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MCAE Presents Ruth E. Derfler Memorial Scholarship to ABE Program Graduate Hafsa Asfa of Fitchburg

BOSTON, MA – The Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education (MCAE) recently presented the Ruth E. Derfler Memorial Scholarship to Hafsa Asfa of Fitchburg, MA. Ms. Asfa is an adult basic education program (ABE) graduate who completed a high school credential program at Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) and is now enrolled in a nursing program at the college.



MCAE Board President Roberta Soolman presented the scholarship to Hafsa Asfa in a ceremony held via Zoom.

[Watch the award ceremony video here](#)

Ms. Asfa emigrated to the United States from Pakistan at age 19. As her three children progressed in their own schooling, she was inspired to go back to school herself and “achieve citizenship, and [the] all-American dream of home, husband, children and a secure job.” Though it was difficult to maintain her home and family responsibilities while attending school, Ms. Asfa says “What kept me going was resilience and the support that I receive from my family, this program, my advisers, all my professors and friends.”

Ms. Asfa completed her nursing pre-requisites, obtained a phlebotomy certification, passed the entrance exam to the RN nursing program and has maintained a 3.47 GPA over the course of two semesters. Ms. Asfa received the Presidential

Diversity Award at MWCC and is one of nine elected members of the Fitchburg Human Rights Commission. As one of her teachers described her, “She is an amazing woman, mother, student, community leader and soon-to-be registered nurse.”

The Ruth E. Derfler Memorial Scholarship was established by the MCAE Board of Directors in 2017 in Ms. Derfler’s memory to honor her decades of leadership and commitment to adult basic education. A former Director of High School Equivalency at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Past President of MCAE, Ms. Derfler was a beloved colleague and an advocate for countless adult basic education staff and students for more than 40 years. Each year, the scholarship is presented to an adult student who has completed their studies at a Massachusetts ABE program and has been accepted by a college, community college, university, or technical training program. The award finalists are nominated by teachers and staff for having achieved academic success in their adult basic education programs, assuming leadership roles in their communities and classrooms, persisting in the face of challenges, and formulating clear goals for their future education plans. The award is funded through the generosity of individual donors.

Based in Boston, MCAE is a statewide membership organization dedicated to championing the right of all adults to

acquire the 21st century literacy, English language, and numeracy skills that lead to economic prosperity, strong families, and vibrant communities. Since 1992, MCAE has advanced quality adult basic education in the Commonwealth through professional development opportunities, strategic communications, and sophisticated advocacy. Its annual NETWORK Conference is the largest gathering of its kind in New England and routinely attracts more than 500 adult education professionals from across the Massachusetts and beyond. For more about MCAE, visit www.mcae.net.

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