

8/10/2017

To whom it may concern:

As a Refugee Career Coach at West Michigan Works, I am writing to you in support of Ms. Wafa Haddad, the founder and president of Noor's Heaven of West Michigan, and her desire to register the aforementioned organization with the United Nations Global Marketplace. I have known Ms. Haddad since January of 2017 and she has been an irreplaceable partner in my work.

In my capacity as a Career Coach, I provide case management and direct services to refugees in the Grand Rapids, Michigan area. Due to institutional barriers, I have often relied on Noor's Heaven's services as a vital lifeline to ensure my clients gain self-sufficiency and confidence in their initial few months in western Michigan. With Ms. Haddad's guidance, many of my clients have been able to apply for social security benefits, driver's licenses, receive assistance dealing with domestic violence, and navigate the complex immigration system in the United States. As I do not have access to my clients outside of the office, Noor's Heaven has been an invaluable resource for Arabic-speaking refugees in the area.

Since Ms. Haddad's arrival to Grand Rapids in the mid-nineties, she has become a force to be reckoned with in greater Grand Rapids. She is deeply involved in the local community, participating in fundraisers, volunteering with local non-profits, and, most importantly, breaking down barriers between people. Ms. Haddad is a bridge between the varied cultures that live in the Grand Rapids metropolitan area and she has been steadfast in her support of refugees despite difficult political circumstances.

At the beginning of this year, I had several Arabic-speaking clients who desperately were in need of driver's licenses. This would allow them to feel independent for the first time since coming to the United States just months prior. She taught a class explaining the material that would be covered by the test for a Michigan Temporary Operator's Permit. Additionally, Ms. Haddad and her organization provided the resources necessary to pass the practical exam and helped them search for their first cars in the United States. Without her support and guidance, it would have been significantly more difficult for my clients to not only learn how to drive, but also purchase cars.

In summary, Ms. Haddad's support of the refugee community is admirable, powerful, and transformative. I have witnessed first-hand the effect she has had on my clients. I usually meet my clients two months after their arrival to the United States, and they are usually lost, bewildered, and confused. Ms. Haddad eases their transition to their new lives in Michigan and provides an essential link between local non-profit organizations, government agencies, and individuals.

I highly recommend Ms. Wafa Haddad as a new vendor with the United Nations Global Marketplace with no reservations.

If you have any further questions or concerns, I can be contacted at +1 (616) 336-4021 or sulloa@westmiworks.org.

Best,

Saúl Ulloa
Refugee Career Coach
West Michigan Works

