No amount of television or online articles could have prepared me for the injustices. I feel sympathy and compassion for the children who were left without parents in a foreign country they did not know. Being from the United States, the idea of innocent men, women, and children living next to a warzone is unfathomable. I am very thankful for the way my Arabic heritage has positively affected the way I view the world.



SARENA BALON *
University of South Carolina
Exercise Science/Pre-Med Major

As someone who grew up in Rhode Island, I thought I had a pretty good understanding of other's views. I did not see where I came from as a bubble, and naively assumed that people across the United States were akin to those in Rhode Island. I very quickly realized the stark differences between South Carolina and the northeast. I however, was fortunate enough to come from a family that exposed me to Syrian and Arabic cultures, and it was these experiences that taught me people grow based upon their exposure to cultures. My Arabic background will forever play a role in how I view the world.



EVA PICKERING
American University
Communications/Legal Affairs/
Economics/Government (CLEG)

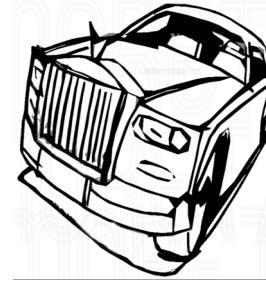
I believe that my background has given me the ability to think critically about foreign affairs, to place myself or my family into the shoes of many people around the world. My Arabic heritage has instilled a strong sense of family in me. I believe that the same family mentality can be applied to our whole country. I am grateful for the opportunity to be in college and to have a job and someplace safe to live. These same opportunities should be afforded to others; in our world's time of need, we should be a gracious host.



JONATHAN URSILLO *
University of Connecticut/Storrs
Environmental Sciences

As an individual with an Arabic background, I feel as though I am more aware of the brutal realities of life for young adults that live in Arab countries. Many of these Arab nations are ravaged by instability that results from incompetent governments, persistent violence and foreign intervention. I am able to enjoy a relatively stable political and social climate that guarantees protection of basic rights to all regardless of background. My grandparents came to America seeking shelter from oppression of Christians in Syria many years ago. America offered the hope of opportunity and religious freedom. I have learned to be more thankful for the very things that I can sometimes take for granted.

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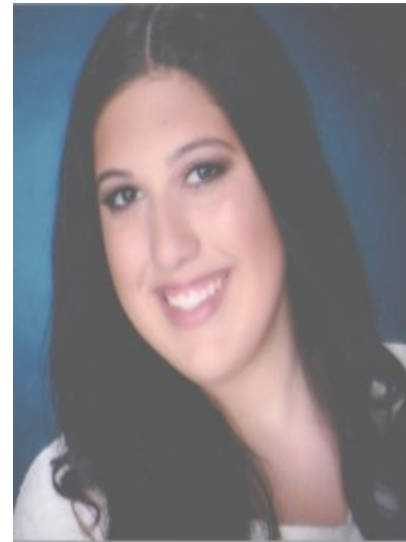
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NOUR SHABO *
Rhode Island College
Technical Theater

I know that my background has caused me to think about questions pertaining to my heritage. I often ponder the thought of how many times I may have felt that the beautiful and exquisite culture that makes me who I am, has shaped myself, my thoughts, my heart and my mind. It's easy to say I see the world differently, especially as a millennial, and especially as a middle eastern woman. Being middle eastern has opened my eyes because I can say that I have had better cultural experiences versus my peers.



ANGELA GATTINELLA
Wentworth Inst. of Technology
Industrial Design

I was raised in a close knit family with family traditions that were strong and always anticipated. In a world filled with constant turmoil and broken families due to societal differences, I often wonder what it would be like if the family unit was united again as it once was and should be today. I see the world as fragile, divided, and in great need of the old school family values. Today, we hear of Syrian families fleeing for their lives. I attend a diverse college in Boston. My friends come from all backgrounds and religious beliefs. We study and socialize together and have spirited conversations. This is how I view the world today...as one diverse society.



JEAN JOSEPH ABOUD
Sacred Heart University
Business Management


My Arabic background has absolutely had an effect on how I see the world ever since I was a little boy. Since my father is from Lebanon and my mother is from the United States, I have been blessed with the best of both worlds. Not only have I had different world experiences, I will always treasure them forever, but they have given me a different outlook on life. People are naturally intrigued with my background. I am able to say and feel I have been very lucky in the sense that I have been able to experience two completely different cultures which I feel makes me very unique.



KATELYN LANE *
Providence College
Health Policy and Management Major

My Arabic background has made me compassionate and sympathetic towards individuals affected by the violence in the Middle East, and refugees that are denied entry into the United States. While many people in the United States who learn about these incidents think little of them or pay little attention, my heart aches for the helpless people. I hope that some day soon the violence in these areas will subside, and people will be able to live their lives free from worry about being harmed.

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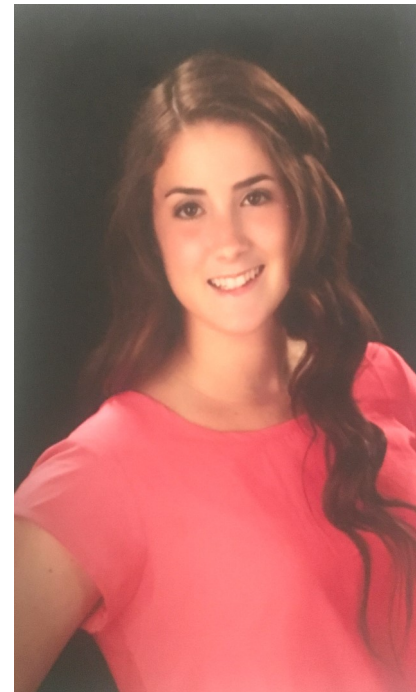
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MIA ROWAN
Johnson & Wales University
Hospitality

Everywhere I go since I was a little, people would ask me: "what ethnicity are you?" Having an Arabic background has definitely changed the way I see the world for many more reasons. All of the Arabic people I have met have been generous and warm hearted. Many from the Church community, and also friends of friends all prove the culture is incredible in the way of preparing, feeding people and the overwhelming generosity.



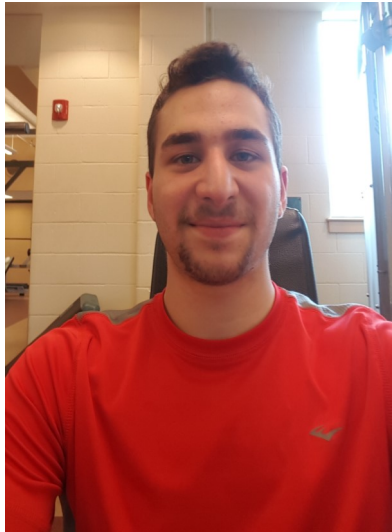
ERIN AZAR *
Quinnipiac University
Health Science/ Physical Therapy

So many factors contribute to how each and every person interprets and interacts with their world. Culture and ethnic backgrounds play a huge role in shaping people's worldviews. I have found that my Arabic culture has always been closely tied to my family and my faith. My Arabic background has kept me rooted in these beliefs through my family's mutual commitment to living a life of faith. I see the world as a continual opportunity to do good.



HAILEIGH GATTINELLA *
Rhode Island College
Special/Elementary Education Major

Whenever you turn on the television and listen to the news channels one hears about the situations that are happening in the Middle East and in other countries that do not enjoy democracy. Tens of thousands of Arabic people and others have been forced to leave their homes and cities to escape from persecution and have been forced to live in refugee camps. When comparing myself with the young people who are living this nightmare, I am very sad. I see the world as unfair and unjust. I wish all people had the same rights and freedoms.



MOHAMMED CHAGHLIL
Rhode Island College
Biology and Computer Science

My roots are embedded in the oldest city in the world, Damascus. My Arabic heritage goes back countless generations and I feel that I need to know more about my civilization. People of the Arab world have a strict respect for the parents and obey them. Sometimes when I use my traditional behavior to perform a task, it ends up surprising people who do not know about my culture. Finally, because of my Arabic background and upbringing, I feel that I can see where truth and falsehood lies. The world needs clarity across all cultures.

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ADAM KHOURY *

Emerson College
Visual Media Arts

Transitioning into the city of Boston to begin my next chapter in life as a college student taught me some valuable lessons. I learned the hard way how to be a proper Bostonian, I have to be pushy. I have to keep my eyes and my head forward and tune out any other living person surrounding me. I wouldn't have noticed this lack of love in the American culture if the Lebanese perspective and context wasn't a lens that I looked at the world through. There is a heightened sense of community in the Lebanese culture, not found in America.



GIANNA ROUSSEAU *

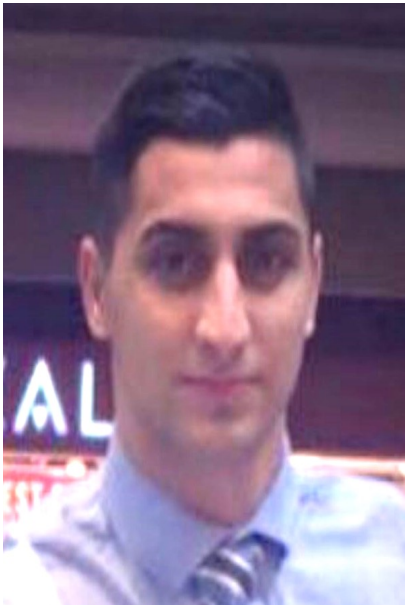
Assumption College
Actuary Science

While some of the people around me blindly follow the implementations of stricter immigration policies, I am fortunate enough to have the background of a Lebanese-Syrian mother who educates me on the matter. Rather than immediately following the views of major politicians in the media, I am educated enough to step back for a moment and assess the situation for myself. My diverse Arabic background has provided me with the ability to grow up in a more accepting environment that recognizes peoples' difference, but does not shame them for it.



OLIVIA FERRI *
Providence College
Business Management/Theology

My Arabic background affects me in more ways than I sometimes realize. When thinking about what my life would be like without my heritage and that is when I realized what an impact it has had on me. I see the world through a larger lens. I am a more global thinker which in turn has made me more aware of events occurring around the world. I have been taught to be more than just tolerant of others, but to love them regardless of their background.



JONATHAN KARRAZ
Rhode Island College
Justice Studies

There are many different cultures around the world that one can reflect and understand. Every culture possess different values and attitudes. My Arabic background has expanded my knowledge of cultures and accepting the differences of others, the importance of life and spending times with loved ones. I have been taught consistent involvement in things that you love and community events would fuel and discipline one to get ahead in life. I view the world as a place that needs peace, instead of hatred and jealousy.

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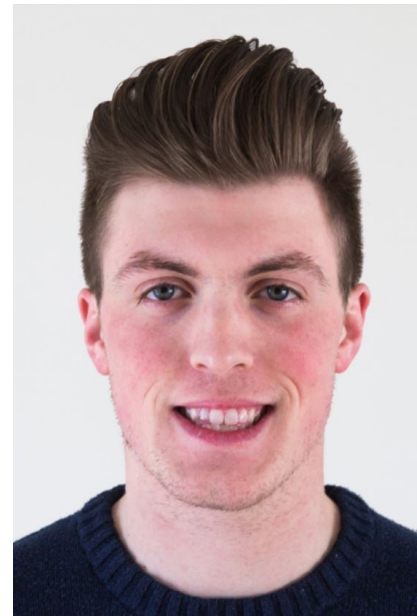
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PETER J. THOMAS II *
University of Rhode Island
Nursing

In America, people see the terrible atrocities that are occurring among the innocent people in Syria, and how Syrian refugees are being denied access to our beautiful country because radicalism has taken advantage of the hospitality of Americans. In today's society, many people are afraid to say that they are Arab-American and hide from who they truly are at their core. I believe it is important for every Arab-American to be proud of who they are.



AMY TUNDEL *
Springfield College
Early Education/Psychology

Being Arabic, and visibly so, at this point in time is scary for most. It comes with an instant label as a terrorist. While some tense up when passing by an Arabic looking older person, I smile because they look like an older distant relative. I associate my Syrian family with great love and affection. We must show compassion for those refugees from other countries, because they are weak women and children. I will always look at the world with an open mind and look out for other Arabic people.



SANDRA DEEB *
University of Rhode Island
Ocean Engineering & French

My eyes have always been open to the rich cultures of the world. I grew up with both my American and Arabic cultures, and am always in touch with my heritage. Arabic was my first language. I adore the cuisine and music. I am also aware that there are many cultures in the world, I accept and respect them. The unknown is often feared and it continues today primarily in the form of racism. I understand the importance of digging beyond the superficial layer, to seek common humanity and appreciate the beauty in its unique qualities.



ALEXANDRA S. AWAD *
University of New Hampshire
Animal Science

As everyone has their unique heritage, I felt I was one of a kind with two completely different cultures. Both cultures value family, education and modest; these values built the foundation for who I am in this world. My trip to Egypt was a pivotal moment in my life, where I built stronger relationships with relatives. As a student, I am blending my cultures into one: furthering developing myself as a person. I plan to join organizations, constantly seeking out and exploring different experiences and people from different cultures.



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MICHAEL COSTA *
Comm. Coll. of Rhode Island
Computer Science

Every single person alive today in America, carry a background of heritage with them, which they also pass onto future generations. The presence of their heritage may change the way those people view the world. I feel obligated to constantly inform myself about the status of the war that is currently going on in Syria and the Middle East. Along with keeping informed, my view of the world is also affected by the conflicts.



EMMA NASSANEY *
Eckerd College
Marine Science

When I first read the question for this year's application, what came to mind was the constant stereotyping of people of all Arabic descent. "They are terrorist that ride camels, smoke hookah and eat hummus." Everything about this statement is wrong. Arab people are afraid to get on planes, speak freely in their mother tongue and dress the way that they would like to dress. They open themselves up to bigotry and violence. To change the way people think, we need to abolish the negative stereotypes associated with being Arabic.



JONATHAN SAKER
Rhode Island College
Business /Finance

The determination of my parents to come to America has given me tons of pride in my heritage and the origin of my family. Throughout my life my parents always strived to have me visit their homeland and learn their culture. Visiting Lebanon has been a humbling experience, especially learning how other people live. Having the ability to speak the Arabic language is something that I am also proud of and will cherish for the rest of my life. From my parents' guidance, all the way to my first hand experiences in a different culture, have helped me construct the person I am today.



SARA CHEDID
Univ. of Massachusetts/ Amherst
Chemistry

Growing up surrounded by the Middle Eastern culture has influenced the way I am. The way I act. The way I see the world. When my peers and society began fearing Middle Easterners, I was not going to allow people's fears to dictate my thoughts and my accomplishments. I am Lebanese and I am very proud of my heritage. I have had to face ignorant people. As I grew older and began attending an open-minded college and being surrounded by different people, I saw that there was a sense of acceptance. Young adults who are willing to accept others without being afraid of judgement because they are from a different culture.

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MEGHAN GHAZAL *
Stonehill College
Biology

A worldview is not something that can be easily discovered over night. It is something that surrounds you throughout your lifetime, thus the way you live. I believe that the experiences of my family and myself have profoundly impacted my worldview. Though I have never directly been the target of an ethnic conflict, it is clearly displayed in our society that being an individual that identifies with a middle eastern country brings about a negative stigma. Along with acceptance of others comes a great deal of strength from my heritage.



MATTHEW MARDO *
Lincoln High School Senior
Harvard University

Being an individual of Arabic descent makes it more difficult to accomplish my goals of being successful in biological sciences and make an impact in the world today. Due to terrorist attacks from those in the Middle East, individuals of Arabic descent have become victims of racial profiling. Since these events have become so instilled in the American psyche, Arabs are provided with a reduced number of opportunities. However, where there is a challenges there is a breakthrough to be made: I hope to persevere through this adversity and prove through my actions and achievements that those of Arabic descent can succeed.



KAITLIN PETERS *
Cumberland High School Senior
Stonehill College

I have come to realize that being Arabic has changed my perception of the world. Due to recent events in the Middle East and the United States some people look at Arabic people in a bad light. I have come to realize that you can't always believe what you hear on the news. The media has the power to shape public opinion and set cultural guidelines, solely by the way they present the facts. I am very proud that I am Arabic and it has made me change my perception of how I view the world.



ANGELA MACKSOUD *
Lincoln High School Senior
Wheaton College

My Arabic background has affected the way I see the world by allowing me to become aware of cultural prejudices, as well as learn more about my culture. Growing up after 9/11 society, I was taught by others that Arabic people carried a negative stereotype. It was not until I became older that I understood the conflict in the Middle East, and where the uneducated, negative opinions that others shared came from. I have become more aware of foreign affairs, and now, I immerse myself in such incredible culture consisting of great traditions and delicious foods.

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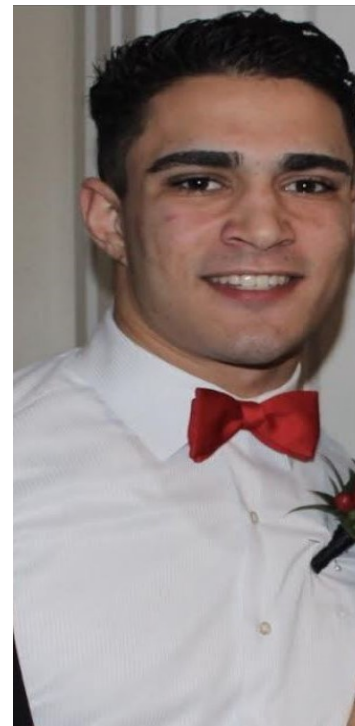
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KLARA KOSTO *
Cranston High School East Senior
Assumption College

I was not born in the United States and in 2006 my family and I moved to Syria seeking a better, safer life and this is where I attended Syrian middle school. However, in 2008, my family and I came to America as refugees. Rhode island has now become my home and leaving our homeland was the hardest decision my family has had to make. I have learned to appreciate what I have and never take anything or anyone for granted. I have learned to work hard for what I want. My family has influenced my life by giving me support and now I know that I can do anything.



TYLER BALON *
Lincoln High School Senior
Ohio State University

In an election year dominated by issues on foreign policy, especially those concerning the Middle East, many people forget the necessity of diversity and the principles in which the United States was founded upon. Many social issues about discrimination and prejudice continue to polarize the nation. As a Syrian-American, I cannot begin to express my gratitude and how fortunate I am to have the unique experiences from the Arabic traditions, food, church festivals and my rich heritage and pride. It has become apparent to me that my Arabic background has really shaped the way in which I see the world.



SARA ALKHOURI *
Lincoln High School Senior
University of Rhode Island

I was born in the heart of Syria, Damascus. Starting over in America without fully speaking English was a challenge. However, I am glad that I had the chance to experience such different cultures. When I first moved to America I realized that many people did not know what was really happening in Syria or what caused the conflict to arise in the first place. I feel that the more you know about any topic the sooner a conflict can end. My Arabic background enhanced how I see the world. I now know that a person should always strive to achieve their dreams.



TAREEF SALLOUM *
Lincoln High School Senior
University of Rhode Island

I can proudly say that since I was brought into this life, my Arabic background and culture have been the window that I have been seeing the world through. I was taught that family is the center of my world. Loyalty and love form the infrastructure of Arabic families and mine is no exception. Religion, as it is typical in Arabic households, has had a big impact on my parents. Accordingly, I have to carry on with this legacy. I am very thankful to have such a family that taught me to stand and support not only each other, but everyone who is in need of help.



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RGB architects

50 Holden Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

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Fax: (401) 273-7156

Email: rgbinfo@rgb.net
Website: www.rgb.net

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MICHAEL SULLIVAN
Cumberland High School Senior
University of Rhode Island

My Arabic background has taught me to view things from both a local and global perspective with an open mind and to not “judge a book by its cover” but to be objective and to make decisions based on fact and not by appearances, popular opinion and or what others may say. With current events taking place in the world, it is easy to be judgmental about a person because of where they come from, to stereo-type someone because of the religion they practice or because they seek to leave their country for a better way of life.



JENNIFER C. PASQUARIELLO *
No. Smithfield High School Senior
University of Rhode Island

The Arabic culture was shown to me by my grandmother and learned more about my background through various church events. These events made me appreciate and enjoy my background within a community. However, I value these Arabic traits the most when I am with my family. Moments you spend with loved one should be cherished because time is ultimately fleeing. My grandmother has shared many stories about her childhood and coming to America and I believe that I should help new families in my community adapt to life in the United States.

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KENNETH KANDO

ATTORNEY AT LAW

Centerville Commons
875 Centerville Road
Warwick, RI 02886



Direct: (401) 585-9110
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of my husband

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and son

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By: Rosalyn Capaldi

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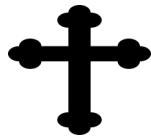
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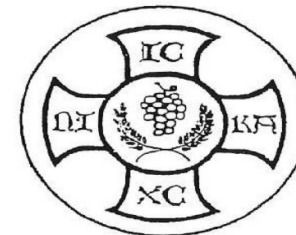
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To the
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May you continue to strengthen the growth of your organization towards furthering the educational needs and goals of our youth, promoting the pride, culture and contributions that the Arabic speaking people throughout the centuries have achieved.

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George and Sandra Matook

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On 51 YEARS

..... of support and recognition to our young
Arab American minds, through career development
and advancement.

KEEP UP THE GREAT WORK !!!

The Honorable Thomas Lazieh
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