



AMERICAN TURKISH
ASSOCIATION OF
WASHINGTON DC

MARCH/APRIL 2025
ISSUE 5

WOMEN IN STEM

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS WITH
ATA-DC'S LEADERSHIP
AWARD RECIPIENTS

DR. ESMA AKIN
DR. HANDE ÖZDINLER
DR. DUYGU TOSUN-TURGUT

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
CELEBRATION

TALES FROM THE WOMEN LEADERS

ATA-DC HOUSE IS UNDER
CONSTRUCTION!

ATA *News*

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Dear Members and Friends,

As we welcome the arrival of spring, it's not just the flowers that are blossoming—our community at the American Turkish Association (ATA) is also entering a season of renewal and growth. Spring is a time when we can reflect on new beginnings, and we're excited to share that our new ATA-DC house is currently under renovation and will open its doors around the end of May. This new space represents much more than just a physical move; it will allow us to serve our community more effectively, with new initiatives, cultural events, and a stronger sense of belonging for all. There's an article in this issue that goes into greater detail about the renovation progress, so stay tuned for more updates as we prepare for this exciting chapter.

The new space is only the beginning. As we continue to grow, we remain committed to fostering cultural exchange between the American and Turkish communities. ATA-DC has always been a place where we can come together to share, learn, and celebrate each other's cultures. Our mission is to build bridges of understanding, respect, and friendship. Whether it's through our language programs, art exhibitions, or social gatherings, we aim to create meaningful connections that go beyond borders. We are deeply proud of our long-standing tradition of cultural dialogue, and with the new space, we plan to expand our offerings to ensure we can continue this important work in even more impactful ways.

One of our key focuses will continue to be the youth. The younger generations are the future of our community, and it's essential that we support them as they navigate both their Turkish heritage and their American experiences. We are committed to providing a platform where young Turkish-Americans can grow, learn, and become leaders within our community. Whether through cultural events, leadership programs, or educational opportunities, we want to empower our youth to embrace both sides of their identity with pride.

Looking ahead, we have much to look forward to. Our national holidays will be celebrated with the same joy and dedication as always, and of course, our award-winning festival in October is already in the works. Together, we will continue to build a community that honors our past, celebrates our present, and looks forward to a bright future.

Thank you for being a part of this journey with us, and we look forward to growing alongside you in this season of renewal.

With sincere thanks and warmest wishes,

Sertap Schreffler

PRESIDENT OF ATA-DC



turkish festival

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WHAT OUR SPONSORS SAID

For the past year, Turkish community played an important role in Value Mortgage's growth story. Through Turkish Festival, we were able to foster a new era of brand awareness and we closed out the year by helping 30+ borrowers to fulfill their dream of home ownership. These numbers were only accomplished in less than 7 months with the help of ATADC and the Turkish community's amazing hands on engagement opportunities. This gave us the upper

hand to deliver a high quality, personalized mortgage solutions to our borrowers. We couldn't have been more pleased to contribute to the Turkish Festival by being one of the main sponsors and looking forward to further our engagement with the Turkish community in the coming days and months. I would like to congratulate ATA-DC's leadership and the festival committee to organize such a fantastic festival.

EMRAH DILSIZOGLU, VALUE MORTGAGE

FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Hello friends and our esteemed readers,

When the vibrant colors of spring begin to bloom, they bring new hopes and fresh chapters into our lives. That's why it is my favorite season and the most cherished time of the year. Spring means **renewal, awakening, and new beginnings**. The gentle breeze carries a sense of possibility, inspiring us to embrace change and set new goals for ourselves and surroundings. Just like the nature, humankind would rise from the ashes and be reborn from its core. I've always believed that, in the face of challenges, there is a quiet **strength within us**, ready to lead us **toward brighter days**.

As for the latest edition of ATANews, we embrace the new season and this opportunity to strengthen our connections, support one another, and celebrate the unique identity we all share. With this notion in my mind, we had a special celebration of **International Women's Day** on March 8. We came together not only to recognize the incredible achievements of women across the world, but also to reflect on the journey toward equality, empowerment, and inclusion. Three exceptional women and remarkable scholars, **Prof. Esma Akin, MD; Prof. Duygu Tosun Turgut, PhD; and Prof. Hande Özdinler, PhD** were with us to celebrate this day. You will read more about their journeys of perseverance, and leadership in science and technology throughout this new edition of ATANews.

Being your trusted quarterly magazine dedicated to celebrating and connecting our community in the DC metro area, **ATANews** continues to bring the stories of individuals who have built their lives here while keeping their Turkish roots alive. In every issue, we aim to **showcase these inspiring stories**, highlight local events, and provide valuable insights into culture, business, arts, and social initiatives. This edition is no different—inside, you will find heartfelt interviews, exciting upcoming events, and reflections on the shared experiences that bind us together.

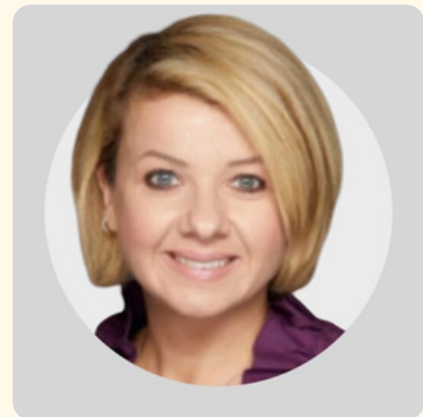
Thank you for being a part of this journey with us. We **welcome your thoughts, contributions, and ideas** as we continue to grow together.

Enjoy this issue, and let's make this spring a season of renewed friendships and unforgettable memories!

With warm regards and cheers,

Ozge Ogun-Sert

ATA-DC SECRETARY GENERAL
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



STATE OF MARYLAND'S SISTER CITIES EVENT IN ANNAPOLIS



The American Turkish Association of DC (ATADC) played an active role in the Maryland Sister States Reception on March 12, 2025, strengthening its ties to international collaboration. The event, a key initiative of the Maryland Sister States Program, brought together global communities to foster cultural and diplomatic exchange.

Since its inception in 1980, the Maryland Sister States Program, guided by the Secretary of State and a dedicated advisory board, has facilitated meaningful exchanges through citizen volunteer efforts. The recent reception welcomed approximately 350 participants, representing a rich tapestry of international perspectives.

Dr. Umut Burak Geyikci and Burcu Lale represented ATADC, contributing significantly to the evening's cultural exchange. Ms. Lale's performance of a traditional Turkish dance and the sharing of Turkish desserts provided attendees with an immersive experience of Turkish culture. The reception proved instrumental in raising ATADC's profile among fellow sister state representatives, Maryland's Secretary of State, and embassy dignitaries, thereby enhancing the association's network and fostering valuable international connections.

TURKISH EMBASSY HAS A NEW DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION

Murat Uğurluoğlu, a career member of the Turkish Foreign Service, arrived in Washington, DC as the Deputy Chief of Mission in February 2025. He previously served as Consul General in Boston.

Upon his arrival in Washington, he immediately met with the Board of ATA-DC, as one of the capital's most prominent civil society organizations. The meeting was hosted and led by Mr. Uğurluoğlu and the Chief Counselor of the Turkish Embassy, Mr. Firat Sirma. We believe that it was an important step in strengthening our ongoing collaboration and fostering future initiatives.

Uğurluoğlu began his career at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2004. In Türkiye, he assumed various positions at the Deputy Directorate General for Maritime and Aviation, the Presidency and Office of the Special Advisor to the Foreign Minister. Abroad, he served as Third Secretary at the Turkish Embassy in Kabul, Second Secretary and Counsellor at the Turkish Embassy in London, Counsellor at the Turkish Permanent Mission to the United Nations and Deputy Head of Mission at the Turkish Embassy in Baghdad.



ATA-DC HOUSE RENOVATIONS UNDERWAY, COMMUNITY GATHERS TO CELEBRATE

COMMUNITY NEWS



The renovation of the ATA-DC house is officially in progress, marking a significant milestone for the organization and its members. This transformative project aims to create a welcoming and functional space for the entire community, reinforcing ATA-DC's commitment to fostering cultural and social connections.

Following a meticulous selection process, four bids were considered for the renovation. The board ensured that the chosen contractor hailed from within the community, aligning with ATA-DC's dedication to supporting local businesses. After careful evaluation, Wholesale Cabinet Creations was unanimously selected as the winning bidder, offering the best value and expertise for the project.

Before the renovations officially began, ATA-DC hosted a special fundraiser, opening the doors of the future community space to its members. Attendees were given an exclusive preview of the renovation plans, allowing them to envision the house's transformation firsthand. The event not only provided insight into the upcoming changes but also played a crucial role in securing the funds needed for the renovation.

One of the highlights of the event was the delicious food, but the most memorable moment for many was the chance to "whack a wall" as part of our fun, construction-themed party. It was a great way to kick off this exciting project. With renovations now in full swing, anticipation is building for the grand opening of the new ATA-DC House, expected in late May or beginning of June.



WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION BY THE DMV KADINLARI GROUP

DMV Kadınları hosted its 2nd Annual Women's Day Event, bringing together women from across the region for an afternoon of connection, celebration, and support. This year, the gathering featured a care package drive for a local nonprofit dedicated to helping women in need, making the event not just a celebration but also a meaningful act of giving back.

Attendees enjoyed delicious food, heartfelt conversations, and the opportunity to uplift and empower one another. DMV Kadınları continues to strengthen the bonds of sisterhood within the community, reminding us all that when women come together, they inspire change.



AN UNFORGETTABLE DAY AT THE 4TH ANNUAL HAMSI ŞENLİĞİ

On February 26, the 'Turks in DMV' social media group was thrilled to host the 4th Annual Hamsi Şenliği bringing Turkish-American community members together. For the past three years, all proceeds from the festival have been donated to educational institutions. This year, the funds raised at the event were donated to ATA-DC to support the renovation of the Atatürk School.

Thanks to the contributions of Turkish American community members and the dedication of our incredible volunteers, a total of \$9,162 was raised. A huge thank you to the amazing volunteers and the dedicated admins of 'Turks in DMV'—Yusuf Bulca, Haldun Tarhan, Serdar Karaman, and Aykut Culculoglu—for making this event such a success. This year, nearly 450 guests gathered to enjoy delicious hamsi from the Black Sea, dance to lively performances by the DMV Turkish Music Ensemble and Zifiri Group, and celebrate our culture as a community. Adding to the excitement, Turkish singer Ozan Demiralp, known as 'Hello Ozan,' surprised the crowd with a special performance, making the day even more memorable.

A heartfelt thank you to our Board Members, Büşra Kayı Tarhan and Nile Karaman, for their support in making this event possible, as well as to the many student volunteers who contributed their time and effort.



TURKISH PRODUCTS GOT PROMOTED IN NATURAL FOOD TRADE SHOW

The Turkish Aegean Exporters' Association continued its strong presence at the Natural Products Expo West, held from March 5-7 2025 in Anaheim, California. Under the *"Turkish Tastes"* theme, 11 Turkish companies showcased a variety of high-quality products, including olives, olive oil, and nuts, highlighting the rich flavors of Türkiye's agricultural exports. Marking its fifth consecutive year at the event, the association once again invited Turkish Coffee Lady (TCL) to join its hospitality team for the second year in a row. Throughout the 3-day trade show, Gizem White, founder of Turkish Coffee Lady, along with Feriha İřtar, TCL Foundation and ATA-DC Board member, served authentic Turkish coffee and delights to attendees. The event concluded on a high note, with exhibitors and visitors alike expressing satisfaction with the successful promotion of Turkish products at one of the world's leading natural food trade shows.



ATA-DC'S NETWORKING EVENT "CONNECTION HOUR" IS BACK!

Despite the chilly weather, over 30 people gathered at Bistro Cacao for the ATA-DC Connection Hour, where both old friends and new faces came together to connect, network, and catch up. The event, held from 6-9 PM, provided the perfect opportunity for the community to mingle and engage in meaningful conversations, all while enjoying the extended happy hour specials. A big thank you goes out to our gracious host Bistro Cacao and Hulya Altinsoy for their hospitality and generosity, which made the evening truly memorable. As part of the festivities, two lucky attendees won \$25 gift cards to Bistro Cacao, while two others won ATA-DC's signature Mustafa Kemal Atatürk hoodies.



THE MAGICAL MUSIC OF FAZIL SAY TAKES CENTER STAGE



On February 7, renowned pianist and composer Fazil Say took the stage at Lisner Auditorium for an unforgettable solo concert as part of his 2025 U.S. Tour. Say performed a program featuring his own compositions, captivating the audience with his signature blend of virtuosity and innovation. He introduced each piece, offering glimpses into his creative process before bringing the piano to life with sounds mimicking wind, whispers, and echoes.

Ahead of the US tour, Fazil Say shared his excitement, calling the program "a universal voice from Türkiye to the world of classical music."

THE HEROES AND MARTYRS OF MARCH 18 REMEMBERED AT EMBASSY

The Turkish Embassy in Washington, D.C. hosted a commemoration ceremony on Tuesday, March 18 to honor the martyrs and heroes of the Çanakkale/Gallipoli battle on its 110th anniversary. The Campaign is remembered as a national victory, marking the day Allied warships were repelled by the courage and sacrifice of the great Turkish army.

Under the leadership of Atatürk, the Çanakkale battle is considered by many to be the beginning of the Turkish Independence War. The ceremony began with a wreath-laying at the Atatürk Monument in the embassy courtyard, paying tribute to those who sacrificed their lives during one of the most significant battles of World War I.



TURKISH ROCK BAND GRIPIN KICKED OFF ITS U.S. TOUR IN DC

Popular Turkish rock band Gripin wrapped up their highly anticipated U.S. tour, which kicked off on March 6 in Washington, D.C. and took them across major cities, including New York, Philadelphia, Boston, San Francisco, and Seattle.

Known for their unique blend of alternative and pop rock, Gripin attracted large crowds, particularly at Drom in New York and City Winery in Philadelphia, where fans sang along to their biggest hits. The tour concluded on March 15 at High Dive in Seattle, marking a successful run for the band in the U.S.



LONG-TIME DONOR AND SPONSOR SALTZMAN & EVINCH'S IFTAR



Long-time ATA-DC donor and supporter Günay Evinch of Saltzman & Evinch Law firm brought Turkish-American community members together for an Iftar dinner on March 25th. In a statement, Evinch and his partner David Saltzman said "Founded in 1994, the Turkish - Jewish American law firm, Saltzman & Evinch hosts an annual Iftar dinner at the Diyanet Center of America. While we are blessed to provide dinner to more than 2000 visitors that night, we are also honored to host Turkish-American community leaders; Maryland federal, state and county officials; as well as imams, rabbis and reverends. We celebrate solidarity in diversity and American unity in our beloved homeland, the USA. We share the warm hospitality and rich culture of our motherland, Türkiye."



ATA-DC CELEBRATES INT'L WOMEN'S DAY WITH AN INSPIRING LEADERSHIP PANEL

March 8, International Women's Day, is a global celebration of women's achievements and a powerful call for gender equality. It recognizes the social, economic, cultural, and political contributions of women throughout history while also shedding light on the challenges they continue to face. Rooted in early 20th-century labor movements, the day has evolved into an international movement advocating for women's rights, empowerment, and inclusion.

For the Turkish American community and members of ATA-DC, International Women's Day is one of the most significant annual events. Each year, ATA-DC presents Leadership Awards to distinguished women from diverse backgrounds, using the occasion to raise funds for girls' education through donations and ticket sales. This year's event featured an inspiring panel discussion showcasing three accomplished women in STEM, whose groundbreaking work continues to shape their fields. Honored for their contributions to research and development both in the United States and in Türkiye,

Dr. Esma Akin, MD, of GWU Medical School; Dr. Hande Özdinler of Northwestern University's Department of Neurology; and Dr. Duygu Tosun-Turgut of the Center for Imaging Neurodegenerative Diseases at UCSF, received this year's ATA-DC Leadership Awards.

Moderated by Özge Övün-Sert, ATA-DC's General Secretary and Editor-in-Chief of ATANews, the discussion focused on career pathways for women and young girls in science, the barriers they face, and strategies for overcoming them. The panelists shared their personal journeys, reflecting on their experiences in high school, university, and advanced academic programs. They addressed gender inequality and the biases that women often encounter in STEM fields.

Dr. Esma Akin spoke about the importance of navigating professional challenges while staying true to one's identity, while Dr. Özdinler and Dr. Tosun-Turgut shared anecdotes of gender-related biases they faced from male colleagues. Their stories resonated with the audience, offering both insight and encouragement to aspiring female scientists.

ATA-DC presented this year's Leadership Awards to Dr. Esma Akin, Dr. Hande Özdinler and Dr. Duygu Tosun-Turgut in recognition of their outstanding and inspiring contributions to academia and STEM researches.





In her speech, ATA-DC's President Sevtap Schreffler said "I am deeply proud of the incredible talent, resilience, and impact that Turkish women like these have had not only in the United States but across the world. They inspire us all to push boundaries, challenge norms, and continually strive for excellence."

Adding to all the powerful messages of the event, Chief Counselor of the Turkish Embassy, Mr. Firat Sırma, delivered an insightful speech on women's rights and social status in Türkiye. He highlighted a significant historical achievement—Turkish women gaining the right to vote and run for office in 1934, well ahead of many European countries.



The two-hour discussion was filled with engaging dialogue, moments of laughter and humor as the panelists recounted bittersweet and lighthearted experiences from their careers. The audience actively participated, asking thought-provoking questions and contributing to the empowering atmosphere. Beyond an enjoyable celebration, the event also underscored ATA-DC's commitment to uplifting women, supporting education, and fostering a future where young girls can pursue their dreams without limitations.

Following the panel, attendees indulged in a magnificent culinary experience featuring dishes provided and sponsored by *Chef Aynur*, alongside delicious, handcrafted baklava from *Fairfax Bakery*. The event's venue, GWU's Textile Museum offered free guided museum tour for the attendees and guests.

In line with ATA-DC's commitment to leveraging education and empowerment, and under the initiative of its Board of Directors, all proceeds from the event were donated to Bridge to Türkiye's "Educate a Girl" school project in Türkiye.



TURKISH AMERICANS GATHERED IN REPONSE TO EVENTS IN TÜRKİYE

Turkish-Americans living in the Washington, DC metro area recently gathered on two occasions to express their opinions about the ongoing events in Türkiye.

Featured in some of the media outlets in Türkiye, members of the Turkish American community around the DMV area participated in the event, waving their national flags and singing anthems and patriotic marches. The protests in Türkiye have varied in size and nature, with some remaining peaceful and others encountering clashes with law enforcement. Social media has played a key role in organizing and amplifying voices during these events.

As a non-political 501 (c) (3) community organization, ATA-DC upholds the democratic rights to peaceful expression and encourages its members to stay informed through credible news sources while engaging in respectful discussions. ATA-DC remains committed to fostering cultural understanding while maintaining its non-political stance based on its bylaws.



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April 23rd

NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND CHILDREN'S DAY

PERFORMANCES

ACTIVITIES

FOOD

April 27th, 2025

11 AM- 2 PM

McLean High School

Entry: Min. \$5 Donation per Adult (Kids Free)

ATATÜRK SCHOOL STUDENT PERFORMANCES

FACE PAINTING

MAGIC SHOW

MUSIC & DANCE



All proceeds benefit ATA-DC Atatürk School

WOMEN LEADERS IN STEM

*WORK HARD,
BE PERSISTENT
AND
NEVER LOOSE
HOPE.*



SHE IS A PROUD ATATÜRK'S DAUGHTER!



'For most of the problems we have today, if we had more Atatürks as leaders, we either would not have those problems to begin with, or we would have solved them by now.'

Atatürk was an amazing visionary, and he never gave up or lost hope.

*He turned
Impossible to I'm possible."*

DR. HANDE ÖZDİNLER



BY ÖZGE ÖVÜN-SERT

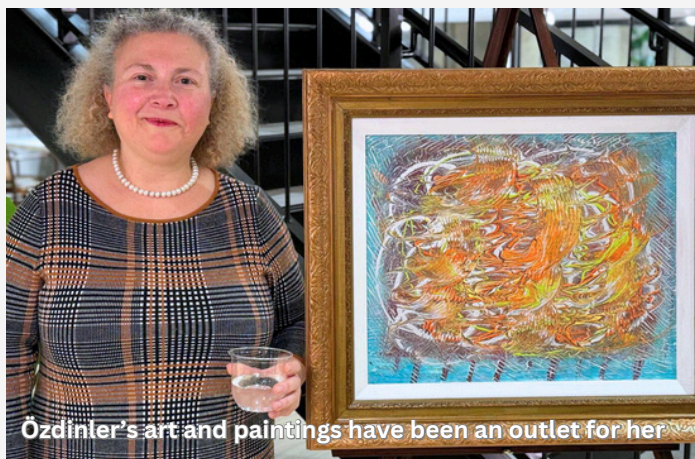
Dr. Hande Özdinler, PhD is a pioneering neuroscientist. She is also a mother, painter, a poet and one of the leading experts in upper motor neuron diseases. Her translational research brings hope to patients battling neurodegenerative disorders, such as ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis). Dr. Özdinler's passion for science and her commitment to finding effective treatments continue to shape the future of neuroscience. She founded the first upper motor neuron research lab at Northwestern at the age of 35. She is also a dedicated advocate of Atatürk's reforms and social progress in Türkiye. In this interview with ATANews, Dr. Özdinler talked about her academic journey and the path to a successful career and social activism.

You have an impressive academic background, including your work at Harvard before joining Northwestern. What motivated you to pursue a career in neuroscience?

My journey began at Bogazici University, where I received an exceptional education in Molecular Biology and Genetics. The rigorous training shaped my scientific curiosity and drive. I then pursued a Master's in Biotechnology, a joint program between Chemical Engineering and Molecular Biology and Genetics. It was during this time that we achieved something remarkable, cloning a gene from a heat-resistant bacteria, a first in Türkiye at the time. My Master's thesis was recognized with The Best Master's Thesis award at Bogazici University in

1996, a moment of immense pride and validation for our pioneering work. Eager to push the boundaries of gene cloning and transgenic research, I moved to the United States. But life took an unexpected turn. My younger brother, just 23 years of age, passed away from a thalamic stroke. His loss shook me to my core. Grief became a catalyst I needed to understand the brain, its mysteries, and its vulnerabilities. So, I made a bold decision. I left my field, my program, and even my university, choosing instead to start a new one at LSU Health Sciences Center in New Orleans. There, I had the privilege of working with Dr. Erzurumlu, a pioneer in neuroscience. I immersed myself in cell biology, anatomy, and neuroscience, determined to unravel the complexities of the brain. It was an all consuming pursuit, but every late night, every moment of struggle, only deepened my resolve. In the end, I earned my PhD, but more importantly, I had found my true calling.

My next chapter took me to Neurosurgery Department at Harvard Medical School, where I had worked alongside two extraordinary scientists, Dr. Jeffrey Macklis and Dr. Robert Brown. It was an exhilarating time of discovery and challenge. I was honored to receive the Harvard Center for Nervous System Repair Award, a recognition given to only 2 individuals in the entire Harvard community. There, I accomplished something unprecedented I became the first person to isolate upper motor neurons from the intricate structure of the brain. Not only did I manage to culture them, but I also identified the growth factors essential for their survival. Finally, at just 35, I was recruited by Northwestern University to establish the first upper motor neuron research lab. It was a monumental responsibility, but I embraced it fully. From that moment on, there was only an unwavering drive to push forward, to discover, and to make a difference for me.



Özdinler's art and paintings have been an outlet for her



Dr. Özdinler while giving a speech at Northwestern University

Are there any upcoming projects or clinical trials that you are particularly excited about?

Yes, I am very excited about NU 9 or AKY9, its new name. NU 9 was generated in Dr. Silverman's lab and this molecule was identified based on its ability to reduce aggregation of misfolded SOD1, which is one of the causes of ALS. We investigated whether this compound could reduce different protein aggregations, which is observed in almost all ALS, and half of Alzheimer's patients. We also found that NU 9 improves mitochondria, the cytoarchitectural dynamics and repairs the diseased neurons, such that they do not undergo neurodegeneration and they chose to stay in the brain alive. To move NU 9/AKY9 into clinical trials, we applied to FDA with an IND (investigational new drug) application, and we received approval to move forward. We now need financial support for clinical trials. I had no idea how expensive the clinical trials could be. They are expensive, but required for any compound to turn into a drug. We test for potential toxicity in Phase 1 and efficacy in Phase 2, which means testing if the compound is working and doing what it needs to be doing. In Phase 3, we test for population effect that it does what it needs to be doing in a larger cohort of patients. Every step is important. Science is required to open the door, but

then we need financial support to move it forward. I truly believe NU 9 is a remarkable compound and it could indeed be the drug for neurodegeneration because it helps overcome many of the cellular problems that are shared by different neurodegenerative diseases. I am very excited and optimistic. I truly hope that we will receive the support we need to move NU 9 forward. Patients are waiting and unfortunately time is passing very fast.

Securing funding for research is often difficult. What have been some of the biggest hurdles you've faced, and how have you overcome them?

Securing funding for research is becoming increasingly difficult. Today, only about 10% of NIH grant applications get approved. Just 10%. That means nine out of ten brilliant ideas—ideas that could lead to life-saving discoveries—never get the chance to move forward.

For young faculty, this reality can be especially disheartening. The pressure is immense, the competition fierce. But perseverance is key. The best way to break through is to keep pushing—submit more grants, refine your proposals, and carve



out a unique strength that sets you apart. Being the expert in something, no matter how niche, can make all the difference. Another crucial strategy is diversification. Relying on a single funding source is a risk no scientist can afford. Apply everywhere—NIH, the DoD, private foundations. Knock on every door. Keep applying. Keep believing in yourself.

Beyond traditional grants we apply, there's another lifeline: Philanthropy. Private support has fueled some of the most transformative breakthroughs in science. If you have the means, consider investing in research. Your generosity could change lives. In fact, you can support our research and be a part of something truly groundbreaking. Because every discovery starts with someone who believes in the power of science.

What strategies have helped you navigate and succeed in academic and research environments?

It has been always challenging and tough. Competition can be brutal and there are many bullies. The best way to deal with bullies is not to bully them back, it is best to smile at them and move away. Bullies are like viruses, if you do not let them infect you, if you do not let their words and comments affect you, they will not have the power to bully you. At the end of the day, it is the character that leads the way. Everyone is smart and hard-working, but not everyone is kind and gentle and thinking about others as much as they think about themselves. Your education will bring you to the doorsteps of your dream job, but your character will determine whether you will succeed or not. So, always be nice and kind. This is the best strategy to be successful.



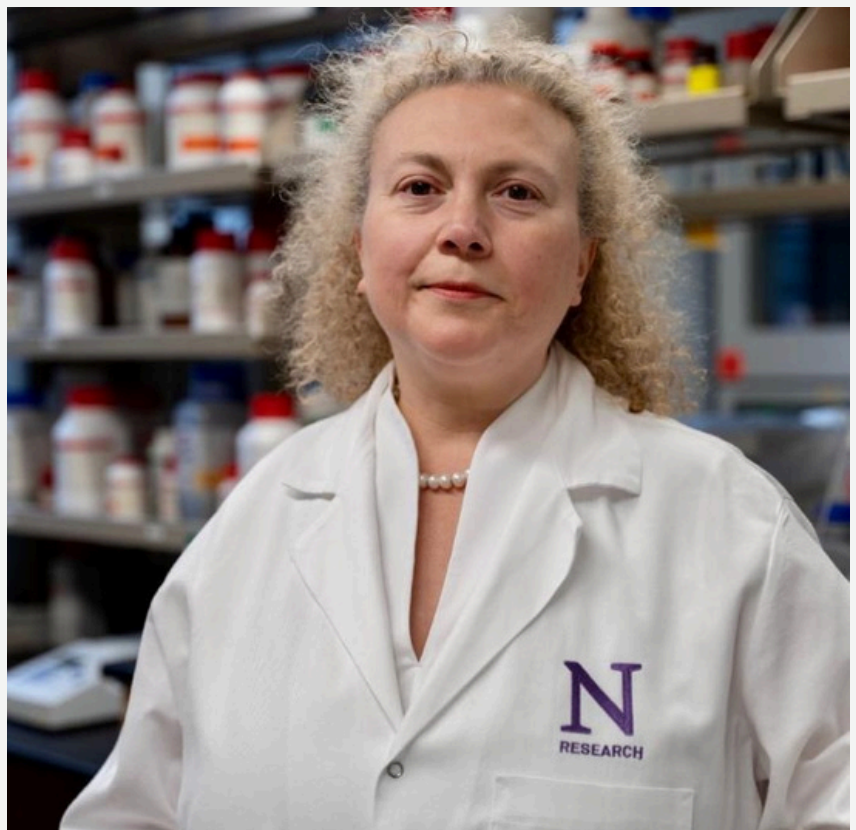
Hande Özdinler with her husband and son back in 2009

Do you think female scientists bring a different perspective to research fields, particularly in neuroscience?

Most definitely! I think female leadership and male leadership are different. Male leadership is usually based on hierarchy, where everyone knows who the boss is, and where each member knows where they stand in the food chain. The female leadership is different than that. If the female has not turned into a male to be included in that clan or boys club, and if she managed to keep her true color and self-identity, then she would lead with a different notion. Good female leaders lead with reflection. They do not need to be the boss, they try to make sure that at the end of the day, everyone will end up being the boss of their own. This is a cumulative and inclusive exercise. Male leaders think this is weakness. They reason that women cannot be the boss, or that women do not have what it takes to be the leader or to be the boss. But true and good female leaders, really do not care to be the boss, they just want to make sure each and every member of their group grows at the same time. We need more woman leaders in every field.

What keeps you motivated and focused despite the challenges of scientific research?

We all face challenges in life, we all go through tough times, but there is usually a light at the end of the tunnel, or a great cause that keeps us motivated and charged. Mine is to help ALS patients. I know that the ALS disease can be cured and once we cure ALS, all other diseases will be much easier. I also know that I am equipped with much of the knowledge and training to be able to bring the field closer to a cure, so whatever happens and how much ever adversary I have to face with, I look at the eyes of the ALS patients. I also have a picture of Ataturk in my office, when I feel tired, when I receive a sad news or at a time when there is a setback, I look into at him. I know that he would never give up and he would get up and continue the next day, so I tell myself to do the same. ■



A JOURNEY IN MEDICINE, INNOVATION, AND GLOBAL COLLABORATION



“My professors were my role models and gave me the encouragement I needed to succeed in my field. For that, I will be eternally grateful.”

Dr. ESMA AKIN, MD



BY ELVAN RAMAZANOĞULLARI

Dr. Esma Akin, Chief of Nuclear Medicine and Professor of Radiology at The George Washington University Medical Center, is a leading expert in nuclear medicine and diagnostic radiology. A Hacettepe University graduate, she trained in the U.S. at Georgetown and MedStar Health and is board-certified in both specialties. A past president of ACR's D.C. chapter and recipient of the ACR DCMRS Gold Medal, she is internationally recognized for her contributions to nuclear medicine and molecular imaging, including her book PET-CT Applications in Non-Neoplastic Conditions. Beyond medicine, she is a dedicated educator and mentor for next generation.

A Passion for Science and Medicine

From an early age, Dr. Akin was drawn to the sciences, particularly physics, which played a pivotal role in her decision to specialize in radiology and nuclear medicine. “I have always been a science kid and especially enjoyed physics while in school,” she shares. “Radiology, and in particular nuclear medicine, is very closely associated with radiation physics, which greatly interests me.” This passion led her to pursue a medical degree at Hacettepe University, one of Türkiye’s oldest and most prestigious institutions,

before embarking on a journey to the United States for her medical residencies.

Moving across the ocean alone was no easy feat, but she found comfort in the support of friends in Washington, D.C. “The transition of moving to another country by myself was of course no cakewalk,” she recalls. “However, I did have friends in Washington, D.C., which made my transition easier and more pleasant.” Academically, the shift to a U.S. residency program was seamless, thanks to the rigorous training she received in Türkiye. “Hacettepe University School of Medicine prepared us extremely well, so it was a very smooth transition into residency at Georgetown University for me.”

The Global Impact of Turkish Medical Professionals

Türkiye has long been recognized for its strong medical education system, producing skilled physicians who make significant contributions worldwide. Dr. Akin credits her professors for instilling in her both knowledge and confidence. “Turkish medical schools have rigorous curricula and very efficiently prepare their students as compassionate and knowledgeable physicians,” she explains. “My professors were my role models and gave me the encouragement I needed to succeed in my field. For that, I will be eternally grateful and try hard to pay it forward with my own trainees.”

Throughout her career, Dr. Akin has fostered international collaboration in nuclear medicine, frequently participating in annual imaging meetings in Türkiye as an instructor and invited faculty. “The collaborations are ongoing in many fields, not just nuclear medicine,” she says. “I am delighted to see the enthusiasm that the new generation of young physicians have for collaborative endeavors in research and the clinical exchange of ideas.”

A Legacy of Excellence

As a dedicated educator, Dr. Akin has received the Golden Apple Teaching Award, a recognition from George Washington University for her passion for mentoring the next generation of physicians. She credits her own professors for shaping her approach to teaching. “I try to emulate the teaching methods of my medical school professors in my practice and while educating medical students and resident physicians,” she explains. “I regard teaching as a universal profession and consider it sacred.”



Bridging Borders in Medicine

Despite the challenges of transitioning from medical training in Türkiye to practicing in the U.S., Dr. Akin emphasizes the importance of adaptability and a positive mindset. “Getting adjusted to the cultural differences between the two countries is smoother if one is willing to approach life with positivity and excitement, which is easier to do earlier in one’s career,” she advises.

Türkiye has made significant advancements in nuclear medicine, sometimes surpassing developments in the U.S. “Türkiye and Europe are extremely advanced in nuclear medicine, sometimes even more so than the United States,” she notes. However, regulatory challenges in the U.S. often slow the approval process for new treatments. “Approval of radioactive diagnostic and therapeutic agents takes a long time in the U.S. due to regulatory issues, but this is done for the safety of the patient. Research and development, however, are excellent in the United States, which is part of the reason I chose to do my residency training here.”

Serving on important boards, including The American Board of Nuclear Medicine, has given Dr. Akin a broader perspective on the future of global medical collaborations. “As artificial intelligence and online access expand and are incorporated into our everyday practice, collaboration between medical boards of different countries will become easier and more accessible to physicians around the globe,” she explains.

"I believe this will not just be limited to the medical boards, but will enable the creation of newer and more innovative collaborations between institutions across continents. It is indeed a very exciting time for medicine and science."

For young medical professionals in Türkiye considering a career abroad, Dr. Akin offers words of encouragement. "There is definitely an adjustment period when being in a different country, but medicine is universal," she says. "A solid work ethic, willingness to adapt to change, and upholding the principles we all learn in medical school in clinical practice is all one needs to succeed as a scientist and be an effective and compassionate physician."

I AM DELIGHTED TO SEE THE ENTHUSIASM THAT THE NEW GENERATION OF YOUNG PHYSICIANS HAVE FOR COLLABORATIVE ENDEAVORS IN RESEARCH AND CLINICAL EXCHANGE OF IDEAS. THEIR DEDICATION, FRESH PERSPECTIVES, AND COMMITMENT TO ADVANCING MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE ARE DRIVING INNOVATION, AND SHAPING THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE AND MEDICINE.

A Deep Connection to Turkish Culture

Beyond her professional life, Dr. Akin remains deeply connected to Türkiye's culture. "The human connection we have in Turkey is like no other," she says fondly. "Our culture teaches us to be authentic and genuine. I believe good people in every culture respond to this." If she could bring one thing from Türkiye to Washington, D.C., she wouldn't hesitate. "I would definitely bring my childhood friends," she shares. "I'm lucky that some of them still visit me in Washington, D.C., and we are able to bring our families together."

Looking ahead, Dr. Akin hopes to continue fostering international collaboration between the U.S. and Türkiye. One of her aspirations is to create a charitable initiative that brings together physicians from both countries to serve underserved communities. "There exist such organizations throughout the world, but it would be wonderful to take part in one with all the colleagues I know and enjoy working with," she says. Through her groundbreaking work in nuclear medicine, dedication to education, and commitment to global



collaboration, Dr. Esma Akin continues to inspire the next generation of medical professionals. Her journey is a testament to the power of perseverance, passion, and the lifelong impact of a strong medical foundation.

Serving on prestigious boards, including The American Board of Nuclear Medicine and the Maret School, Dr. Akin has been leveraging her expertise to shape policies, and contribute to the broader community. She will continue to champion innovation and collaboration, striving to make a lasting impact through her leadership and commitment to advancing knowledge and service. As a long-time supporter and donor of ATA-DC, we celebrate and thank her for her leadership. ■

MAPPING THE MIND: SCIENCE, MENTORSHIP AND ADVOCACY



“Don't be afraid to step outside your comfort zone and learn from those with different skill sets. You need to be resilient and persistent. Learn from your failures, persevere through obstacles, and never lose sight of your passion for improving human health. “

DR. DUYGU TOSUN-TURGUT



BY KORAY KÜKRER

Dr. Duygu Tosun Turgut is a distinguished scientist and professor at UCSF in California. Recognized for her expertise in neuroimaging and computational analysis, her research focuses on understanding brain disorders such as Alzheimer's and traumatic brain injury. Dr. Turgut's innovative work is transforming the way we diagnose and treat neurological diseases. In an exclusive interview with ATANews magazine, Koray Kükrer sat down with Dr. Tosun Turgut to discuss her career path, academic ambitions, and journey as a woman and immigrant researcher in the U.S.

Could you share some insights into your early life in Türkiye and what sparked your interest in electrical and electronic engineering?

I was fortunate to grow up in Türkiye during the 80s, a time when the ideals of Atatürk's vision were still strongly present, emphasizing the value of women's intellect and achievements, particularly in science and mathematics. My time at TED Ankara College was especially impactful, providing me with invaluable exposure to both national and

international opportunities in math and science competitions. My initial attraction wasn't solely to electrical and electronic engineering itself, but rather to the elegance of mathematics and physics, subjects I found intuitively accessible. Furthermore, the prospect of the career opportunities available after graduating from Bilkent University's Electrical and Electronic Engineering department, which was the top-ranked program at the time of my university entrance, was a significant motivating factor.

What motivated your transition from engineering to specializing in neuroimaging and biomedical informatics?

My initial aspiration was medical school. However, due to cultural perceptions at the time, particularly regarding the demanding nature of the profession for women, I was encouraged to pursue a different path. My transition to neuroimaging and biomedical informatics became a way to fulfill my desire to contribute to medicine while still leveraging my strengths and passions: mathematics and science. Essentially, it allowed me to pursue my core interest in a way that was both personally fulfilling and aligned with my abilities.

How did your educational experiences at Bilkent University and The Johns Hopkins University shape your research trajectory?

While Bilkent University and Johns Hopkins University both significantly impacted my research trajectory, they offered contrasting experiences. Bilkent provided a rigorous theoretical foundation, but the stark lack of female representation, under 5%, demanded substantial independent academic effort. Nevertheless, I cultivated valuable, enduring friendships. Johns Hopkins, in contrast, immersed me in cutting-edge research during my Ph.D., fostering interdisciplinary collaboration. This environment emphasized scientific integrity and the importance of building a strong professional reputation. Most importantly, my PhD advisor taught me the power of unwavering principles in achieving my goals, regardless of external influences.

What inspired you to choose and focus on neuroimaging for neurodegenerative diseases and psychiatric disorders?

What really pulled me into studying neurodegenerative and psychiatric disorders was seeing how much these conditions

turn lives upside down. It's not just about forgetting things or feeling down; it's about watching people you care about slowly lose pieces of themselves, or struggle with invisible battles that change everything. You see the families, too, and how they're affected. Neuroimaging, to me, felt like a way to look past the surface and finally see what's actually happening in the brain biologically. It's like having a map to understand these complex disorders. Plus, the technology is just mind-blowing! Being able to see how brain function and react to pathological insults and knowing that this information could lead to earlier diagnoses and better treatments, that's incredibly motivating. It's like we're finally getting the tools to fight back against these diseases that have been so hard to understand for so long.

As the founding director of Medical Imaging Informatics and Artificial Intelligence at the San Francisco VA Medical Center, what are your key objectives?

My key objectives center on building a dynamic and impactful research hub that not only advances the field but also cultivates a nurturing environment for its team members. My team strive to push the boundaries of innovation in biomedical and brain imaging through the strategic application of artificial intelligence, particularly in Alzheimer's research. A core objective is to create a lab culture where team members flourish, especially fostering a supportive STEM environment for women and early-career women in STEM, who are often underrepresented. I am dedicated to bridging the gap between cutting-edge research and direct patient care by actively collaborating with clinical trials and pharmaceutical companies, ensuring that our work translates into tangible improvements in healthcare.

How do you envision the integration of AI in advancing medical imaging and patient care?

What AI brings to medical imaging is like having a second, incredibly precise pair of eyes that can spot tiny changes, subtle patterns, and potential problems that might be easily missed. AI can analyze thousands of brain scans to find the very first signs of a disease, often years before symptoms appear. This means doctors could intervene much earlier, potentially slowing down or even preventing a disease from progressing. Beyond just finding problems, AI can also help personalize patient care. By analyzing a patient's unique imaging data, along with their medical history and genetic

information, AI can help figure out the best treatment plan for that specific individual. It's like having a tailor-made approach to medicine, rather than a one-size-fits-all solution. Crucially, AI has the potential to drastically improve health equity. By automating image analysis, AI can help bridge the gap in access to specialized medical expertise, particularly in underserved communities where radiologists or neurologists may be scarce. AI can also help standardize diagnostic processes, reducing the variability in care that can sometimes depend on location or socioeconomic status. Moreover, AI can be trained on diverse datasets, potentially mitigating biases that can creep into medical diagnoses, ensuring more equitable outcomes for all patients.

What does receiving the ATA-DC Leadership Award mean to you personally and professionally?

It's a profound validation of the journey I've undertaken, a journey that hasn't always been easy, especially navigating spaces where women have historically been underrepresented. It's incredibly humbling to know that my work resonates and inspires others, especially young girls and women, to pursue their dreams with confidence. It reinforces the importance of visibility and representation, showing that it's possible to break barriers and excel in traditionally male-dominated fields. Professionally, this award serves as a powerful motivator to continue pushing the boundaries of research and education and elevate the profile of Turkish women scholars on a global stage. It is also about creating a more inclusive and equitable scientific environment and empowering others to achieve their successes by creating lasting positive change.

Can you share your thoughts on the importance of such recognitions in the scientific community?

These recognitions act as beacons of inspiration for future generations. They demonstrate that success is attainable, regardless of gender, background, or origin, and hopefully encourage young people to pursue careers in science. By showcasing role models, these awards help dismantle stereotypes and create a more inclusive and diverse scientific community, which is essential for creativity and innovativeness needed to solve the complex challenges facing our world. Such recognitions are not just about celebrating past achievements; they are about investing in the future of science.

How do you approach mentorship, especially for young women pursuing careers in STEM fields?

I strongly believe that we are surrounded by amazing mentors, and the key is being able to recognize and capitalize on those interactions. It's not about finding someone with all the answers, but rather fostering a relationship where mentees are empowered to ask the right questions, both of themselves and the situations they encounter. As mentors, we may not have all the solutions, but we do possess valuable experience in navigating complex challenges and can guide mentees in developing their own problem-solving skills. I emphasize the importance of self-reflection and critical thinking, encouraging them to explore different perspectives and approaches. Beyond mentorship, I also stress the critical role of sponsorship. Excelling in one's field is essential, but it's equally important to have advocates who can champion your achievements when decisions are made behind closed doors. Sponsors can open doors to opportunities, provide crucial support, and ensure that your contributions are recognized. I strive to be both a mentor and a sponsor, actively promoting the visibility and advancement of young women in science. I encourage them to build strong networks, seek out diverse mentors, and cultivate relationships with potential sponsors. Ultimately, the goal is to empower these young women to not only succeed in their careers but also to become mentors and sponsors themselves, creating a ripple effect that transforms the landscape of science.



What initiatives are you involved in to support diversity and inclusion within the scientific community?

My commitment to diversity and inclusion within the scientific community is deeply ingrained in my professional activities, particularly through my involvement with the Alliance of Women Alzheimer's Researchers (AWARE), a Professional Interest Area (PIA) within ISTAART. As the immediate past chair, I've been actively engaged in initiatives aimed at fostering a more equitable and supportive environment for women researchers in the Alzheimer's field. AWARE's core mission is to cultivate a balanced global leadership, and we pursue this through targeted mentorship programs tailored to the unique challenges faced by women at different career stages. We facilitate a robust networking platform, enabling women researchers to connect, collaborate, and access vital resources and professional opportunities. We are also committed to identifying and addressing the specific systemic barriers that impede the advancement of women leaders in Alzheimer's research. This involves advocating for policy changes, raising awareness about gender disparities, and creating a more inclusive research culture.

What are the upcoming projects or research areas you are excited about?

The reality is that diseases like Alzheimer's aren't just about what's happening in the brain. It's more like a whole-body situation. So, we're shifting our focus to see the bigger picture. We're not just looking at brain scans anymore; we're trying to figure out how things like your environment, your lifestyle, and even your stress levels play a part. Where you live, what you eat, how much you move, what medication you take, all matters. We're using things like maps and surveys to track those things and see how they connect to brain changes. Basically, we want to treat the whole person, not just the symptoms. We're aiming for treatments that consider everything that makes you, you—your body, your environment, your habits, your health and well-being history—to really tackle these diseases head-on.

Reflecting on your journey, what advice would you offer to aspiring researchers and clinicians?

It will sound cliché but: cultivate a genuine curiosity and a lifelong love of learning! This field is constantly evolving, with new technologies and discoveries emerging rapidly. Embrace



Duygu Tosun met with Michael J. Fox as the winner of 2016 PPMI Data Challenge

the challenge of staying up-to-date and never stop asking "why?" and "how?" Medical imaging sits at the intersection of medicine, engineering, computer science, and more. Seek out collaborations with experts from diverse backgrounds, as these partnerships will broaden your perspective and lead to more innovative solutions. Don't be afraid to step outside your comfort zone and learn from those with different skill sets. You need to be resilient and persistent. Research can be challenging, and setbacks are inevitable. Learn from your failures, persevere through obstacles, and never lose sight of your passion for improving human health.

How do you balance your professional responsibilities with personal interests and well-being?

Honestly, balancing professional responsibilities with personal life is a constant juggling act, and sometimes, it feels like I'm dropping all the balls! There's definitely that nagging guilt when I prioritize one over the other, like when I have to miss a family event for a conference or cut a hike short to meet a deadline. But I've learned that completely sacrificing personal time isn't sustainable, and it actually hurts my work in the long run. I try to be really intentional about scheduling "me time," even if it's just a short walk or reading a book or cooking for the family or cuddling with the kids. I've realized that pursuing my personal interests isn't a distraction from my work; it's actually fuel for it. ■



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FROM CLAY TO CREATION: A NEW CERAMICS STUDIO IN VIENNA, VA

AMERICAN DREAM COME TRUE FOR **PINAR TURHAN** AS SHE IS TRANSFORMING HER HOME-BASED BUSINESS TO A FULLY EQUIPPED CERAMIC AND POTTERY STUDIO.

BY GAMZE ÇAKMAK



In the heart of Vienna, VA, a new creative space is set to open its doors this May, "Clay & Kiln Club", bringing the timeless art of ceramics to the local community. At the helm is a passionate entrepreneur, Pinar Turhan whose journey with clay began a decade ago in Istanbul, Türkiye, and has since transformed into a deeply personal and professional endeavor. Gamze Çakmak from ATANews met with Pinar Turhan at her retail store inside the Painted Tree Boutiques located in Dulles, Virginia.

"It was love at first sight."

With a background in biology and a master's degree in microbiology, she initially pursued a different path. However, a chance encounter with ceramics in a small studio in Kadıköy sparked a love that would reshape her life. "Nothing I had ever done before pulled me away from my thoughts or emotions. When I first met clay, it was love at first sight! Working with clay allows me to focus completely on the present moment," she recalls. What started as a hobby quickly became a form of therapy, and soon, a lifelong passion.

"I am an enthusiastic person who loves what I do. Seeing this excitement spread to those who join me during workshops is truly wonderful."

After moving to the U.S. in 2017, she faced the challenges of adapting to a new environment while raising her children. It was during the pandemic that she reignited her love for ceramics, setting up a home studio and sharing her creations on Instagram. To her surprise, people began reaching out, asking for lessons. Initially hesitant, she took a leap of faith and discovered an unexpected joy in teaching. "Seeing others get excited about something I love doing, watching them learn with enthusiasm, was an incredible feeling."

The growing demand for her classes led to a natural expansion, and soon, she found the perfect space for her own ceramics studio. Located in a charming two-story townhouse, the studio aims to be more than just a place for production; it is designed to be a welcoming, social, and inspiring environment. "I want people to feel comfortable and at home when they come in. If I'm happy, the people who come will be happy too."

"The clay itself has a way of guiding you."

Her approach to teaching is unique. Rather than heavily guiding her students, she allows them to experience the creative process with minimal intervention, offering adjustments only when needed. This method ensures that even beginners leave with a sense of accomplishment. "The clay itself has a way of guiding you," she says.

Of course, starting a business in a new country has not been without challenges. From navigating bureaucratic hurdles to the physical demands of the craft, she has faced her fair share of obstacles. However, her determination and support from her spouse have helped her push through. "Kilns are expensive, clay is heavy, and setting up a proper studio takes patience. But I believe in taking things step by step, growing gradually and organically."

Looking ahead, Pinar envisions her studio not just as a workspace but as a thriving community hub. She plans to host workshops, collaborate with other artists, and even offer a showroom where students can display and sell their work. "This is more than just a business for me—it's a journey. I want to continue learning and evolving, while helping others do the same."



"If you find yourself questioning where you are in life, whether you are happy or not, it's probably time for a new beginning."

Pinar Turhan's story is a testament to resilience, passion, and the power of pursuing one's dreams. As she prepares to welcome her first students in May, she leaves aspiring entrepreneurs with a simple yet profound piece of advice: "If you find yourself questioning where you are in life, it's probably time for a new beginning. But just wanting something isn't enough—you have to take action."

With a motto that perfectly captures her philosophy—"From clay to creation, from hands to hearts"—this soon-to-open studio is set to bring artistry, mindfulness, and a sense of community to Vienna, VA, one piece at a time. ■

A SPECIAL LETTER FROM AN ARTIST

OF OUR OWN: **HASAN KALE**, THE MICRO-ANGELO



A celebrated artist, Hasan Kale is also known as Microangelo. His microart involves in drawing onto micro objects such as rice grain, a nail, a silk cocoon, a needle, a butterfly wing



He_{ello},

Without labeling it as good or bad, I'd like to talk about a field that resonates with your soul, stirs your emotions, and excites you—Art.

Art is a world of lines and colors that transport us to different realms, sometimes raising profound questions. Since the dawn of humanity, art has been an inseparable part of our lives. However, defining art precisely is challenging, as it is a concept that evolves over time and varies across cultures.

In general terms, art is the expression of imagination and creativity through various mediums. Emotions and thoughts can be conveyed through painting, sculpture, music, cinema, literature, and many other forms. It embodies elements such as aesthetics, creativity, and freedom of expression. Yet, perspectives on art differ from person to person and era to era, introducing diverse viewpoints—traditional, modern, and contemporary—each with its own unique forms of expression.

Today's understanding of art is broader and more inclusive than ever. It has become an accessible and participatory experience for everyone. When different disciplines converge, digital art, installations, and performances emerge at the forefront. As new materials and techniques are introduced, artistic boundaries continue to be pushed.

Art is a universal language that unites people from different cultures and beliefs, connecting them and bringing them together on common ground. In essence, it is a way of seeing the world from a different perspective.

As I always say, "Colors have no language or religion."

Stay inspired by art...

Merhabalar,

İyi yada kötü demeden tarzınızın oluşturduğu, yüreğinize bir nebze dokunup sizi heyecanlandıran bir alandan bahsedeceğim. "Sanat" baktıkça farklı dünyalara götüren çizgiler ve renkler. Bazen de birçok soru barındıran eserler. Sanat, insanlığın varoluşundan bu yana hayatımızın ayrılmaz bir parçası olmuştur. Lakin Sanat nedir sorusuna kesin bir cevap vermek zordur. Çünkü zamanla ve kültürden kültüre değişen sürekli verilen bir kavramdır.

Genel anlamı ile hayal gücü ve yaratıcılığın çeşitli yollarla ifade edilmesidir. Duygu ve düşünceler, bu ifadeler resim, heykel, müzik, sinema, edebiyat gibi farklı alanlarda gerçekleştirilir. Estetik kaygıları olan, yaratıcılık, ifade özgürlüğü gibi unsurlar bulunur. Sanata bakış ise kişiden kişiye, dönemden döneme farklılık gösterir. Değişik bakış açıları getirir. Geleneksel, modern ve çağdaş bakış açıları gibi. Hepsinin farklı ifade biçimleri vardır.

Bugünün Sanat anlayışı daha geniş ve kapsayıcıdır. Herkesin erişebileceği ve katılabileceği etkinlik haline gelmiştir. Farklı disiplinler bir araya geldiğinde ise dijital Sanat, enstelasyonlar, performanslar öne çıkar. Yeni matzemeler, yeni teknikler ifade biçimleri devreye girdikçe sınırlar da zorlanmaktadır.

Sanat insanlığın ortak bir dilidir. Farklı kültürlerden, inançlardan gelen insanları bir araya getirir. Onları bir birine bağlar, ortak payda da buluşturur. Kısaca dünyayı farklı bir gözle görme biçimidir.

Her zaman dediğim gibi "renklerin dili, dini yoktur."

Hep sanatla kalın...

BY SELÇUK OFLAZ / DEMET CABBAR

ATATÜRK SCHOOL'S 1ST SEMESTER FILLED WITH JOY AND EXCITEMENT

ATA-DC's Atatürk School continues its education without interruption. The first semester concluded with a year-end party held on December 15, where kids received their certificates. At the party, Turkish Mr. and Mrs. Claus visited the kids, who enjoyed interacting with them.

The second semester commenced on January 5. As the end of the semester approaches, students and staff at the Atatürk School are busy preparing for the 23rd April National Sovereignty Day celebrations. This year, the commemoration and celebration of this significant day will take place at McLean High School on Sunday, April 27. The program will start at 11 AM and end at 2 PM. For the entry, we will require min. \$5 donation per adult which will go to the Atatürk School programs. Join us to celebrate this special day together!

The school year will end on May 4th and students will receive their completion certificates. The ATA-DC team is currently working on renovating the ATA-DC house which includes preparing classrooms at the new location for next year's program.



YCAP HOSTS INSPIRING SPEAKERS LEADING TO INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



The Young Cultural Ambassadors Program (YCAP) kicked off 2025 with three fantastic speaker events, setting the stage for a year of insightful discussions on diplomacy, leadership, and cultural exchange.

• *Turkish-American Relations: A Historical Perspective (January 9, 2025)*

Lincoln McCurdy and Sibel Mehmed shared key findings from their intensive research on Turkish-American relations, presenting their Turkish-American Relations Almanac. Sibel, now in her third year with YCAP, interned with Lincoln McCurdy, a Turkish-American relations expert, to contribute to this in-depth resource, which explores historical milestones and evolving diplomatic ties.

• *A Conversation with Alexandria Mayor-Elect Alyia Gaskins (February 6, 2025)*

Mayor-Elect Alyia Gaskins discussed her leadership journey, governance strategies, and vision for Alexandria, offering inspiration to young professionals and future leaders. Following this session, YCAP participant Nazli Göksoy reached out to the mayor's office and secured a volunteer position. She is now actively involved in the Mayoral Youth Forum, where she serves as Co-Captain of the Communications Committee. We congratulate Nazli for also securing and internship at the mayor's office and wish her all the best at

the Mayor's office! Her journey highlights the real-world impact of YCAP, demonstrating how young leaders can turn inspiration into action through engagement in local governance and public service.

• *Being a Turkish Diplomat – Firat Sirma, Turkish Embassy Counselor (February 10, 2025)*

Firat Sirma offered an insightful look into the dynamic world of diplomacy, providing a firsthand account of the rewards,



and challenges that come with representing Türkiye on the global stage. He delved into complexities of international relations, the nuances of diplomatic ties and negotiations as well as the crucial role diplomats play in fostering bilateral partnerships. Mr. Sirma highlighted the dedication and adaptability required to navigate different types of political landscapes and cultural diplomacy while upholding interests abroad.

NAVIGATING A SOCIAL LIFE AS A TURKISH TEEN

BY ELA DİLSİZOĞLU



My name is Ela Dilsizoglu, and I am 14 years old. I moved to the U.S. from Istanbul, Türkiye, in 2016 due to my parents' work. When I first moved, I had a tough time adjusting to the new environment, but I was fortunate enough to transfer to a school where I encountered kind people who made me feel welcomed. Despite the warm reception, I still struggled to fit in. Being a 14-year-old Turkish girl in the U.S. came with many challenges and experiences that I had to navigate before fully adjusting. I am writing this to share my story of how I became comfortable with the friends I have now.

Navigating a social life as a 14-year-old can be both exciting and frightening. At this age, everything seems to be constantly changing. Friendships become more complicated, and there is this pressure to fit in—whether it's by being yourself or changing who you are to fit others' expectations. Over the years, I've learned that I should never change myself to be someone I'm not. My parents always remind me that if someone doesn't like me for who I am, there are plenty of other kids in the world with whom I could build friendships. Anyone would be lucky to be friends with the person I am becoming. For many young girls, whether in Türkiye or the U.S., balancing the influences of cultural norms with family values can be stressful. It's a time when young teens are discovering themselves while also trying to meet

the expectations set by their families. My advice is to always listen to yourself, create your own path, and not let anything get in the way of that.

One of the most important aspects of growing up as a Turkish girl is understanding the role of family in your life. In Turkish culture, family is often at the center of everything. Parents tend to be protective, especially toward their daughters, and there's a strong emphasis on respect and responsibility. This means that Turkish girls often have a more structured social life compared to their peers in other parts of the world. However, this doesn't mean that all girls find their group of friends immediately. Some people take more time than others, and that's completely okay. As I was adapting to this new lifestyle in the U.S., it took me a while to find the people with whom I felt I belonged. Eventually, once I stepped outside my comfort zone and engaged with others, I formed friendships that have taught me valuable lessons over the years, and some of those friendships are still with me today.

I want to thank my parents for raising me and guiding me through this difficult adjustment in my life. I also want to thank my brother, Ege, for staying by my side through thick and thin and always allowing me to be myself around him. ■



SPRING CYCLES AND FLEXIBLE RECIPES: NOURISH YOUR BODY WITH SMART HABITS

BY DENIZ ORHUN

We experience some gusty winds as part of the natural cycles in April and May. Some nature enthusiasts observe that these winds play a role in naturally pruning and trimming branches. This allows air to circulate smoothly between branches, protecting them from molds and other diseases. Flowers also undergo stress when the temperatures change, which prepares them for regrowth and the blooming stage. Let's embrace the sound of spring, adapt our bodies to the temperature fluctuations, and create flexible recipes.

A "Flexible recipe" means tailoring your family diet: being aware of what and how much you eat, customizing portions to your needs, and adjusting meals to meet your body's specific needs. Focus on methods rather than strictly following recipes. By using traditional instincts and local knowledge, and combining them with science and advice from healthcare providers, you can create flexible, easy-to-make recipes that suit your needs. And always remember, "The recipe is nothing; the method is everything!"



Mini Berry Cupcakes (Yield: 9 servings)

Ingredients:

¾ stick of butter (3oz, 85 gr.)
 3 oz. vegetable oil (85gr.)
 11.5 oz. sugar (325 gr.)
 6 oz Milk (170 gr.) and 3 eggs
 1 lb. of flour (454 gr., 16 oz.)
 0.25 oz. of baking powder (7 gr.) and pinch of salt

Instructions:

- In a bowl, mix butter and vegetable oil well, add sugar and whisk together
- In another bowl, mix the milk and eggs thoroughly
- Add this into butter mixture and combine by hand.
- Mix baking powder, salt and flour together. You can sift the mixture if your flour has been sitting for a long time
- Gradually incorporate the flour mixture into the oil-egg mixture by hand. Ensure there are no lumps in the batter.
- Place your berries in the middle of each mold, and cover with cake mix. It helps to prevent overcooking the berries.
- Pour the batter into the molds and bake at 360 F.
- Mini portions make a great finger food for those who prefer smaller dessert.

Chef Tips:

If you have mini cupcake molds, use them to bake these quickly. Preheat oven 360 F and use seasonal fruits like strawberry, raspberry, blackberry etc.

Nettle or Mustard Leaf Salad (Yield: 4 servings)

Ingredients:

A bunch of mustard leaves or nettle leaves
 3 leaves kale
 4 Tablespoons of parmesan cheese
 2 handfuls of almonds
 Vinaigrette Sauces
 3 cloves of garlic, minced
 Half a cup of olive oil and ½ lemon
 1 ice cream spoon of mustard
 Black pepper and salt to taste

Instructions:

- Sauté the almonds in a stainless-steel pan
- Add mustard leaves or nettle leaves, partly sauté them with olive oil in 2 minutes
- Thinly slice the kale and knead it with a pinch of salt
- In a small bowl minced garlic, add lemon, mustard, salt, black pepper and olive oil, mix well
- Take entire ingredients in a salad bowl, add salad dressing, almond and parmesan cheese

Chef Tips:

Mustard Greens come in two varieties: smooth, flat-leafed and crinkly, curly -leafed. The curly variety has a spicier flavor than the flat one. You can eat mustard greens raw or cooked, but the vitamin levels vary depending on how you prepare them. Cooked mustard greens have higher levels of Vitamin K and vitamin A, while vitamin C and E levels are reduced. In my experience, the best way to enjoy them is partly cooked and add olive oil, and some acid like lemon to balance the taste and health benefit.



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"To see me does not necessarily mean to see my face. If you understand my ideas and feel my sentiments, that is enough."

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