



October 2009

## Syed Farrukh Shabbir M.D. Memorial Scholarship

The third Syed Farrukh Shabbir MD Memorial Scholarship first place winner is **Shelby Strodman**. She wrote the 500-word winning essay. This Ft. Osage High School graduate wrote the most compelling essay about the importance of peace and understanding in a pluralistic world. Shelby now attends the Central Methodist University this fall. Shelby will receive a \$500 scholarship.

The second place winner of the essay contest is **Jennifer Carney** of North Kansas City High School who now attends William Jewell College. Jennifer will receive a \$250 scholarship.

Approximately 95 letters were sent to public and private high school counselors in the greater Kansas City areas in January. The deadline for the essay contest was March 31, 2009. The scholarship contest sponsored by the Crescent Peace Society was open to any college bound graduating senior from a high school located in the greater Kansas City area. This was a blind essay contest judged by Ali and Adil, Dr. Shabbir’s two older sons; The Reverend Vern Barnett, minister emeritus of CRES; and Elizabeth Alex, KSHB TV 41 anchor.

Syed Farrukh Shabbir, M.D. was a physician who practiced in the greater Kansas City area for over 27 years. During his lifetime, he was active in the community serving the health care needs at various hospitals, universities and in his own private practice as a psychiatrist.

In addition, he was involved in working with people of many faiths not just in the health care area, but also in community activities. Unfortunately, his life was cut short on January 22, 2006 at the age of 57 after fighting a debilitating autoimmune disease called Wegener's granulomatosis.

“Our desire is for the next generation of college students to think about the importance of peace and pluralism and that they take an active role in making this a better world for everyone”, said Mahnaz Shabbir who is Dr. Shabbir’s widow and on the advisory board of the Crescent Peace Society.



Syed Farrukh Shabbir, MD  
1948-2006

### **Crescent Peace Society**

#### **Mission**

*“To enhance the understanding of Muslim cultures through educational and cultural activities involving the exchange of ideas and experiences among people of diverse cultures.”*

## First Place Winner: Shelby Strodman

Pluralism is, according to Webster, “the existence within a nation or society of groups with distinct ethnic origin, cultural patterns, religion.” This certainly describes our world today. In Emma Lazarus’ poem, *The New Colossus*, which appears on the Statue of Liberty, she cries, “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free . . . .” Lazarus, a Jewish American poet, saw the Statue of Liberty as a light beckoning to the world, and her words represent freedom for thousands of immigrants coming to America. People came here from all cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds, bringing with them their beliefs and faith.

Early colonists developed political and social practices that influenced our history. The Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution represent their moral values: freedom of religion and to assemble, as well as the dignity and worth of each individual in our country. Early immigrants were glad to be here and ready to adapt. Many came because of religious persecution or a desire for a new life; some were indentured servants or prisoners. Today, America has become a mixture of many races, cultures, and ethnic backgrounds, each struggling for recognition and acceptance.

To have peace and understanding in a pluralistic world does not mean everyone has to think and act the same. Pluralism allows for differences in beliefs and personalities, but pluralism is more than just existing together. Pluralism embodies moral values common to all religions such as the Golden Rule. Pluralism doesn’t mean everyone needs to be the same. Diversity is healthy. To achieve peace and understanding, individuals with diverse backgrounds need to recognize their differences and work towards the common good of all. Unfortunately, all too often an effort to bring fairness to one minority brings discrimination to other ethnic or religious groups.

One doesn’t have to be a Christian and believe in Jesus to have high moral standards. There is more than one way to solve a problem, more than one viewpoint. Today, there are diverse religious communities in America, and many of them work together to help the homeless or fight hunger—here and abroad. Many denominations operate food pantries, send money and supplies to third world countries, and help with disaster relief throughout the world. Helping our global neighbors encourages peace and understanding.

One Webster definition for peace is “freedom from war”; understanding is “comprehension or sympathetic awareness.” My definition for peace is harmony. If people live in harmony and have a sympathetic awareness of the opposite viewpoint, there would be “peace and understanding in a pluralistic world.” Unfortunately, mutual understanding is often absent. People have their own viewpoints and are closed-minded. In a pluralistic world, it isn’t necessary to adopt the opposing viewpoint; it is merely necessary to recognize it and let those viewpoints exist, opening our minds to new ideas, thinking outside the box. Pluralism does not intend to mesh people into one mold but rather to acknowledge each other as members of a civil, moral society. Peace and understanding in a pluralistic world does not mean uniformity but rather a give and take, each unique group recognizing the uniqueness of each other.

## Second Place Winner: Jennifer Carney

There are a plethora of races and nationalities represented at my high school. I walk down the hallways and sometimes I hear languages I don't recognize; that is definitely a humbling moment to realize how small one person can truly be. It is quite a distinct experience to study and live among such a largely diverse group of people and to be quite honest it isn't always pleasant.

In the hallways it's hard not to notice the color-coding of the cliques and groups and the same applies for each lunch table. Our cafeteria would make one great exhibit of nations; we are much more of a salad bowl than a melting pot when we're roaming the school.

Possibly my most memorable high school experience was thanks to a courageous English teacher I had sophomore year. We had been reading a book in class and it was finally time for the dreaded Socratic seminar in which we're all required to voice an opinion and sustain conversation about a novel I didn't suspect half the class even read. We pushed the tables out of the way and made a circle with our chairs so we could all see each other. Boy, I had no idea that this procedure we had mindlessly gone through many times would be so different this time, so life altering.

Our class consisted of a fair representation of our school. We had several white students, a few African Americans, a couple "mixed" students, a student from Germany, and few students from the Middle East.

"Let's discuss the racism in this book," was all my teacher said and we were silent for what seemed like forever until one student began to talk about why she wasn't offended by the author and why if a student spoke like the author she would be livid.

That brought uproar of our class and we spent the entire block debating the morals of race and living and learning together. We were the *Breakfast Club* of my high school and this book brought us all together to talk out the issue of race vs. peace in our own hallways. It turns out that our classrooms are more of a melting pot than our hallways.

My frustrations with our diverse school didn't end that day and the color-coded cliques didn't suddenly cease to exist, but that day twenty very different students felt completely comfortable with who they were in that classroom. Twenty students came to know what peace felt like in that classroom.

Our hallways may be crowded. We may hear people speak in words we will never understand, but twenty students learned that day that we cannot contain the peace that we have been taught. We are all the same. We all have the same common goals and together, like that English class, we are much stronger than we are alone. Peace is attainable and necessary; we are all so much more when we push aside our tables and gather or chairs together.

### **Please Donate (your donation is tax-deductible)**

The third annual Syed Farrukh Shabbir MD Memorial Scholarship is right around the corner. Letters will be sent to high school counselors in January 2010. The essays need to be submitted by March 31, 2010. The winners will be recognized at the Fourteen Annual Crescent Peace Society Eid Dinner in September 2010. Details can be found at [www.crescentpeace.org](http://www.crescentpeace.org). Please consider donating to the scholarship fund. Your donation is tax deductible. Please mail your check to:

Syed Farrukh Shabbir MD Memorial Scholarship, PO Box 23175, Overland Park, KS 66283.