



12 Years: Sharing Culture and Hope

The Mosaic Foundation was conceived of in 1997 by the wives of the Arab Ambassadors serving in the United States at the time. Through their common bonds as friends and colleagues, those 17 women desired to celebrate their cultures and heritage and promote causes close to their hearts. Through their conversations and brainstorming sessions, the idea of a collaborative effort of the diplomatic wives focused on celebrating Arab heritage and culture, supporting important programs for the world's women and children, and creation of a network of women dedicated to giving back to the community emerged.

These early meetings, and visionary women planted the seed that has flourished into the Mosaic Foundation we know today. While the corporate offices are located in the hustle and bustle of downtown Washington D.C., HRH Princess Haifa was gracious enough to allow the fledgling foundation temporary work space in her basement in Virginia. She also asked her staff to assist the foundation in getting off the ground; some of those same employees continue to guide the work and lend their long-term perspective to Mosaic's decisions today.

Through their tireless dedication to the foundation and its programs, the Mosaic Foundation held its first public event in 1998. For the inaugural Mosaic Bazaar, a local venue was turned into a medieval Arabian souk, complete with textiles, handicrafts, and exotic jewelery. The unprecedented success of the autumnal event filled those founding trustees with hope and excitement; they were giving people a forum to explore Arab culture and were challenging conventional stereotypes about Arab women in the process. "In the end, people realize we are all very similar," suggested Luma Kawar, founding Mosaic Trustee from the Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan, "Instead of focusing our energies on the so-called clash of civilizations, we should strive to promote the convergence of cultures." One of the ways the foundation went about proving to themselves and others that the world is indeed small and in need of care was the establishment of the grants programs.

Under the direction of Mosaic chairman HRH Haifa Al Faisal of Saudi Arabia, the inaugural gala raised over \$500 000 for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and began a tradition of giving that has circled the world and changed lives across the globe. From that first Major Beneficiary, to the rapid relief funds of our World Emergency Grants and the thrice-yearly awarding of our Trustees Grant programs, the foundation has awarded nearly 8 million dollars to relief, cultural, and humanitarian causes in America, the Arab World, and beyond.

Realizing the need for cultural exchange in the United States goes beyond philanthropy, the Mosaic Foundation trustees decided that one of their core goals must be to promote cross cultural dialogue. Shoring themselves up with the successes of the Bazaar and the Annual Benefit Dinners, the organization hosted its first educational lecture series in 2003 through its newly formed Cultural Committee. The panel discussion, *The Evolving Status of Women in the Arab World: Culture, Faith, and Law* brought a standing room only crowd to the historic Meridian House. The mainly American audience had many questions for the speakers and subjects included the hijab, women's rights in Islam, and the history of Islamic jurisprudence – and once again Mosaic was happy to be the conduit through which information and education about practices, beliefs and cultures flowed to America.

The past twelve years of excellence in giving, education, and cultural exchange have raised the bar for Mosaic: we have lofty ideals for what the future will be. We fervently believe that positive change in a society rests squarely on the amount of opportunity and advantage afforded to its women and children. To provide this very opportunity, to encourage cross-cultural dialogue, and to foster a society based on equality, appreciation, and mutual respect have been some of Mosaic's goals since day one, and will continue to be well into the future.