

MEAAG Activities March/April 2021

- March 1st: virtual art exhibit “Middle Eastern Artists in the Garden and Beyond,” in partnership with Brookside Gardens
- March 10th: virtual meet-the-artists event of “Middle Eastern Artists in the Garden and Beyond,” co-hosted by Brookside Gardens Visitor Center and MEAAG and emceed by [Mel Lehman](#), Director of Common Humanity. Seven local artists transported viewers through their screens to vivid natural scenes and interpretations of their heritage. The virtual gallery is online [here](#). In the coming weeks MEAAG will post the event recording on its YouTube Channel.
- March 14th: March was Middle Eastern American Heritage Month, celebrated on Zoom with the theme of “Spread the Joy” with emcee [Ms. Sarah Elbeshbishi](#). We were delighted to host three county officials and dozens of community members for our annual proclamation, presented the Distinguished Community Service Award to the [ICMCares Team](#). Presentations included country “table” displays, regional music and dance videos, and the latest Montgomery County Covid-19 information. In lieu of our customary regional banquet tables, we recognized the pandemic relief work of Mid-County United Ministries, American Muslim Senior Society, Islamic Center of Maryland, and the Muslim Community Center and contributed 200 "goodie bags" with masks to distribute in the organizations’ vital assistance efforts around the county.
- March 16th: The second of six monthly Montgomery County Public Library-MEAAG Conversations with Middle Eastern- and South Asian-American authors was held, featuring Rockville’s own [Hena Khan](#) and her new book, *Amina’s Song*. [Here](#) is a short interview of Ms. Khan to launch the book.
- March 25th: MEAAG’s monthly meeting took place to evaluate the heritage celebration and discuss the Ramadan proclamation event and progress on launching a website.
- March 26th: the first of three [Public Conversations on covid-19 hesitancy](#) was convened by Prof. Thomas Breyer of the University of Central Florida, in which MEAAG member Debbie Trent participated, to dialogue and strategize about attaining herd immunity.
- April 18th: MEAAG organized a virtual public Ramadan proclamation and cultural event with county officials and area clergy. The County Executive and the County Council

President jointly proclaimed Ramadan. MEAAG invited three guest speakers who highlighted Ramadan as a pillar of Islam, influential American Muslims, and the meaning of Ramadan during COVID-19.

- March 26-April 25: MEAAG and Brookside Gardens' Visitors Center organized the second part of their "Middle Eastern American Artists in the Garden and Beyond" at [Brookside Gardens Visitor Center](#). Seven local artists participated in the exhibit.
- April 20: Middle Eastern and South Asian American groups organized Meet-the-Authors program #3, featuring Rashin Kheiriyeh, who discussed her stories and art about the childhood challenges of belonging to a new culture while respecting one's own heritage.
- April 20: MEAAG collaborated with several community leaders to organize Arab American Heritage Month. County Council President Tom Hucker proclaimed April as Arab American Heritage Month.
- April 20: Representatives from MEAAG and the Middle Eastern Liaison attended a Proclamation Ceremony Recognizing Sexual Assault Awareness Month by Councilmember Glass and a Proclamation Ceremony Recognizing Chesapeake Bay Week by Council President Hucker.
- April 21: Representatives from MEAAG and the Middle Eastern Liaison attended Ramadan Iftar that was sponsored by MCMC and MCMF.
- April 25: MEAAG organized a special live conversation with American Egyptian Rana el Kaliouby, author of *Girl Decoded: A Scientist's Quest to Reclaim our Humanity by Bringing Emotional Intelligence to Technology*. Soon to be available in paperback, *Girl Decoded* is Rana's memoir of growing up in a conservative Muslim family in Egypt and Kuwait and ultimately founding an American tech start-up at the forefront of artificial emotional intelligence (Emotion AI).
- MEAAG's next meeting will be on May 19th at 5 pm.