

## Local

## We are all members of the society



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

muna@kuwaittimes.net

This article is a tribute to the silent group of people in society who suffer from injustice, indifference and sometimes mistreatment or lack of appreciation because they are labeled as people with special needs or handicapped, because sadly they do not have the capability to run, walk or play like others.

They need special care - unlike other individuals - because of their disabilities but that special care doesn't mean they don't contribute in positive and important ways to our society. The types of disabilities can vary from physical, emotional to mental disability and bring a host of health-related concerns. But the most prominent problems of people with special needs are not their health status, but the society's view of them as inferior, lack of respect, injustice and inequality, simply because they are different. They feel insulted when others focus their attention on their disabilities, especially at gatherings, malls and restaurants. Or worse, when non-disabled people occupy parking spots designated for them or make fun of them. It is terrible and inhumane.

Moreover, many public places lack the equipment or infrastructure necessary to accommodate disabled persons in a proper and dignified way. For example, seeing-impaired persons often cannot way in the malls or use elevators by themselves because these places do not provide the necessary navigation tools. Also, roads can make a person with special needs vulnerable to traffic accidents. There are other problems faced by disabled persons - mistreatment by the family that thinks they must sit at home without regard to their right to mix with people and get a job, along with showing the respect they deserve.

So there is no doubt that there is a need to change societal attitude towards people with special needs and respect the differences in others and accept them without pity or contempt. This is a problem in the Arab world. I believe there is a need to have awareness programs targeting the society and families with disabled persons - this is the role of the media.

I recently read some good news, where MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf said there are plans to treat disabled people in the same category as those with 10 years of service for retirement. Hajraf said in a statement that the committee of persons with disabilities discussed 21 amendments to the disabled law, pointing out that there is a consensus with the government on some points, most notably the age of retirement - 15 years for men and 10 years for women. I think it is good that some are thinking about those who cannot express their rights in a clear and frank manner and are often ignored by society.

What always bothers me is that people with special needs have a right to entertainment too. They should be provided with appropriate recreational activities and their access to these places must be facilitated. It is important for any entertainment venue to have a section dedicated for special needs people. I believe they are strong to fight for their place in this life and in societies that only see their outer selves - they are heroes.

### PHOTO OF THE DAY



Photo shows the architectural details of the facade of the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah Cultural Center in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yassine Bensaid/KUNA

## Local student turns bullying into songs

By Nawara Fattahova

Bad experiences can sometimes lead to creative outcomes. Being bullied at a young age in school inspired and motivated 14-year-old Kuwaiti student Noor Qaddoumi to compose beautiful songs that have useful messages. Noor, a talented student of Kuwait English School, participated in the 'Little Big Stars' talent show broadcast on MBC.

"I saw an advertisement about the audition of this program on TV. The same day I went to the audition with my family. It took place in September in Kuwait, and the team chose those who qualified. Then we traveled to Lebanon in October, where the show was filmed. The episode where I participated was broadcast earlier this month (December)," she told Kuwait Times.

Noor's talent is in writing and composing songs about humanitarian issues such as bullying, pollution, injustice and others. 'Little Big Stars' is not a competition but rather a platform to showcase children's talents. It includes various themes such as singing, mathematics, exercise, athletics, cooking and other talents.

### Kuwait Times: Why choose humanitarian issues for your songs?

**Noor:** I feel it's important to be able to discuss and present a message. Some people are feeling depressed due to being bullied, and I want to help them. This is a kind of support for them, and to tell them they are not alone. Through my songs, I want to encourage them to speak loudly about their problems.

'Don't Hide It' is the name of the song that I composed on bullying. Through this song I tell victims of bullying not to keep this bad experience to themselves, but to speak about it to get help from others. As I went through this experience, it made me able to compose this song. I also presented this song at an anti-bullying conference and during a school show, where I ranked third among the participants.

When I was a child at school, some older students used to bully me, especially since I wear glasses. They used to threaten me and ask me to do things that would make me get in trouble. At first I kept it to myself and was sad, as I didn't want my mom to get upset. I even told my mom I don't want to go to school. But later I decided to tell my parents, who informed the school administration.

### KT: Which musical instrument do you play?

**Noor:** It's called a ukulele. It's kind of a small guitar with four strings. I like this instrument as it makes me happy



Noor Qaddoumi

whenever I play it. I learnt playing it on YouTube, and now it's almost a year that I'm playing the ukulele. I feel it produces happy melodies. I only write songs in English but I wish to write in Arabic as well in the future, when my Arabic gets better. I'm also learning to play the guitar and piano, in addition to ballet.

### KT: When did you start composing songs?

**Noor:** I started at the beginning of this year, so it's been almost a year now. I registered with the school choir in third grade. They trained me how to sing and taught me how to do notes. I also participate in the British School in Middle East music festival every year. I compose songs on injustice, pollution, gossiping and bullying, and am working on ideas for new songs.

I would like to become a lawyer. I want to defend those who suffer from injustices, as I lived through this experience. I also want to become a popular singer. Music is a great way to express yourself and your feelings - it's my way to send a message.