



News Release

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Century Student Grows as Youth Leader in Muslim Community

Century student Fartun Ahmed of Minnetonka, whose career goal is to become a superintendent of schools, has assumed a youth leadership position at the Dar Al-Hijrah mosque near the University of Minnesota. She is responsible for helping plan educational activities for over 200 young people, and contributes articles to the mosque newspaper, the Dar Al-Hijrah Times.

Ahmed, 19, wants people to know that Muslim women who choose to wear head scarves and modest clothing still have leadership and career goals. “We are not oppressed,” said the articulate student, who has earned top grades at Century. “We want to be academically successful so that we can serve our community and all of humanity.”

Ahmed said she chose Century because it was affordable and a bit outside of her comfort zone. “I wanted to meet new people and challenge myself,” said Ahmed, who, in 2008, was the first Minnetonka High School graduate to wear the traditional hijab. “I also am interested in presenting Islam to people who do not know it.”

Ahmed has made friends at Century, and she has enjoyed her classes, particularly the Interpersonal Communications class taught by Prof. Bucky Fay. “I made it a point never to miss that class,” said Ahmed, becoming animated as she described the small-group work and public speaking opportunities related to the class. She also enjoyed Prof. Neil Johnston’s art classes.

Born in Kenya, Ahmed emigrated to America in 1993 with her parents, who are from Somalia, and her younger brother and sister.

Ahmed has been studying her religion since she was a child. She began wearing hijab in junior high school when she attended Salahudin, a weekend Islamic school, and developed a deeper set of ethics and morals. “I became a more balanced person who is able to succeed academically and religiously,” said Ahmed. “I have completed my goal of memorizing the entire Holy Quran.”

Ahmed emphasized that no one forced her to wear hijab. “I see it as a duty to God,” she said. “I am obeying His will as stated in the Quran.”

Ahmed has held several leadership positions in the Salahudin Student Union, and is currently a youth director of the Dar Al-Hijrah Youth Council. She has been interviewed by reporters from the Star Tribune, Minnesota Public Radio and MinnPost.

“The mosque is the center of our lives,” said Ahmed. “We strive to produce conscientious, successful and well-balanced Muslim leaders. We believe in moderation and tolerance. We can live in the United States as good Muslims who also know our civic duties. Our students want to be doctors, teachers, community organizers, lawyers. We want to be productive.”

Ahmed said “legacy” is an important word for Muslims. “I am a first-generation college student and I want to inspire others to go to college,” said Ahmed.



Photo: Fartun Ahmed