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**Soraya Tarzi’s Founding of ‘Ishadul Naswan,’ The First Magazine for Women in Afghanistan, and The Anjuman-i Himayat-i-Niswan, A Women’s Welfare Organization**
Supporting International Women’s Day

CAPTURING COUNTLESS TALES IN A SINGLE SNAPSHOT
The Afghan Community Center is a vibrant and inclusive space in Saint Louis that serves as a hub for the Afghan community and fosters connections with the broader community.

The Afghan Community Center seeks to develop a center that reflects the diverse needs, aspirations, and cultural heritage of the Afghan community in the United States. The ultimate goal is to create a welcoming environment that promotes social integration, empowerment, and mutual understanding.

The Afghan Community Center aspires to create a dynamic and inclusive space that celebrates Afghan culture, fosters social cohesion, and empowers individuals and families to thrive within the St. Louis community.
In the heart of St. Louis, a beacon of innovation and craftsmanship shines brightly through the endeavors of Sultan Home Repair and Remodeling. At the helm of this transformative journey is Ajmal Darwish, a visionary entrepreneur whose dreams and determination have crossed oceans and cultural barriers to redefine the essence of home improvement. Merging the rich narrative of Ajmal’s journey with the detailed offerings of Sultan Home Repair and Remodeling, we present a story of resilience, excellence, and community empowerment.

Ajmal’s story begins with a simple yet profound love for construction and home repair, nurtured from childhood. His path, from a high school graduate in Turkey to a celebrated business owner in the United States, is a testament to the power of dreams and perseverance. Recognized for his innovative solutions and dedication to quality, Ajmal’s journey was catapulted to new heights when he received the prestigious $15,000 Afghan Entrepreneurship Grant. This accolade not only honored his commitment but also underscored Sultan Home Repair and Remodeling’s pledge to elevate homes with unparalleled craftsmanship.

Sultan Home Repair and Remodeling stands as a testament to Ajmal’s vision, offering a wide array of services that promise to transform every corner of your home. From plumbing repairs to kitchen cabinet design, from basement transformations to lawn care, Sultan ensures that your living spaces are not just enhanced but reborn. Each service, delivered with exceptional quality and innovation, reflects Ajmal’s passion for bringing remodeling dreams to life.

But Sultan’s offerings are far more than a list of services; they are a bridge between cultures, a promise of clear communication, and an assurance of inclusivity. With a team fluent in English, Dari, Pashto, Urdu, and Turkish, led by Ajmal and his friend Paul, Sultan guarantees a service experience that transcends language barriers, fostering a sense of connection and understanding.

The recognition through the Afghan Entrepreneurship Grant is a nod not just to Sultan’s business excellence but to its profound commitment to community empowerment and economic contribution in St. Louis. By choosing Sultan Home Repair and Remodeling, clients support a vision that extends beyond mere home improvement. They become part of a larger narrative of fostering community resilience and growth.

Are you ready to embark on a transformative journey with Sultan Home Repair and Remodeling? To enhance your home with a team that combines expertise, innovation, and a deep-rooted passion for community betterment. Reach out and discover the difference. Sultan Home Repair and Remodeling isn’t just about remodeling homes; it’s about building dreams and strengthening communities, one project at a time. Let’s bring your home vision to life, together.

Connect with Sultan Home Repair and Remodeling:
• Email: sultanhomeremodeling@gmail.com
• Cell: 314 924 2952

Hamdullah Hamdard
International Institute of St. Louis
Immigrants often face numerous challenges and undergo significant changes as they leave their homes in search of a safer and more stable environment to build a better future. Upon finding themselves in an entirely different and foreign world, these transitions can be daunting. Wahid Mahmodi, who arrived in the United States in December 2021, found himself in a completely new society where, like many immigrants, he faced numerous obstacles in smoothing his path.

Despite holding a degree in Computer Science from Afghanistan and possessing extensive experience in IT and teaching computer programs at universities, educational centers, and online sites, Mahmodi had to seek employment in a different field to support his living expenses. However, he understood that acceptance into the job market required effective time and expense management. He believed that, despite all the hardships, America is a land of opportunity for those who act with purpose and perseverance and aim for the heights of success.

For newcomers eager to continue their education and seeking professional job opportunities, there are humanitarian organizations and institutions that serve as reliable supporters. Through a scholarship from one of these organizations and in collaboration with the International Institute of St. Louis, Mahmodi completed a six-month cybersecurity course at Claim Academy. This led to his introduction to Washington University and a 17-month employment contract with the university’s IT department.

He views this success as just the beginning and believes he can leverage this opportunity to significantly improve his situation in the near future. For him, migration is not solely about security, welfare, and comfort in one of the world’s most advanced countries. He values specialization, experience, and continuing education at reputable scientific institutions as significant achievements of his migration journey.

Mahmodi plans to expand his educational YouTube channel, Keyhan Poya, which has been active for several years, alongside his teaching and work at the university. His goal is to provide a valuable learning resource for those interested in computer science in Afghanistan and beyond. Given the current situation in Afghanistan and the harsh conditions imposed by the Taliban, he believes he can contribute through his YouTube channel. He encourages other Afghans living in St. Louis, who possess skills and knowledge in various scientific and professional fields, not to give in to the initial hardships of migration and to exert every effort towards achieving their goals.

Hamdullah Hamdard
International Institute of St. Louis
In Afghanistan, the essence of society is deeply rooted in the strength of family bonds, emphasizing a culture of collectivism where the well-being and honor of the family unit are paramount.

This societal fabric underscores the importance of unity, mutual support, and collective prosperity, ensuring that all members, regardless of age, contribute to and benefit from the family’s harmony and success.

Family life in Afghanistan is characterized by privacy, respect, and loyalty, reflecting the high value placed on familial integrity. Within the sanctity of home, personal matters are kept confidential, strengthening the bonds among family members. This environment creates a supportive space where personal triumphs and challenges are collectively addressed, reinforcing the family’s unity.

Afghan households are often large and multigenerational, embodying a vibrant network of relationships and interactions. Living arrangements typically include extended families under one roof, sharing not only their living space but also the joys and responsibilities of daily existence. This communal lifestyle fosters a cooperative spirit, especially among women, who are central to nurturing, educating, and maintaining the household. Their collaborative efforts in child-rearing and managing domestic affairs highlight the cherished communal values of Afghan society.

The family structure in Afghanistan respects tradition and hierarchy, with the eldest male often shouldering decision-making and economic responsibilities. Yet, every family member plays a vital role. Women, in particular, are the household’s backbone, tasked with preserving its warmth and managing day-to-day operations. Their invaluable contributions to domestic chores, child-rearing, and the overall well-being of the family reflect the resilience and significance of Afghan women.

Children are raised to respect elders and value the wisdom of generations past, ensuring the continuity and reverence of Afghan traditions and knowledge. The distinct yet complementary roles of men and women in family life create a balanced and harmonious unit, foundational to Afghan society.

Marriage in Afghanistan is viewed as a union that brings families together, emphasizing compatibility, respect, and shared values. The celebration of marriage symbolizes unity, reinforcing community bonds and a sense of belonging.

At its core, Afghan culture celebrates the strength and integrity of the family, with women playing a pivotal role in upholding household harmony and guiding future generations. Amidst a vibrant and resilient culture, the unbreakable bonds of family and the cherished contributions of women weave the fabric of a strong, enduring Afghan society. Through unity and familial bonds, the Afghan community thrives, anchored in the principles that hold sacred the collective well-being and prosperity.

Hamdullah Hamdard
International Institute of St. Louis
Soraya Tarzi, born on November 24, 1899, in Damascus, Syria, was not just the first queen consort of Afghanistan but a pivotal figure in the nation’s modernization efforts, especially regarding women’s rights. As the beloved wife of King Amanullah Khan and the daughter of Sardar Mahmud Beg Tarzi, a distinguished Afghan intellectual and political figure, she was at the forefront of ushering in a new era for Afghanistan from 1919 to 1929.

Educated by her forward-thinking parents, Soraya was imbued with modern values and a progressive vision for her country. Her marriage to Amanullah Khan in 1913, following her family’s return from exile at the invitation of King Habibullah Khan, marked the beginning of a partnership that would radically transform Afghanistan. Unlike his predecessors, Amanullah Khan was monogamous, dissolving the royal harem and setting a precedent for women’s emancipation that was publically supported by Queen Soraya.

As queen, Soraya Tarzi was an advocate for women’s education and rights, embodying the change her husband’s regime sought to implement. She was instrumental in the establishment of the first primary school for girls in Kabul, the Masturat School, and the Masturat Hospital for women, breaking barriers and setting new standards for women’s participation in public and political life. Her efforts did not stop there; in 1921, she founded “Ishadul Naswan” (Guidance for Women), the country’s first magazine for women, and the Anjuman-i Himayat-i-Niswan, an organization dedicated to women’s welfare.

Queen Soraya’s activism extended to the international stage, where she and her husband were celebrated for their modernist views during their European tour in 1927-1928. In 1928, she made a bold statement by publicly removing her veil at a grand assembly, encouraging other women to follow her lead and embrace their freedoms.

However, the rapid pace of these reforms sparked resistance among traditionalists, leading to unrest. In 1929, amidst rising tensions, King Amanullah abdicated to prevent a civil war, and the couple went into exile in Rome, Italy. Queen Soraya lived there until her death on April 20, 1968. She was buried in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, next to her husband, leaving behind a legacy of progress and empowerment that continues to inspire.

Soraya Tarzi’s life and work highlight the complexities of modernization in a traditional society. Her efforts towards women’s emancipation, education, and healthcare set foundational stones for future generations. Despite the challenges and eventual exile, her vision for a modern Afghanistan where women could thrive alongside men remains a powerful testament to her enduring influence.

Hamdullah Hamdard
International Institute of St. Louis
As the frosty tendrils of winter recede, St. Louis, Missouri, unfolds into a vibrant tableau of springtime splendor, inviting locals and visitors alike to revel in the season’s renewal. This enchanting period in the Gateway City is a celebration of new beginnings, marked by a kaleidoscope of activities that weave together the natural world, cultural festivities, and the thrill of outdoor adventures into one cohesive, exhilarating experience.

The transition into spring is perhaps most vividly captured at the Missouri Botanical Garden, affectionately known as MoBOT. Here, the extended hours of April allow for leisurely explorations through gardens bursting with cherry blossoms, tulips, and azaleas, painting a scene straight out of a dream. The garden becomes a cultural crossroads during the Sake and Sakura event, where visitors are transported to the serene ambiance of the Japanese Garden’s Teahouse Island, blending natural beauty with a taste of far-off places. The annual sale hosted by the St. Louis Herb Society adds another layer to this experience, offering attendees the chance to bring a slice of this botanical paradise into their own homes.

The city’s festival scene is equally dynamic, catering to a wide range of interests and passions. The Saint Louis Art Museum transforms into a floral wonderland with its Art in Bloom festival, where the lines between art and nature blur in a stunning display of floral arrangements inspired by the museum’s collections. Meanwhile, the aromatic allure of the Kickin’ It Route 66 BBQ Challenge in St. Robert fills the air, promising a feast for the senses as pitmasters vie for supremacy. The Fault Line Film Festival shifts the focus to the silver screen, showcasing the creative talents of university and high school students and offering a glimpse into the future of film.

Adventure awaits in the lush settings of St. Louis’s parks and outdoor spaces. The Go Ape Treetop Adventure in Creve Coeur Park offers a heart-pounding journey through the canopy, while the St. Louis Zoo provides a more grounded, yet equally engaging, exploration of global wildlife and conservation efforts. The city’s parks, notably the iconic Forest Park, become havens of tranquility, where spring blooms set the stage for peaceful strolls and moments of reflection amid the bustling city life.

In St. Louis, spring is more than just a season; it’s a multifaceted celebration that embraces the joy of discovery, the beauty of nature, and the warmth of community. From the enchanting displays at the botanical garden to the bustling energy of festivals, and the call of the wild that echoes through parks and zoos, the city offers a tapestry of experiences that are as diverse as they are delightful. As spring unfurls its colors and scents across St. Louis, the city beckons everyone to join in the celebration and make lasting memories amidst its seasonal wonders.

Hamdullah Hamdard
International Institute of St. Louis
Nawruz, the herald of spring and a symbol of renewal and new beginnings, is a festival deeply ingrained in the cultural tapestry of Afghanistan. This ancient festival, celebrated on the day of the vernal equinox, typically falls between March 19th and 21st, marking the start of spring in the Northern Hemisphere. Derived from the Avestan language, “Nawruz” means ‘new day,’ and it is a time when nature rejuvenates, embodying new life and fresh starts.

In Afghanistan, Nawruz is not just a one-day celebration but a series of events spreading joy and festivity over two weeks, culminating in the Afghan New Year on March 20th. It is a public holiday cherished by millions, bringing together families and communities in a spirit of peace, solidarity, and rejuvenation.

Preparations for Nawruz begin with Chaharshanbe Suri, the festival of fire, symbolizing the triumph of light over darkness and purity over the remnants of the past year. People leap over bonfires with chants that metaphorically exchange their pallor for vitality, a practice rooted in purification.

Central to Nawruz celebrations in Afghanistan is the tradition of Haft Mewa, a delightful fruit salad made from seven dried fruits, symbolizing the coming together of family and the sharing of sweetness for the year ahead. This is alongside, or sometimes in place of, the Haft Sin table, which is adorned with seven items starting with the Persian letter ‘sin’, each symbolizing hopes for the new year, ranging from health to prosperity.

The festival is rich in communal activities and traditional games, such as kite flying and buzkashi, a thrilling equestrian sport. Mazar-i-Sharif, known for its Guli Sorkh Festival (Tulip Festival), becomes a focal point of celebrations, with people thronging to see the blooming red tulips and participate in the vibrant Janda Bala ceremony outside the Blue Mosque.

Despite the shadow cast by years of conflict and the recent challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the spirit of Nawruz remains undimmed. Afghans, resilient and proud of their heritage, continue to celebrate with fervor. Nawruz is a testament to the enduring hope and communal solidarity of the Afghan people, a time when the beauty of spring and the joy of renewal are embraced, transcending the adversities of the present.

The festival of Nawruz in Afghanistan is a vibrant, collective expression of the enduring human desire for renewal and joy. It is a time for reflection, forgiveness, and looking forward with optimism. As families gather, traditional foods are shared, and prayers for peace and prosperity are offered, Nawruz reaffirms the cultural richness and resilience of the Afghan people, reminding us all of the perpetual promise of a new day.

Hamdullah Hamdard
International Institute of St. Louis
The month of March is designated to honor and celebrate Women's History, and March 8 is recognized on a global scale as International Women's Day (IWD). Every year, this day honors women in our daily life as well as their impact in our communities and society. This year's theme for IWD is “Inspire Inclusion.” Including women provides them added sense of value, belonging, relevance and empowerment—and provides value to the overall community.

On an individual basis, it’s important to understand, value and seek out the inclusion of women and girls. Additionally, sharing this knowledge, support and encouragement with others is key. This is why the International Institute supports women in the following areas and beyond:

- forging women’s economic empowerment
- recruiting, retaining and developing female talent
- supporting women and girls into leadership, decision-making, business and STEM
- designing and building infrastructure that meets the needs of women and girls
- helping women and girls make informed decisions about their health
- involving women and girls in sustainable agriculture and food security
- providing women and girls with access to quality education and training
- elevating women and girl’s participation and achievement in sport
- promoting creative and artistic talent of women and girls

- addressing further areas supporting the advancement of women and girls

The Afghan Community Support Program is poised to help forge women’s economic empowerment through supporting women entrepreneurs in the St. Louis area. $15,000 grants are available for Afghan women who are looking to establish or grow their business. This is a true testament to the investment St. Louis is willing to make on Afghan women, and women every day in our city.

Applications for the $15,000 grant will be accepted through the end of March. Applicants must be residents of St. Louis, Missouri.

Krissy Durant
International Institute of St. Louis
Afghanistan, situated at the heart of Asian civilization, boasts numerous historical sites and a rich cultural heritage. Afghan cuisine enjoys a unique fan base worldwide, with each region’s food influenced by its climate, lifestyle, hospitality, religious beliefs, traditions, and temperaments, tailored to the local populace’s tastes. Afghans have preserved their authenticity and culture, alongside their diverse traditional attire, through their cuisine. The country is home to a variety of ethnic groups, customs, and religions, contributing to its significant culinary diversity. This diversity and exceptional hospitality make Afghanistan a memorable destination for many foreign tourists, especially those eager to sample its most famous dishes.

When visiting Afghanistan, exploring places with rich cultural influences, including religious sites and the National Museum of Afghanistan, is essential. However, tasting traditional Afghan dishes is a must, as these foods are deeply rooted in the country’s culture and symbolize its geographical and ethnic diversity. Afghan cuisine features a wide range of ingredients, allowing people with different culinary preferences to come together and share their thoughts on food. Various grains, legumes, meats, and other ingredients are used in Afghan cooking, adding to its food diversity.

Traditional Afghan dishes such as Mantu, Aushak, Bolani, Qabili Palaw, Delda, Aush, and Kichri are among the most authentic and popular among the people. Kabuli Palaw, known locally as Qabili Palaw, is a traditional Afghan dish made of steamed rice and lamb, enhanced with raisins, carrots, and a mix of sweet spices.

Bolani is traditional street food made with dough filled with meat, vegetables, pumpkin, or potatoes, perfect for a light meal or snack. Aushak, also known as Afghan leek and scallion dumplings, primarily consists of vegetable-filled dumplings, served with tomato sauce and dried mint.

Afghan kebab, another local favorite, is a meat dish slowly cooked in various styles, predominantly using lamb. Mantu, a popular dish among Afghans, is known for its natural ingredients and delicious taste, often featured in festive meals, adding color to celebrations.

The traditionality among Afghans has allowed them to pass down their thousands of years old history and identity through generations, with Afghan cuisine being one of these cherished aspects.

Elyas Mirzaee
Kabul - Afghanistan
Unlock your real estate dreams in the U.S. with Paul Doelling, specializing in services for immigrants. From home buying to starting a business, Paul provides tailored support, including Islamic financing and lease negotiations, all with no buyer commission. Based in St. Louis, he’s your ally in achieving success. Visit us to start your journey.

Homes:
My services for new immigrants and refugees include:
• Assisting in buying homes and educating immigrants on the home buying process
• Assisting buyers with finding lenders who work with immigrants
• Assisting buyers looking for Islamic Financing
• Assisting buyers in obtaining financial assistance, such as paying for closing costs or down payments

Commercial:
I help immigrants with real estate issues with starting new businesses, including:
• Assisting in finding good locations to establish businesses
• Assisting in finding lenders who work with immigrants
• Negotiating leases with landlords
• Reviewing current leases and providing advice on saving money in leases

My office is located at 1034 S. Brentwood, Suite 750, in the University Club Tower, St. Louis, MO 63117. My website is www.pauldoelling.unitedplatinumrealty.com
My commission comes from the seller of the house or from the landlord of a building. I do not charge my buyer clients for any commission.
Also, I volunteer at the International Institute, Viva Brasil, and United Nations Association.

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pmdoelling@gmail.com
Afghan Journal is thrilled to announce that our newspaper is now open to submissions from talented local authors. Share your captivating stories with us and let your voice be heard. Send us your articles today!