

THE AFGHAN JOURNAL

ISSUE #14

FEBRUARY
2024



THE AFGHAN JOURNAL

**FREE TAX PREPARATIONS
FURTHER FINANCIAL
RESOURCES AVAILABLE
THROUGH INTERNA-
TIONAL INSTITUTE OF ST.
LOUIS**

Tax appointments can
be made Mondays...

**BUILDING ETHICAL
FOUNDATIONS
INSTILLING PRINCIPLES
AND VALUES IN CHILDREN**

Teaching values and
ethical principles to
children helps them
lead a successful...

**DISCOVERING THE
DELMAR LOOP: A FEAST
FOR THE SENSES**

As you stroll along the
vibrant streets, take a
moment to appreci-
ate the stars on the St.
Louis Walk of Fame...

**CRAFTING MEMORIES
WITH SAY DECOR:
BIHISHTA'S
INSPIRATIONAL JOURNEY**

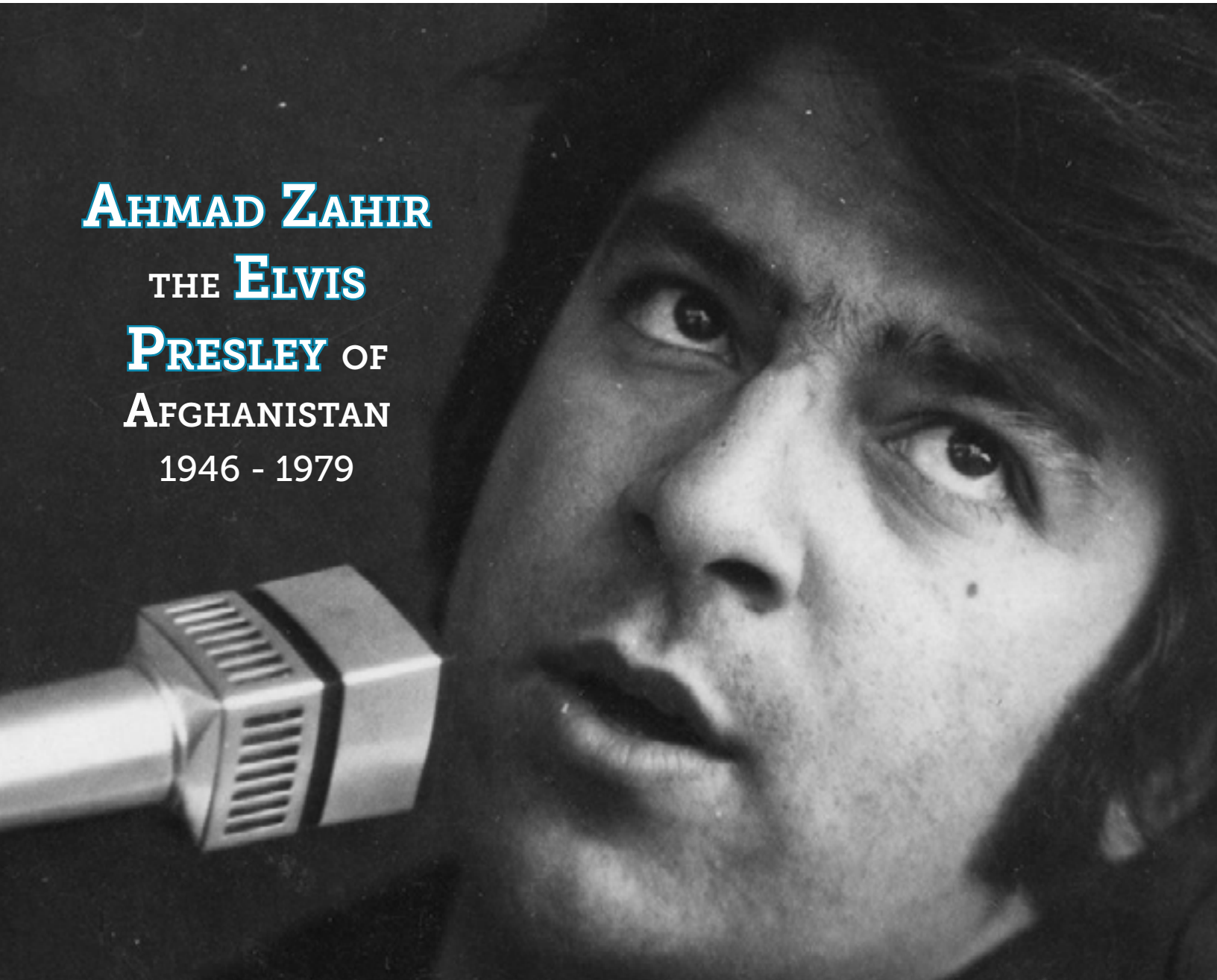
Bihishta's journey
began in Uzbekistan
after finishing high
school, where she...

AHMAD ZAHIR

THE ELVIS

PRESLEY OF AFGHANISTAN

1946 - 1979





08



06



05

Free Tax Preparation 04

February 8th to April 10th 2024
Tuesdays from 12pm-4pm
Wednesdays from 10am-2pm

Who Qualifies
Available to international
Institute clients,
immigrants, refugees, low-
to-moderate income
households and individuals
with disabilities

Tax appointments can be made
Monday - Friday from 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

BY APPOINTMENT ONLY
CALL 314-655-0929

All appointments will hold inside the International Institute
at 3401 Arsenal Street, St. Louis, MO 63116




10



07



09



11



**CAPTURING COUNTLESS TALES
IN A SINGLE SNAPSHOT**



AFGHAN COMMUNITY CENTER

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.

CONTENTS

- 04 FREE TAX PREPARATIONS FURTHER FINANCIAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE THROUGH INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ST. LOUIS
- 05 DISCOVERING THE DELMAR LOOP: A FEAST FOR THE SENSES
- 06 THE HISTORICAL KHARABAT STREET IN KABUL
- 07 AHMAD ZAHIR: THE ICONIC VOICE THAT TRANSCENDED BORDERS
- 08 BUILDING ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS INSTILLING PRINCIPLES AND VALUES IN CHILDREN
- 09 TIPS FOR STAYING HEALTHY IN COLD AND FLU SEASON
- 10 THE RICH HERITAGE AND TIMELESS ELEGANCE OF AFGHAN TRADITIONAL CLOTHING
- 11 CRAFTING MEMORIES WITH SAY DECOR: BIHSHTA'S INSPIRATIONAL JOURNEY

FREE TAX PREPARATIONS FURTHER FINANCIAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE THROUGH INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ST. LOUIS



As part of their long list of services provided to immigrants in the St. Louis area, the International Institute's Community Development Corporation ([IICDC](#)) partners each year with GECC and AARP volunteers to provide free tax preparation services. AARP are IRS-certified and provide tax preparation services to older Americans, low- and moderate-income tax filers, people with disabilities and those with limited English language skills.

Tax appointments can be made in person or by phone. All tax appointments will take place in person at the International Institute of St. Louis.

Make an appointment in person at the International Institute: Tuesdays 12:00 pm – 4:00 pm or Wednesdays 10:00 am – 2:00 pm.

Make an appointment by phone by calling 314-655-0929 Mondays and Thursdays, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm, or Mondays, Tuesday or Wednesday evenings from 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm.

Tax filing appointments begin February 6 and take place until April 10.

Priority is given to the International Institute clients and members of the local immigrant and refugee community. However, this is a tax service open to anyone in the community who qualifies.

Along with free tax preparations, the IICDC provides the following financial resources for immigrants in the region:

- Business Microloans & Business Education Sessions
- Business Riba Free Loans
- Consumer Credit Builder Loans
- Immigration Loans

- ASSET Program
- Financial Literacy Classes
- Tax Clinics
- Technology Access through T-Mobile



Free Tax Preparation

February 6th to April 10th, 2024

Who Qualifies

Available to International Institute clients, immigrants, refugees, low-to-moderate income households and individuals with disabilities or low English proficiency

Book an appointment

You can schedule an appointment in person or by phone, but all appointments will be held in person at the International Institute
3401 Arsenal Street, St. Louis, MO 63118



Make an appointment in person, at the International Institute:

- Tuesdays 12 pm–4 pm
- Wednesdays 10 am–2 pm

Make an appointment by phone, call 314-655-0929:

- Mondays and Thursdays 10 am–3 pm
- Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday 5 pm–8 pm

Services provided by Gateway EITC Community Coalition and AARP volunteers:

Documents you must bring with you to your appointment:

1. Identification WITH A PICTURE such as a driver's License, State ID, Permanent Resident or Green Card, Passport, etc.) for taxpayer and spouse.
2. Social Security card for every person named on the tax return.
3. Income documentation for taxpayer and spouse:
 - a. W-2 forms from every job held in 2023
 - b. SSA-1099 - Social Security payments for 2023
 - c. SSI letter from social security
 - d. 1099-G Unemployment compensation for 2023
4. Form 1095-A: health insurance statements.
5. Your Federal and State tax returns, if you have them.
6. Expense documentation for 2023 for every person named on the tax return.
 - a. Any 1098 forms listing expenses.
 - b. Records of payments for post-secondary/college education
 - c. Records of payments for child and/or dependent care
7. If you are married and filing your return together, both spouses must be present for e-filing.
8. A bank account check for tax return direct deposit if desired.

Carrie Brickey

International Institute of St. Louis

DISCOVERING THE DELMAR LOOP: A FEAST FOR THE SENSES



The Delmar Loop is nestled in the heart of St. Louis, stretching along Delmar Blvd from Trinity Ave to DeBaliviere Ave, the [Delmar Loop](#) is not just a street; it's an immersive experience waiting to be explored. This buzzing district seamlessly blends entertainment, culinary delights, and a touch of history, creating a vibrant tapestry that captures the spirit of the city.

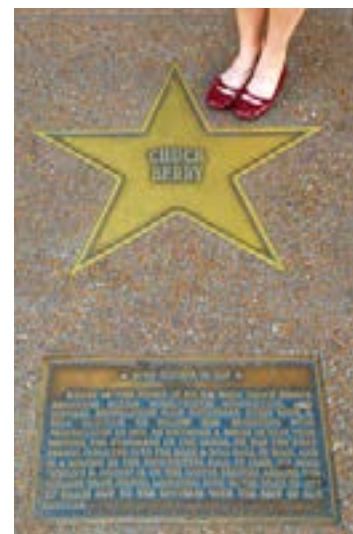
As you step into the Delmar Loop, the lively beats of live music fill the air. Renowned venues like [the Pageant](#) and [Delmar Hall](#) become the stage for rock, roots and indie gigs, creating a rhythmic atmosphere that resonates through the streets. It's a music



lover's paradise where you can discover new sounds or enjoy your favorite tunes in a dynamic setting.

But the Delmar Loop is not just about music; it's a culinary journey that caters to every palate. From the savory offerings of noodle bars to the smoky goodness of BBQ joints, and the exotic flavors of Korean and Mexican cuisine, the diverse array of restaurants along Delmar Boulevard is a haven for food enthusiasts.

As you stroll along the vibrant streets, take a moment to appreciate the stars on the [St. Louis Walk of Fame](#). Icons like [Maya Angelou](#) and [Betty Grable](#) have left their mark, celebrated through brass plaques embedded in the sidewalk. Nearby, the statue of [Chuck Berry](#) pays homage to a musical legend, adding a touch of stardom to the cultural landscape.



The Delmar Loop is more than just a contemporary hotspot; it holds a piece of history. In the 1950s, it was the go-to meeting place for [University City's](#) teenagers with theaters like the Varsity and Tivoli shaping the social scene. Today, it stands as a testament to the city's evolution, where the past seamlessly blends with the present.

And there's more – the Delmar Loop surprises with unique boutiques offering treasures you won't find elsewhere. Two cannabis dispensaries add a distinctive touch for those interested in exploring a different kind of experience.

In essence, the Delmar Loop is a sensory feast, a place where the vibrant energy of live music meets the diverse flavors of a culinary adventure. Whether you're here for the beats, the bites, or the blend of history and modernity, the Delmar Loop invites you to discover a St. Louis experience like no other. It's not just a street; it's the heartbeat of a city, pulsating with life and inviting you to join the rhythm.

Hamdullah Hamdard

International Institute of St. Louis

THE HISTORICAL KHARABAT STREET IN KABUL



Khwaja Khordak Street, located in Kabul's first district, has a rich history dating back to ancient times. Originally called "Khwaja Khordak," it later transformed into "[Kharabat Street](#)," becoming a haven for artists and singers. This name has stood the test of time, preserving the street's vibrant history.

During [Amir Sher Ali Khan](#)'s rule, the street was named "Khwaja Khordak" before becoming "Kharabat Street" to accommodate the growing community of artists near [Bala Hesar](#). The street reflects the changes in Kabul's cultural landscape over time.

In the past, music was limited to palaces and royal courts, but during [Abdul Rahman Khan](#)'s era, classical music became more accessible to the general population. The old city of Kabul around Kharabat Street holds historical treasures, including the enchanting Lane of Lovers and Sufis.

Kharabat Street became a flourishing center for traditional [Afghan music](#), nurtured by legendary musicians like [Ustad Qasim](#), [Rahimbakhsh](#), Yaqub Qasimi, [Shida](#), and [Ustad Sarahang](#). Their artistry enriched the cultural tapestry and resonated beyond borders.

Stretching nearly a thousand meters in length and four meters in width, Kharabat Street has witnessed the passage of time. While the [Aga Khan Foundation](#) once paved it with cement, some areas show signs of decay, reflecting the street's resilient spirit.

Beyond its musical heritage, Kharabat Street is known for the age-old tradition of [kite flying](#). As the Kite Center, it has been a hub for buying and selling kites. While kite flying is now popular among the youth, some adults in Kabul still engage in this ancient game during leisure moments. This cultural tradition transcends generations, with older individuals decorating kites with love messages that gently descend upon the homes of their beloveds.



Kharabat Street is not just a relic of Afghanistan's cultural legacy; it is the birthplace of prominent Afghan artists and artisans, celebrated like the timeless melodies echoing through its winding lanes.

Hamdullah Hamdard
International Institute of St. Louis

AHMAD ZAHIR: THE ICONIC VOICE THAT TRANSCENDED BORDERS

In the heart of Afghanistan, where the mountains echo with tales of resilience and the valleys whisper the secrets of a nation, there emerged a musical luminary who would redefine the soundscape of the country. [Ahmad Zahir](#), born on June 14, 1946, in Kabul, is not just a name; he is the rhythmic heartbeat of Afghan music, an icon whose influence has transcended borders and left an indelible mark on the cultural tapestry of the nation.

Often hailed as “the [Elvis Presley](#) of Afghanistan,” Ahmad Zahir’s journey from a privileged [Pashtun](#) family with ties to the royal court to becoming the nation’s first pop sensation was nothing short of extraordinary. In a society where pursuing a career in music was deemed “low class,” Zahir defied societal norms and embarked on a musical odyssey that would change Afghanistan’s music scene forever.

His early years, marked by self-taught mastery of the guitar, accordion, and harmonium, laid the foundation for a musical career that spanned a mere decade but resonated across generations. The band he formed in high school, with classmates as his musical comrades, catapulted him into the limelight, earning him the moniker “Bulbul-e-Habibia” or the Nightingale of [Habibia High School](#).

Despite societal reservations, Zahir’s passion for music led him to pursue a degree in English and later work as a journalist. It was during this time that he found mentors and collaborators who would shape his distinctive style, blending traditional Afghan music with influences from Western genres like British pop and French belle chansons.

Zahir’s voice, a baritone that could stir the deepest emotions, became the hallmark of his music. His lyrics, often drawing from [Persian poetry](#) and addressing themes ranging from love to politics, showcased a versatility that set him apart. In a country where music was cherished but musicians were considered “low class,” Zahir not only broke barriers but also elevated the status of musicians, making it a respected profession.

The trajectory of Zahir’s career was meteoric. His concerts drew crowds from all ethnic groups, and he became a household name. The impact of his music was not confined to Afghanistan; it reached neighboring countries like Tajikistan, Russia, Uzbekistan, and Iran, marking him as a regional sensation.

However, with fame came challenges. Zahir’s re-

fusal to support the new Soviet-backed regime after the [Saur Revolution in 1978](#) led to the black listing of his music on [Afghanistan National Television and Radio](#). His life became entangled in political turmoil and personal tragedies, including a mysterious and tragic end to his second marriage.

On June 14, 1979, on his 33rd birthday, the echoes of Ahmad Zahir’s voice were silenced in a tragic car crash near Salang Pass. The circumstances surrounding his death remain shrouded in mystery, adding an air of intrigue to the legacy of Afghanistan’s musical maestro.

Four decades later, Ahmad Zahir’s influence endures. His music continues to resonate with Afghans around the world, serving as a cultural anchor for the diaspora. In a nation marred by conflict and political upheavals, Zahir’s songs, with themes of heartbreak, separation, and the fear of sudden death, evoke a poignant connection to Afghanistan’s past and homeland.

[Ahmad Zahir](#), the Afghan Elvis, lives on not just in the melodies that defined an era but also in the hearts of those who found solace, joy, and reflection in his timeless music. His legacy is a testament to the power of art to transcend societal norms, bridging cultures and generations through the universal language of music.



Hamdullah Hamdard

International Institute of St. Louis

BUILDING ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS INSTILLING PRINCIPLES AND VALUES IN CHILDREN



Good moral conduct in social life holds significant importance. There is a saying from the beloved [Prophet Muhammad](#) (peace be upon him) that states: 'The most beloved of you to God is the one with the best manners.' Ethics is defined as a science that discusses the good and bad qualities and actions of a person. Ethical upbringing for children at a young age may not be noticeable for some parents, but this is a mistake that many parents make. Children, from the moment of birth, possess the power of understanding.

Teaching values and ethical principles to children helps them lead a successful and happy life in adulthood. Ethical values are necessary for everyone, but it is better to teach them to children at a younger age. Teaching ethical values to children helps them develop excellent character in the future. In the framework of teaching ethical values to children, excessive use of punishment and rewards should be avoided. Physical punishment should be avoided, as its results are usually counterproductive. Encouragement is considered one of the effective methods in child upbringing, but a balance must be maintained in encouragement.

Children usually imitate their parents, so it is necessary for parents to exhibit good behavior both at home and outside. Most importantly,

children should be encouraged to tell the truth, and parents should discourage deceitful words and actions. Parents need to pay attention to the fact that the shaping of a child's character begins from the first week of birth, just as feeding and providing a conducive environment are essential needs for a child. Any form of harshness, violence, and neglect affects the spirit and mind of a child.

Just as a child needs food, water, and air, they also need affection and love. Therefore, be mindful of your behavior both inside and outside the home. The moral growth of a child is considered as important as their physical growth. It is not necessary to wait until they are grown up to expect them to develop ethical values. The earlier you focus on the ethical upbringing of children, the better you contribute to shaping their character.



Haroon Safi
St. Louis

TIPS FOR STAYING HEALTHY IN COLD AND FLU SEASON



As winter arrives, many people worry about staying healthy and avoiding colds and the flu. These illnesses can easily spread, posing a risk to individuals and communities alike.

To stay safe, [experts recommend washing hands](#) thoroughly for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. If soap is not available, using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer can effectively eliminate viruses and bacteria.

It's crucial to [avoid touching](#) the face, especially the eyes, nose, and mouth, to prevent the spread of microbes. Surfaces like desks, counters, doorknobs, and workout equipment should be regularly disinfected, as microbes can survive on them for hours.

Shared items such as phones, remotes, keyboards, and other frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned with disinfectant wipes regularly to stop the spread of viruses.

If someone has a cold, it's important to wash all items they've touched, like clothing, towels, and blankets, in hot water with soap. Surfaces they come into contact with, such as doorknobs and light switches, should be regularly disinfected.

[Staying hydrated](#) by drinking at least eight glasses

of water a day helps flush out toxins and supports the immune system. A well-balanced diet rich in vitamin C, zinc, and other minerals is also crucial for a strong immune system. Supplements of zinc and vitamin C can be beneficial in managing and preventing respiratory infections.

Getting [vaccinated](#) against the flu is a key preventive measure, especially for those with underlying health conditions and at higher risk. The flu vaccine helps reduce the severity and duration of the illness.

In conclusion, adopting good hygiene practices, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and staying up-to-date with vaccinations are essential steps to prevent and manage colds and the flu. By following these guidelines, individuals can contribute to their well-being and that of their communities, particularly during the prevalent respiratory illnesses of winter.



Fawzia Shahab
ANRTV Former Anchor

THE RICH HERITAGE AND TIMELESS ELEGANCE OF AFGHAN TRADITIONAL CLOTHING



Wearing [traditional clothes](#) is one of the aspects that reflects a country's national identity and is among the most prominent expressions of cultural heritage. Clothing, with its cultural, moral, and ethical values, has a direct connection to the diverse cultures of different ethnic groups.

In Afghanistan, traditional clothing plays a crucial role in preserving the social identity of the community and is closely linked to the cultural, ethical, and moral values of its diverse ethnic groups.

Currently, there has been an increase in the use of traditional clothing, such as Afghan fabrics. The attention and interest in Afghan traditional attire have not only risen among the people of Afghanistan but also among Afghan diaspora communities abroad. Even those living outside Afghanistan continue to appear in traditional attire during [special ceremonies](#). This signifies that Afghan handicrafts still have a significant number of enthusiasts.

Considering the cultural diversity and numerous ethnicities in Afghanistan, [Afghan fashion](#) is recognized as a rich cultural heritage. This fashion encompasses traditional practices that have spread throughout the land. Afghan culture, influenced by diverse ethnicities such as [Pashtun](#), [Tajik](#), [Hazara](#), [Uzbek](#), [Baloch](#), [Turkmen](#), and Ghorjai, portrays various cultural characteristics. Afghan clothing, in turn, incorporates influences from different regions and cultures, displaying a diversity of colors and patterns that represent the cultur-

al and ethnic diversity of the land. In Afghanistan, there are two distinct types of clothing: traditional and national attire, and everyday or casual clothing. These two types of attire have marked differences.

Women's clothing stands out as one of the attractions, known for its vibrant colors and unique embroidery. These garments often include floral embroidery, colorful fabric patches, or indigo dyeing, prominently seen in ceremonial and Afghan bridal attire.

The beautiful culture and artistic skills of Afghan women collaborate to transform Afghan clothing

into some of the most beautiful and traditional garments globally. All these attires stand as a representation of the culture and history of this well-dressed nation. Due to their unique designs and intricate details, they bring forth a cultural and artistic charm to every observer. When delving into the history of Afghan clothing, we trace back to ancient times in this



land. The earliest signs of human settlement in Afghanistan date back approximately thirty thousand years. These discoveries indicate that this land has always been a primary attraction along the historical route known as the [Silk Road](#). This crucial route, serving as a passage for human migration to this region, has had a significant impact on the history and culture of Afghanistan.

Since then, the cultural and traditional values of Afghanistan have always thrived in this land. Given the geographical landscape of this country situated in aridity, the Afghan people have preserved their traditional and nomadic lifestyle with pride. This lifestyle is a testament to the will and resilience of the Afghan people, who, in the face of temporal changes and global transformations, remain steadfast in their cultural diversity.



Elyas Mirzaee
Kabul - Afghanistan

CRAFTING MEMORIES WITH SAY DECOR: BIHISHTA'S INSPIRATIONAL JOURNEY



Bihishta faced them with determination, offering affordable decor services and saving up.

In the competitive world of event design, Bihishta's secret ingredients were patience and courage. She lowered prices, worked with local businesses, and stayed updated on the latest trends.

SAY Decor is more than a business; it's a way for Bihishta to be kind

In the colorful world of making events special, let's dive into the amazing story of Bihishta Shahab and her business, SAY Decor. Born in Afghanistan but growing up in Uzbekistan, Bihishta's journey from enjoying decorating as a hobby to becoming a successful business owner is truly special.

Bihishta's journey began in Uzbekistan after finishing high school, where she even got some college credit for working with computers. But her real passion was decorating, and she started helping friends with their party decor. Word quickly spread within the Afghan community about Bihishta's talent.

Behind every success story, there's someone providing support, and for Bihishta, that person is her husband. He stood by her through thick and thin, encouraging her and helping with the practical side of transporting decor items.

The big turning point came when Bihishta got paid for her decoration design. That was the moment she realized she could turn her passion into a business that not only brought her joy but also financial stability for her family.

SAY Decor isn't just a name; it's a family legacy. The name comes from her children's names – Setaish, Aysha, and Yousef. This family connection shows Bihishta's dream of creating a business that lasts for generations.

Of course, the journey had its challenges. Limited space, not enough money, and people questioning her prices were tough hurdles. But

to her community. She helps Afghan refugees and immigrants who can't afford decor services, creating special memories for them at a minimal cost.

Making customers happy is a priority for SAY Decor. Bihishta listens to their ideas, discusses creative plans, and ensures joy is part of every creation.

Quality matters a lot to Bihishta. She once designed and baked for a talented wedding cake baker, earning recognition for matching their expertise.

Using social media and word of mouth, Bihishta expanded SAY Decor throughout the community, showcasing her unique designs on Instagram and reaching more people.

Looking forward, Bihishta dreams of growing SAY Decor even more – more customers, a grand opening, and becoming a well-known name in event design.


SAY Decor operates from Bihishta's home, and you can connect with her for inquiries, call [\(314\) 255-7979](tel:3142557979) or email say_decor@yahoo.com

In the wonderful world of event design, Bihishta Shahab's SAY Decor is not just about decorations; it's a story of following your passion, overcoming challenges, and creating memories that last a lifetime.



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!

 3611 South Grand, Suite 105, St. Louis, Missouri

 +1 (314) 827 1821

 Hhamdard@afghancenter.org

 www.afghancenter.org