

*Compassionate  
Academic Success  
Respect  
Empathy*

# W Women Walking West

Advancing education for women from across the globe

## Mission

*W3's mission is to remove language, social, cultural, academic, and financial barriers that foreign-born adult women experience in the U.S. This mission helps instill an environment of connections that creates a base of support to provide opportunities for women to overcome difficulties and therefore achieve their lifelong professional and personal goals.*

## Values

*To create a culture that includes our core values: Compassion, Academic Success, Respect and Empathy (CARE).*

## A Message from the Board Chair

Dear Friends,

It was during my early experience in higher education that I made the commitment to give back to individuals who faced barriers to achieving their educational dreams. While my personal experiences led me to this path, it is the dedication of our board members and donors, and our mentors and volunteer staff who give their time to our cause that have made it possible for that commitment to come to life through Women Walking West (W3).

We are growing! With our growth comes responsibility to continue our efforts to provide the needed assistance to women who have come to our country looking for a better life. To do this, we must remain fiscally responsible. Our 2022 fundraising efforts were all very successful. As a result, we have again reached our financial goals.

2023 marks the eighth year since the inception of W3. I am happy to share that to-date, W3 has provided assistance to 143 mentees (women we serve) from 42 countries, and given over 65 scholarships/awards. On behalf of Women Walking West and its Board of Directors, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the individuals whose support and commitment continue to help us grow and succeed in our mission to support the educational needs of foreign-born women, **One woman at a time.**



*Dr. George Sehi, Board Chair*



*Dr. Fatemeh Hajhosseini & Dr. George Sehi*

## W3 Welcomes Dr. Fatemeh Hajhosseini as New Chief of Operations and Development

Having served as a founding board member since W3 was established in 2015, Dr. Hajhosseini is committed to the mission of the organization. "I am honored to be given the opportunity to support Women Walking West in my new role," Dr. Hajhosseini expressed. "It is a great privilege and opportunity to be a part of an organization that works to afford all foreign-born adult women access to a quality education in the United States and helps them achieve their educational dreams."

A former adjunct faculty at the University of Houston and Mount St. Joseph University, as well as a community organizer, Dr. Hajhosseini brings with her a broad wealth of experience and a passion for helping others. "I am delighted to be a part of empowering the next generation of women to achieve their full potential," shared Dr. Hajhosseini.

In her new role as Chief of Operations and Development, Dr. Hajhosseini will expand the community outreach of Women Walking West, develop new relationships with donors and sponsors, and strengthen the mentee/mentor community.

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# W3 Newsletter

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Gina Kuvin, W3 Mentor with her husband and other family members

## Mentor Spotlight

I decided to become involved with W3 after attending my first Gala. At the Gala I listened to a young woman speak of achieving her dreams in the U.S. with the help of many of the people in that room. The passion and enthusiasm for improving the lives of foreign-born women, their families, and their communities was contagious. I quickly applied to be a mentor.

Education has always been very important to me. I grew up in Cincinnati, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of 7 children. I was the first in my family to graduate from college. I met my husband, Randy at Miami University. We've now been married 37 years and have 3 grown children and 1 grandson.

Randy and I worked to provide the best educational opportunities for our children. We were blessed to send our daughters to a private, all-girl high school that focused on developing voice, vision, and values, along with academics. I saw how it empowered the young women fortunate enough to attend. I also became keenly aware of how rare such opportunities are. There are so many that struggle against geographical, financial, cultural, and language barriers preventing them from reaching their full potential.

In subsequent years, I have learned much from the women in my life about overcoming some of these obstacles. I met a woman at a parish retreat who tells the story of her family fleeing Castro's Cuba when she was a child. Years later she is still filled with gratitude for those who assisted her family. My sister-in-law is a 1<sup>st</sup> generation American-born daughter of immigrants from Egypt. In her recently published book, *Ancestry Unfinished*, she writes of her struggles to keep her Syrian-Lebanese heritage and culture alive for her own daughter. I had not realized how much I took for granted until she opened my eyes to the layers of challenges for generations of women in a new country.

*I had not realized how much I took for granted until she opened my eyes to the layers of challenges for generations of women in a new country.*

My two W3 mentees want nothing more than to have the opportunity to improve their lives. It has been my privilege to be their sounding board, translator, advisor, and friend as they discerned the best path for themselves. I look forward to the opportunity to meet more young women and to play a small role in helping them to achieve their dreams.

# GOOD NEWS!

Mentee, **Soha Salajegheh**, received her **Masters Degree!**

In December, Mentee, **Dhatrika Uggumudi**, graduated from **Wright State University!**

Mentee, **Kikelomo Omojola** graduated with **MASW and obtained her drivers license**. Currently working with TriHealth as a social worker, **she appreciates W3 and her mentor Kim Sellers!**

Mentee, **Qiuhua Duan** is working as a **faculty member** at the **University of Alabama Civil Engineering Dept!**



## Bourbon Tasting & Fundraising Event

Held at Horsepower Farm in Middletown, the "Pour for a Purpose" event featured seven different pouring's, plus the opportunity for exclusive pouring's and raffle winnings of other highly sought after bourbons.

Mixologist and story teller Molly Wellmann treated attendees to historical facts and stories about each of the items as she poured tastings for guest.

Thank you to event sponsors: Accufab INC. Horsepower Farm, Overberg Construction, The Party Source, Tri-State Signs, and Tazikis Mediterranean Café. We extend our gratitude to Noah Koterba (former W3 Board Member) for leading this effort. The venue received rave reviews as did the variety of the bourbons.



*Dr. Monica Posey  
President, Cincinnati State*

*Emily Zaphiro da Silva,  
W3 Mentee*

*Hasna, ben Jillali,  
W3 Mentee*

# When SHE Rises

## Advancing Education For Women 3rd Annual Gala

On November 3, 2022 Women Walking West celebrated their achievements at their third annual gala: When She Rises.

The Gala was hosted by Mr. John Dovich & Dr. Vijaya Reddy with Mrs. Norma Rashid as the emcee for the evening. Held at the beautiful Manor House 430 people registered to attend the the fundraising event.

Keynote speaker, Dr. Monica Posey, President at Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, gave a strong speech about the importance of diversity and inclusion.

Attendees also enjoyed hearing from several mentee speakers who gave inspirational talks about their journeys and how W3 has helped them to achieve their goals.

## Women Walking West *Her Words* Essay Contest

The In Her Words Essay Contest was designed to highlight the determination and personal commitment of our mentee community through their own storytelling. For their essay the women were given two prompts to choose from: **1.** Define a “powerful woman” from your own perspective and cultural lens. What does that phrase mean, and how have you seen it exemplified throughout your life? **2.** Write about how you see your role to make a more peaceful and prosperous world for your family, children, and future generations.

**Congratulations to all of the winners!** Please enjoy a brief overview of the winners’ essays:

**First Place Winner: Jun Oikawa** received a MAC personal laptop as her prize. As a child growing up in Japan, being powerful as a woman was not something that anyone ever taught Jun. In her essay, Jun shares her struggles to overcome the historical culture of her native country. She tells the story of how she found the strength in herself that allowed her to pave her path into the future. A “powerful woman” is what Jun strives to be. With the support from family, friends, instructors and communities such as Women Walking West, Jun will continue to take on challenges, and pave her own path into the beautiful future.

**Second Place Winner: Emily Zaphiro da Silva** received a cash prize of \$500. In her essay, Emily shares her feeling on how being a woman of color in the U.S. affected her opportunities. Raised in Brazil, when Emily came to the US she found a mostly welcoming environment, but also struggled in a society set on a system that is not equally fair and does not provide the same opportunities and resources for all people. “The United States, especially, is a country of so many peoples, some of whom were already here, and some who arrived later, and those encounters weren’t always peaceful. But all of these are part of this land right now, where change is constant and unstoppable. The ones who tried to slow this process almost always have their mark in history stained with blood. But my point is that it’s a privilege being able to help, live and learn with so many people. I make that my personal mission” Emily wrote.

**Third Place Winner: Adaobi Iwuanyanwu** received a cash prize of \$200. Adaobi begins her essay by sharing the Nigeria she knew as a child – one where she was shielded from inequality and injustice. A time that contrasted sharply to the Nigerian SARS tragedy that amplified something that she describes was a “daily occurrence that passed in the blink of an eye”. Adaobi describes how she became more aware of the discrimination that people of certain races face, and that after hearing about the #EndSARS movement in Nigeria she began to notice the oppression in other areas as well. Adaobi has promised herself that she will better her role in society. She will speak up and not remain silent, but will be the individual who finds the courage to not only draw the line, but give other people the pen to do so as well.

**Third Place Winner: Abigail Annan** received a cash prize of \$200. Abigail’s essay centered around the historical oppression of women in African cultures, and the clear absence of women from important activities and historical events. It was her mother who, although she had no education, worked hard in order to pay tuition for her five children, that Abigail views as a powerful women. In her perspective, however, Abigail feels that the majority of women in the modern world are powerful because they are educated. Abigail feels that education “exposes individuals to facts that help cut traditional beliefs and myths that promote backwardness”. Her mother had no education, but she wanted her children to have opportunities in life that she did not have as a child so she worked hard. Now her mother owns a guest house and is a well-established business woman. Abigail views her mother as a powerful woman, and is inspired by her to also work hard.



## W3 Board

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**Reham Gaafar, M.D.**  
Ex-Officio Board Member  
W3 Mentee & Medical Student

*“We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back. We call upon our sisters around the world to be brave – to embrace the strength within themselves and realize their full potential.”*

– Malala Yousafzai

## Featured Endowment

Our story is an embodiment of the value of knowledge. My father, Dr. Abbas Hatamzadeh, was my role model throughout life. He obtained his PhD in the French language from Sorbonne University in Paris, France and was fluent in 4 languages. He became a professor of French Literature at the University of Esfahan in Iran from 1958 to 1980. In addition to his role in education and the university setting, my father's love for the promotion and well-being of others extended to the healthcare field as well. During his years of teaching and after retirement from the university, he served as hospital management and administrator position for 3 hospitals in Esfahan and worked to ensure quality healthcare for the patient's that these institutions served.



*Dr. Abbaas Hatamzadeh*

In addition to establishing many foreign language schools, mosques, and health clinics in Esfahan, my father's impact on the community reached further with his work in translating scholarly articles and books to English, French, and Farsi, allowing the further spread of knowledge within the community. He maintained core values of family and education. I am one of 6 children and I still look back at my childhood days alongside my siblings and family as the most joyous time of my life. My father instilled in us a never-ending value for knowledge and education.

### *My father instilled in us a never-ending value for knowledge and education.*

My husband and I (Morteza & Marzieh) moved to the US in our teenage years to pursue further education and both of us attained our advanced degrees. Our children have gone on to obtain their MDs, MBAs and are leaders in their fields. We could not be more proud. They know that although the road to attaining knowledge can be arduous, it is valuable and brings satisfaction. There is no better feeling than teaching someone and seeing them use their knowledge to help others. We chose to start an endowment because of just this reason - We have lived the experience of how knowledge transforms and sustains life and are enthusiastic about helping others who are motivated in this path to achieve their dreams.

My father's lasting impression on us was to always be kind to humanity, always seek knowledge and share that knowledge, and to use language as a tool rather than a barrier to achieving these goals. He taught us that regardless of nationality, gender, or socioeconomic status, education is essential to the success and promotion of the well-being of mankind. The mission of Women Walking West is fully aligned with my father's vision and our family is honored to support and follow the great cause of advancing education for women from across the globe.

 **Women Walking West**

Advancing education for women from across the globe

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