

A source of inspiration

By Leena Saidi

LAU alumni and TV celebrity Ricardo Karam highlights Arab endeavors



Ricardo Karam

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—Suad Juffali, managing director of the Ahmed Juffali Benevolent Foundation



The jury

There is no doubt that renowned television presenter, producer and talk-show host Ricardo Karam (M.B.A. '96) has inspired many an LAU student. And that is exactly what Karam seeks to do with Takreem, an organization he founded with the aim of rewarding outstanding Arabs in their respective fields in the hopes of inspiring future achievers.

For Karam, who is also a social and humanitarian activist, the last two decades have witnessed world events that have tarnished the Arab world's image. “Takreem was established in 2010 with the fundamental goal of counteracting these sensitivities and altering the misconceptions about the region by exposing the outside world to its wide array of talents,” he says.

With this objective of promoting a positive Arab identity, the organization strives to be a source of inspiration to the region's youth in their search for role models. “Through the stories of those we honor we can also broadcast the message that the Arab world is a place of initiative, creativity, positive thinking, entrepreneurship and the sanctity of youth,” Karam stresses.

Each year, Takreem holds a prestigious award ceremony to witness and recognize outstanding winning laureates in their different fields, such as scientific and technological achievement, humanitarian and civic services, environmental development and sustainability, cultural excellence, and outstanding corporate leadership.

Indeed, for Karam, the most difficult task is not searching for deserving recipients but deciding which of the many outstanding candidates to honor. A jury composed of inspirational figures such as Noor al Hussein, Bindary al Faisal, Lakhdar Brahimi, Mai al Khalifa, Saleh al Turki, Carlos Ghosn, Paula al Sabah, Marc Levy, and Nora Joubblatt joins him in this

tough and complex endeavor.

In 2011 the Humanitarian and Civic Services Award went to Suad Juffali (A.A. '53), founder and director of the Help Center and founder of the Women's Welfare Society and the Al Faisaliyah Women's Society. “Being honored from within the Arab world is extremely culturally significant,” Juffali pointed out during her acceptance speech. A former member of the LAU Board of Trustees, Juffali's dedication to social welfare, art, literature, music, health, medical and educational programs spans over 60 years of active service in the Middle East and the U.S.

Takreem enjoys support from a number of LAU alumni, some of whom have joined its board. These include Manal Saab (B.S. '04), who has a strong record of community service in the healthcare sector; Wissam Moukahal (B.S. '95), currently executive chairman of Macquarie Capital Middle East and the founder of Z. Moukahal Foundation, which aims to provide access to learning environments for Lebanese children who lack the financial means to pursue top quality education; and philanthropist Latifa Kosta (B.A. '73), who has held, among others, the title of president of the Federation of International Women's Association in London, an umbrella organization encompassing dozens of London-based female communities for the purpose of creating a platform for the exchange of information, ideas and expertise.

Since its inception, Takreem has honored and awarded over 70 laureates from the various Arab countries: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, KSA, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Sudan, Kuwait, Tunis, Qatar and Yemen. In the words of the Takreem, Karam's determination is not “a step,” but a stride “towards enlightenment in the Arab world.”